



**Australian Government**

**Australian Institute of  
Health and Welfare**

# **Child protection Australia 2015–16**

CHILD WELFARE SERIES NO. 66





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**Australian Institute of  
Health and Welfare**

*Authoritative information and statistics  
to promote better health and wellbeing*

CHILD WELFARE SERIES

Number 66

# **Child protection Australia**

**2015–16**

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare  
Canberra

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**The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare is a major national agency that provides reliable, regular and relevant information and statistics on Australia's health and welfare. The Institute's purpose is to provide authoritative information and statistics to promote better health and wellbeing among Australians.**

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- Department for Child Protection and Family Support, Western Australia
- Department for Child Protection, South Australia
- Department of Health and Human Services, Tasmania
- Community Services Directorate, Australian Capital Territory
- Territory Families, Northern Territory.

# Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ASGS	Australian Statistical Geography Standard
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ARIA+	Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CP NMDS	Child Protection National Minimum Data Set
IRSD	Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
Qld	Queensland
RA	Remoteness Area
RoGS	Report on Government Services
SA	South Australia
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas
Tas	Tasmania
Vic	Victoria
WA	Western Australia

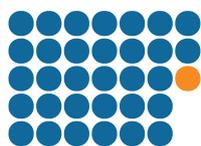
# Symbols

0	zero
–	rounded to zero
..	not applicable
n.a.	not available

# Summary

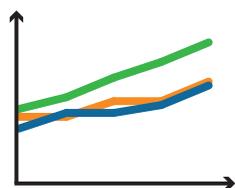
*Child protection Australia 2015–16* is the 20<sup>th</sup> annual comprehensive report on child protection. This report includes detailed statistical information on state and territory child protection and support services, and some of the characteristics of children receiving these services.

## Key findings for 2015–16



**1 in 33 children received child protection services, with 73% being repeat clients**

162,175 (1 in 33) children had an investigation, care and protection order and/or were placed in out-of-home care.



**Rates for children in substantiations, on care and protection orders, and in out-of-home care continued to rise**

Between 2011–12 and 2015–16, rates per 1,000 children:

- in substantiations rose from 7.4 to 8.5
- on orders rose from 7.9 to 9.6
- in out-of-home care rose from 7.7 to 8.6.



**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children continued to be over-represented**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were 7 times as likely as non-Indigenous children to have received child protection services.



**Emotional abuse and neglect were the most common primary and co-occurring types of substantiated abuse and neglect.**



**Children from geographically remote areas had the highest rates of substantiations**

Children from *Very remote* areas were 4 times as likely as those from *Major cities* to be the subject of a substantiation.



**Most children in relative/kinship placements were with grandparents**

48% of children in relative/kinship placements were placed with grandparents at 30 June 2016.



**Large proportions of carer households had multiple children placed**

52% of foster carer households and 40% of relative/kinship carer households had more than 1 child placed with them at 30 June 2016.



# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Child protection overview

In Australia, state and territory governments are responsible for statutory child protection. Each responsible department assists vulnerable children who have been, or are at risk of being, abused, neglected or otherwise harmed, or whose parents are unable to provide adequate care or protection. Children and young people are those aged under 18. This includes unborn children in jurisdictions where they are covered under the child protection legislation. Unborn children are reported as a separate age group in tables disaggregated by age (where applicable).

A number of government and non-government organisations share a common duty of care towards the protection of children and young people. Departments responsible for child protection investigate, process and oversee the management of child protection cases. Children and their families are assisted by being provided with, or referred to, a wide range of services.

The national recurrent expenditure on child protection and out-of-home care services was almost \$4 billion in 2015–16, a real increase of \$283.7 million (7.7%) from 2014–15 (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision 2017).

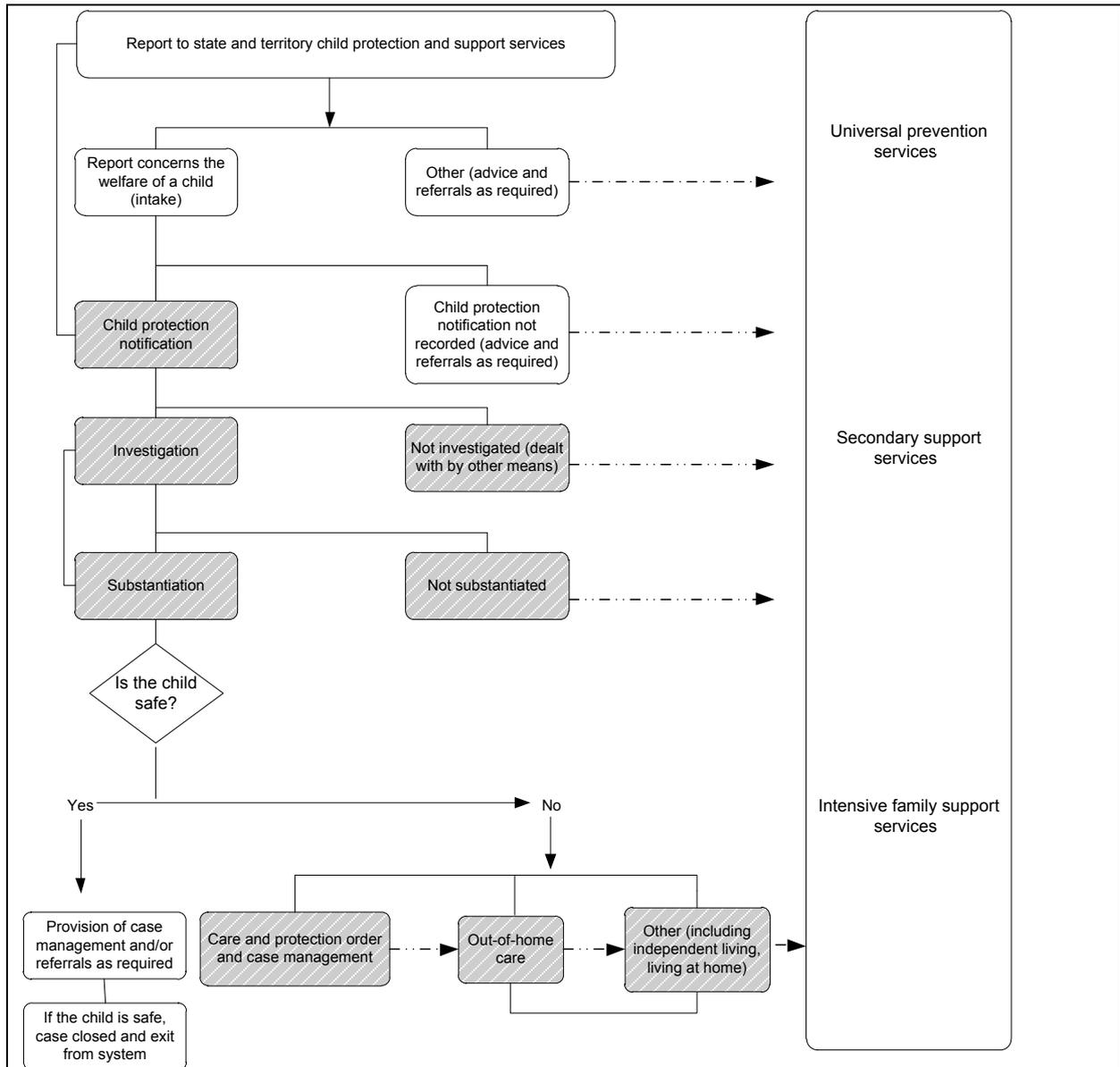
### Child protection processes

Across Australia, the broad processes in child protection systems are similar. A simplified version of the main processes is shown in Figure 1.1. These processes are described in more detail in Box 1.1.

Children in need of protection can come into contact with departments responsible for child protection through a number of avenues. Reports of concern about a child may be made by community members, professionals (for example, police, school personnel or health practitioners), the children themselves, their parent(s) or another relative. These reports may relate to abuse and neglect or to broader family concerns, such as economic problems or social isolation.

Child protection intake services screen incoming reports to determine whether further action is required. The defined threshold for intervention varies across jurisdictions and this can lead to jurisdictional differences in the responses taken to initial reports. Reports that are deemed to require further action are generally classified as either a 'family support issue' or a 'child protection notification'.

Reports classified as requiring family support are further reviewed and may be referred to support services. The National Child Protection Data Collection does not include those reports that are not classified as child protection notifications.



**Notes**

1. Shaded boxes are items for which data are collected nationally.
2. Dashed lines indicate that clients may or may not receive these services, depending on need, service availability and client willingness to participate in what are voluntary services.
3. Support services include family preservation and reunification services provided by government departments responsible for child protection, and other agencies. Children and families move in and out of these services and the statutory child protection system, and might also be in the statutory child protection system while receiving support services.

**Figure 1.1: Child protection process in Australia**

## **Box 1.1: Child protection statutory processes**

### **Notifications, investigations and substantiations**

Child protection notifications are assessed to determine whether an investigation is required, if referral to support services is more appropriate or if no further protective action is necessary.

An investigation aims to obtain more detailed information about a child who is the subject of a notification and to determine whether the notification is 'substantiated' or 'not substantiated'.

A substantiation indicates there is sufficient reason (after an investigation) to believe the child has been, is being or is likely to be, abused, neglected or otherwise harmed. The relevant department will then attempt to ensure the safety of the child or children through an appropriate level of continued involvement, including providing support services to the child and family.

### **Care and protection orders**

In situations where further intervention is required, the department may apply to the relevant court to place the child on a care and protection order. Court is usually a last resort – for example, where the family is unable to provide safe care, where other avenues for resolving the situation have been exhausted, or where the extended family is unable to provide safe alternatives for care of children. The level of departmental involvement that a care and protection order mandates will vary depending on the type of order (see Box 4.1).

### **Out-of-home care**

Some children are placed in out-of-home care because they were the subject of a child protection substantiation and require a more protective environment. Children may also be placed in out-of-home care when their parents are incapable of providing adequate care for them, or where alternative accommodation is needed during times of family conflict. However, there are no national data available on the reasons children are placed in out-of-home care. See Box 5.1 for the national categories of out-of-home care.

Out-of-home care is considered an intervention of last resort, with the current emphasis being to keep children with their families wherever possible. Where children need to be placed in out-of-home care, an attempt is made to subsequently reunite children with their families. If it is necessary to remove a child from their family, placement within the wider family or community is preferred. This is particularly the case with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, as is outlined in the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle (see Section 5.2, particularly Box 5.3).

### **Family support services**

Family support services include programs that seek to prevent family dysfunction and child maltreatment occurring; that provide treatment, support and advice to families; and that offer more intensive programs to assist the most vulnerable families (COAG 2009). Family support services may be used instead of, or as a complementary service to, a statutory child protection response, and may include developing parenting and household skills, therapeutic care, and family reunification services.

## **Child protection policies and practices**

Child protection policies and practices are under continual development on a jurisdiction-by-jurisdiction basis. In recent years, there has been an increasing national focus on early intervention and family support services to help prevent families entering or

re-entering the child protection system and to help minimise the need for more intrusive interventions (AIFS: Bromfield & Holzer 2008).

Most jurisdictions have enacted strategies that attempt to assist families in a more holistic way by coordinating service delivery and by providing better access to different types of child and family services (COAG 2014).

## **Jurisdictional policy context**

Although the processes that each jurisdiction uses to protect children are broadly similar (AIFS: Bromfield & Higgins 2005; Figure 1.1), there are some important differences between jurisdictions' child protection policies and practices that should be taken into account when making cross-jurisdiction comparisons. Key differences across jurisdictional policy are briefly discussed here. Further details relating to each jurisdiction's policy and practice are at appendixes B–G (online) <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=60129558626>>.

### **Mandatory reporting**

Commonwealth and jurisdiction-specific legislation governs the reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect. However, there is variation regarding who is legally obliged to report it to the appropriate authority. Further details about mandatory reporting are at appendixes B–G (online) <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=60129558626>>.

### **Notifications, investigations and substantiations**

The policies for assessing child protection notifications vary broadly across jurisdictions. This may result in higher levels of notifications being recorded in jurisdictions where all reports are recorded as notifications ('caller-defined') than in jurisdictions where the initial report is considered a notification only when the information received suggests that a child needs care or protection ('agency-defined').

Between initial reports and substantiation, a range of activities take place that are broadly categorised as investigations. In jurisdictions where a preliminary assessment has occurred, activities tend to assess risk of significant harm and focus on formal investigation. In jurisdictions where all initial contacts are recorded as notifications, a preliminary assessment will often occur to determine the need for formal investigation, followed by a formal investigation if it is concluded that a child may have been, or is, at risk of harm. Formal investigation, as conducted in each jurisdiction, will determine whether the notification has been substantiated.

Thresholds for what is substantiated vary – some jurisdictions substantiate the harm, or risk of harm, to the child, and others substantiate actions by parents or incidents that may cause harm. In considering harm to the child, the focus of the child protection systems in many jurisdictions has shifted away from the actions of parents to the outcomes for the child.

As well as policy variation at the jurisdictional level, the definition of what constitutes child abuse and neglect has broadened at a national level over time (AIFS: Holzer & Bromfield 2008). These changes affect the comparability of data included in this report. Legislative, policy and definitional differences between jurisdictions and detailed information on recent policy and practices changes are outlined at appendixes B–G (online) <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=60129558626>>.

## **National policy context**

The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020 (COAG 2009) aims to ensure Australia's children are safe and well. As a measure of this outcome, a target of 'a substantial and sustained reduction in child abuse and neglect in Australia' was set. The National Framework is composed of a series of 3-year action plans, and progress against agreed measures with available data is reported in a series of annual reports to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) (COAG 2012, 2013, 2014; DSS 2015a). More information and the latest data on a range of National Framework indicators are available on the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) website <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/nfpac/>>.

Developing and implementing National standards for out-of-home care was a priority area under the second action plan, for 2012–2015. These standards were designed to deliver consistency and to drive improvements in the quality of out-of-home care provided to children and young people (FaHCSIA 2011). The third action plan, for 2015–2018, strongly emphasises prevention and early intervention, with a focus on targeting assistance to those communities that have most contact with the child protection system (DSS 2015b).

## **Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse**

The Royal Commission to investigate Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse continued during 2015–16. The work of the Royal Commission was initially due for completion by the end of 2015; however, additional funding has been granted to extend the completion date to 15 December 2017.

Out-of-home care, as defined in the Child Protection National Minimum Data Set (CP NMDS), is an institution for the purposes of the Royal Commission and more than 40% of the private sessions conducted by the Royal Commission related to child sexual abuse in out-of-home care (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse 2016). In March 2016, the Royal Commission released a consultation paper highlighting some opportunities for key improvements within the out-of-home care system to help better protect vulnerable children from sexual abuse while in care (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse 2016). These include:

- a nationally consistent approach to service delivery, recording, reporting and information sharing regarding child sexual abuse in out-of-home care
- increased placement stability for children in the out-of-home care system
- improved training, accreditation and support of staff and carers caring for children in out-of-home care
- better understanding of perpetrators' grooming behaviours.

Some jurisdictions include cases of alleged abuse in care in the data for this report on the number of notifications, investigations and substantiations; see Appendix B in appendixes B–G (online) <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=60129558626>>. However, these cases are not able to be separately identified in the national data.

## **Senate Inquiry into Out-of-home care**

On 17 July 2014, the Senate referred matters relating to out-of-home care to the Community Affairs References Committee for inquiry and report. The report, which was released in August 2015, included 39 recommendations, several of which relate specifically to the

CP NMDS (Senate Community Affairs Committee Secretariat 2015). The AIHW continues to work with jurisdictions to implement recommendations from the inquiry.

## 1.2 Child protection data components

### Data sources

#### National child protection data

The state and territory departments and the AIHW jointly fund the annual collation, analysis and publication of child protection data. Data in this report are largely drawn from the CP NMDS, implemented for reporting from 2012–13. The CP NMDS consists of a number of unit record (child-level) files extracted from state and territory child protection administrative data sets according to nationally agreed definitions and technical specifications. The CP NMDS includes, by definition, all items that jurisdictions have agreed to provide to the AIHW for national child protection reporting. More information about the development and implementation of the CP NMDS can be found in the AIHW working paper *A new approach to national child protection data: implementation of the Child Protection National Minimum Data Set* (AIHW 2014a).

The AIHW, in collaboration with jurisdictions, annually reviews the national technical specifications and definitional materials associated with the CP NMDS. The AIHW and the states and territories then agree to any required changes.

The jurisdictions provide data to the AIHW across 7 broad components:

- notifications, investigations and substantiations
- care and protection orders
- out-of-home care
- foster carers
- relative/kinship carers
- intensive family support services
- National standards for out-of-home care.

Data for these components are based on unit record-level data for all jurisdictions except New South Wales. (Data for New South Wales are based on aggregate data, using the methodology from previous years.) Other jurisdictions also supplied data in aggregate format for tables where unit record data were not available. This includes all data relating to the use of intensive family support services for all jurisdictions.

National child protection data are analysed and published annually in:

- *Child protection Australia* (this report)
- annual reports to the COAG on progress in implementing the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020
- online National Framework indicators, available on the AIHW website <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/nfpac/>>
- the Productivity Commission's *Report on government services 2017* (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision 2017). For all jurisdictions except

New South Wales, most data reported for 2015–16 in the *Report on government services 2017* were produced from the CP NMDS for that report. Data for New South Wales were based on aggregate data that this jurisdiction supplied to the Productivity Commission. Some data included in this report may not match data reported in the RoGS due to retrospective updates to state/territory data and differences in the data extraction and analysis methodologies.

## Population estimates used for rate calculations

All rates in this report, including historical rates, were calculated using revised population estimates based on the 2011 Census. This may have resulted in revisions to rates published in previous editions of *Child protection Australia*. The population estimates used in calculating historical rates are available in online supplementary tables (tables S1 and S2). These can be downloaded free of charge from the AIHW website <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=60129558626&tab=3>>.

Indigenous populations and associated rates presented in this report were calculated using the revised Indigenous population estimates and projections based on the 2011 Census. See Box 1.2 for further details.

### Box 1.2: Indigenous Australians—population and rates

On 30 April 2014, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) released new Indigenous population estimates based on the 2011 Census. These included revised back-cast estimates of the Indigenous population for the years before 2012, as well as population projections for 2012 onwards. There was an increase in estimates of the number of Indigenous Australians for those based on the 2011 Census compared with the 2006 Census-based estimates. This means that any rates calculated with Indigenous population estimates based on the 2011 Census are lower than those based on the 2006 Census.

Following a review of the impact of the revised Indigenous population projections, the AIHW has adopted a methodology for reporting Indigenous populations and their associated rates. This methodology uses the Series B Indigenous population projections for reporting from 2011 onwards and back-casts historical trend data using the 2011 Census-based series of back-cast estimates for the Indigenous population. (See Appendix A for more information regarding the calculation of rates.)

All Indigenous rates in this report were calculated using the revised Indigenous population estimates and projections, based on the 2011 Census, and should not be compared with rates calculated using populations or projections based on previous Censuses.

## Scope and limitations of the CP NMDS

National child protection data are based on those cases reported to departments responsible for child protection and, therefore, are likely to understate the true prevalence of child abuse and neglect across Australia. Further, notifications made to other organisations, such as the police or non-government welfare agencies, are included only if these notifications were also referred to departments responsible for child protection.

For child-based counts in this report, children are counted only once in the relevant table, regardless of the number of contacts the child had with the component of child protection being reported. For example, if a child was the subject of more than 1 substantiation during the reporting period, they are counted only once in tables reporting the number of children

in substantiations. However, there may be some small level of double-counting due to movement between jurisdictions.

Not all jurisdictions were able to supply unit record-level data for all tables included in this report. As such, some tables include aggregated data provided by jurisdictions. Footnotes have been included to identify tables where aggregate data are used (in addition to New South Wales data, which were based entirely on aggregate data in 2015–16).

The practices used to identify and record the Indigenous status of children in the child protection system vary across states and territories. Over the past few years, several jurisdictions have introduced measures to improve the identification of Indigenous clients (AIHW 2012). However, in some jurisdictions, the high proportion of children whose Indigenous status is unknown still affects the quality of data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (as footnoted in relevant tables).

The data systems that jurisdictions use can be upgraded and changed between reporting cycles. Details regarding jurisdictions' data systems and any key changes from the previous year are at appendixes B–G (online)

<<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=60129558626>>.

'Average day' measures have been included for children on orders (Table S18) or in out-of-home care (Table S32) and for carer households approved/authorised to provide funded out-of-home care placements (Table S46). Average day measures are calculated by summing the number of days that each person was subject to the same event during the year and dividing this total by the number of days in the financial year. This provides a view of the data that accounts for each day during the year, rather than a snapshot for a single day (for example, 30 June, which is typically reported). These data are presented in supplementary tables only due to known issues with data availability and quality.

## **This report**

This report presents information on state and territory child protection and support services, and some of the characteristics of the children who receive these services, as well as information on carers and intensive family support services. Data produced from the CP NMDS based on nationally agreed specifications may not match state and territory figures published elsewhere and may not be comparable with data for previous years.

The supplementary data tables referred to in this report (those with a prefix of S), are available to download from the AIHW website <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=60129558626&tab=3>>.

Technical notes for some analyses used in this report are available in Appendix A. Appendixes B–G (online) <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=60129558626>> contain additional information on legislation, policy, data systems, data comparability and inquiries across jurisdictions of relevance to child protection reporting.

Metadata for the CP NMDS is available on METeOR, the AIHW's online metadata repository, and can be accessed at:

<<http://meteor.aihw.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/656494>>.

## 2 Children receiving child protection services

In this report, children receiving child protection services are defined as those children who, in the reporting period, were:

- the subject of an investigation of a notification, and/or
- on a care and protection order, and/or
- in out-of-home care.

### 2.1 Overview and key statistics

In 2015–16, almost 162,200 children received child protection services – around 115,000 were the subject of an investigation, 61,700 were on a care and protection order and 55,600 were in out-of-home care (Figure 2.1). Note that individual components do not sum to the total number of children receiving child protection services as children may be involved in more than 1 component of the system.

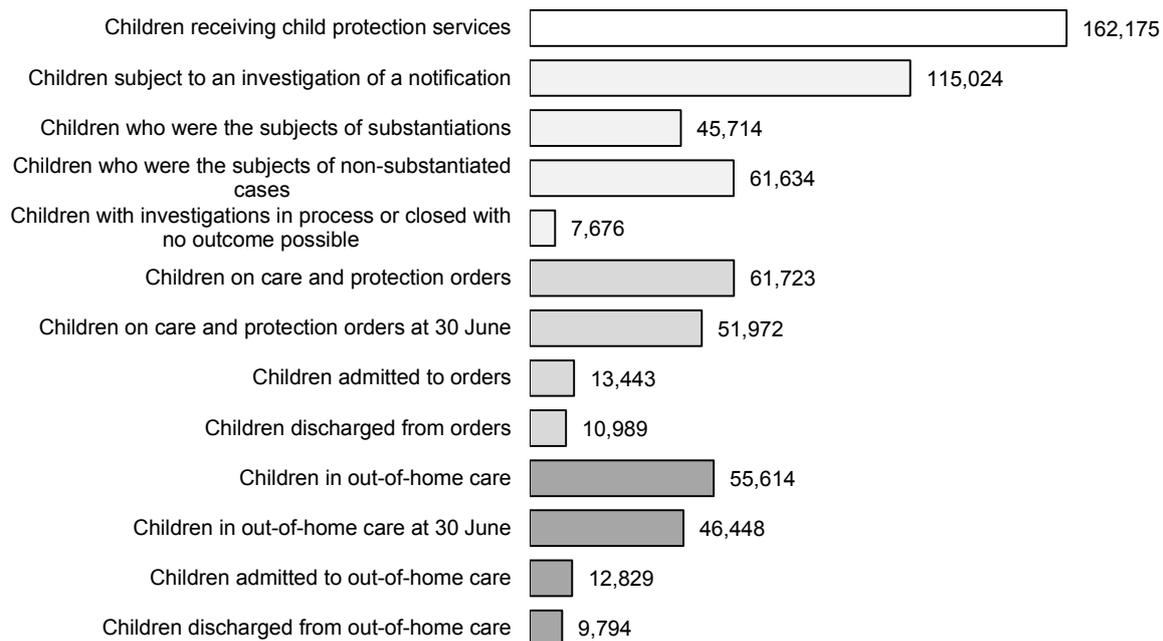
### 2.2 Child protection services received

Figure 2.1 shows that 162,175 children received child protection services in 2015–16; a rate of 30.2 per 1,000 children aged 0–17 in the general population.

Of children receiving child protection services in 2015–16, 115,024 were the subject of an investigation (21.4 per 1,000), 61,723 were on a care and protection order (11.5 per 1,000) and 55,614 were in out-of-home care (10.4 per 1,000). These rates varied across jurisdictions (Table 2.1). The key differences that can affect these data are outlined on page 4 and at Appendix D (online) <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=60129558626>>.

Children may be involved in more than 1 component of the system. As such, the components do not sum to the total children receiving child protection services (see Figure 2.2 for the overlap of services received).

Children who were only the subject of a notification that was not subsequently investigated have not been included in this analysis. This is because, apart from an initial risk assessment, it is expected that the department responsible for child protection would have a limited level of involvement with these children and their families. Children who received intensive family support services only have not been included in this section as unit record-level data were not available for national reporting. See Chapter 7 for information about children receiving intensive family support services.



*Notes*

1. Numbers presented in this figure refer to protection services during 2015–16 except for 2 counts: children on care and protection orders at 30 June 2016, and children in out-of-home care at 30 June 2016.
2. Children may be involved in more than 1 component of the system. As such, the components do not sum to the total children receiving child protection services.
3. Children may be the subject of multiple investigations and decisions to substantiate or not substantiate within the reporting period. However, the numbers reported for 'children who were the subjects of substantiations' and 'children who were the subjects of non-substantiated cases' are mutually exclusive—children can be counted only for the highest level of intervention provided in the period (that is, substantiation or not a substantiation).
4. Refer to the Glossary for definitions.

