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First national results

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Symbols used in the tables

- nil or rounded to zero
- .. not applicable
- n.a. not available

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Notes

1. Percentages in all tables exclude unknowns.
2. Percentages in tables may not add to 100 due to rounding.
3. All tables in this report use data provided by State and Territory community services departments.

Introduction

Child protection is the responsibility of the community services department in each State and Territory. Children who come into contact with the community services departments for protective reasons include those:

- who have been or are being abused, neglected or otherwise harmed; or
- whose parents cannot provide adequate care or protection.

The community services departments provide assistance to these children and their families through the provision of, or referral to, a wide range of services. Some of these services are targeted specifically at children in need of protection (and their families); others are available to a wider section of the population and attempt to deal with a broad range of issues or problems.

This report provides national data on children who come into contact with the community services departments for protective reasons. The three areas of the child protection system for which national data are collected are:

- child protection notifications, investigations and substantiations;
- children on care and protection orders; and
- children in out-of-home care.

Box 1: Child protection definitions

Notification— is a contact made to the authorised department by persons or other bodies making allegations of child abuse and neglect, child maltreatment or harm to a child. The data on child protection notifications, investigations and substantiations in the national data collection relate to those notifications received by community services departments between 1 July and 30 June of the relevant financial year.

Investigation— is the process whereby the community services department obtains more detailed information about a child who is the subject of a notification and makes an assessment of the degree of harm or risk of harm for the child. After an investigation is completed, a notification will either be 'substantiated' or 'not substantiated'.

Substantiation— a notification will be substantiated where it is concluded after investigation that the child has been, is being or is likely to be abused or neglected or otherwise harmed.

It should be noted that children can be the subject of more than one notification, investigation and substantiation in any year.

Methodology and definitions

The data in this report were extracted from the administrative systems of the State and Territory community services departments according to definitions and counting rules agreed to by the departments and the AIHW. The State and Territory community services departments provide funding to the AIHW to collate, analyse and publish these data. See Boxes 1 and 2 for definitions of the main data items.

Each State and Territory has its own legislation, policies and practices in relation to child protection, so there are differences between jurisdictions in the data provided. The differences are greatest for the data on notifications, investigations and substantiations. Except for the tables on trends, Australian totals have generally not been provided for these data.

Changes in legislation, policies and practices over time also impact on the number of children in the child protection system. Fluctuations in the number of children in the child protection system may be due such changes. For more information about child protection systems and the national data collection refer to *Child Protection Australia 2000–01* (AIHW 2002).

Box 2: Care and protection orders and out of home care

Care and protection orders are legal or administrative orders or arrangements which give community service departments some level of responsibility for a child's welfare. The level of responsibility varies with the type of order or arrangement. These orders include guardianship and custody orders; supervision and other finalised orders; and interim and temporary orders.

Out-of-home care is defined as out-of-home overnight care for children and young people under 18 years of age where the State or Territory makes a financial payment. It includes residential care, foster care and relative/kinship care. Children in out-of-home care can be placed in a variety of living arrangements or placement types. The following categories are used in the national data collection: foster care, relative/kinship care, residential care and independent living.

In the national data, the number of children on orders and the number of children in out-of-home care are counted at 30 June of the relevant year.

Summary of first national results 2001–02

- Each State and Territory has its own legislation, policies and practices in relation to child protection, so the data provided by jurisdictions are not strictly comparable.
- Australian totals have not been provided for those data that are least comparable across States and Territories. The major differences between jurisdictions are in the data on notifications, investigations and substantiations. (See *Child Protection Australia 2000–01* for an explanation of these differences (AIHW 2002).)

Notifications, investigations and substantiations

- The number of child protection notifications in Australia increased significantly over the last 6 years rising from 91,734 in 1995–96 to 137,938 in 2001–02. Over this period the number of notifications increased in all jurisdictions except Western Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory (Table 1).
- Between 2000–01 and 2001–02 the number of notifications in Australia increased by 22,467 (Table 1).
- The number of substantiations in Australia also increased over the last few years rising from 24,732 in 1999–00 to 30,473 in 2001–02. This was largely due to increases in the number of substantiations in New South Wales and Queensland (Table 2).
- Rates of children who were the subjects of child protection substantiations in 2001–02 ranged from 1.4 per 1,000 children in Tasmania to 8.3 per 1,000 in Queensland (Table 3).
- Between 2000–01 and 2001–02 the rates of children in substantiations increased in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania. The increase was largest in Queensland where rates rose from 7.4 per 1,000 in 2000–01 to 8.3 per 1,000 in 2001–02 (Table 3).
- Indigenous children are over represented in the child protection system. The rate of Indigenous children in substantiations, for example, was nearly eight times the rate for other children in Victoria and Western Australia (Table 4).