*Sources:* Tables 2.1, 4.1, 5.1 and S7.

**Figure 2.1: Children receiving child protection services in Australia during 2015–16**

**Table 2.1: Children receiving child protection services, by number and number per 1,000, states and territories, 2015–16**

Child protection component	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT <sup>(a)</sup>	NT	Total
<b>Number</b>									
Children who were the subject of an investigation of a notification	48,236	25,812	18,303	10,936	3,226	1,338	1,714	5,459	115,024
Children on care and protection orders	21,950	15,319	11,030	5,800	3,916	1,434	926	1,348	61,723
Children in out-of-home care	20,316	12,473	10,709	4,967	3,671	1,300	879	1,299	55,614
<b>Children receiving child protection services</b>	<b>64,330</b>	<b>37,357</b>	<b>27,842</b>	<b>15,375</b>	<b>6,204</b>	<b>2,579</b>	<b>2,388</b>	<b>6,100</b>	<b>162,175</b>
<b>Number per 1,000</b>									
Children who were the subject of an investigation of a notification	28.2	19.8	16.2	18.4	9.0	11.8	19.6	86.0	21.4
Children on care and protection orders	12.8	11.7	9.7	9.8	10.9	12.6	10.6	21.2	11.5
Children in out-of-home care	11.9	9.6	9.5	8.4	10.2	11.4	10.0	20.5	10.4
<b>Children receiving child protection services</b>	<b>37.6</b>	<b>28.6</b>	<b>24.6</b>	<b>25.8</b>	<b>17.2</b>	<b>22.7</b>	<b>27.3</b>	<b>96.1</b>	<b>30.2</b>

(a) Out-of-home care data for the ACT includes some young people 18 years and over whose carers receive a full carer payment. This is generally to facilitate completion of schooling without change to the placement.

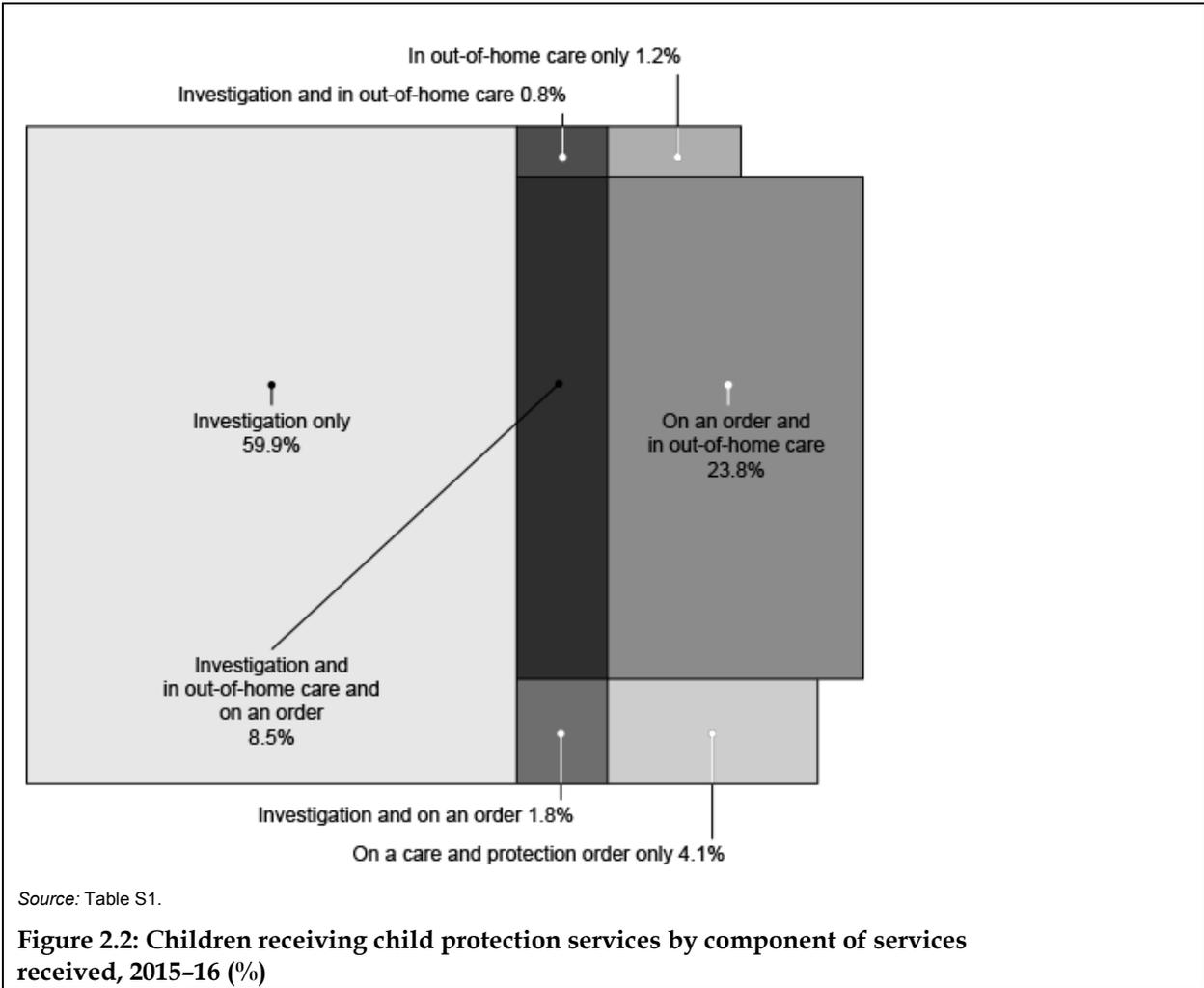
*Notes*

1. 'Children receiving child protection services' is defined as 1 or more of the following occurring within the reporting period: an investigation of a notification, being on a care and protection order, or being in out-of-home care. It is not a total count of these 3 areas; it is a count of unique children across the 3 areas.
2. Refer to Table S53 for the population data used to calculate rates.
3. Rates were calculated using revised population estimates based on the 2011 Census and should not be compared with rates calculated using populations or projections based on previous Censuses.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2016.

Children may receive a combination of child protection services. As such, there are links and overlaps between the data for the notification, investigation and substantiation; care and protection orders; and out-of-home care data collections. The overlap between the separate data collections has been analysed, drawing on unit record data from the majority of jurisdictions (and aggregate information specifically provided by New South Wales).

Figure 2.2 shows that three-fifths (60%) of children receiving child protection services during 2015–16 were the subject of an investigation only. Almost one-quarter (24%) of children were both on an order and in out-of-home care. Overall, 9% of children were involved in all 3 components of the system. These findings are similar to those for 2014–15 (AIHW 2016b).



Children who were the subject of an investigation only represent a large component of the analysis of unique children receiving services. Note that almost two-thirds (63%) of these children were not the subjects of substantiations in 2015-16 (Table 2.2). The proportion of children who were not the subjects of substantiations varied across jurisdictions, with higher percentages in New South Wales, Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory (67%, 73%, 79%, and 64%, respectively). Conversely, Tasmania had a higher percentage of children in substantiations (68%).

**Table 2.2: Children who were the subject of a finalised investigation only in 2015–16, by investigation outcome, states and territories**

Investigation outcome	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
	<b>Number</b>								
Substantiated	13,088	9,716	3,895	3,240	925	614	261	1,253	32,992
Not substantiated	26,896	10,389	10,433	4,734	932	288	952	2,247	56,871
<i>Total children in finalised investigations</i>	<i>39,984</i>	<i>20,105</i>	<i>14,328</i>	<i>7,974</i>	<i>1,857</i>	<i>902</i>	<i>1,213</i>	<i>3,500</i>	<i>89,863</i>
	<b>%</b>								
Substantiated	32.7	48.3	27.2	40.6	49.8	68.1	21.5	35.8	36.7
Not substantiated	67.3	51.7	72.8	59.4	50.2	31.9	78.5	64.2	63.3
<i>Total children in finalised investigations</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<b>Total children who were the subject of an investigation only</b>	<b>40,878</b>	<b>21,009</b>	<b>16,210</b>	<b>9,444</b>	<b>2,229</b>	<b>1,129</b>	<b>1,424</b>	<b>4,751</b>	<b>97,074</b>

*Note:* This table includes data for children whose only contact with child protection services during 2015–16 was an investigation. It excludes those children who had an investigation *and* involvement in another area of the system, such as care and protection orders and/or out-of-home care. The data relating to investigation outcome are further restricted to include only those for whom an investigation was finalised in the reporting period, thus excluding investigations in process or closed with no outcome possible.

*Source:* AIHW Child Protection Collection 2016.

The CP NMDS will be used in future to provide more detailed analyses regarding the movement of children within the child protection system (for example, identifying the number of children who are the subject of a substantiation who are subsequently placed on care and protection orders and/or in out-of-home care).

## 2.3 Characteristics of children receiving child protection services

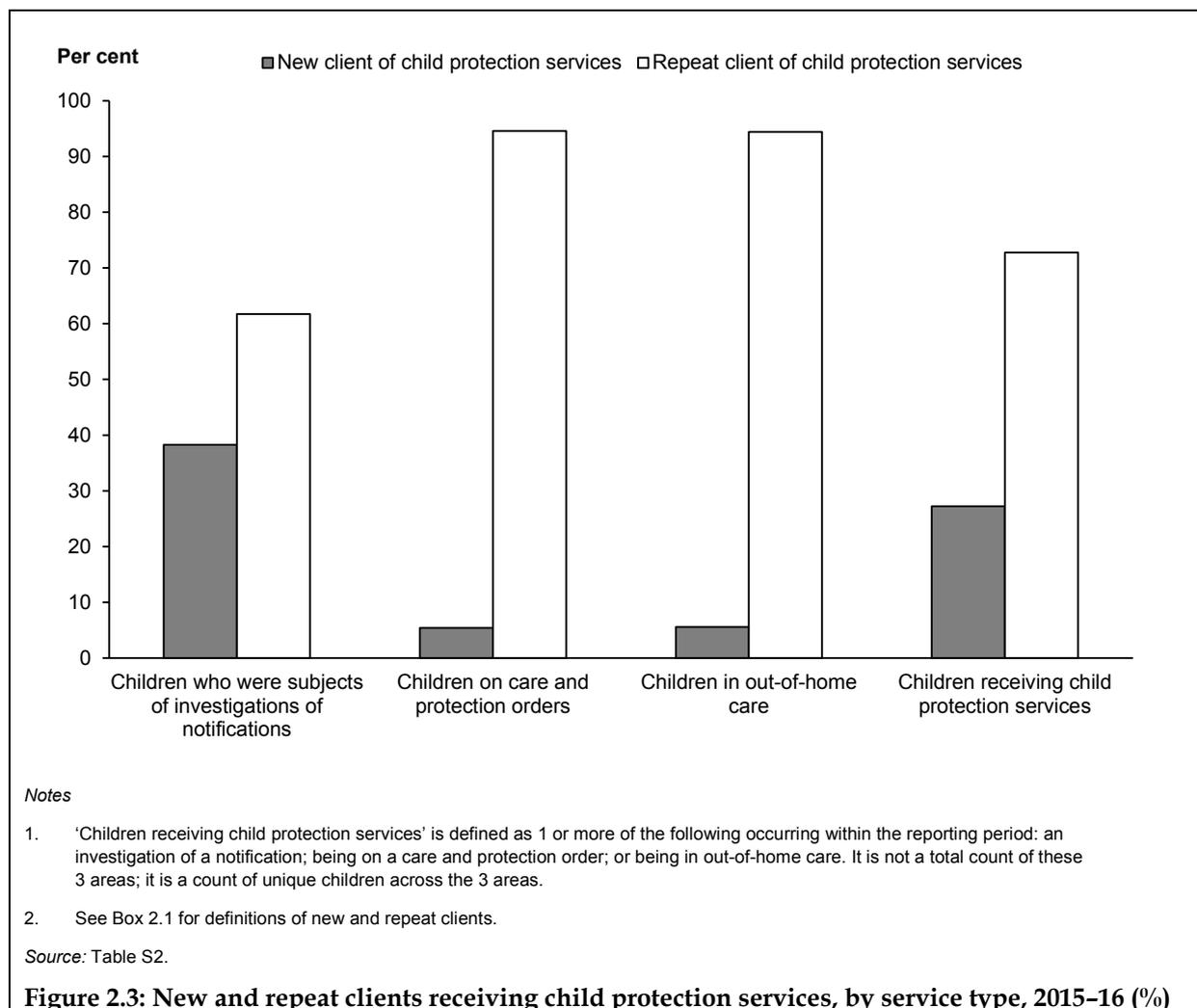
### New and repeat clients

Examining data on whether children were new or repeat clients of the reporting jurisdiction provides some insight into whether child protection service clients are primarily new children or those with prior involvement with the child protection system, and whether this differs across the system components. Definitions of new and repeat clients are provided in Box 2.1.

### Box 2.1: Definition of new and repeat clients

- **New clients** are children or young people who have never previously been the subject of an investigation, any type of care and protection order (as per the scope of this collection), or funded out-of-home care placement (excluding respite placements lasting less than 7 days) within the jurisdiction.
- **Repeat clients** are children or young people who have previously been the subject of an investigation, or who were discharged (according to national specifications) from any type of care and protection order or funded out-of-home care placement (excluding respite placements lasting less than 7 days), or whose earliest order and/or placement in the current reporting period is part of a preceding continuous episode of care.

In 2015–16, almost three-quarters (73%) of children receiving child protection services were repeat clients (Figure 2.3). However, the percentage of repeat clients was substantially higher for those on an order or in out-of-home care (95% and 94%, respectively) than for those who were the subject of investigations (62%).



## Age

Across Australia in 2015–16, infants (children aged under 1) were most likely (37.6 per 1,000 children) to be receiving child protection services and those aged 15–17 were least likely (20.7 per 1,000) (Table 2.3). The median age of children receiving services was 8.

These findings reflect that younger children are regarded as the most vulnerable, and most jurisdictions have specific policies and procedures in place to protect them. There has also been an increased focus nationally on early intervention and on providing services early in a child's life to improve long-term outcomes and reduce the negative impacts of trauma and harm (COAG 2009; FaHCSIA 2012).

**Table 2.3: Rates of children receiving child protection services, by age group, states and territories, 2015–16 (number per 1,000)**

Age group (years)	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
<1	35.7	48.0	29.2	28.7	35.7	29.0	41.2	124.8	37.6
1–4	35.0	28.8	24.6	25.8	17.5	24.9	25.7	96.0	29.5
5–9	38.8	29.9	25.7	28.1	18.5	23.1	28.2	100.8	31.6
10–14	38.8	28.7	24.6	25.6	16.5	21.8	28.0	104.8	30.6
15–17	28.1	19.3	16.0	15.9	9.8	13.9	20.6	60.3	20.7
0–17	36.0	28.6	23.7	25.0	17.2	21.8	27.2	96.0	29.4
<b>All children</b>	<b>37.6</b>	<b>28.6</b>	<b>24.6</b>	<b>25.8</b>	<b>17.2</b>	<b>22.7</b>	<b>27.3</b>	<b>96.1</b>	<b>30.2</b>
<b>Children receiving child protection services</b>	<b>64,330</b>	<b>37,357</b>	<b>27,842</b>	<b>15,375</b>	<b>6,204</b>	<b>2,579</b>	<b>2,388</b>	<b>6,100</b>	<b>162,175</b>

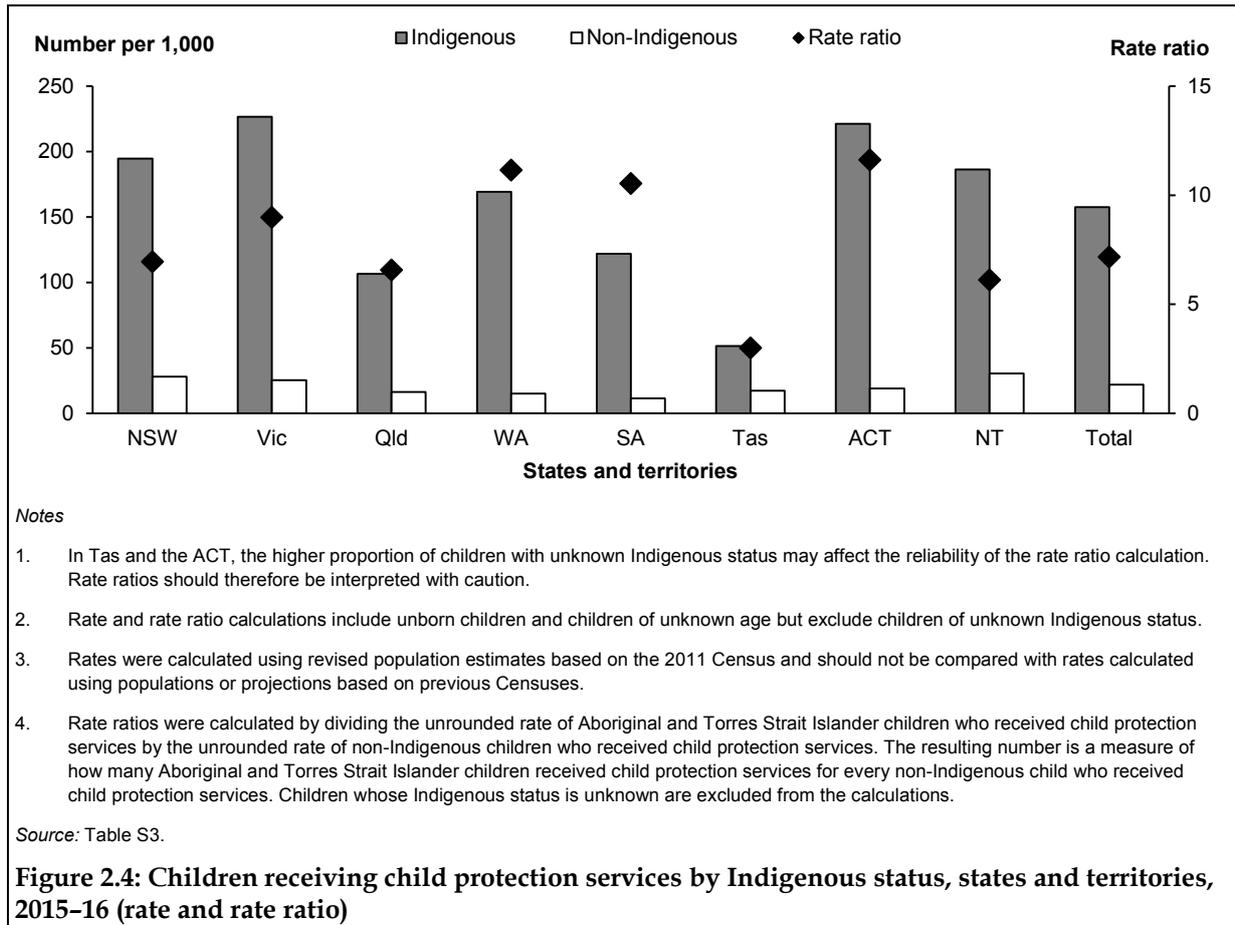
### Notes

1. Refer to Table S4 for numbers of children receiving child protection services for this table and to Table S54 for population data.
2. Unborn children may be covered under child protection legislation and are therefore included in this report. However, they are excluded in rate calculations for the 'less than 1' and '0–17' age categories. Unborn children are included in the 'All children' rates.
3. 'All children' includes children of unknown age.
4. Rates were calculated using revised population estimates based on the 2011 Census and should not be compared with rates calculated using populations or projections based on previous Censuses.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2016.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

During 2015–16, 46,632 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children received child protection services – a rate of 157.6 per 1,000 children compared with a rate of 22.0 per 1,000 for non-Indigenous children. Overall, Indigenous children were 7 times as likely as non-Indigenous children to have received child protection services. However, the rate ratio varied substantially across the jurisdictions – from 3 times as likely as non-Indigenous children to be receiving child protection services in Tasmania to nearly 12 times as likely in the Australian Capital Territory (Figure 2.4). This measure may be affected by the higher proportion of children with unknown Indigenous status in these jurisdictions.



On average, Indigenous children who received child protection services were slightly younger than non-Indigenous children, with median ages of 7 and 8, respectively. Additionally, 61% of Indigenous children were aged under 10, compared with 59% of non-Indigenous children (Figure 2.5).



## 2.4 National trends

### Trends relating to children

The number of children receiving child protection services rose by around 20% over the past 4 years – from 135,139 children in 2012–13 to 162,175 children in 2015–16. The rate of children receiving child protection services in Australia increased from 26.0 per 1,000 in 2012–13 to 30.2 per 1,000 in 2015–16 (Table 2.4).

Since 2012–13, rates increased steadily in New South Wales, Victoria and the Northern Territory. In other jurisdictions, there were fluctuations over the 4-year period. Over the past year, the rates rose in Queensland, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory, and fell in Western Australia and South Australia.

**Table 2.4: Children receiving child protection services, number and number per 1,000, states and territories, 2012–13 to 2015–16**

Year	NSW	Vic	Qld <sup>(a)</sup>	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
<b>Number</b>									
2012–13	48,399	27,272	30,389	13,657	6,380	2,947	2,215	3,880	135,139
2013–14	53,250	28,949	29,585	15,385	7,083	2,609	1,635	4,527	143,023
2014–15	59,092	33,430	27,163	15,909	6,309	2,560	1,703	5,814	151,980
2015–16	64,330	37,357	27,842	15,375	6,204	2,579	2,388	6,100	162,175
<b>Number per 1,000</b>									
2012–13	29.1	21.8	27.6	24.0	17.9	25.5	26.7	61.3	26.0
2013–14	31.7	22.9	26.6	26.5	19.8	22.7	19.3	71.3	27.2
2014–15	35.0	26.0	24.2	27.0	17.6	22.4	19.8	91.5	28.6
2015–16	37.6	28.6	24.6	25.8	17.2	22.7	27.3	96.1	30.2

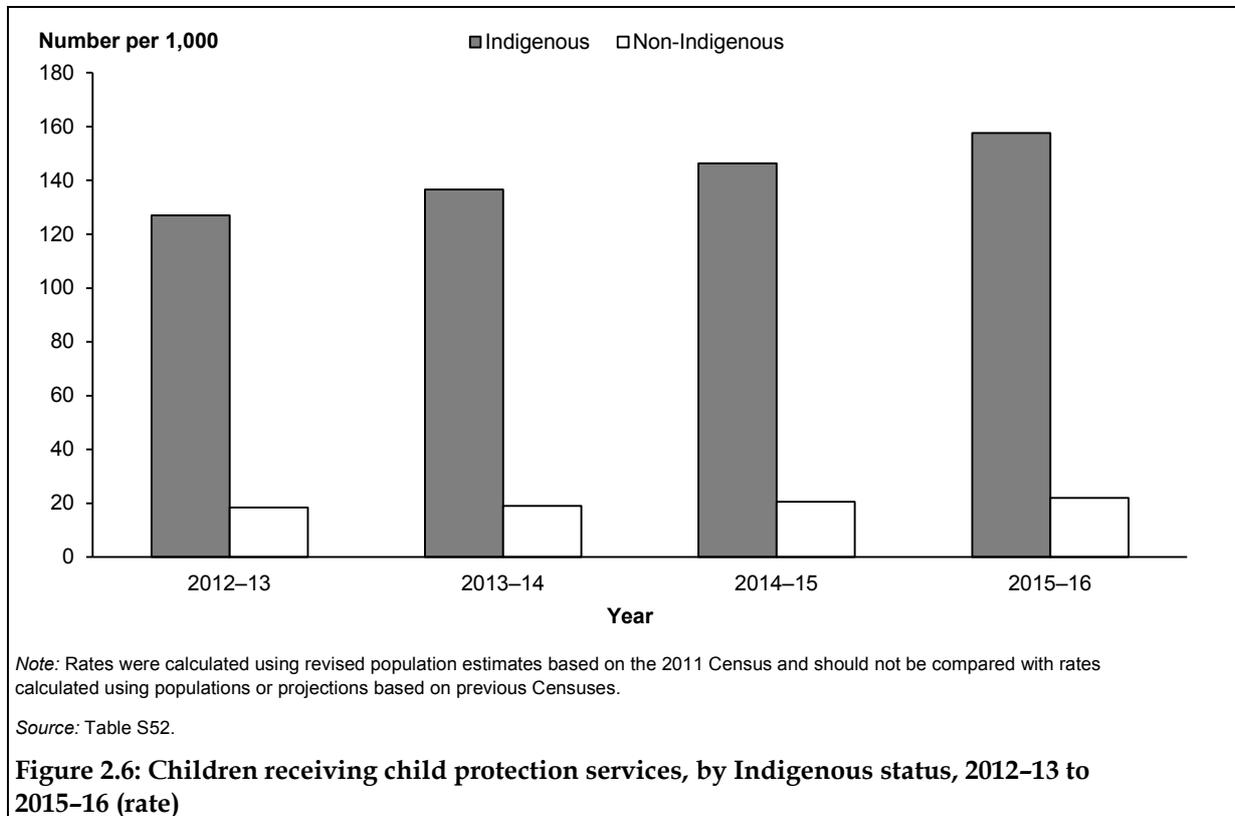
(a) Qld data produced from the CP NMDS from 2014–15 onward are not comparable with data for previous years.

*Note:* Rates were calculated using revised population estimates based on the 2011 Census and should not be compared with rates calculated using populations or projections based on previous Censuses.

*Source:* AIHW Child Protection Collection 2016.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

From 2012–13 to 2015–16, the rate of children receiving child protection services has increased for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children – from 126.9 to 157.6 per 1,000 and from 18.5 to 22.0 per 1,000, respectively (Figure 2.6).