Children on care and protection orders

- There was a continuous upward trend in the number of children on care and protection orders in Australia which increased from 15,718 at 30 June 1997 to 20,557 at 30 June 2002 (Table 7).
- The rate of children on orders also increased over this period rising from 3.3 per 1,000 in 1997 to 4.3 per 1,000 in 2002 (Table 9).
- Over the last few years the increase in rates was relatively small: between 2001 and 2002 the rate of children in care increased from 4.2 to 4.3 per 1,000 (Table 9).

- There was some variation across jurisdictions in the rate of children on orders: this ranged from 2.8 per 1,000 in Western Australia to 5.1 per 1,000 in New South Wales (Table 9).
- At 30 June 2002 the rate of Indigenous children on care and protection orders was nearly six times the rate for other Australian children (Table 10).

Children in out of home care

- The number of children in out of home care rose each year from 1996 to 2002, the period for which national data has been collected. The numbers in care increased by 35% from 13,979 at 30 June 1996 to 18,880 at 30 June 2002 (Table 11).
- The rate of children in out of home care in Australia increased from 3.0 per 1,000 at 30 June 1997 to 3.9 per 1,000 at 30 June 2001. But there was no increase in the rate of children in out of home care between 30 June 2001 and 30 June 2002 (Table 12).
- In four jurisdictions, however (New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia), rates of children in care continued to increase between 2001 and 2002 (Table 12).
- In 2001–02 rates of children in out of home care ranged from 2.7 per 1,000 in the Northern Territory to 5.0 per 1,000 in New South Wales (Table 13).
- The rate of Indigenous children in out of home care was over six times the rate of other Australian children (Table 13).
- Only 6% of children in care at 30 June 2002 were in residential care, with 51% in foster care and 39% in relative kinship care (Table 14).

Tables

Child protection notifications, investigations and substantiations

Table 1: Number of notifications, by State and Territory, 1995–96 to 2001–02

Year	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
1995–96	28,930	29,914	15,362	3,748	8,895	2,933	1,437	515	91,734
1996–97	n.a. ^(a)	31,707	15,478 ^(b)	2,099	10,094	2,363	1,220	481	n.a. ^(a)
1997–98	31,223	33,163	17,233	2,447	11,651	1,016	1,125	710	98,568
1998–99	31,513	34,679	18,721	2,568	13,132	653	1,358	n.a. ^(c)	n.a. ^(c)
1999–00	30,398	36,805	19,057	2,645	15,181	422	1,189	1,437 ^(d)	107,134
2000–01	40,937	36,966	22,069	2,851	9,988 ^(e)	315	794	1,551	115,471
2001–02	55,208	37,976	27,592	3,045	11,203	508	801	1,605	137,938

(a) Data for the 1996–97 financial year were not available from New South Wales.

(b) Data refer to the calendar year 1996, rather than the financial year.

(c) Data for the 1998–99 financial year were not available from the Northern Territory.

(d) The number of notifications in 1999–00 in the Northern Territory was higher than in previous years due to the introduction of a new information system that enabled improved reporting of all reports received.

(e) In 2000–01 the classification of notifications in South Australia was changed to exclude reports that did not meet the criteria of reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect.

Table 2: Number of substantiations, by State and Territory, 1995–96 to 2001–02

Year	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
1995–96	14,063	6,663	4,662	1,095	2,415	235	445	255	29,833
1996–97	n.a. ^(a)	7,034	4,895 ^(b)	982	2,527	244	376	252	n.a. ^(a)
1997–98	8,406	7,357	6,323	1,135	1,915	135	411	343	26,025
1998–99	7,540	7,251	6,373	1,215	2,114	128	442	n.a. ^(c)	n.a. ^(c)
1999–00	6,477	7,359	6,919	1,169	2,085	97	233	393	24,732
2000–01	7,501	7,608	8,395	1,191	1,998	103	222	349	27,367
2001–02	8,606	7,687	10,036	1,187	2,230	158	220	349	30,473

(a) Data for the 1996–97 financial year were not available from New South Wales.

(b) Data refer to the calendar year 1996, rather than the financial year.

(c) Data for the 1998–99 financial year were not available from the Northern Territory.