# 3 Notifications, investigations and substantiations

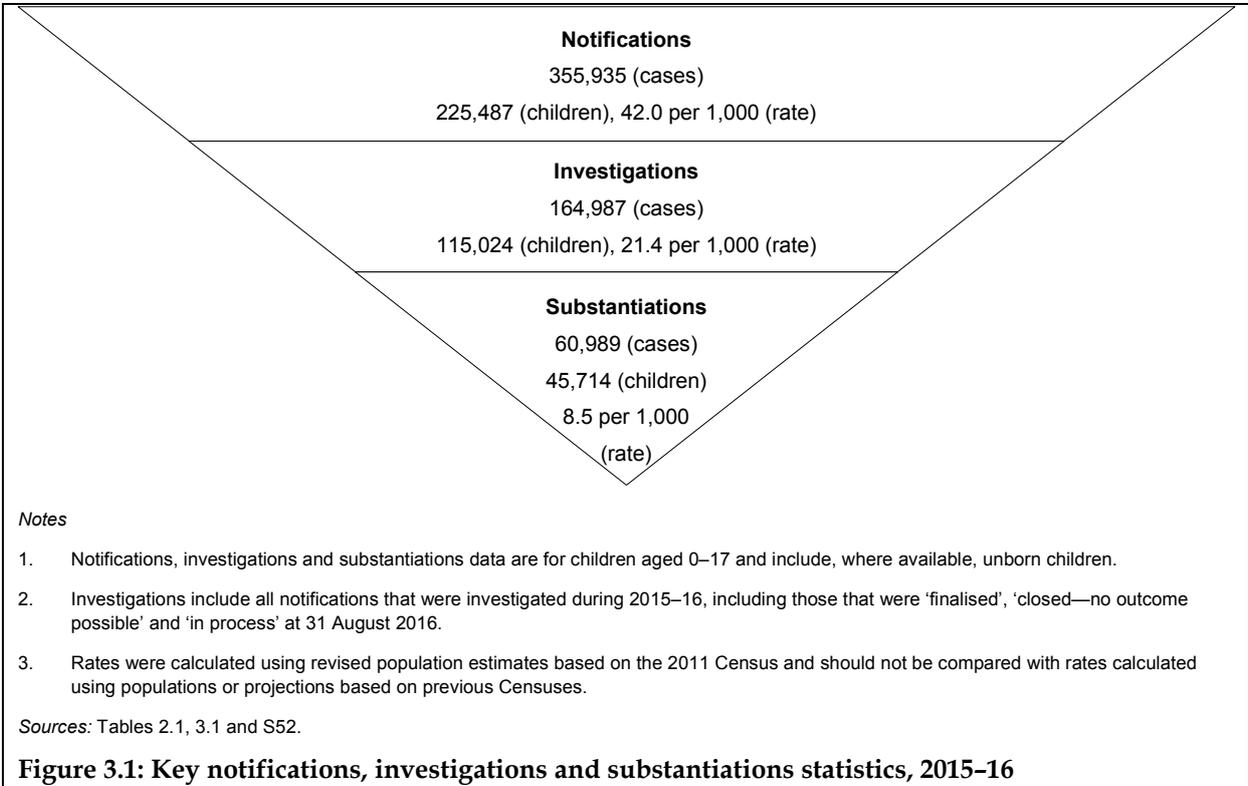
This chapter contains information on the number of notifications, investigations and substantiations (see Box 3.1) and the number of children who were the subject of these. ‘Children and young people’ are defined as those under the age of 18. In some jurisdictions, this may include pregnant women where there are concerns about their unborn children (where unborn children are covered under the child protection legislation).

The data in this chapter relate to notifications that departments responsible for child protection received between 1 July 2015 and 30 June 2016. See Box 3.1 for further details.

## 3.1 Overview and key statistics

In 2015–16, there were almost 356,000 notifications involving around 225,500 children, a rate of 42.0 per 1,000 children in Australia. The number of children in notifications is higher than the unique number of children receiving child protection services reported in Chapter 2. This is because the unique count of children receiving child protection services does not include children in notifications who did not have a subsequent investigation. These children are included in the count of all children in notifications.

Of the notifications, 46% (almost 165,000) were investigated, with 61,000 substantiations (after investigation) relating to around 45,700 children – a rate of 8.5 per 1,000 children (Figure 3.1).



### **Box 3.1: Notifications, investigations and substantiations**

- **Notifications** consist of contacts made to an authorised department by persons or other bodies alleging child abuse or neglect, child maltreatment or harm to a child. The National Child Protection Data Collection does not include those reports that are not classified as child protection notifications.  
A notification can only involve 1 child. Where it is claimed that 2 children have been abused or neglected or harmed, this is counted as 2 notifications, even if the children are from 1 family. Where there is more than 1 notification about the same 'event' involving a child, this is counted as 1 notification. Where there is more than 1 notification between 1 July 2015 and 30 June 2016, but relating to different events, these are counted as separate notifications.
- **Investigations** are the processes whereby the relevant department obtains more detailed information about a child who is the subject of a notification received between 1 July 2015 and 30 June 2016. Departmental staff assess the harm or degree of harm to the child, and their protective needs. An investigation includes sighting or interviewing the child where it is practical to do so.
- **Finalised investigations** are those notifications made during 2015–16 that were investigated and had an outcome of either 'substantiated' or 'not substantiated' recorded by 31 August 2016. The cut-off point of 31 August allows time for investigating notifications made close to the end of the financial year. The outcomes of investigations that are still in process after this cut-off (4%, or 7,390 in 2015–16) are not reported in the data for this or subsequent reporting periods. It is important to note that substantiations as reported here (that is, substantiations of notifications received during the year) are therefore an under-count of the actual number of substantiations made during the year, due to the use of this methodology in preceding reporting periods.
- **Substantiations** of notifications received during the current reporting year refer to child protection notifications made to relevant authorities during the year ended 30 June 2016 that were investigated, for which the investigation was finalised by 31 August 2016, and for which it was concluded that there was reasonable cause to believe that the child had been, was being, or was likely to be, abused, neglected or otherwise harmed. Substantiations may also include cases where there is no suitable caregiver, such as children who have been abandoned or whose parents are deceased.

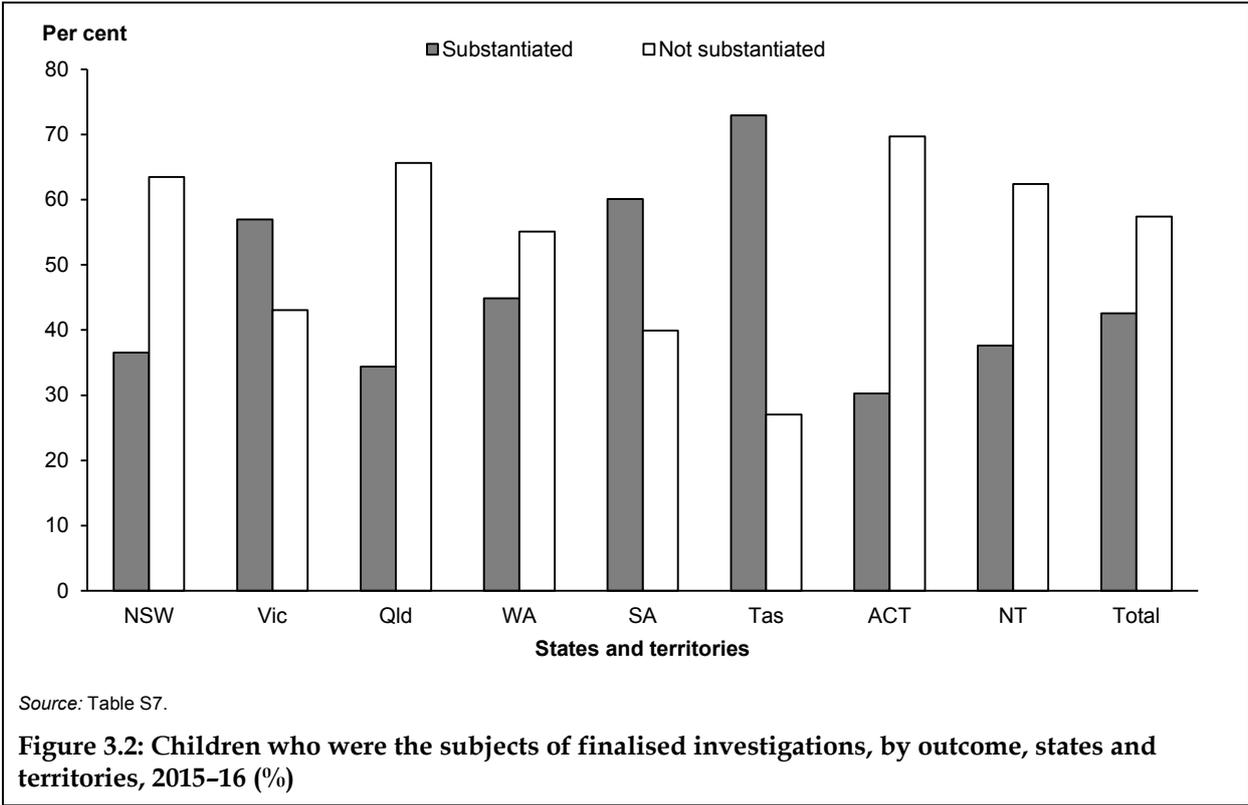
Instances of alleged abuse or neglect by family members (other than parents/guardians) and non-family members are generally included in the count of notifications if the notification was referred to the state and territory departments responsible for child protection. These cases are included in counts of investigations and substantiations only where there has been a finding or allegation of a failure to protect by the parent or guardian.

### 3.2 Cases and the children involved

Of the 355,935 notifications in 2015–16, 164,987 (46%) were assessed as requiring further investigation while the remaining 190,948 (54%) were dealt with by other means, such as by being referred to a support service (Table S5). The number of notifications and the percentage of those notifications investigated are not comparable across jurisdictions. This is because legislation and the policies that provide the framework for assessing child protection notifications vary broadly across jurisdictions.

For investigations in 2015–16, the most common source of the related notification was police (22%), followed by school personnel (19%). Nationally, only 0.3% of notifications came directly from the child involved (Table S6). Notifications to departments responsible for child protection come from a range of sources, and legislation relating to mandatory reporting varies across jurisdictions. This should be taken into consideration when interpreting these data (see appendixes B–G (online) <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=60129558626>>, for details).

Overall, 43% of the 107,348 children in finalised investigations were the subjects of substantiations in 2015–16. The percentage varied across the jurisdictions, from 30% in the Australian Capital Territory to 73% in Tasmania (Figure 3.2).



Children within the child protection system may be involved in multiple statutory child protection cases during any given year. Across Australia, in 2015–16, the total number of notifications (355,935) and substantiations (60,989) involved 225,487 and 45,714 children, respectively (Table 3.1).

**Table 3.1: Number of notifications, substantiations of notifications and number of children who were the subject of a notification and/or substantiation of a notification, states and territories, 2015–16**

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA <sup>(a)</sup>	SA	Tas <sup>(b)</sup>	ACT	NT	Total
Children in notifications	79,487	71,663	19,905	15,090	13,496	8,004	6,991	10,851	225,487
Total notifications	139,999	107,062	22,581	18,031	21,424	11,514	14,859	20,465	355,935
Children in substantiations	17,282	14,154	5,621	4,198	1,641	795	449	1,574	45,714
Total substantiations	30,266	14,888	6,104	4,582	1,857	868	627	1,797	60,989

- (a) In WA, notifications where the primary concern at notification was emotional/psychological, physical, sexual abuse or neglect are counted as notifications in this table. The definition of emotional abuse in Western Australia has been broadened to include children witnessing family and domestic violence from 2015–16.
- (b) From February 2016, any notification to Child Protection Services Tasmania finalised under Section 17(2)(a) of the *Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997* (that is, the notification was based on information or observations that were not sufficient to constitute reasonable grounds for the belief or suspicion contained in the notification) was classified as a child concern report for the purpose of national reporting and was not counted as a notification. As such, the number of notifications reported nationally for Tas for 2015–16 has decreased compared with previous years. Due to changes in the way in which notifications have been defined in Tas, information related to notifications reported nationally may differ from that published in state-based publications, such as the Annual Report and Budget Papers.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2016.

These data reflect that a number of children were the subject of more than 1 notification and/or substantiation. Table 3.2 shows that about 1 in 5 children (20%) who were the subject of any substantiation during the year were the subject of more than 1 substantiation.

**Table 3.2: Number of substantiations per child, states and territories, 2015–16 (%)**

Number of substantiations	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
1	60.4	94.9	91.8	91.7	89.2	91.8	73.7	87.9	80.5
2	21.9	5.0	7.8	7.5	9.2	7.2	18.3	10.1	12.4
3	9.3	0.1	0.4	0.8	0.9	1.0	5.1	1.9	3.8
4+	8.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.0	2.9	0.1	3.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Children in substantiations (number)</b>	<b>17,282</b>	<b>14,154</b>	<b>5,621</b>	<b>4,198</b>	<b>1,641</b>	<b>795</b>	<b>449</b>	<b>1,574</b>	<b>45,714</b>

Note: Percentages in the table may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2016.

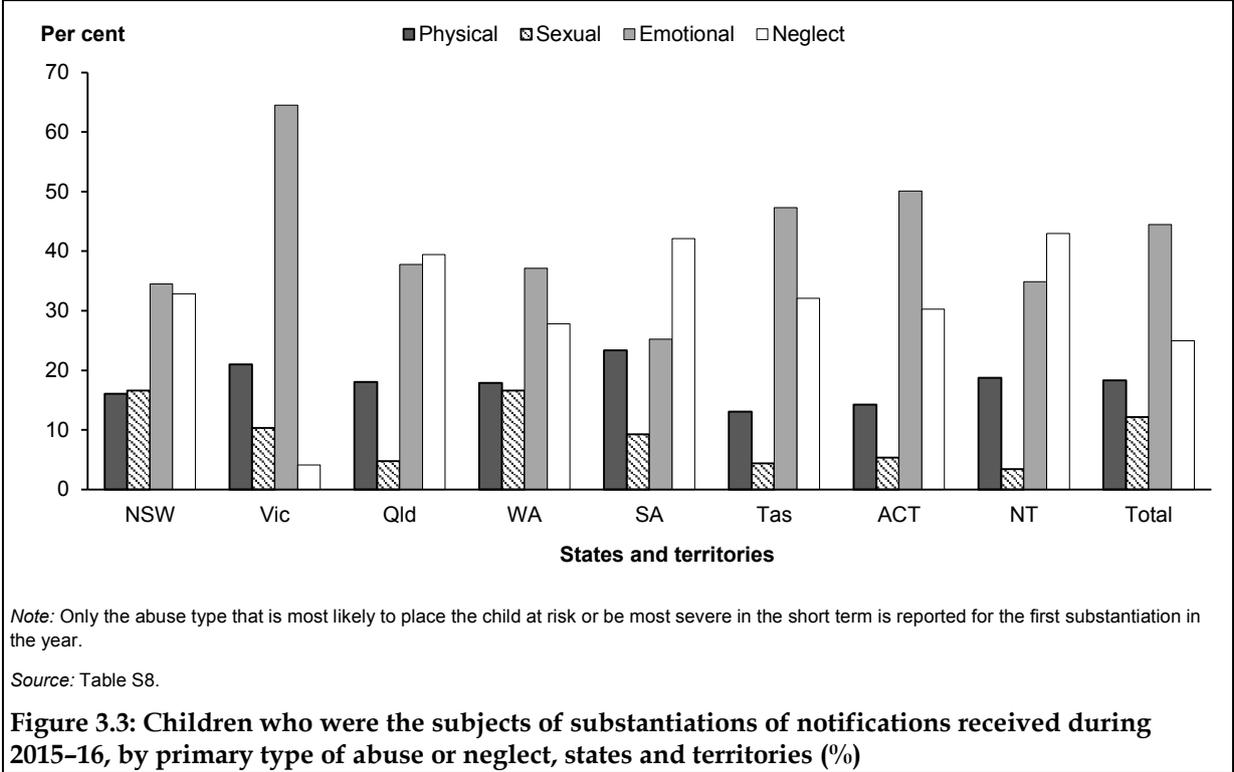
## Types of abuse and neglect

The type of abuse or neglect reported for children who were subjects of substantiations is the one considered most likely to place the child at risk or be most severe in the short term – generally known as the ‘primary’ type of abuse or neglect.

Nationally, emotional abuse was the most common primary type of abuse or neglect substantiated for children (45%), followed by neglect (25%). However, there was some variation between jurisdictions, with neglect being the most common type substantiated for children in Queensland, South Australia and the Northern Territory (Figure 3.3).

Across Australia, physical abuse was the primary type substantiated for 18% of children who were the subject of substantiations. This ranged from 13% in Tasmania to 23% in

South Australia. Sexual abuse was the reason for substantiation for 12% of children (Figure 3.3).



Other types of abuse or neglect may also be recorded as part of the substantiation. The co-occurrence of abuse and neglect refers to substantiations where both primary and other types of abuse are recorded.

Table 3.3 shows the co-occurrence of primary types of abuse or neglect with other types of abuse or neglect that were recorded. As well as being the most common primary types reported, emotional abuse and neglect were also the most likely types to co-occur, with average co-occurrences of 33% and 28%, respectively. Emotional abuse co-occurred in about half (51%) of all substantiations where physical abuse was the primary type of substantiated abuse or neglect and in just under one-quarter (23%) of substantiations where sexual abuse was the primary type. Neglect co-occurred in 33% of cases where emotional abuse was the primary type of substantiated abuse and in 26% of substantiations where physical abuse was the primary type. The co-occurrence of sexual abuse was much lower than all other types of abuse or neglect, with an average co-occurrence of less than 2% (Table 3.3).

**Table 3.3: Co-occurrence of substantiated types of abuse and neglect, by primary type of abuse or neglect, 2015–16 (%)**

Primary type of abuse or neglect	Co-occurring type of abuse or neglect <sup>(a)(b)</sup>				Total number of substantiations <sup>(c)</sup>
	Physical abuse	Sexual abuse	Emotional abuse	Neglect	
Physical abuse	..	1.8	50.8	26.2	<b>10,808</b>
Sexual abuse	7.4	..	23.0	14.1	<b>7,171</b>
Emotional abuse	22.0	1.9	..	32.8	<b>26,217</b>
Neglect	7.1	1.4	24.6	..	<b>16,734</b>
<b>Average co-occurrence<sup>(d)</sup></b>	<b>15.0</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>32.5</b>	<b>28.2</b>	<b>60,930</b>

(a) Excludes 3,923 cases for Qld where the same type of abuse/neglect was recorded as both a primary and co-occurring type of abuse/neglect.

(b) Not all jurisdictions were able to provide data for all types of co-occurring abuse or neglect—some jurisdictions were able to report only primary and secondary types. Therefore, the proportion of co-occurring abuse types may be understated.

(c) Excludes 59 cases where the primary type of abuse was unknown. As such, the total number of substantiations reported does not match the number reported in Table 3.1.

(d) 'Average co-occurrence' is equal to the total number of cases where the type of abuse or neglect of interest was identified as co-occurring, divided by the total number of substantiations where the given type of abuse or neglect was not the primary type.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2016.

## Age

Age is one of the factors that child protection workers consider when determining the time taken to respond to a notification, the type of response and whether a notification will be substantiated.

Across Australia in 2015–16, children in younger age groups were more likely to be the subjects of substantiations than those in older age groups. Infants (children aged under 1) were most likely (16.1 per 1,000 children) to be the subjects of substantiations and those aged 15–17 were least likely (3.9 per 1,000 children). This pattern was consistent across all jurisdictions (Table 3.4).

The rate of infants who were the subjects of substantiations ranged from 7.8 per 1,000 children in Queensland to 47.5 per 1,000 in the Northern Territory. Overall, the Northern Territory rates were higher than those for other jurisdictions for all age categories. Queensland had the lowest rates for the 'less than 1' and the 1–4 age groups, and South Australia had the lowest rates for children aged 5–9, 10–14 and 15–17 (Table 3.4).

**Table 3.4: Rates of children aged 0–17 who were the subjects of substantiations of notifications received during 2015–16, by age group, states and territories (number per 1,000)**

Age group (years)	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
<1	15.2	25.6	7.8	9.8	18.9	12.7	12.7	47.5	16.1
1–4	10.4	11.4	5.2	7.2	5.5	9.3	5.6	27.8	9.0
5–9	10.1	11.3	5.1	7.5	4.5	7.2	5.3	24.0	8.7
10–14	9.8	10.4	4.6	6.8	3.2	5.5	4.1	24.9	8.0
15–17	4.9	5.0	2.0	3.7	1.0	1.7	2.2	12.3	3.9
0–17	9.5	10.8	4.6	6.8	4.6	6.5	5.1	24.8	8.2
<b>All children</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>10.8</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>24.8</b>	<b>8.5</b>
<b>Children in substantiations (number)</b>	<b>17,282</b>	<b>14,154</b>	<b>5,621</b>	<b>4,198</b>	<b>1,641</b>	<b>795</b>	<b>449</b>	<b>1,574</b>	<b>45,714</b>

*Notes*

1. Refer to Table S9 for the numbers used to calculate these rates and to Table S54 for population data.
2. Unborn children may be covered under child protection legislation and are therefore included in this report. However, they are excluded in rate calculations for the 'less than 1' and '0–17' categories. Unborn children are included in the 'All children' rates.
3. 'All children' includes children of unknown age.
4. Finalised investigations, and thus substantiations, refer only to cases that were notified during the year and finalised by 31 August 2016. This excludes finalised investigations that were notified in a previous reporting period (see also Box 3.1 for the definition of a finalised investigation).
5. Rates were calculated using revised population estimates based on the 2011 Census and should not be compared with rates calculated using populations or projections based on previous Censuses.

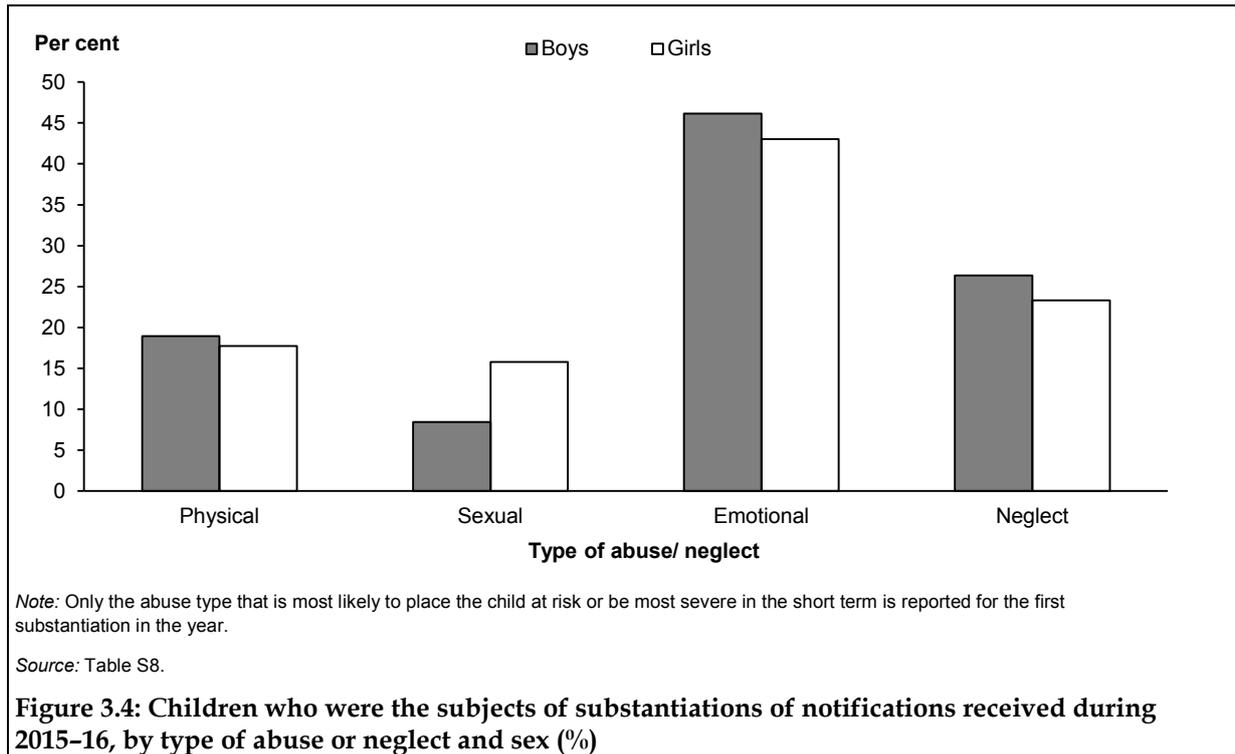
Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2016.

## Sex

Overall, just over half (51%) of children who were the subjects of substantiations were girls (23,048 compared with 22,188 boys). However, in Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania, slightly more boys than girls were the subjects of substantiations (Table S8).

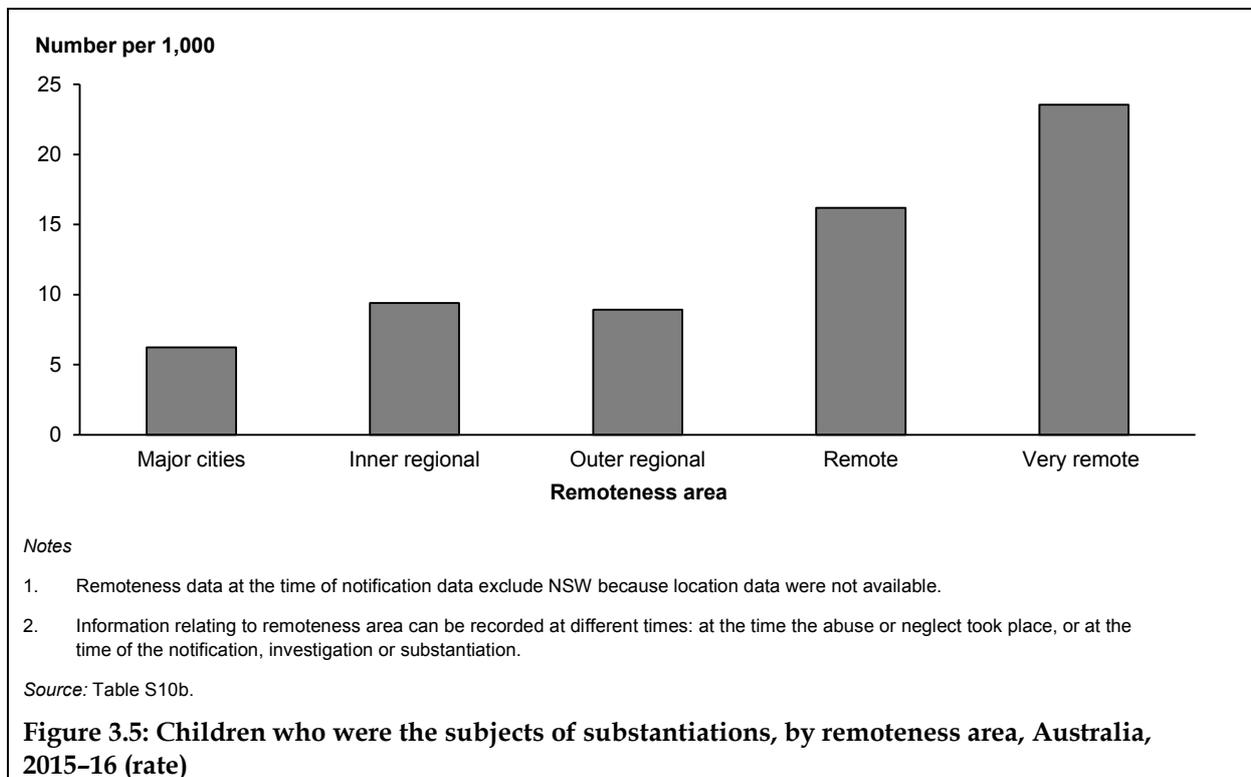
Nationally, and in all jurisdictions, girls were more likely to be the subjects of substantiations of sexual abuse than boys (16% and 9%, respectively) (Figure 3.4). This is consistent with recorded crime statistics for sexual assault (ABS 2016c).

In contrast, boys were more likely to be the subjects of substantiations of physical abuse in all jurisdictions except Victoria and the Northern Territory. Nationally, boys also had slightly higher percentages of substantiations for neglect and emotional abuse (26% and 46%, respectively, compared with 23% and 43%, respectively, for girls). This, however, varied at the jurisdictional level (Table S8).

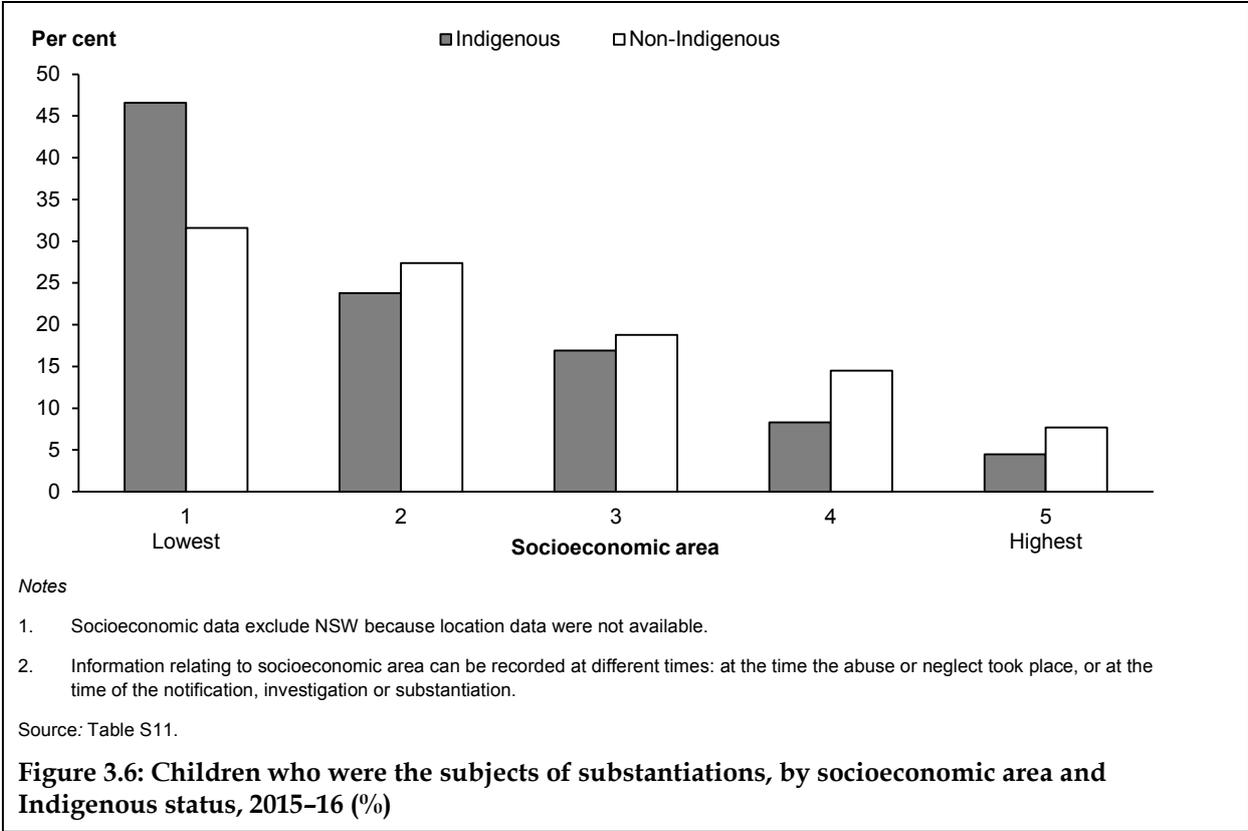


## Remoteness and socioeconomic areas

Overall, children from geographically remote areas had the highest rates of substantiations – children from *Very remote* areas were 4 times as likely as those from *Major cities* to be the subject of a substantiation (23.5 per 1,000 compared with 6.2, respectively; Figure 3.5).



Children who were the subjects of substantiations were more likely to be from the lowest socioeconomic areas (36% in the lowest socioeconomic area compared with 7% in the highest; Table S11). Indigenous children were far more likely to be from the lowest socioeconomic areas – 47%, compared with 32% for non-Indigenous children (Figure 3.6).



### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in substantiations

In 2015-16, 12,903 (43.6 per 1,000) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were the subject of a child protection substantiation – almost 7 times the rate of non-Indigenous children (6.4 per 1,000) (Table 3.5). This is consistent with findings for previous years (see Figure 3.12).

The reasons for the over-representation of Indigenous children in child protection substantiations are complex. The legacy of past policies of forced removal, intergenerational effects of previous separations from family and culture, a higher likelihood of living in the lowest socioeconomic areas, and perceptions arising from cultural differences in child-rearing practices are all underlying causes for their over-representation in child protection services (HREOC 1997). Drug and alcohol abuse and family violence may also be contributing factors (Scott & Nair 2013). Indigenous children are also over-represented in other areas related to child safety, including hospital admissions for injuries and assault; experiences of homelessness; and involvement in the youth justice system (AIHW 2014b).

**Table 3.5: Children aged 0–17 who were the subjects of substantiations of notifications received during 2015–16, by Indigenous status, states and territories (number and number per 1,000)**

State/ territory	Number				Number per 1,000			Rate ratio Indigenous/ non- Indigenous
	Indigenous	Non- Indigenous	Unknown	All children	Indigenous	Non- Indigenous	All children	
NSW	5,287	11,923	72	17,282	57.2	7.4	10.1	7.8
Vic	1,708	12,442	4	14,154	80.2	9.7	10.8	8.3
Qld	1,924	3,444	253	5,621	21.8	3.3	5.0	6.6
WA <sup>(a)</sup>	1,808	2,378	12	4,198	48.3	4.3	7.1	11.3
SA	582	971	88	1,641	35.9	2.8	4.6	12.7
Tas <sup>(b)</sup>	157	526	112	795	14.5	5.1	7.0	2.8
ACT	112	294	43	449	45.5	3.5	5.1	13.2
NT	1,325	249	0	1,574	49.6	6.8	24.8	7.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,903</b>	<b>32,227</b>	<b>584</b>	<b>45,714</b>	<b>43.6</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>6.9</b>

(a) WA has significantly improved reporting on Indigenous identification compared with years before 2015–16.

(b) In Tas and the ACT, the higher proportion of children with unknown Indigenous status may affect the reliability of the rate ratio calculation. Rate ratios should therefore be interpreted with caution.

#### Notes

1. Rates were calculated using revised population estimates based on the 2011 Census and should not be compared with rates calculated using populations or projections based on previous Censuses. Refer to Table S53 for the populations used in the calculation of rates.
2. Rate and rate ratio calculations include unborn children and children of unknown age but exclude children of unknown Indigenous status.
3. Legislation and practice differ across jurisdictions in relation to children aged 17. In some jurisdictions, children aged 17 are not substantiated and this means the number per 1,000 children who were the subjects of substantiations may be lower for those jurisdictions.
4. Rate ratios were calculated by dividing the unrounded rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were the subject of substantiations by the unrounded rate of non-Indigenous children who were the subject of substantiations. The resulting number is a measure of how many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were the subjects of substantiations for every non-Indigenous child who was the subject of substantiation.

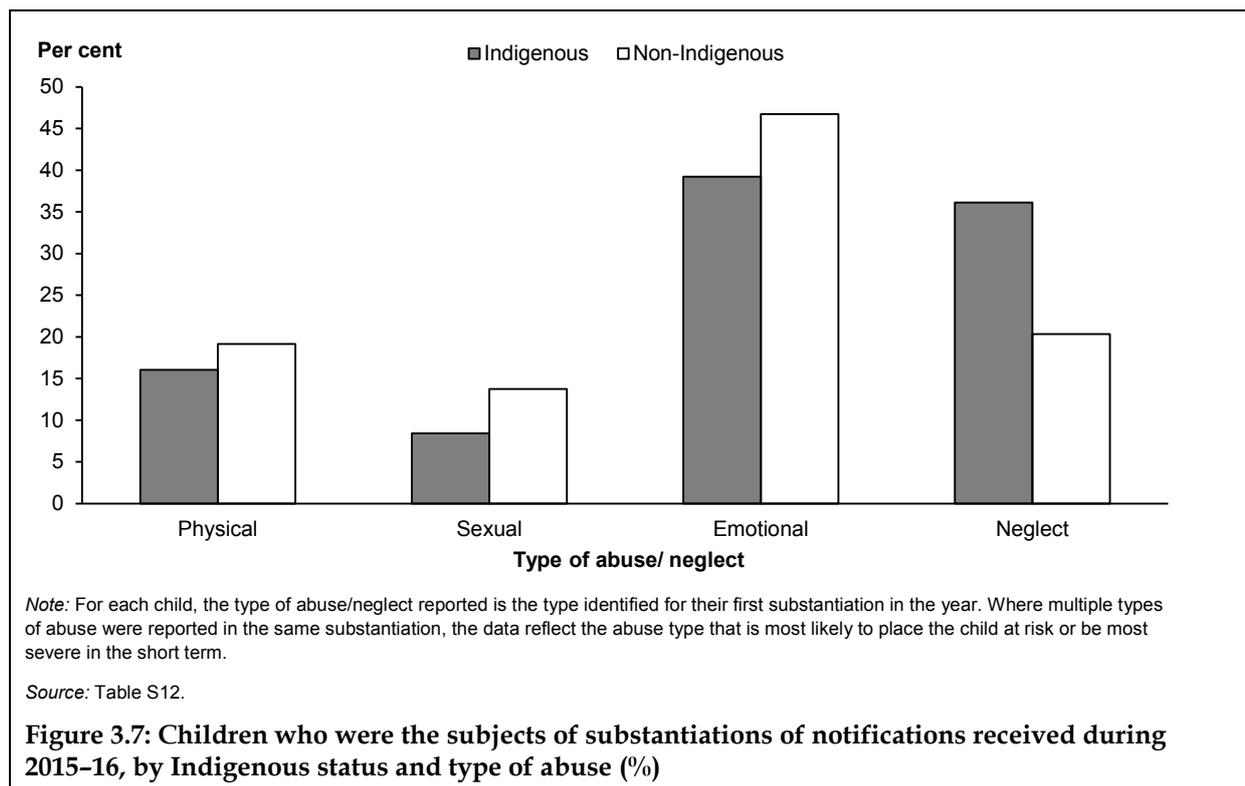
Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2016.

## Abuse and neglect type

Overall, emotional abuse and neglect were the most common types of substantiated abuse for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (39% and 36%, respectively, of children in substantiations). This compares with 47% and 20%, respectively, for non-Indigenous children. The proportion of substantiations for other abuse types was higher for non-Indigenous children (Figure 3.7).

The percentage of Indigenous children substantiated for emotional abuse varied substantially across jurisdictions – ranging from 27% in South Australia to 69% in Victoria (Table S12). Variation across jurisdictions was also reflected in the percentage of Indigenous children substantiated for neglect – ranging from 6% in Victoria to 49% in South Australia.

Across all jurisdictions except Victoria, sexual abuse was the least common type of substantiation for Indigenous children (8% nationally). Sexual abuse was also the least common type of substantiation for non-Indigenous children in all jurisdictions except New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia.



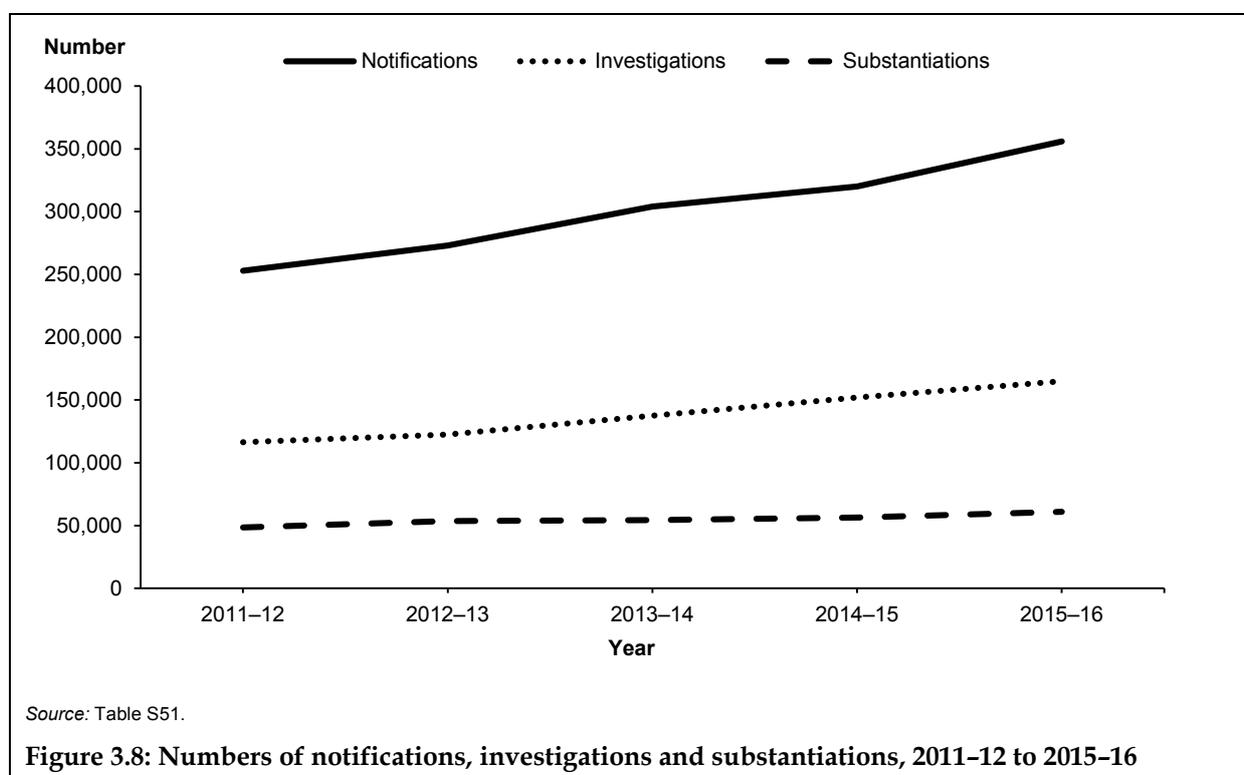
### 3.3 National trends

#### Trends in number of cases

Overall, since 2011–12, the numbers of notifications, investigations and substantiations have risen. The number of notifications has risen steadily, from 252,962 in 2011–12 to 355,935 in 2015–16. The number of investigations has gradually increased from 116,528 in 2011–12 to 164,987 in 2015–16. The number of substantiations rose steadily from 48,420 in 2011–12 to 60,989 in 2015–16 (Figure 3.8).

Although, nationally, there was an increase in notifications and substantiations over the 5 years, the size and direction of change varied across jurisdictions (tables S13 and S14).

The greater increase in investigations compared with substantiations over the past 2 years has widened the gap between the number of investigations and substantiations.



#### Trends relating to children

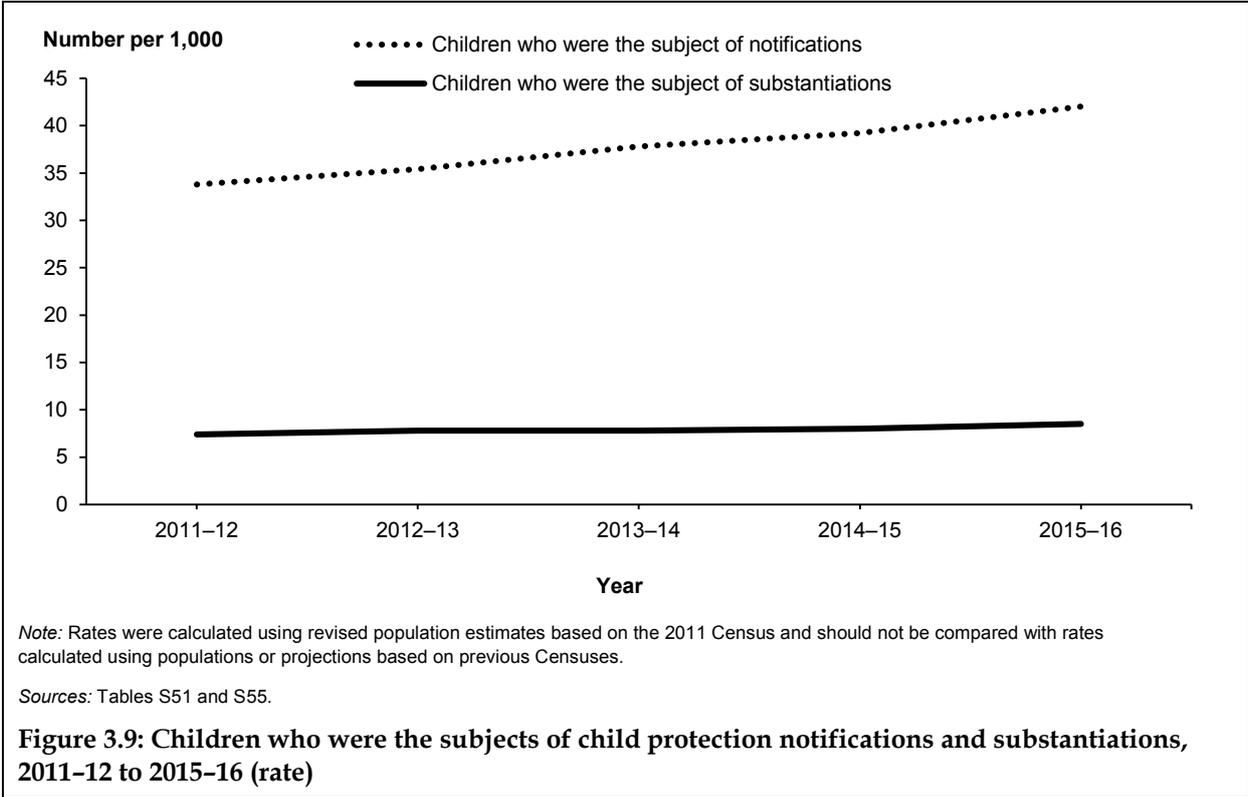
The rate of children who were the subjects of notifications rose steadily from 33.8 per 1,000 children in 2011–12 to 42.0 per 1,000 in 2015–16 (Figure 3.9).

The rate of children who were the subjects of substantiations rose from 7.4 per 1,000 children in 2011–12 to 8.5 per 1,000 children in 2015–16. Over the 5-year period, there has been a 21% increase in the number of children who were the subjects of substantiations, rising from 37,781 in 2011–12 to 45,714 in 2015–16 (Table S51).

Legislative changes, enhanced public awareness and inquiries into child protection processes, along with real rises in abuse and neglect, could influence increases in the number of notifications and substantiations, and the children who were the subject of them. Additionally, recent increases could be related to an increased focus on providing statutory

responses to those who are most likely to need intervention and protection. This may have resulted in a more targeted approach to investigations and a rise in the number of children who were the subjects of substantiations.

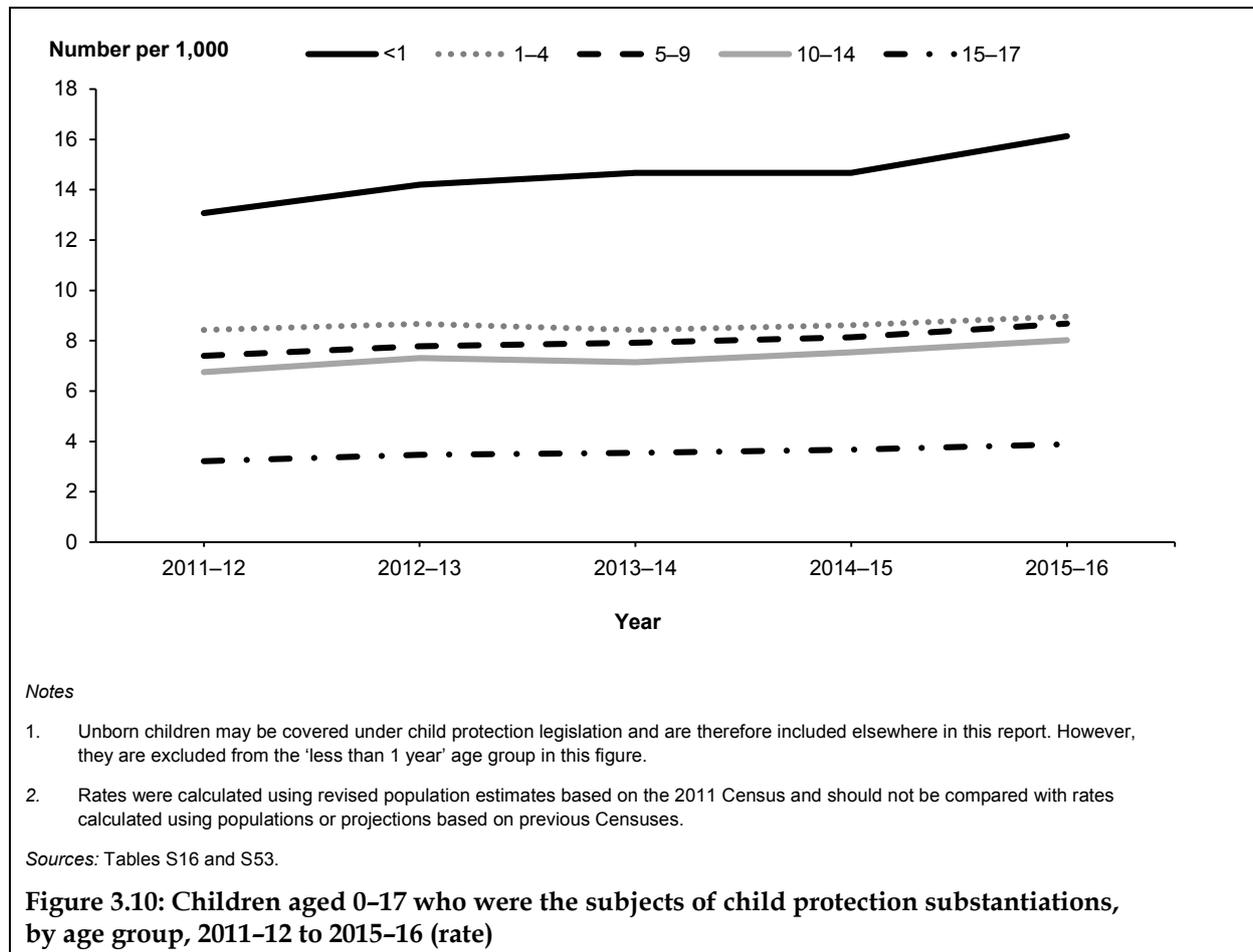
Information on state and territory policies and practices and the various inquiries into state and territory child protection services that may have enhanced public awareness is provided at appendixes B–G (online) <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=60129558626>.



Across states and territories, rates of children who were the subjects of substantiations have fluctuated over the past 5 years. Since 2011-12, rates have increased overall for all jurisdictions except for Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory. The largest increase over this period was for Victoria (from 7.1 per 1,000 children in 2011-12 to 10.8 in 2015-16). Over the past 12 months, rates have risen in New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory and dropped in Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory (Table S15).