Table 3: Rates of children aged 0–16 years who were the subject of a substantiation, per 1,000 children by State and Territory, 1996–97 to 2001–02

Year	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
1996–97	n.a. ^(a)	6.2	4.2 ^(b)	2.1	6.2	1.9	4.1	4.4
1997–98	5.0	5.9	5.1	2.4	4.7	1.1	4.7	5.6
1998–99	4.5	6.3	5.1	2.5	5.2	1.1	5.2	n.a. ^(c)
1999–00	3.9	6.3	5.6	2.3	5.1	0.7	2.6	6.2
2000–01	4.4	6.6	7.4	2.5	5.0	0.9	2.8	5.8
2001–02	4.8	6.5	8.3	2.4	5.3	1.4	2.7	5.8

(a) Data for the 1996–97 financial year were not available from New South Wales.

(b) Data refer to the calendar year 1996, rather than the financial year.

(c) Data for the 1998–99 financial year were not available from the Northern Territory.

Table 4: Children aged 0–16 years who were the subjects of substantiations: number and rate per 1,000 children, by Indigenous status and State and Territory, 2001–02

State/Territory	Number of children			Rate per 1,000 children			Rate ratio Indigenous /Other
	Indigenous	Other	Total	Indigenous	Other	Total	
New South Wales	913	6,361	7,274	15.3	4.3	4.8	3.6:1
Victoria	579	6,569	7,148	48.1	6.1	6.5	7.9:1
Queensland	795	6,553	7,348	14.3	7.9	8.3	1.8:1
Western Australia	386	718	1,104	13.5	1.7	2.4	7.9:1
South Australia	346	1,407	1,753	31.6	4.4	5.3	7.2:1
Tasmania	2	151	153	0.3	1.4	1.4	0.2:1
Australian Capital Territory	11	191	202	6.5	2.6	2.7	2.5:1
Northern Territory	222	109	331	9.7	3.2	5.8	3.0:1

Notes

1. Due to the small numbers involved, children aged 17 years were not included in this table.
2. The Indigenous rates for 2002 were calculated using 2001 Census data. These rates should not be compared with the Indigenous rates published for previous years.

Table 5: Notifications, by type of action and State and Territory, 2001–02

Type of action	NSW ^(a)	Vic	Qld	WA ^(b)	SA	Tas	ACT	NT ^(c)
Number								
Investigations finalised ^(d)	26,255	12,868	14,638	2,427	5,615	396	522	824
Investigations not finalised ^(e)	7,363	343	8,396	510	18	57	128	11
Total investigations	33,618	13,211	23,034	2,937	5,633	453	650	835
Dealt with by other means ^(f)	21,590	24,765	3,489	—	5,570	11	18	—
No investigation possible/no action ^(g)	—	—	1,069	108	—	44	133	770
Total notifications	55,208	37,976	27,592	3,045	11,203	508	801	1,605
Per cent								
Investigations finalised ^(d)	48	34	53	80	50	78	65	51
Investigations not finalised ^(e)	13	1	30	17	—	11	16	1
Total investigations	61	35	83	96	50	89	81	52
Dealt with by other means ^(f)	39	65	13	—	50	2	2	—
No investigation possible/no action ^(g)	—	—	4	4	—	9	17	48
Total notifications	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

- (a) The data provided relate to all notifications where the primary reported issue involved harm/injury or risk.
- (b) 'Notifications investigated' and 'Notifications not finalised' includes 69 cases where it is unknown whether there will be an investigation or not as data has not yet been recorded.
- (c) In the Northern Territory, notifications dealt with by other means could not be separately identified and were included in the category 'no investigations possible/no action'.
- (d) 'Investigations finalised' is an investigation that was completed and an outcome recorded by 31 August 2002.
- (e) 'Investigations not finalised' is an investigation that was begun but not completed by 31 August 2002.
- (f) Includes notifications that were responded to by means other than an investigation, such as referral to police, referral to family services or provision of advice.
- (g) Includes notifications where there were no grounds for an investigation or insufficient information was available to undertake an investigation.

Table 6: Outcomes of finalised investigations, by State and Territory, 2001–02

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
Number								
Substantiation	8,606	7,687	10,036	1,187	2,230	158	220	349
Carer/family issues ^(a)	5,944	..	..	..	..	19	..	..
Not substantiated	11,705	5,181	4,602	1,240	3,385	219	302	475
Total finalised investigations	26,255	12,868	14,638	2,427	5,615	396	522	824
Per cent								
Substantiation	33	60	69	49	40	40	42	42
Carer/family issues ^(a)	23	..	..	..	..	5	..	..
Not substantiated	45	40	31	51	60	55	58	58
Total finalised investigations	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

- (a) In New South Wales this category comprises investigations where no actual harm occurred but there were carer/family issues. In Tasmania the category was used where there were reasonable grounds to suspect the possibility of previous or future abuse or neglect and further involvement of the department was warranted.