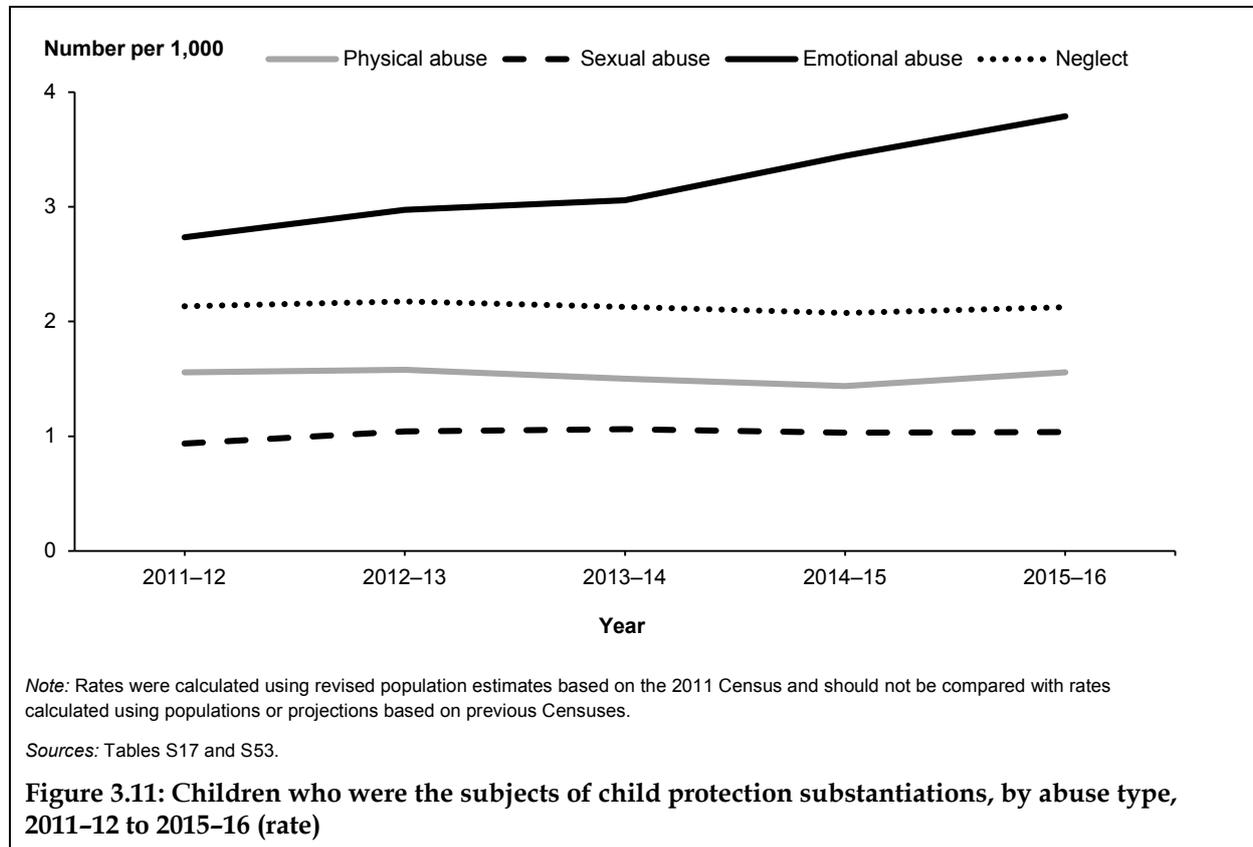
## Age profile

Since 2011–12, the rates of children aged under 1 who were the subjects of substantiations were consistently higher than the rates for any other age group. The rate of children aged under 1 who were the subjects of substantiations has risen steadily from 13.1 in 2011–12 to 14.7 in 2014–15 per 1,000 children, with a 10% increase in the past 12 months to 16.1 in 2015–16. The rates for other age groups have also risen slightly over the past 5-year period. In the past 12 months, all age groups have increased by at least 4% (Figure 3.10).



## Abuse and neglect type

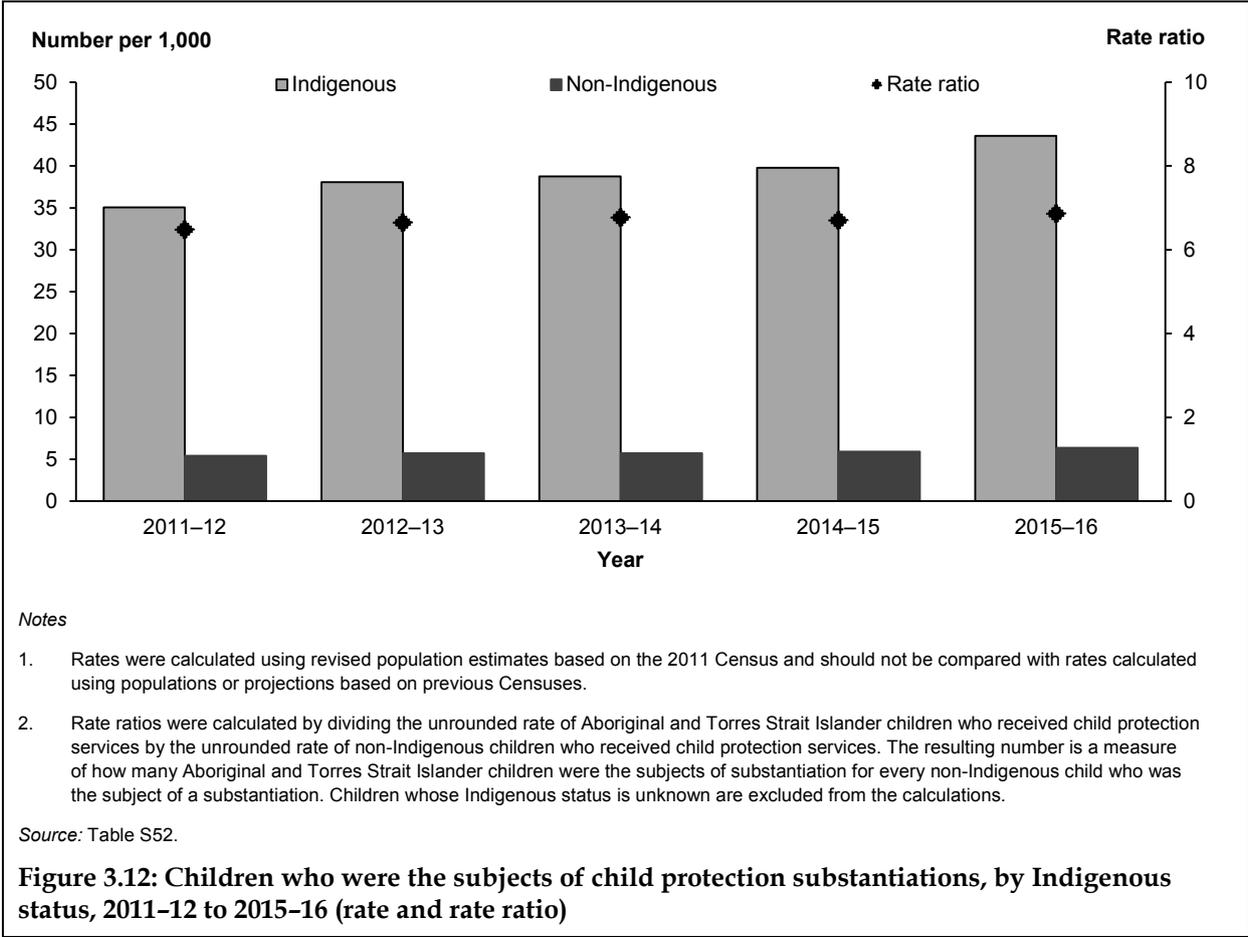
Between 2011–12 and 2015–16, the rates of children who were the subjects of substantiation for emotional abuse were the highest of all types of abuse or neglect. Rates of emotional abuse have also shown the greatest increase of all types of abuse or neglect (from 2.7 to 3.8 per 1,000 children) over this time. The rates for all other types of abuse and neglect have remained fairly stable for the 5 years to 2015–16 (Figure 3.11).



### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

Over the past 5 years, the substantiation rates for Indigenous and non-Indigenous children have both increased, from 35.1 to 43.6 per 1,000 for Indigenous children and from 5.4 to 6.4 per 1,000 for non-Indigenous children. The rate ratio of Indigenous to non-Indigenous children has risen slightly since 2011–12, from 6.5 to 6.9 in 2015–16 (Figure 3.12).

Note that all rates for the period 2011–12 to 2015–16 were calculated using the 2011 Census-based population estimates, including back-cast historical estimates. Therefore, rates presented in this report are not comparable with rates calculated using estimates based on the 2006 Census.



## 4 Care and protection orders

Care and protection orders are legal orders or arrangements that give child protection departments some responsibility for a child's welfare (see Box 4.1 for national categories).

### 4.1 Overview and key statistics

In 2015–16, almost 48,000 care and protection orders were issued across jurisdictions, with almost 13,500 children admitted to an order during that time. Nationally, in 2015–16, more children were admitted to care and protection orders (13,500) than were discharged from orders (almost 11,000). At 30 June 2016, almost 52,000 children were on a care and protection order – a rate of 9.6 per 1,000 Australian children (Table 4.1). The number of children on a care and protection order on an average day (for jurisdictions with available data) is reported in Table S18.

**Table 4.1: Key care and protection order statistics, 2015–16**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Number per 1,000</b>
Care and protection orders issued during 2015–16	47,999	..
Children admitted to an order during 2015–16	13,443	2.5
Children discharged from an order during 2015–16	10,989	2.0
Children on a care and protection order during 2015–16	61,723	11.5
Children on a care and protection order at 30 June 2016	51,972	9.6

*Source:* AIHW Child Protection Collection 2016.

For this report, children are counted only once, even if they were admitted to, or discharged from, more than 1 order, or were on more than 1 order at 30 June 2016. If a child was on more than 1 order at 30 June 2016, the child is counted as being on the order that implies the highest level of intervention by the department (with finalised guardianship or custody orders being the most interventionist, and interim and temporary orders the least interventionist).

#### Box 4.1: National care and protection order types

- **Finalised guardianship or custody orders:** Guardianship orders involve the transfer of legal guardianship to the relevant state or territory department or non-government agency. These orders involve considerable intervention in the child's life and that of their family, and are sought only as a last resort.  
Custody orders generally refer to orders that place children in the custody of the state or territory department responsible for child protection or a non-government agency. These orders usually involve the child protection department being responsible for the daily care and requirements of the child, while the parent retains legal guardianship.  
Finalised guardianship or custody orders can be long-term or short-term.  
*Long-term orders* transfer guardianship/custody to the nominated person for a specified period greater than 2 years, generally until the child reaches the age of 18.  
*Short-term orders* transfer guardianship/custody to the nominated person for a specified period of 2 years or less.
- **Finalised third-party parental responsibility:** These orders transfer all duties, powers, responsibilities and authority to which parents are entitled by law to a nominated person(s) whom the court considers appropriate. The nominated person may be an individual, such as a relative, or an officer of the state or territory department. Finalised third-party parental responsibility orders can be long-term or short-term (see *Long-term orders* and *Short-term orders*).
- **Finalised supervisory orders:** Under these orders, the department supervises and/or directs the level and type of care that is to be provided to the child. Children under supervisory orders are generally under the responsibility of their parents and the guardianship or custody of the child is unaffected.
- **Interim and temporary orders:** These orders cover the provisions of a limited period of supervision and/or placement of a child. Parental responsibility under these orders may reside with the parents or with the department responsible for child protection.
- **Administrative arrangements:** These are agreements with child protection departments, which have the same effect as a court order of transferring custody or guardianship. These arrangements can also allow a child to be placed in out-of-home care without going through the courts.
- **Immigration (Guardianship of Children) orders:** Orders made under the *Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act 1946*. Under this Act, the Minister for Immigration is the legal guardian for unaccompanied humanitarian minors (children under 18 years of age who have entered Australia without a relative to care for them); however, the minister may assign custody of the child to a willing and suitable person in the jurisdiction where a child resides. The assigned person becomes responsible for all matters concerning the child's daily activities, care and welfare. This category captures the arrangements of such children, who are subsequently placed with carers funded by the departments responsible for child protection.

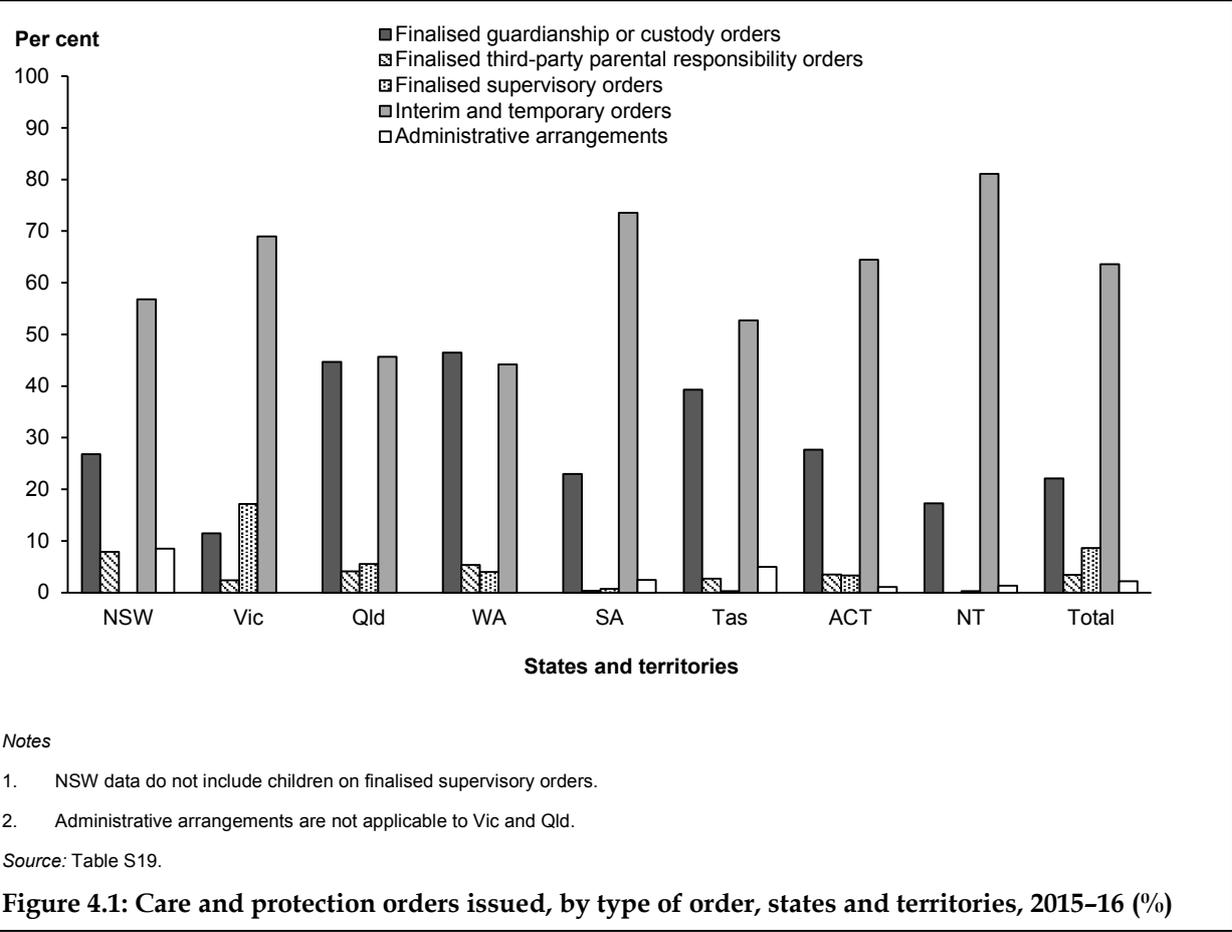
Children are counted in the state or territory where the order is operative, regardless of where the child is residing. The following are excluded from the collection:

- children on offence orders, unless they are also on a care and protection order
- administrative and voluntary arrangements with the departments responsible for child protection that do not have the effect of transferring custody or guardianship.

## 4.2 Types of orders issued

Of the 47,999 care and protection orders issued in 2015–16, most were interim and temporary orders (64%, or 30,540) or finalised guardianship or custody orders (22%, or 10,616) (Figure 4.1).

The types of care and protection orders issued varied across jurisdictions, reflecting both the different types of orders available and the different policies and practices putting them into effect. In all jurisdictions except Western Australia, interim and temporary orders were the most commonly issued type of order (comprising about 44% to 81% of orders issued). In Western Australia, finalised guardianship or custody orders were the most common (47%).



## 4.3 Children admitted to, and discharged from, orders

A total of 13,443 children were admitted to orders in 2015–16. Among this group, three-quarters (76%) were admitted to an order for the first time. The percentage of children admitted for the first time ranged from 66% in Western Australia and Tasmania to 93% in South Australia (Table 4.2).

**Table 4.2: Number of children admitted to, and discharged from, care and protection orders, states and territories, 2015–16**

	NSW <sup>(a)</sup>	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
Children admitted to orders	3,554	5,213	1,910	1,129	889	284	180	284	13,443
Children admitted for the first time	3,171	3,468	1,468	748	825	187	161	221	10,249
<i>Percentage of all admissions</i>	89.2	66.5	76.9	66.3	92.8	65.8	89.4	77.8	76.2
Children discharged from orders	2,035	5,006	1,787	1,028	520	231	111	271	10,989

(a) NSW data do not include children on finalised supervisory orders. NSW is working to improve the way it counts admissions to care and protection orders, but currently does not strictly conform to the national counting rules.

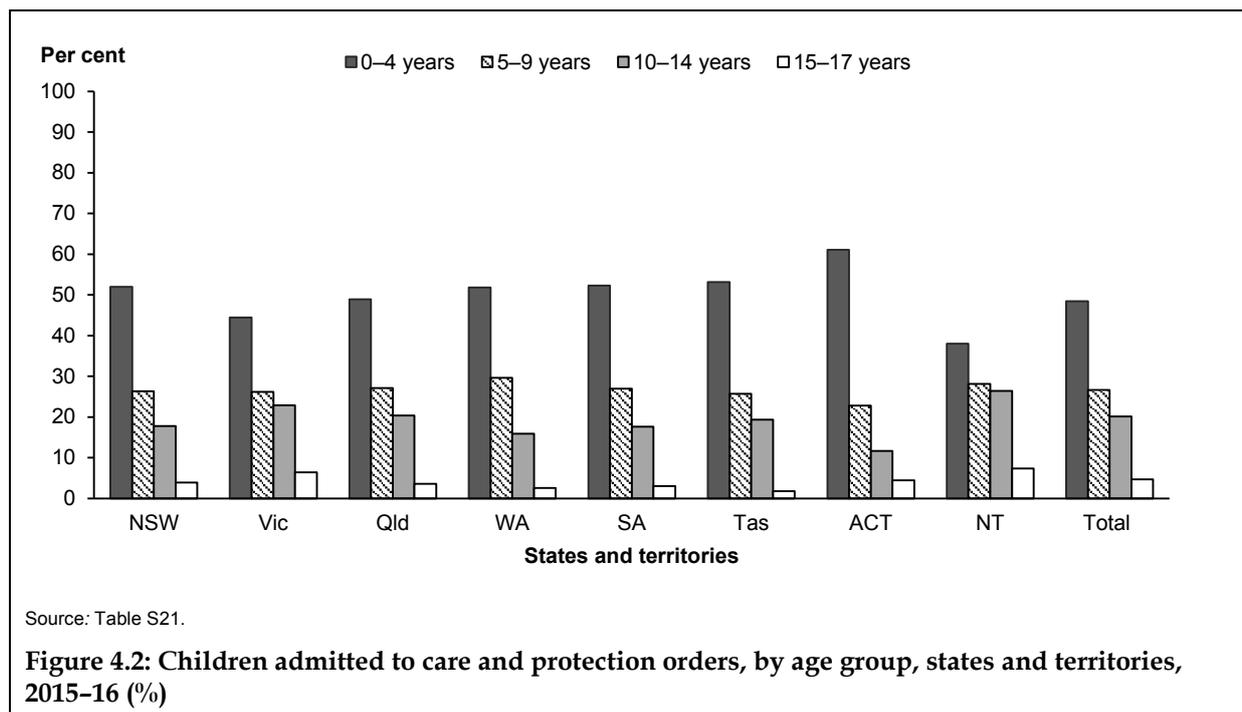
*Notes*

1. Data may include children who were discharged on their 18th birthday.
2. A renewal of an existing order is not counted as an admission. A change to an order is counted as an admission. However, if a new care and protection order is applied in 5 days or less of the discharge of another order (regardless of the type of order), neither an admission nor a discharge are counted.
3. If a child is on multiple care and protection orders/arrangements, all orders/arrangements must be discharged before a discharge for the purposes of this table is counted.
4. If a child is admitted to, or discharged from, multiple care and protection orders/arrangements, the child is counted for only 1 admission and/or 1 discharge for the year.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2016.

Children may be admitted (or re-admitted) to a care and protection order for a number of reasons, including substantiated abuse, irretrievable breakdown in the relationship between the child and their parents, or where parents are unwilling and/or unable to adequately care for the child. The percentage of children who were the subjects of substantiations in 2014–15, and who were subsequently placed on a care and protection order within 12 months, ranged from 17% in the Australian Capital Territory to 39% in the Northern Territory (Table S20).

Almost half (49%) of children admitted to orders in 2015–16 were aged between 0 and 4, reflecting the previously noted view that younger children are regarded as the most vulnerable. This ranged from 38% in the Northern Territory to 61% in the Australian Capital Territory (Figure 4.2). The median age of children admitted to orders was 5. Age patterns were similar to those for substantiations of notifications, with a decreasing proportion as age increased (Table S21).



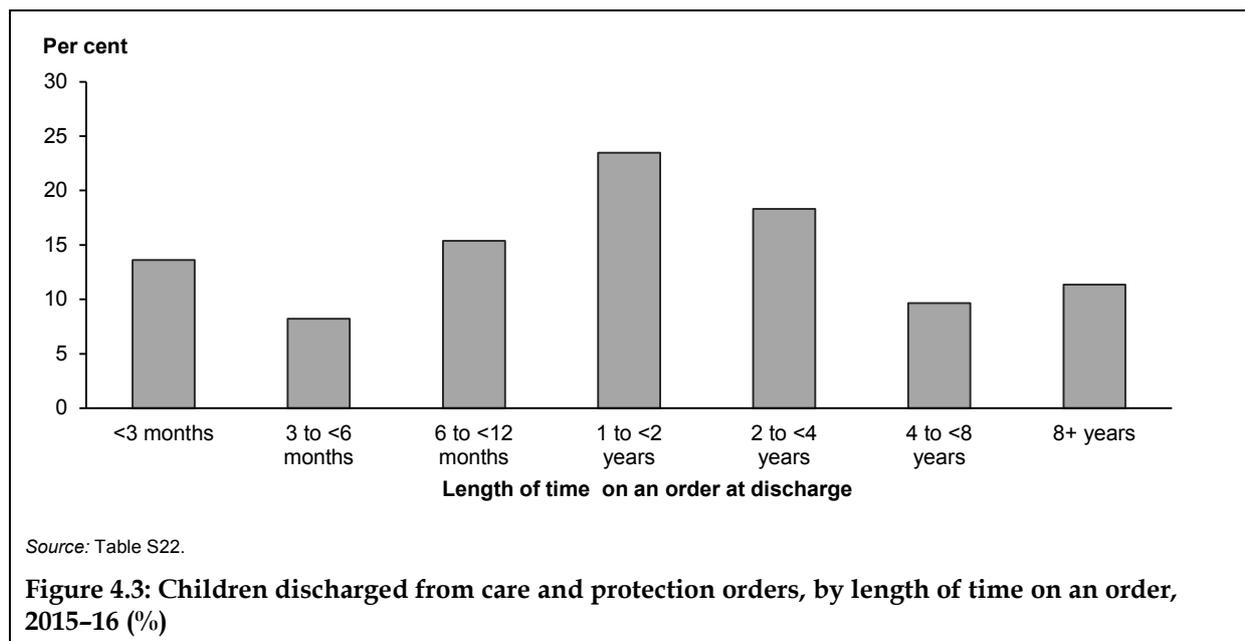
### Length of time on an order at discharge

Almost two-thirds (63%) of the children discharged from care and protection orders in 2015-16 had been continuously on an order for 1 year or more (Figure 4.3). This pattern was consistent across most jurisdictions, with lower percentages reported for Victoria (54%), South Australia (54%) and the Northern Territory (55%) (Table S22).

In 2015-16, 14% of children who were discharged had been on an order continuously for less than 3 months, which ranged from 2% of children discharged in Western Australia to 37% in South Australia. Some of these children may have been on interim or temporary orders and have had more permanent order arrangements applied later.

At the other end of the spectrum, 11% of children who were discharged from an order had been continuously on an order for 8 years or more. There was considerable variation across jurisdictions – ranging from less than 1% of children in the Northern Territory to 28% of children in New South Wales (Table S22).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were more likely to have been continuously on an order for 2 to less than 4 years (24%), and non-Indigenous children were most likely to have been continuously on an order for 1 to less than 2 years (25%) at the time of discharge (Table S22).



## 4.4 Children on orders

### Type of order

Of the 51,972 children who were on care and protection orders at 30 June 2016, almost two-thirds (64%, or 33,212) were on finalised guardianship or custody orders, most of which were long-term orders (Table 4.3). Across states and territories, the percentage ranged from 39% in Victoria to 89% in South Australia.

For the other types of orders that children were on at 30 June 2016, there was also considerable variation among the jurisdictions. New South Wales and Victoria had higher percentages of children on finalised third-party parental responsibility arrangements (24% and 23%, respectively, compared with 17% or less in other jurisdictions). Additionally, Victoria had higher percentages of children on finalised supervisory orders (20% compared with 5% overall) and interim and temporary orders (18% compared with 12% overall). Across jurisdictions, only a small percentage of children (less than 1%) were on administrative arrangements or immigration orders that did not require court intervention.

**Table 4.3: Children on care and protection orders, by type of order, states and territories, 30 June 2016**

Type of order	NSW <sup>(a)</sup>	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
<b>Number</b>									
Short-term finalised guardianship or custody orders	n.a.	2,021	2,603	979	520	285	68	310	6,786
Long-term finalised guardianship or custody orders	n.a.	2,225	4,288	2,662	2,537	639	517	636	13,504
<i>Total finalised guardianship or custody orders</i>	<i>12,922</i>	<i>4,246</i>	<i>6,891</i>	<i>3,641</i>	<i>3,057</i>	<i>924</i>	<i>585</i>	<i>946</i>	<i>33,212</i>
Short-term finalised third-party parental responsibility orders	n.a.	3	11	0	2	0	0	0	16
Long-term finalised third-party parental responsibility orders	n.a.	2,548	1,633	565	119	216	90	0	5,171
<i>Total third-party parental responsibility orders</i>	<i>4,686</i>	<i>2,551</i>	<i>1,644</i>	<i>565</i>	<i>121</i>	<i>216</i>	<i>90</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>9,873</i>
Finalised supervisory orders	..	2,179	234	68	28	2	24	6	2,541
Interim and temporary orders	2,164	1,986	811	667	207	99	119	135	6,188
Administrative arrangements	104	..	..	0	20	7	3	2	136
Immigration (Guardianship of Children) orders	0	..	..	5	15	..	2	..	22
Not stated	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,876</b>	<b>10,962</b>	<b>9,580</b>	<b>4,946</b>	<b>3,448</b>	<b>1,248</b>	<b>823</b>	<b>1,089</b>	<b>51,972</b>
<b>%</b>									
Short-term finalised guardianship or custody orders	n.a.	18.4	27.2	19.8	15.1	22.8	8.3	28.5	13.1
Long-term finalised guardianship or custody orders	n.a.	20.3	44.8	53.8	73.6	51.2	62.8	58.4	26.0
<i>Total finalised guardianship or custody orders</i>	<i>65.0</i>	<i>38.7</i>	<i>71.9</i>	<i>73.6</i>	<i>88.7</i>	<i>74.0</i>	<i>71.1</i>	<i>86.9</i>	<i>63.9</i>
Short-term finalised third-party parental responsibility orders	n.a.	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	—
Long-term finalised third-party parental responsibility orders	n.a.	23.2	17.0	11.4	3.5	17.3	10.9	0.0	9.9
<i>Total third-party parental responsibility orders</i>	<i>23.6</i>	<i>23.3</i>	<i>17.2</i>	<i>11.4</i>	<i>3.5</i>	<i>17.3</i>	<i>10.9</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>19.0</i>
Finalised supervisory orders	..	19.9	2.4	1.4	0.8	0.2	2.9	0.6	4.9
Interim and temporary orders	10.9	18.1	8.5	13.5	6.0	7.9	14.5	12.4	11.9
Administrative arrangements	0.5	..	..	0.0	0.6	0.6	0.4	0.2	0.3
Immigration (Guardianship of Children) orders	0.0	..	..	0.1	0.4	..	0.2	..	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(a) NSW is currently unable to provide the data breakdown for long-term or short-term 'finalised guardianship or custody orders' or 'finalised third-party responsibility orders'. NSW data do not include children on finalised supervisory orders. Immigration orders are reported under 'Administrative arrangements'.

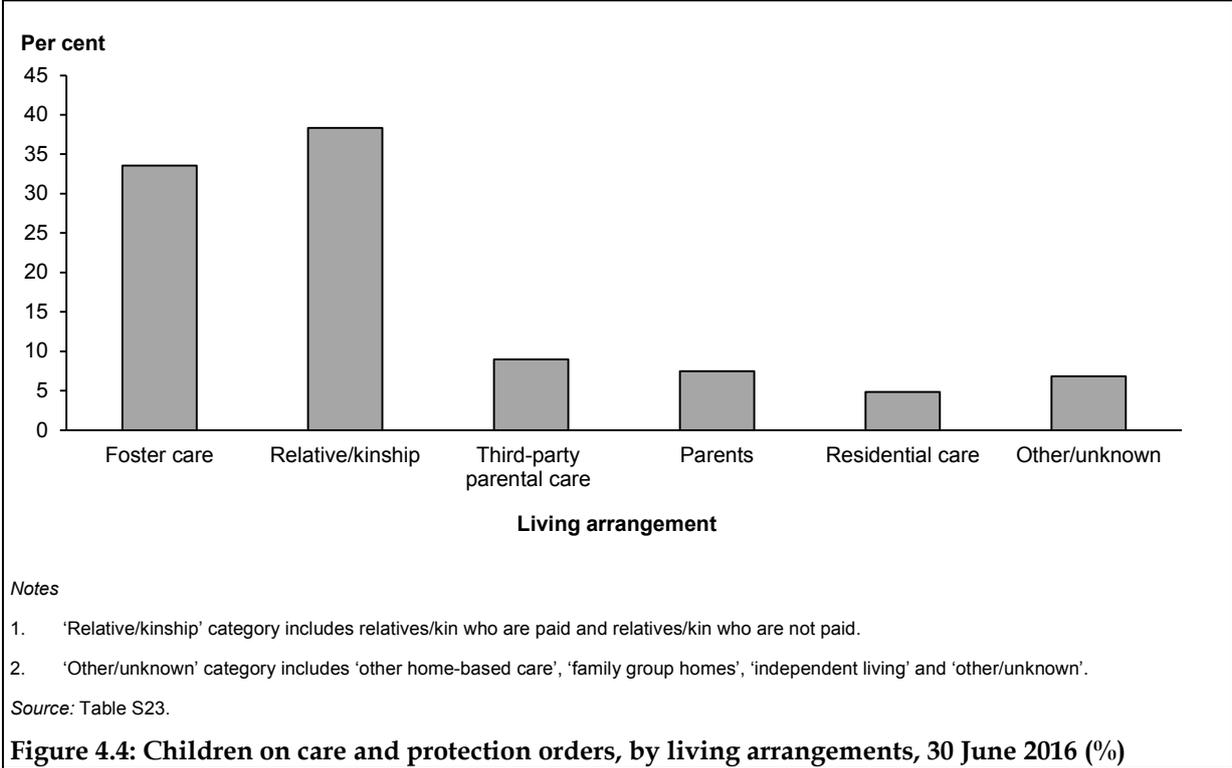
Note: Percentages in the table may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2016.

## Living arrangements

At 30 June 2016, the majority of children on orders lived in funded out-of-home care, either with relative/kinship carers or in foster care (38% and 34% of children, respectively). A relatively smaller percentage of children on orders were living in third-party parental care arrangements (9%), with their parents (8%) or in residential care (5%) (Figure 4.4).

The living arrangements of children on orders generally reflected the expected living arrangements, given the age of the child (Table S24). Across Australia, 99% of children on orders who were living independently were aged 15–17, and 96% of children on orders who were aged under 5 were living in family care or home-based care.



## Age and sex

The age profile of children on orders was similar across all jurisdictions. Of all children on care and protection orders, the percentage aged under 5 ranged from 20% in Queensland and Tasmania to 28% in Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory. The percentage of children aged 15–17 ranged from 13% in Western Australia to 17% in Tasmania (Table S25).

The age distribution of children admitted to orders during 2015–16 was somewhat younger than that for all children on orders at 30 June 2016—49% of children admitted to orders were aged under 5, compared with 23% of children on orders at 30 June. Conversely, 5% of children admitted to orders were aged 15–17, compared with 15% of children on orders at 30 June. These differences can be attributed to including in the 30 June count children who were admitted during previous years and remained on an order in 2016 (tables S21 and S25).

Children in almost all age groups were more likely to be on a finalised guardianship or custody order, ranging from 62% of children aged 1–4 to 73% of those aged 15–17. This pattern was consistent across all states and territories. Children under the age of 1, however, were more likely to be on an interim and temporary order (55%). This trend was seen across

all states with the exception of South Australia and Tasmania, where a higher proportion of children in this age group were on finalised guardianship or custody orders (Table S26).

Overall, there were slightly more boys (51%) than girls (49%) on care and protection orders (Table S27). This was consistent across all jurisdictions.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

At 30 June 2016, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children on orders was almost 10 times that for non-Indigenous children. In all jurisdictions, the rate of Indigenous children on orders was higher than the rate for non-Indigenous children, with rate ratios ranging from 3.5 in Tasmania to 16.8 in Western Australia (Table 4.4).

**Table 4.4: Children on care and protection orders, by Indigenous status, states and territories, 30 June 2016 (number and number per 1,000)**

State/ territory	Number				Number per 1,000			Rate ratio Indigenous/ non- Indigenous
	Indigenous	Non- Indigenous	Unknown	All children	Indigenous	Non- Indigenous	All children	
NSW <sup>(a)</sup>	7,186	12,690	0	19,876	77.4	7.8	11.6	9.9
Vic	1,982	8,974	6	10,962	92.3	6.9	8.2	13.5
Qld	3,990	5,552	38	9,580	44.8	5.3	8.4	8.5
WA	2,617	2,326	3	4,946	69.7	4.1	8.3	16.8
SA	1,119	2,250	79	3,448	68.6	6.5	9.6	10.5
Tas	329	895	24	1,248	30.3	8.7	11.0	3.5
ACT	222	595	6	823	89.9	6.9	9.3	13.0
NT	964	125	0	1,089	36.1	3.4	17.1	10.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,409</b>	<b>33,407</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>51,972</b>	<b>61.9</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>9.5</b>

(a) NSW data do not include children on finalised supervisory orders.

### Notes

1. Rates were calculated using revised population estimates based on the 2011 Census and should not be compared with rates calculated using populations or projections based on previous Censuses. Refer to Table S53 for the populations used in the calculation of rates.
2. Rate and rate ratio calculations include unborn children and children of unknown age but exclude children of unknown Indigenous status.
3. Rate ratios were calculated by dividing the unrounded rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were on a care and protection order by the unrounded rate of non-Indigenous children who were on a care and protection order. The resulting number is a measure of how many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were on a care and protection order for every non-Indigenous child who was on a care and protection order.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2016.

Indigenous and non-Indigenous children were generally on similar types of orders, with most on finalised guardianship and custody orders at 30 June 2016 (Table S28). The percentage of Indigenous children on finalised guardianship and custody orders was higher than the percentage for non-Indigenous children (71% compared with 60%, respectively). However, Indigenous children were less likely to be on all other types of orders, except for administrative arrangements (Table S28).

# 4.5 National trends

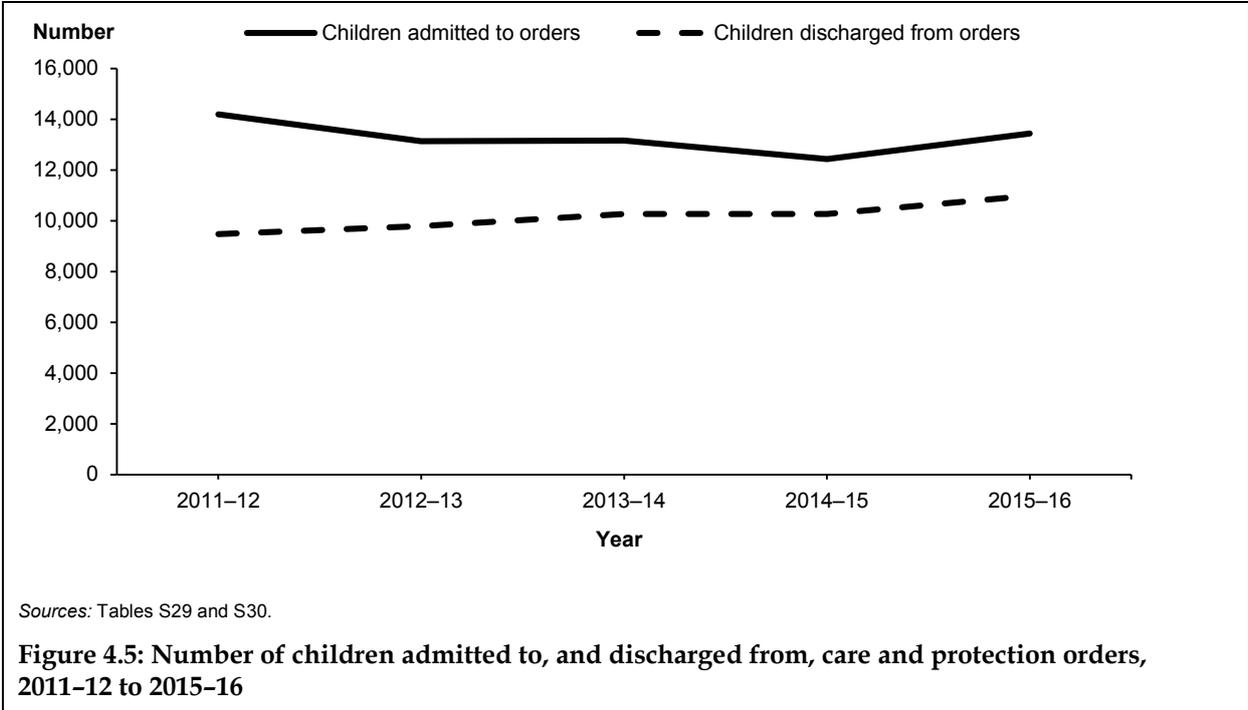
## Children admitted to, and discharged from, orders

The number of children admitted to, and discharged from, orders has fluctuated over the past 5 years, with the number of children decreasing by 5%. Between 2011–12 and 2014–15, the number of children admitted to orders decreased from 14,191 to 12,437. In 2015–16, there was an 8% increase to 13,443.

During the past 12 months, there was a rise in the number of children admitted to orders in all jurisdictions except Western Australia and the Northern Territory (Table S29). Changes in the number of children admitted to orders over time is in part due to the application of national specifications using the CP NMDS (except New South Wales).

Between 2011–12 and 2015–16, the number of children discharged from orders has been steadily increasing, with a 16% rise over the past 5 years, from 9,478 to 10,989. The upward trend flattened in the 12 months between 2013–14 and 2014–15, with a slight decrease from 10,275 to 10,268. Changes in the numbers of children discharged in individual jurisdictions over the past 12 months varied considerably – the number of discharges increased in all jurisdictions except Queensland, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory (Table S30).

Between 2011–12 and 2015–16, the number of children admitted to orders has remained consistently higher than the number discharged (Figure 4.5); however, over the past 5 years, the difference has decreased. In 2011–12, there were 4,713 more children admitted than discharged, whereas in 2015–16, 2,454 more children were admitted than were discharged (tables S29 and S30).



## Children on care and protection orders

From 30 June 2012 to 30 June 2016, the rate of children aged 0–17 on orders slightly increased, from 7.9 to 9.6 per 1,000 (Table 4.5). There were increases in all jurisdictions, with the largest increase in the Northern Territory (from 12.4 per 1,000 in 2012 to 17.1 per 1,000 in 2016).

**Table 4.5: Rates of children on care and protection orders, states and territories, 30 June 2012 to 30 June 2016 (number per 1,000)**

Year	NSW <sup>(a)</sup>	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
2012	9.7	5.9	8.1	6.2	7.5	10.2	8.8	12.4	7.9
2013	9.8	6.2	8.3	7.4	7.8	10.9	8.1	12.8	8.2
2014	10.2	7.2	8.2	7.6	7.8	10.4	8.3	15.5	8.7
2015	10.9	7.8	8.2	8.1	8.4	10.4	8.6	16.9	9.1
2016	11.6	8.2	8.4	8.3	9.6	11.0	9.3	17.1	9.6

(a) NSW data do not include children on finalised supervisory orders.

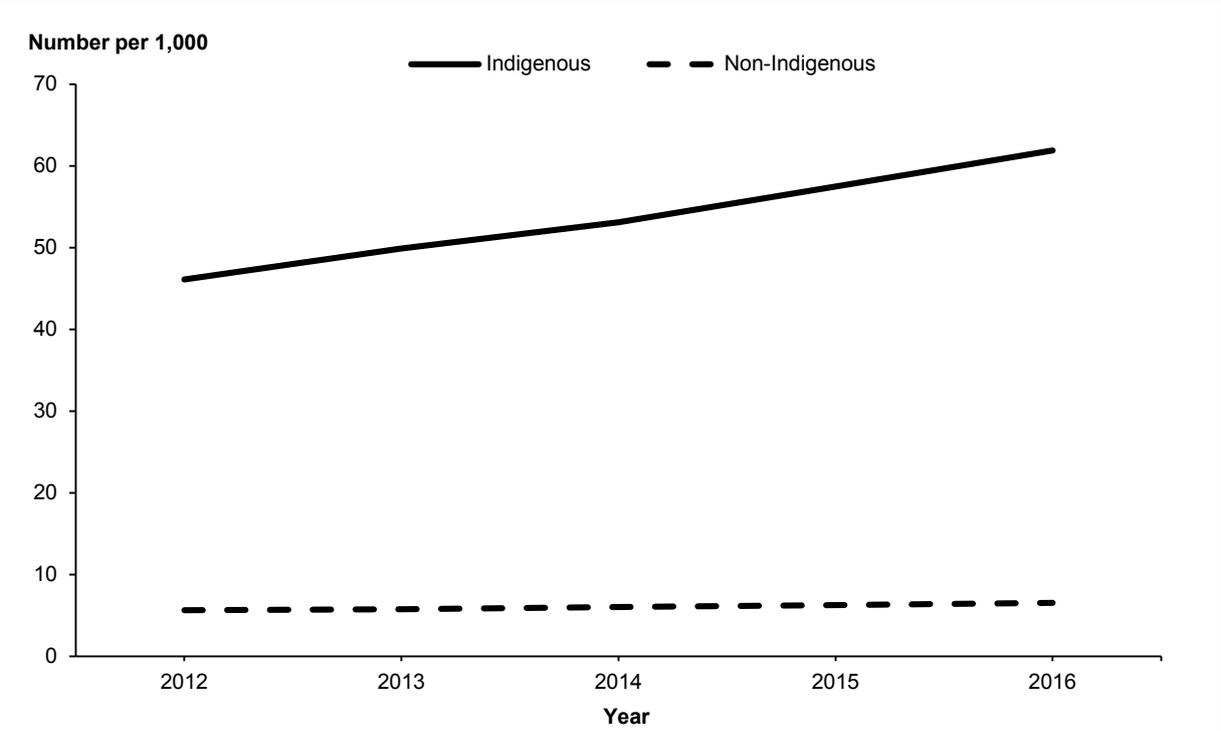
### Notes

1. Refer to Table S31 for the numbers used to calculate these rates and to Table S55 for population data.
2. Some rates may not match those published in previous *Child protection Australia* publications due to retrospective updates to data.
3. Rates were calculated using revised population estimates based on the 2011 Census and should not be compared with rates calculated using populations or projections based on previous Censuses.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2016.

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

From 30 June 2012 to 30 June 2016, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children on care and protection orders has risen steadily, from 13,268 to 18,409 – with rates increasing from 46.1 to 61.9 per 1,000). While the number of non-Indigenous children has increased from 27,531 to 33,407, the rate has remained relatively stable (increasing slightly from 5.6 to 6.5 per 1,000, Figure 4.6). The substantial increase in the rate of Indigenous children on orders has largely driven the rise in the overall rate of children on orders.



**Notes**

1. Rate calculations exclude children whose Indigenous status is unknown.
2. Rates were calculated using revised population estimates based on the 2011 Census and should not be compared with rates calculated using populations or projections based on previous Censuses.

Source: Table S52.

**Figure 4.6: Children aged 0-17 on care and protection orders, by Indigenous status, 30 June 2012 to 30 June 2016 (rate)**

## 5 Out-of-home care

Out-of-home care is overnight care for children aged 0–17, where the state or territory makes a financial payment or where a financial payment has been offered but has been declined by the carer (see Box 5.1 for types of out-of-home care).

### 5.1 Overview and key statistics

In 2015–16, over 12,800 children were admitted to out-of-home care and almost 9,800 children were discharged. At 30 June 2016, there were around 46,500 children in out-of-home care – a rate of 8.6 per 1,000 Australian children (Table 5.1). The number of children in out-of-home care on an average day is reported in Table S32.

**Table 5.1: Key out-of-home care statistics, 2015–16**

	Number	Number per 1,000
Children admitted to out-of-home care during 2015–16	12,829	2.4
Children discharged from out-of-home care during 2015–16	9,794	1.8
Children in out-of-home care during 2015–16	55,614	10.4
Children in out-of-home care at 30 June 2016	46,448	8.6

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2016.

#### Box 5.1: Types of out-of-home care

- **Residential care:** placement in a residential building whose purpose is to provide placements for children and where there are paid staff.
- **Family group homes:** homes for children provided by a department or community-sector agency which have live-in, non-salaried carers who are reimbursed and/or subsidised for providing care.
- **Home-based care:** placement in the home of a carer who is reimbursed (or who has been offered but declined reimbursement) for expenses for the care of the child. This is broken down into 4 subcategories: relative/kinship care, foster care, third-party parental care arrangements and other home-based out-of-home care.
- **Independent living:** includes private board and lead tenant households.
- **Other:** includes placements that are not otherwise classified and unknown placement types. These include boarding schools, hospitals, hotels/motels and the defence forces.

Placements for the purpose of respite are included. Respite care is used to provide short-term accommodation for children and young people where the intention is for the child to return to his or her prior place of residence. This includes respite from birth family and respite from placement.

Excluded from these counts are placements solely funded by disability services, medical or psychiatric services, juvenile justice facilities, overnight child care services or supported accommodation assistance placements, and children in placements with parents where the jurisdiction makes a financial payment.

## 5.2 Children admitted to, and discharged from, out-of-home care

Of the 12,829 children admitted to out-of-home care during 2015–16, 5,905 (46%) were aged under 5. One-quarter (25%, or 3,221) were aged 5–9 and a further 21% (or 2,651 children) were aged 10–14. Children aged 15–17 represented 8% (1,047) of all children admitted to out-of-home care in 2015–16 (Table S33). The median age of children admitted to out-of-home care was 6.

The age distribution of children discharged from out-of-home care was older than that of children admitted to out-of-home care – the median age of children discharged was 9. Nationally, 32% of those discharged were aged 15–17 (Table S34), compared with 8% admitted to out-of-home care (Figure 5.1). This reflects children being admitted to out-of-home care at a younger age and remaining there for longer, as well as children leaving out-of-home care once they turn 18.