Children on care and protection orders

Table 7: Trends in the number of children on care and protection orders, by State and Territory, at 30 June 1997 to 2002

At 30 June	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
1997	5,764	3,865	3,249	785	1,172	508	264	111	15,718
1998	5,987 ^(a)	4,215	3,433	799	1,102	520	255	138	16,449
1999	6,948	4,358	3,609	1,019 ^(b)	1,024	440	236	177	17,811
2000	7,661	4,752	3,612	1,105	1,210	470	232	220	19,262
2001	8,105	4,782	3,573	1,320 ^(c)	1,260	453	219	205	19,917 ^(c)
2002	8,229	4,975	3,765	1,384	1,286	463	261	194	20,557

(a) New South Wales data from 1998 onwards do not include children on supervisory orders.

(b) From 1999 care applications were included for the first time and this resulted in a one-off increase in the numbers.

(c) The data differs from the previous report due to updated figures for Western Australia.

Table 8: Children on care and protection orders: type of order, by State and Territory, at 30 June 2002

Type of order	NSW ^(a)	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
Number									
Guardianship or custody orders/arrangements	7,096	3,617	3,511	1,266	1,242	397	213	177	17,519
Supervisory orders	n.a.	1,157	106	..	..	23	25	1	1,312
Interim and temporary orders	1,093	201	148	118	44	43	23	16	1,686
Other/not stated	40	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	40
Total	8,229	4,975	3,765	1,384	1,286	463	261	194	20,557
Per cent									
Guardianship or custody orders/arrangements	86	73	93	91	97	86	82	91	85
Supervisory orders	n.a.	23	3	..	..	5	10	1	6
Interim and temporary orders	13	4	4	9	3	9	9	8	8
Other/not stated	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

(a) New South Wales could not provide data on children on supervisory orders.

Table 9: Rates of children aged 0–17 years on care and protection orders, per 1,000 children, by State and Territory, 30 June 1997 to 30 June 2002

At 30 June	NSW ^(a)	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
1997	3.7	3.4	3.6	1.7	3.3	4.0	3.3	1.9	3.3
1998	3.8	3.7	3.8	1.7	3.1	4.2	3.2	2.4	3.5
1999	4.4	3.8	4.0	2.1 ^(b)	2.9	3.6	3.0	3.0	3.8
2000	4.8	4.2	4.0	2.3	3.4	3.9	3.0	3.7	4.1
2001	5.1	4.2	3.9	2.7 ^(c)	3.6	3.8	2.8	3.4	4.2
2002	5.1	4.3	4.0	2.8	3.6	3.9	3.3	3.2	4.3

(a) New South Wales data from 1998 onwards do not include children on supervisory orders.

(b) From 1999 care applications were included for the first time and this resulted in a one-off increase in the numbers.

(c) The data differs from the previous report due to updated figures.

Table 10: Children on care and protection orders: number and rate per 1,000 children by Indigenous status and State and Territory, 30 June 2002

State/Territory	Number of children			Rate per 1,000 children			Rate ratio Indigenous /Other
	Indigenous	Other	Total	Indigenous	Other	Total	
New South Wales ^(a)	1,992	6,237	8,229	31.9	4.0	5.1	8.0:1
Victoria	510	4,465	4,975	40.6	3.9	4.3	10.4:1
Queensland	880	2,885	3,765	15.1	3.3	4.0	4.6:1
Western Australia	468	916	1,384	15.7	2.0	2.8	7.9:1
South Australia	233	1,053	1,286	20.3	3.1	3.6	6.5:1
Tasmania	23	440	463	2.8	4.0	3.9	0.7:1
Australian Capital Territory	32	229	261	18.1	2.9	3.3	6.2:1
Northern Territory	126	68	194	5.2	1.9	3.2	2.7:1
Australia	4,264	16,293	20,557	20.5	3.5	4.3	5.9:1

(a) These data exclude children on supervisory orders.

Note: The Indigenous rates for 2002 were calculated using 2001 Census data. These rates should not be compared with the Indigenous rates published for previous years.