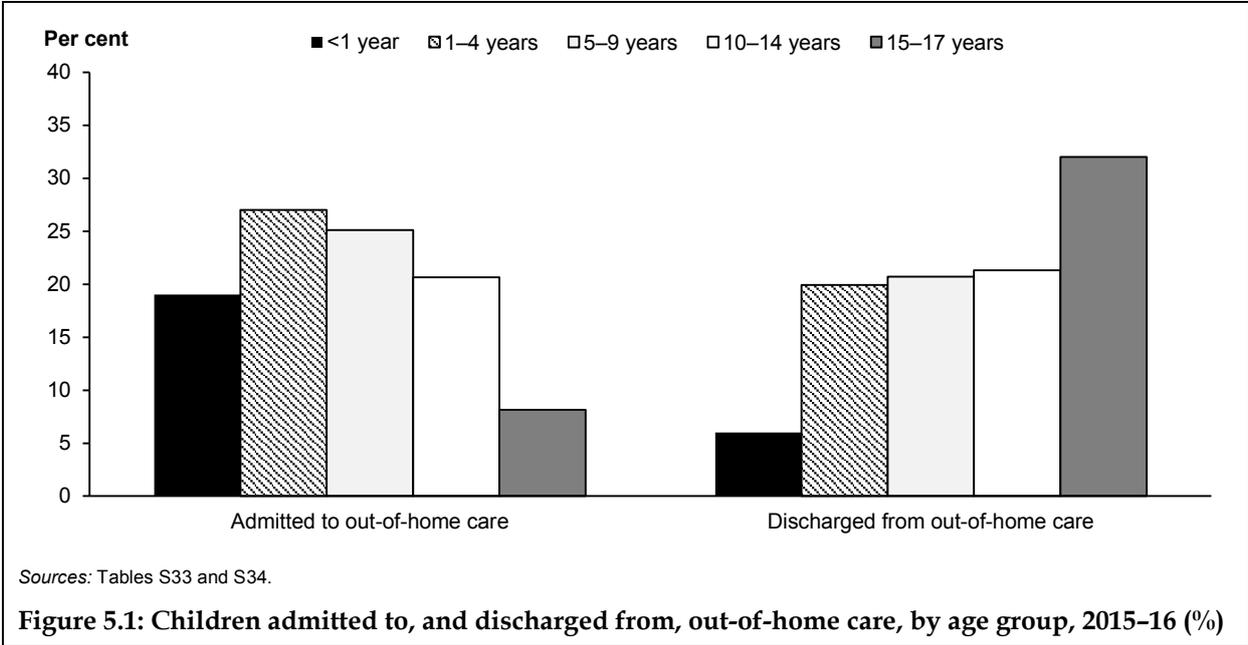
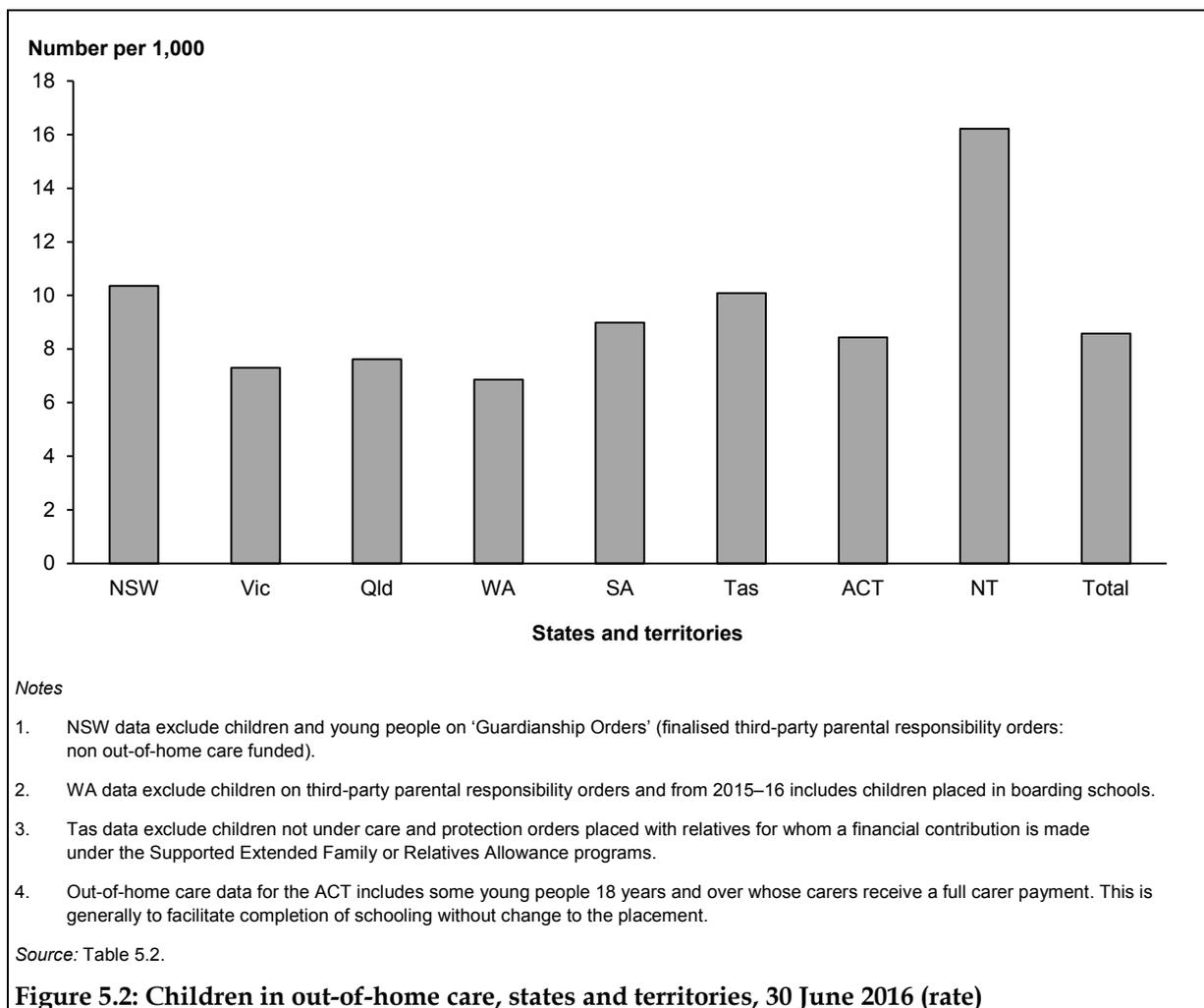


Figure 5.1: Children admitted to, and discharged from, out-of-home care, by age group, 2015–16 (%)

## 5.3 Children in out-of-home care

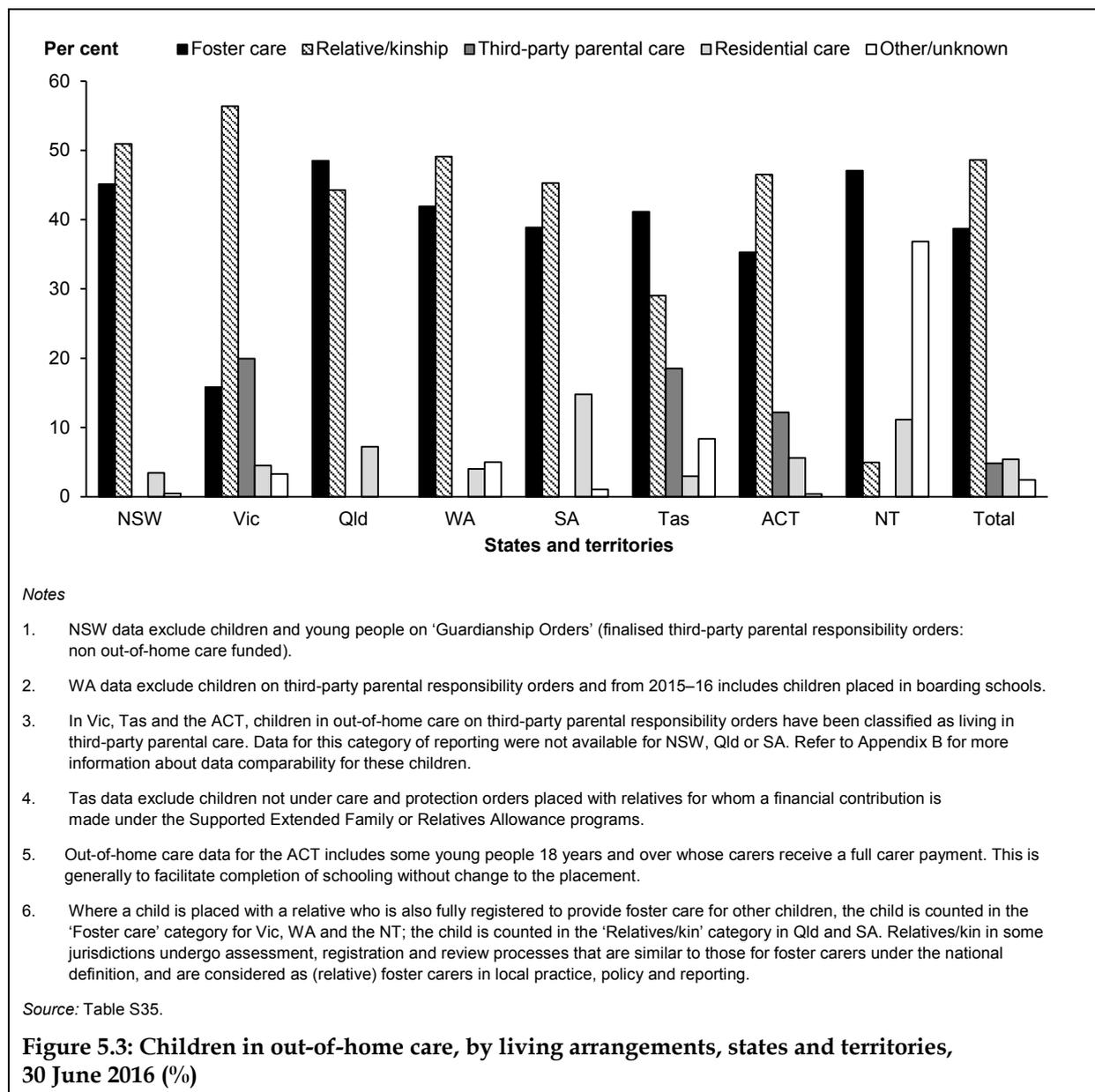
Nationally, the rate of children in out-of-home care at 30 June 2016 was 8.6 per 1,000 children, ranging from 6.9 per 1,000 in Western Australia to 16.2 in the Northern Territory (Figure 5.2).



## Types of placement

The vast majority of children (94%) in out-of-home care at 30 June 2016 were in home-based care – 39% in foster care, 49% in relative/kinship care, 5% in third-party parental care and 1% in other types of home-based care (Table S35). The proportions varied across jurisdictions; for example, the percentage of children in foster care ranged from 16% in Victoria to 49% in Queensland (Figure 5.3). Differences across jurisdictions are due, in part, to differences in reporting practices.

Nationally, around 1 in 20 children in out-of-home care were living in residential care (Figure 5.3). Higher proportions than the national level of children in residential care were reported in Queensland (7%), South Australia (15%) and the Northern Territory (11%). Residential care is mainly used for children who have complex needs. However, in many jurisdictions, priority is given to keeping siblings together, which sometimes results in periods of residential care for larger family groups.



Box 5.2 describes recent development work undertaken to enable reporting of the relationship between children and their relative/kin carer.

**Box 5.2: Preliminary analysis of relationship between relative/kin carer and child**

Data on the relationship of relative/kin carers were only available for 4 jurisdictions in 2015–16, representing 22% of children placed with relative/kin carers at 30 June 2016. However, these data provide some insight into the main types of relative/kin carers utilised for such placements.

For example, Table S36 shows that, in the jurisdictions for which data were available, most (48%) children in relative/kinship care at 30 June 2016 were placed with grandparents, and 22% were placed with an aunt/uncle.

## Age and sex

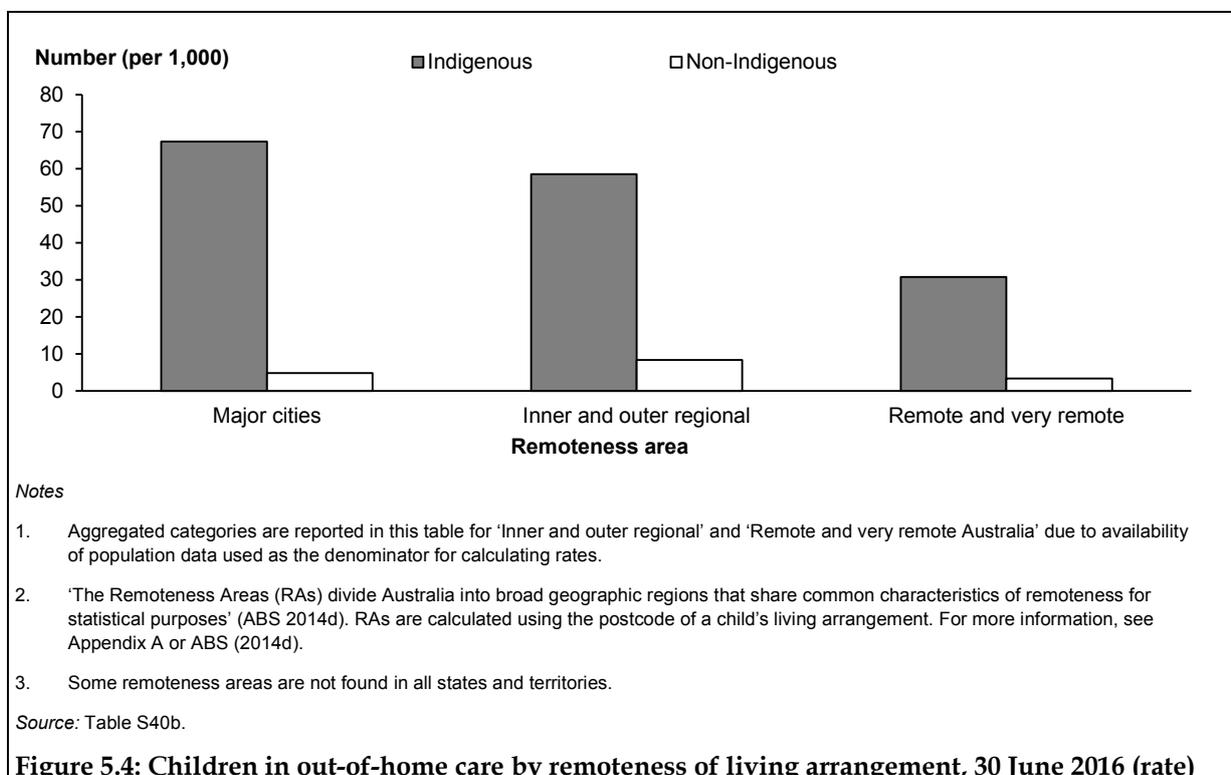
Almost one-third (32%) of children in out-of-home care were aged 5–9 and a similar percentage (31%) were aged 10–14 (Table S37). The median age of children in out-of-home care was 9. In line with the general population distribution, just over half (52%) of all children in out-of-home care were boys (Table S38).

Across age groups, living arrangements for children in out-of-home care were similar to those for children on care and protection orders. Children in residential care were older than children in home-based care – 82% of children in residential care or family group homes were aged 10 and over, with a median age of 14. The corresponding percentage of children aged 10 and over in home-based care was 43% (Table S39), with a median age of 8. Four per cent (4%) of children in residential care or family group homes in Australia were aged under 5, compared with 24% of those in home-based care.

## Remoteness area

Over half (53%) of the children in out-of-home care at 30 June 2016 lived in *Major cities* and two-fifths (43%) lived in *Inner regional* and *Outer regional* areas (based on postcode of living arrangement, Table S40a). However, children living in *Remote* and *very remote* areas were twice as likely as those in *Major cities* to be in out-of-home care at 30 June 2016.

The rates of Indigenous children in out-of-home care were higher across all remoteness areas than the rates for non-Indigenous children (Figure 5.4). Indigenous children living in *Major cities* were 14 times as likely as non-Indigenous children to be in out-of-home care at 30 June – 67.4 per 1,000 children, and 4.8 per 1,000, respectively (Table S40b). Indigenous children living in *Remote* and *very remote* areas were 9 times as likely as non-Indigenous children to be in out-of-home care.



## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

At 30 June 2016, there were 16,846 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care – a rate of 56.6 per 1,000 children. Across jurisdictions, rates ranged from 27.3 per 1,000 in Tasmania to 87.4 per 1,000 in Victoria (Table 5.2).

**Table 5.2: Children in out-of-home care, by Indigenous status, states and territories, 30 June 2016 (number and number per 1,000)**

State/ territory	Number				Number per 1,000			
	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Unknown	All children <sup>(a)</sup>	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	All children <sup>(a)</sup>	Rate ratio Indigenous/non-Indigenous
NSW <sup>(b)</sup>	6,652	11,147	1	17,800	71.6	6.9	10.4	10.4
Vic	1,876	7,821	8	9,705	87.4	6.0	7.3	14.6
Qld	3,619	5,010	41	8,670	40.6	4.8	7.6	8.5
WA <sup>(c)</sup>	2,212	1,887	1	4,100	58.9	3.4	6.9	17.5
SA	1,073	2,095	75	3,243	65.7	6.1	9.0	10.8
Tas <sup>(d)</sup>	297	830	23	1,150	27.3	8.1	10.1	3.4
ACT <sup>(e)</sup>	197	546	5	748	79.8	6.3	8.4	12.6
NT	920	112	0	1,032	34.4	3.0	16.2	11.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,846</b>	<b>29,448</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>46,448</b>	<b>56.6</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>9.8</b>

(a) 'All children' includes children whose Indigenous status was unknown.

(b) NSW data exclude children and young people on 'Guardianship Orders' (finalised third-party parental responsibility orders: non out-of-home care funded).

(c) WA data exclude children on third-party parental responsibility orders and from 2015–16 includes children placed in boarding schools.

(d) Tas data exclude children not under care and protection orders placed with relatives for whom a financial contribution is made under the Supported Extended Family or Relatives Allowance programs.

(e) Out-of-home care data for the ACT includes some young people 18 years and over whose carers receive a full carer payment. This is generally to facilitate completion of schooling without change to the placement.

### Notes

1. Rates were calculated using revised population estimates based on the 2011 Census and should not be compared with rates calculated using populations or projections based on previous Censuses. Refer to Table S53 for the populations used in the calculation of rates.
2. Rate and rate ratio calculations include unborn children and children of unknown age but exclude children of unknown Indigenous status.
3. Rate ratios were calculated by dividing the unrounded rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were in out-of-home care by the unrounded rate of non-Indigenous children who were in out-of-home care. The resulting number is a measure of how many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were in out-of-home care for every non-Indigenous child who was in out-of-home care. Children whose Indigenous status was unknown are excluded from the calculations.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2016.

Nationally, the rate of Indigenous children in out-of-home care was 10 times the rate for non-Indigenous children. In all jurisdictions, the rate of Indigenous children in out-of-home care was higher than that for non-Indigenous children, with rate ratios ranging from 3.4 in Tasmania to 17.5 in Western Australia (Table 5.2).

Indigenous children in out-of-home care were over-represented across all age groups. This was particularly evident for Indigenous children aged 1–4 and 5–9 who were 11 times as likely as non-Indigenous children to be in out-of-home care at 30 June 2016 (Table S41).

Box 5.3 describes the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle, which has been adopted by all jurisdictions in legislation and policy. The impact of the principle is

reflected in the relatively high proportions of Indigenous children who were placed either with Indigenous caregivers or with relatives in many jurisdictions (Figure 5.5). Across Australia, in 2015–16, 66% of Indigenous children were placed with relatives/kin, other Indigenous caregivers or in Indigenous residential care; this percentage is similar to that reported in previous years.

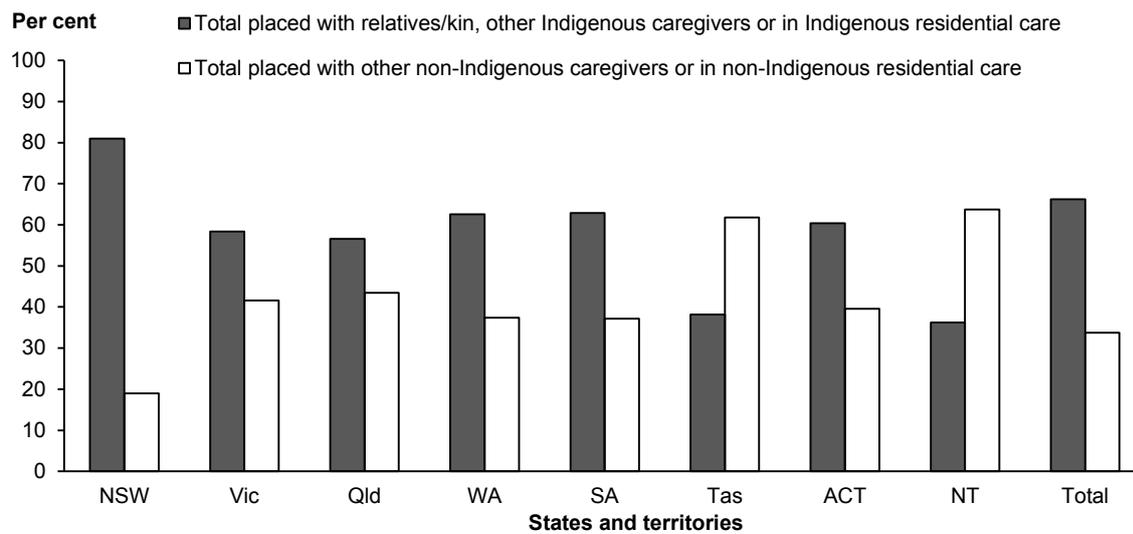
### **Box 5.3: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle**

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle outlines a preference for the placement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people when they are placed outside their family (Lock 1997:50). The principle has the following order of preference for the placement of Indigenous children:

- with the child's extended family
- within the child's Indigenous community
- with other Indigenous people.

The principle is just one of the many considerations taken into account when making decisions on placements for Indigenous children. Where placement options outlined in the principle are not optimal for a child's safety and wellbeing, the child may be placed in an alternative care arrangement. Usually, this is done only after extensive consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and/or organisations.

*Note:* the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle was originally referred to as the 'Aboriginal Child Placement Principle'. This has been amended in accordance with the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children third 3-year action plan 2015–2018 (DSS 2015b).



*Notes*

1. Aggregate data were provided for NSW and the NT.
2. NSW data exclude children and young people on 'Guardianship Orders' (finalised third-party parental responsibility orders: non out-of-home care funded).
3. WA data exclude children on third-party parental responsibility orders and from 2015–16 includes children placed in boarding schools.
4. Tas data exclude children not under care and protection orders placed with relatives for whom a financial contribution is made under the Supported Extended Family or Relatives Allowance programs. A high number of carers whose Indigenous status is unknown may affect the identification of children placed in accordance with the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle.
5. Out-of-home care data for the ACT includes some young people 18 years and over whose carers receive a full carer payment. This is generally to facilitate completion of schooling without change to the placement.

Source: Table S42.

**Figure 5.5: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care, by relationship of carer, states and territories, 30 June 2016 (%)**

## Care and protection order status

Nationally, 93% of children in out-of-home care were also on care and protection orders. Across jurisdictions, the percentage of children in out-of-home care who were on care and protection orders ranged from 84% in Victoria to 100% in the Northern Territory (Table 5.3). In Western Australia, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory, a small proportion of children in out-of-home care were on orders other than care and protection orders (for example, offence orders).

**Table 5.3: Children in out-of-home care, by order status, states and territories, 30 June 2016**

Order status	NSW <sup>(a)</sup>	Vic	Qld	WA <sup>(b)</sup>	SA	Tas <sup>(c)</sup>	ACT <sup>(d)</sup>	NT	Total
	<b>Number</b>								
On a care and protection order	16,539	8,182	8,455	3,842	3,191	1,111	736	1,032	43,088
On another type of order	0	0	0	2	46	0	3	0	51
<i>Total children on orders</i>	<i>16,539</i>	<i>8,182</i>	<i>8,455</i>	<i>3,844</i>	<i>3,237</i>	<i>1,111</i>	<i>739</i>	<i>1,032</i>	<i>43,139</i>
Not on an order	1,261	1,523	215	256	6	39	9	0	3,309
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,800</b>	<b>9,705</b>	<b>8,670</b>	<b>4,100</b>	<b>3,243</b>	<b>1,150</b>	<b>748</b>	<b>1,032</b>	<b>46,448</b>
	<b>%</b>								
On a care and protection order	92.9	84.3	97.5	93.7	98.4	96.6	98.4	100.0	92.8
On another type of order	0.0	0.0	0.0	—	1.4	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.1
<i>Total children on orders</i>	<i>92.9</i>	<i>84.3</i>	<i>97.5</i>	<i>93.8</i>	<i>99.8</i>	<i>96.6</i>	<i>98.8</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>92.9</i>
Not on an order	7.1	15.7	2.5	6.2	0.0	3.4	1.2	0.0	7.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(a) NSW data exclude children and young people on 'Guardianship Orders' (finalised third-party parental responsibility orders: non out-of-home care funded).

(b) WA data exclude children on third-party parental responsibility orders and from 2015–16 includes children placed in boarding schools. Children not on an order are children in negotiated placements, placement service and those awaiting prospective adoption.

(c) Tas data exclude children not under care and protection orders placed with relatives for whom a financial contribution is made under the Supported Extended Family or Relatives Allowance programs.

(d) Out-of-home care data for the ACT includes some young people 18 years and over whose carers receive a full carer payment. This is generally to facilitate completion of schooling without change to the placement.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2016.

## Length of time continuously in care

Nationally, at 30 June 2016, about 4 in 5 children (80%) had been continuously in out-of-home care for 1 year or more – ranging from 72% of children in Victoria to 83% in New South Wales and Tasmania (Table 5.4). More than one-quarter (26%) had been in out-of-home care for between 2 and less than 5 years, while a further 40% had been in out-of-home care for 5 years or more. One-fifth (20%) of children had been in out-of-home care for less than 1 year.

**Table 5.4: Children in out-of-home care, by length of time continuously in care, states and territories, 30 June 2016**

Time in continuous placement	NSW <sup>(a)</sup>	Vic	Qld	WA <sup>(b)</sup>	SA	Tas <sup>(c)</sup>	ACT <sup>(d)</sup>	NT	Total
	<b>Number</b>								
<1 month <sup>(e)</sup>	272	315	178	96	61	16	15	22	975
1 month to <6 months	1,369	1,281	610	383	313	80	57	82	4,175
6 months to <1 year	1,428	1,136	757	320	292	105	63	91	4,192
1 year to <2 years	2,208	1,531	1,022	627	414	144	116	166	6,228
2 years to <5 years	4,361	2,518	2,215	1,327	682	285	202	517	12,107
5 years or more	8,162	2,924	3,888	1,347	1,481	520	295	154	18,771
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,800</b>	<b>9,705</b>	<b>8,670</b>	<b>4,100</b>	<b>3,243</b>	<b>1,150</b>	<b>748</b>	<b>1,032</b>	<b>46,448</b>
	<b>%</b>								
<1 month <sup>(e)</sup>	1.5	3.2	2.1	2.3	1.9	1.4	2.0	2.1	2.1
1 month to <6 months	7.7	13.2	7.0	9.3	9.7	7.0	7.6	7.9	9.0
6 months to <1 year	8.0	11.7	8.7	7.8	9.0	9.1	8.4	8.8	9.0
1 year to <2 years	12.4	15.8	11.8	15.3	12.8	12.5	15.5	16.1	13.4
2 years to <5 years	24.5	25.9	25.5	32.4	21.0	24.8	27.0	50.1	26.1
5 years or more	45.9	30.1	44.8	32.9	45.7	45.2	39.4	14.9	40.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(a) NSW data exclude children and young people on 'Guardianship Orders' (finalised third-party parental responsibility orders: non out-of-home care funded).

(b) WA data exclude children on third-party parental responsibility orders and from 2015–16 includes children placed in boarding schools.

(c) Tas data exclude children not under care and protection orders placed with relatives for whom a financial contribution is made under the Supported Extended Family or Relatives Allowance programs.

(d) Out-of-home care data for the ACT includes some young people 18 years and over whose carers receive a full carer payment. This is generally to facilitate completion of schooling without change to the placement.

(e) Not all jurisdictions were able to identify whether children were in respite care. However, where it was known that children were in respite care, they were included in the relevant time category.

#### Notes

1. If a child has a return home or break of less than 60 days before returning to the same or different placement, they are considered to be continuously in care during this period.
2. Not all jurisdictions were able to identify whether children were in respite care. However, where it was known that children were in respite care, they were included in the relevant time category.
3. Percentages exclude cases where the length of time in a continuous placement was unknown or not stated.
4. Percentages in the table may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2016.