Children in out-of-home care

Table 11: Number of children aged 0–17 years in out-of-home care, by State and Territory, 30 June 1996 to 2002

At 30 June	NSW	Vic	Qld ^(a)	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
1996	5,437	3,385	2,110	1,206	1,064	508	181	88	13,979
1997	5,486	3,393	2,211	1,050	1,193	461	173	111	14,078
1998	5,603	3,615	2,346	1,093	1,055	442	179	137	14,470
1999	6,359	3,581	2,613	1,192	1,045	533	174	177	15,674
2000	7,041	3,867	2,634	1,326	1,131	548	200	176	16,923
2001	7,786	3,882	3,011	1,436	1,175	572	215	164	18,241
2002	8,084	3,918	3,257	1,494	1,196	544	224	163	18,880

(a) The 1996 data for Queensland only include those children in out-of-home care who were on a care and protection order. The data for the years 1997 to 2000 only include those children who were on a care and protection order or remanded in temporary custody. From 2001, the data include all children in out-of-home care.

Table 12: Rates of children in out-of-home care, per 1,000 children by State and Territory, at 30 June 1997 to 30 June 2002

At 30 June	NSW	Vic	Qld ^(a)	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
1997	3.4	3.0	2.5	2.2	3.2	3.7	2.1	1.9	3.0
1998	3.5	3.2	2.6	2.3	2.8	3.6	2.2	2.3	3.1
1999	4.0	3.1	2.9	2.5	2.9	4.4	2.2	3.0	3.3
2000	4.5	3.4	2.9	2.8	3.2	4.6	2.6	3.0	3.6
2001	4.9	3.4	3.3	3.0	3.3	4.8	2.8	2.7	3.9
2002	5.0	3.4	3.5	3.1	3.4	4.6	2.8	2.7	3.9

(a) The 1996 data for Queensland only include those children in out-of-home care who were on a care and protection order. The data for the years 1997 to 2000 only include those children who were on a care and protection order or remanded in temporary custody. From 2001, the data include all children in out-of-home care.

Table 13: Children in out-of-home care: number and rate per 1,000 children aged 0–17 years by Indigenous status and State and Territory, at 30 June 2002

State/Territory	Number of children			Rate per 1,000 children			Rate ratio Indigenous /Other
	Indigenous	Other	Total	Indigenous	Other	Total	
New South Wales	2,098	5,986	8,084	33.5	3.8	5.0	8.8:1
Victoria	489	3,429	3,918	39.0	3.0	3.4	13.0:1
Queensland	708	2,549	3,257	12.2	2.9	3.5	4.2:1
Western Australia	511	983	1,494	17.1	2.2	3.1	7.8:1
South Australia	232	964	1,196	20.2	2.8	3.4	7.2:1
Tasmania	29	515	544	3.6	4.6	4.6	0.8:1
Australian Capital Territory	27	197	224	15.3	2.5	2.8	6.1:1
Northern Territory	105	58	163	4.4	1.6	2.7	2.8:1
Australia	4,199	14,681	18,880	20.1	3.2	3.9	6.3:1

Note: The Indigenous rates for 2002 were calculated using 2001 Census data. These rates should not be compared with the Indigenous rates published for previous years.

Table 14: Children in out-of-home care: type of placement, by State and Territory, at 30 June 2002

Type of placement	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA ^(a)	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
Number									
Foster care	2,798	2,259	2,385	784	985	200	138	119	9,668
Relatives/kin	4,600	1,031	824	508	159	225	63	29	7,439
Other home-based care	—	146	—	—	8	10	—	—	164
<i>Total home-based care</i>	<i>7,398</i>	<i>3,436</i>	<i>3,209</i>	<i>1,292</i>	<i>1,152</i>	<i>435</i>	<i>201</i>	<i>148</i>	<i>17,271</i>
Residential care	269	445	48	154	44	70	21	6	1,057
Independent living	115	37	—	43	—	23	1	2	221
Other ^(b)	302	—	—	5	—	16	1	7	331
Total	8,084	3,918	3,257	1,494	1,196	544	224	163	18,880
Per cent									
Foster care	35	58	73	52	82	37	62	73	51
Relatives/kin	57	26	25	34	13	41	28	18	39
Other home-based care	—	4	—	—	1	2	—	—	1
<i>Total home-based care</i>	<i>92</i>	<i>88</i>	<i>99</i>	<i>86</i>	<i>96</i>	<i>80</i>	<i>90</i>	<i>91</i>	<i>91</i>
Residential care	3	11	1	10	4	13	9	4	6
Independent living	1	1	—	3	—	4	—	1	1
Other ^(b)	4	—	—	—	—	3	—	4	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

(a) The data include a small number of children who were placed with relatives who were not reimbursed.

(b) 'Other' includes unknown living arrangements,

Reference

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2002. Child protection Australia 2000–01. AIHW cat. no. CWS 16. Canberra: AIHW (Child Welfare Series no. 29).