## Long-term alternative care

Reunification is the policy priority for children in out-of-home care. However, for some children this is not achieved and alternative permanent care arrangements are needed (see Box 5.4). The number of children who exited out-of-home care and were reunified with their family is not able to be reported using existing national data. However, work has been undertaken to facilitate future reporting. Policies relating to permanency planning indicate that children who have been in care for 2 or more years require a decision to be made regarding their long-term care arrangements (AIHW 2016c).

#### **Box 5.4: Permanency planning and alternative care arrangements**

Permanency planning refers to the processes undertaken by state and territory departments responsible for child protection to achieve a stable long-term care arrangement. The actions taken to achieve long-term care arrangements can be broadly grouped as reunification, third-party parental responsibility orders, long-term finalised guardianship/custody orders, and adoption. Information on third-party parental responsibility orders and guardianship/custody orders is presented in Box 4.1.

##### **Reunification**

Reunification is a planned process of safely returning and enabling a child to remain at home with their birth parent(s), family or former guardian after a period of time in care, when it is in the child's best interests to do so, and where it will safeguard the child's long-term stability and permanency. Returning to the family of origin, the child may be deemed to have exited care. Parental rights and responsibilities may resume as normal, although, in some cases, a care and protection order can remain in place for a period of time.

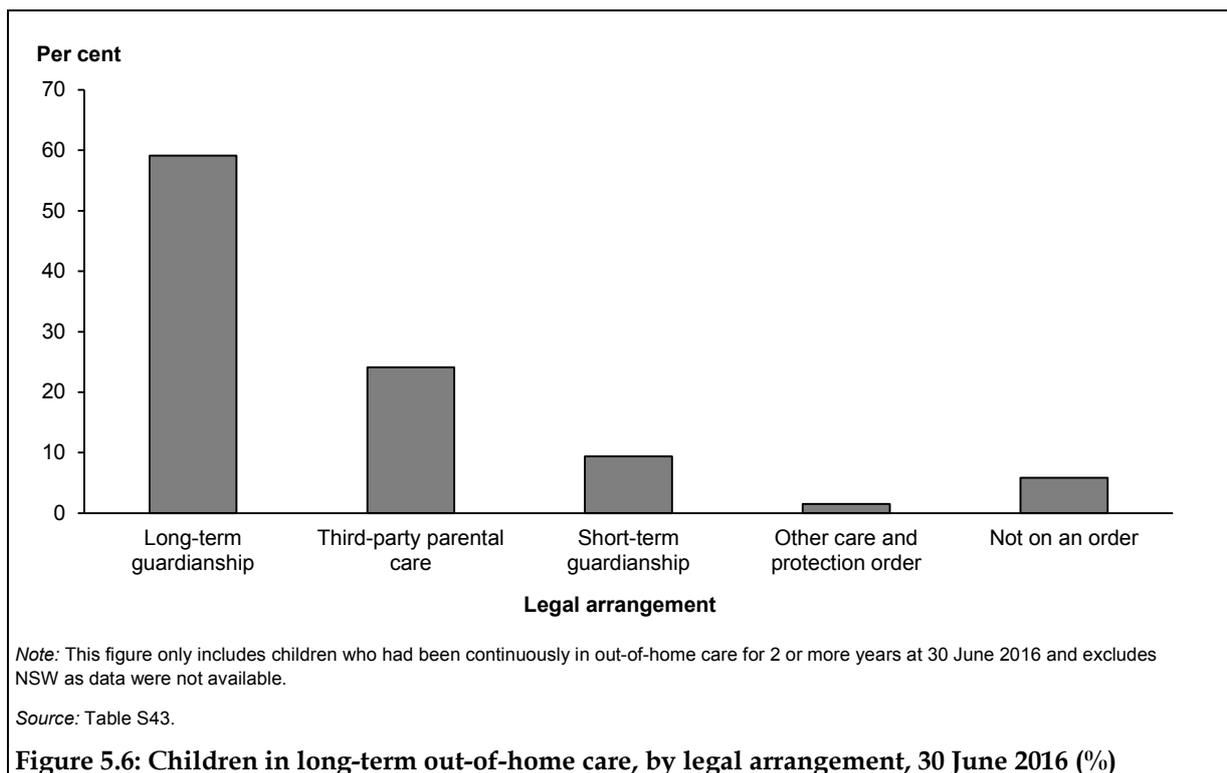
##### **Known carer adoption**

Known carer adoption is adoption by the foster parent(s) or other non-relative(s) who has been caring for a child in out-of-home care, and has had the responsibility for making decisions about the daily care and control of the child for the relevant period (as specified by the relevant state/territory department) before the adoption (AIHW 2016a). Although it should be noted that in some jurisdictions, adoption from care may not be viewed as part of permanency planning, or, while it is legally available, it may be rarely used in practice.

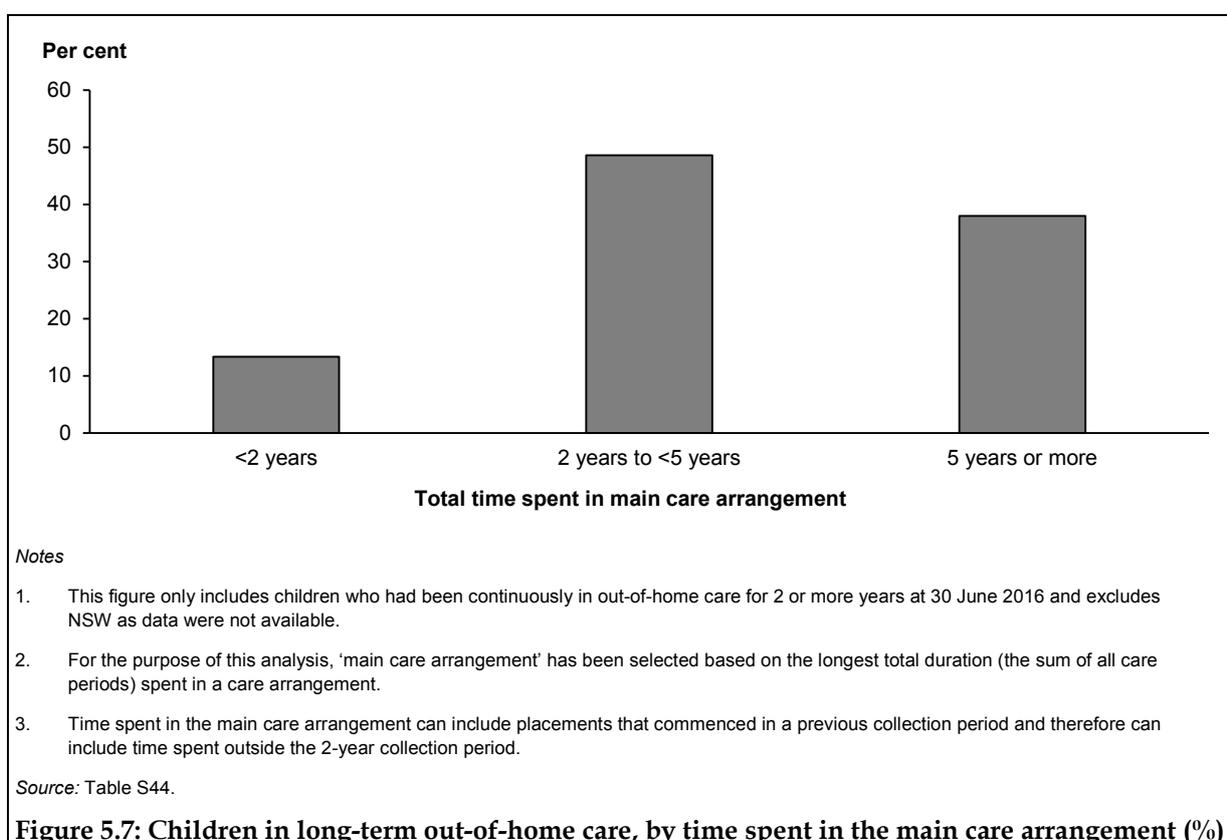
#### **Children remaining in out-of-home care**

Almost 31,000 (67%) of the 46,500 children in out-of-home care at 30 June 2016 had been in 'long-term care'; that is, for 2 or more years (Table 5.4). Figure 5.6 shows that most (83%) children who had been in care for 2 or more years were on a long-term care and protection order. One-quarter (24%) of the children were in a third-party parental care arrangement – home-based care where parental responsibility had been transferred to the carer. Around three-fifths (59%) of the children were on long-term finalised guardianship or custody orders.

Most (88%) children on a long-term guardianship or custody order were living in home-based care with a foster or relative/kinship carer. A smaller percentage (8%) were living in residential care or family group homes (Table S43).



Most (87%) children in long-term out-of-home care had also spent at least 2 years in 1 main care arrangement (Figure 5.7).



Multiple placements are generally viewed as representing instability for a child. However, in the national data, the higher number of placements experienced by some children can also reflect:

- the use of respite care to facilitate an existing long-term placement
- attempts to achieve a more permanent care arrangement (that is, a new placement with relatives/kin or other long-term carer)
- preparation for transition from care (for example, change in placement to independent living or residential care)
- shared care arrangements where children regularly spend a specified number of nights in more than 1 care arrangement (AIHW 2016c).

### **Children adopted from out-of-home care**

An alternative arrangement that may be used to achieve permanency for children in out-of-home care is adoption; specifically, known carer adoption (see Box 5.4).

In 2015–16, 70 known carer adoption orders were finalised in Australia (AIHW 2016a). Australian jurisdictions differ in the extent to which they use adoption to improve permanency for children in out-of-home care (AIHW 2016c). The majority of carer adoptions were finalised in New South Wales, reflecting that state's policies in regard to options used for achieving stability for children in need of long-term care and protection where restoration to family was not appropriate (AIHW 2016a).

## 5.4 National trends

### Children admitted to, and discharged from, out-of-home care

The number of children admitted to out-of-home care showed a decreasing trend between 2011–12 and 2013–14. However, this trend has reversed in the past 2 years, with an increase in the number of children admitted of around 11% observed between 2014–15 and 2015–16 (Table 5.5).

**Table 5.5: Number of children admitted to out-of-home care, states and territories, 2011–12 to 2015–16**

Year	NSW	Vic	Qld <sup>(a)</sup>	WA <sup>(b)</sup>	SA	Tas <sup>(c)</sup>	ACT <sup>(d)</sup>	NT	Total
2011–12	3,407	3,526	2,671	1,088	618	284	247	399	12,240
2012–13	3,038	3,204	2,551	1,107	569	304	203	365	11,341
2013–14	3,248	3,210	2,266	1,100	445	208	214	394	11,085
2014–15	3,440	3,545	2,139	1,050	660	194	219	334	11,581
2015–16	3,681	4,115	2,428	1,035	826	242	208	294	12,829

(a) Qld data produced from the CP NMDS from 2014–15 onward are not comparable with data for previous years.

(b) WA data exclude children on third-party parental responsibility orders and from 2015–16 includes children placed in boarding schools.

(c) Tas data exclude children not under care and protection orders placed with relatives for whom a financial contribution is made under the Supported Extended Family or Relatives Allowance programs.

(d) Out-of-home care data for the ACT includes some young people 18 years and over whose carers receive a full carer payment. This is generally to facilitate completion of schooling without change to the placement.

*Note:* This table includes all children admitted to out-of-home care for the first time in the period, as well as those children returning to care who had exited care 60 days or more previously. Children admitted to out-of-home care more than once during the year were only counted at the first admission.

*Sources:* AIHW Child Protection Collections 2011–12 to 2015–16.

The number of children discharged from out-of-home care remained relatively stable between 2011–12 and 2012–13. This was followed by a fall of 10%, from 9,360 in 2012–13 to 8,409 in 2013–14. The substantial increase in the total number of children discharged in 2014–15 (11,138) was largely due to legislative reforms in New South Wales. In 2015–16, the number of children discharged has returned to levels similar to those observed in 2012–13 (Table 5.6).

The number of admissions has consistently outnumbered discharges; in 2015–16, there were 3,035 more children admitted to out-of-home care than were discharged.

**Table 5.6: Number of children discharged from out-of-home care, states and territories, 2011–12 to 2015–16**

Year	NSW <sup>(a)</sup>	Vic	Qld <sup>(b)</sup>	WA <sup>(c)</sup>	SA	Tas <sup>(d)</sup>	ACT <sup>(e)</sup>	NT	Total
2011–12	2,981	3,123	1,350	710	361	241	168	370	9,304
2012–13	2,762	2,950	1,564	884	440	241	209	310	9,360
2013–14	2,467	2,487	1,520	817	485	220	179	234	8,409
2014–15	4,738	2,637	1,907	822	454	188	146	246	11,138
2015–16	2,676	3,031	2,150	918	445	153	137	284	9,794

(a) NSW data for 2014–15 are not comparable with any other year's data. NSW Safe Home for Life (SHFL) legislative reforms, effective 29 October 2014, transitioned eligible children/young people to the independent care of their guardian. These children/young people exited out-of-home care in 2014–15.

(b) Qld data produced from the CP NMDS from 2014–15 onward are not comparable with data for previous years.

(c) WA data exclude children on third-party parental responsibility orders and from 2015–16 includes children placed in boarding schools.

(d) Tas data exclude children not under care and protection orders placed with relatives for whom a financial contribution is made under the Supported Extended Family or Relatives Allowance programs.

(e) Out-of-home care data for the ACT includes some young people 18 years and over whose carers receive a full carer payment. This is generally to facilitate completion of schooling without change to the placement.

#### Notes

1. The data for children exiting care include those who left care and had not returned in less than 60 days.
2. If a child has more than 1 discharge from care, the child is only counted for 1 discharge for the year.
3. Data may include children who were discharged on their 18th birthday.

Sources: AIHW Child Protection Collections 2011–12 to 2015–16.

## Children in out-of-home care

Nationally, the rate of children in out-of-home care in Australia at 30 June rose between 2012 and 2016, from 7.7 to 8.6 per 1,000 (Table 5.7). Overall, 6,827 more children (an increase of 17%) were in out-of-home care at 30 June 2016 compared with 30 June 2012.

Increases in the rate of children in out-of-home care may reflect the cumulative impact of children being admitted to, and remaining in, out-of-home care. This is evident in the higher proportion of children who have been in care for 5 years or more compared with 2012 (Table S45).

**Table 5.7: Children aged 0–17 in out-of-home care, states and territories, 30 June 2012 to 30 June 2016 (number and number per 1,000)**

Year	NSW <sup>(a)</sup>	Vic	Qld <sup>(b)</sup>	WA <sup>(c)</sup>	SA <sup>(d)</sup>	Tas <sup>(e)</sup>	ACT <sup>(f)</sup>	NT	Total
<b>Number</b>									
2012	17,192	6,207	7,999	3,400	2,548	1,009	566	700	39,621
2013	17,422	6,542	8,136	3,425	2,657	1,067	558	742	40,549
2014	18,192	7,710	8,185	3,723	2,631	1,054	606	908	43,009
2015	16,843	8,567	8,448	3,954	2,838	1,061	671	1,017	43,399
2016	17,800	9,705	8,670	4,100	3,243	1,150	748	1,032	46,448
<b>Number per 1,000</b>									
2012	10.4	5.0	7.3	6.1	7.2	8.7	6.9	11.1	7.7
2013	10.4	5.2	7.4	5.9	7.4	9.3	6.7	11.6	7.7
2014	10.8	6.0	7.3	6.3	7.3	9.2	7.1	14.3	8.1
2015	9.9	6.6	7.5	6.7	7.9	9.3	7.7	16.0	8.1
2016	10.4	7.3	7.6	6.9	9.0	10.1	8.4	16.2	8.6

(a) NSW data at 30 June 2015 onwards are not comparable with previous years' data. NSW Safe Home for Life (SHFL) legislative reforms, effective 29 October 2014, transitioned eligible children/young people to the independent care of their guardian. These children/young people exited and are no longer counted in out-of-home care.

(b) Qld data produced from the CP NMDS from 2014–15 onward are not comparable with data for previous years.

(c) WA data exclude children on third-party parental responsibility orders and from 2015–16 includes children placed in boarding schools.

(d) SA could provide the number of children in out-of-home care only where the department is making a financial contribution to the care of a child (this excludes cases where financial payment was offered and declined).

(e) Tas data exclude children not under care and protection orders placed with relatives for whom a financial contribution is made under the Supported Extended Family or Relatives Allowance programs.

(f) Out-of-home care data for the ACT includes some young people 18 years and over whose carers receive a full carer payment. This is generally to facilitate completion of schooling without change to the placement.

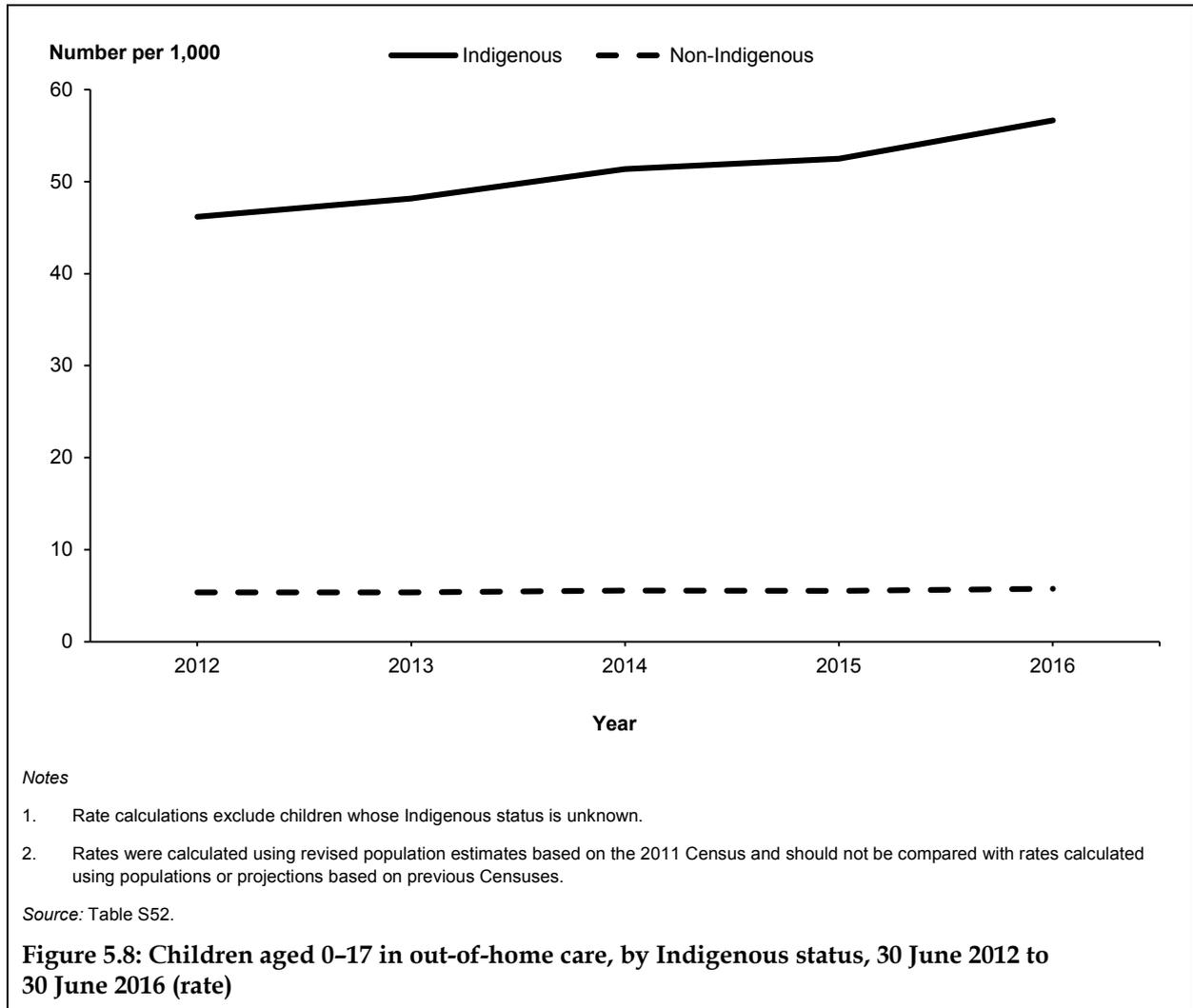
#### Notes

1. Some numbers and rates may not match those published in previous publications of Child protection Australia due to retrospective updates to data.
2. Rates were calculated using revised population estimates based on the 2011 Census and should not be compared with rates calculated using populations or projections based on previous Censuses. Refer to Table S55 for the populations used in the calculation of rates.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2016.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

The rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children placed in out-of-home care has risen steadily since 2012, from 46.2 to 56.6 per 1,000 children, while the non-Indigenous rate has risen slightly, from 5.4 to 5.8 per 1,000 children (Figure 5.8). As with the rate of children on care and protection orders (see Chapter 4), the steady rise in the rate of Indigenous children in out-of-home care has largely driven the rise in the overall rate of children in out-of-home care.



## 6 Carers

Carers are individuals who have undergone screening and received authorisation to provide placements in their private households for children in funded out-of-home care. Across Australia, the vast majority (94%) of children in out-of-home care are placed in home-based care, primarily with foster carers or with relatives/kin (see Chapter 5); however, a smaller number of carers also provide other types of care, including respite and long-term guardianship care (see Box 6.1 for carer types).

### 6.1 Overview and key statistics

As 87% of children in out-of-home care at 30 June 2016 were in foster or relative/kinship care (Table S35), this chapter predominantly focuses on these carer households. However, some expanded reporting, including other authorised carers, is presented in Box 6.2.

At 30 June 2016, there were about 10,000 foster carer households and just over 14,800 relative/kinship households that had 1 or more children placed with them (Table 6.1). The number of households approved/authorised to provide funded out-of-home care placements on an average day is reported in Table S46.

**Table 6.1: Key foster and relative/kinship carer statistics, at 30 June 2016 and during 2015–16**

	<b>Number</b>
Foster carer household with a placement at 30 June 2016	10,031
Foster carer households with a placement during 2015–16	13,142
Relative/kinship carer household with a placement at 30 June 2016	14,811
Relative/kinship carer households with a placement during 2015–16	20,044
	%
Foster carer households with multiple children in placements at 30 June 2016	52
Relative/kinship carer households with multiple children in placements at 30 June 2016	40

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2016.

### Box 6.1: Carer types

**Respite carers:** Carers who provide short-term accommodation for children and young people where the intention is for the child to return to their prior place of residence. Some carers are authorised to provide respite care only. Respite placements may include:

- *respite from birth family* – where a child is placed in out-of-home care on a temporary basis for reasons other than child protection (for example, the child’s parents are ill or unable to care for them on a temporary basis; as a family support mechanism to prevent entry into full-time care; as part of the reunification process; or as a shared care arrangement)
- *respite from placement* – where a child spends regular, short and agreed periods of time with a carer other than their primary carer.

**Long-term guardianship carers:** Carers who have been screened/authorised only for the purpose of having a child placed with them under an order where parental responsibility is transferred to a third party. Long-term guardianship differs from foster or relative/kinship care in that the carer assumes parental responsibility for a long-term period (usually to the age of 18).

#### Foster and relative/kinship care

Foster care and relative/kinship care are forms of overnight care provided by 1 or more adults in a private household to a child who is living apart from their natural or adoptive parents.

- **Foster care** is where the caregiver is authorised and reimbursed (or was offered but declined reimbursement) by the state/territory for the care of the child. These substitute parents are generally called ‘foster carers’. There are varying degrees of reimbursement made to foster carers.
- **Relative/kinship care** is where the caregiver is a relative (other than parents), considered to be family or a close friend, or is a member of the child or young person’s community (in accordance with their culture) who is reimbursed (or who has been offered but declined reimbursement) by the state/territory for the care of the child.

State and territory differences in policies and practices in relation to foster care and relative/kinship care should be taken into account when interpreting the data. Some notable differences include:

- There are varying degrees of reimbursement made to foster carers. For example, some carers are paid a wage beyond the reimbursement of expenses.
- Where a carer is authorised to provide both foster and relative/kinship care, they may be included in the count of both foster and relative/kinship carers.
- In some jurisdictions, respite carers known to the department are registered as either ‘general foster carers’ or ‘relative carers’ and therefore may be included in the scope of these collections.

While the majority of carer households are authorised to provide foster or relative/kinship care, a smaller number of carers also provide other types of care, including respite and long-term guardianship care (see Box 6.2).

### Box 6.2: Placements provided by all carer households at 30 June 2016

Expanding reporting to count the total number of unique carer households can give insight into the total number of children placed in the household regardless of the placement type, as some carer households may be approved/authorised to provide more than 1 care type. It also allows information about carer households that provide placements other than foster or relative/kinship care to be included in the count.

Unique household analyses exclude New South Wales. At 30 June 2016, there were 13,840 unique carer households with a placement; of these, 57% had 1 child placed with them, 41% had 2–4 children placed and almost 3% had 5 or more children placed with them (Table S47).

## 6.2 Foster carer households

At 30 June 2016, there were 10,031 households with 1 or more foster care placements (Table 6.2). Nationally, during 2015–16, there were 13,142 households that had 1 or more foster care placements at some point during the year (Table 6.2).

**Table 6.2: Number of foster carer households with a placement, states and territories, at 30 June 2016 and during 2015–16**

Households	NSW <sup>(a)</sup>	Vic	Qld <sup>(b)</sup>	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT <sup>(c)</sup>	Total
Households with a placement at 30 June 2016	4,354	930	2,639	862	712	233	148	153	10,031
Household with a placement during 2015–16	5,285	1,613	3,468	1,133	938	309	193	203	13,142

(a) In NSW, the total number of foster carer households are those that had a placement in the past 2 years. 'Households with a placement at 30 June' includes those households that had only a short-term respite placement during the year. Counts of foster carer households are slightly understated as complete information is not available for some non-government agencies.

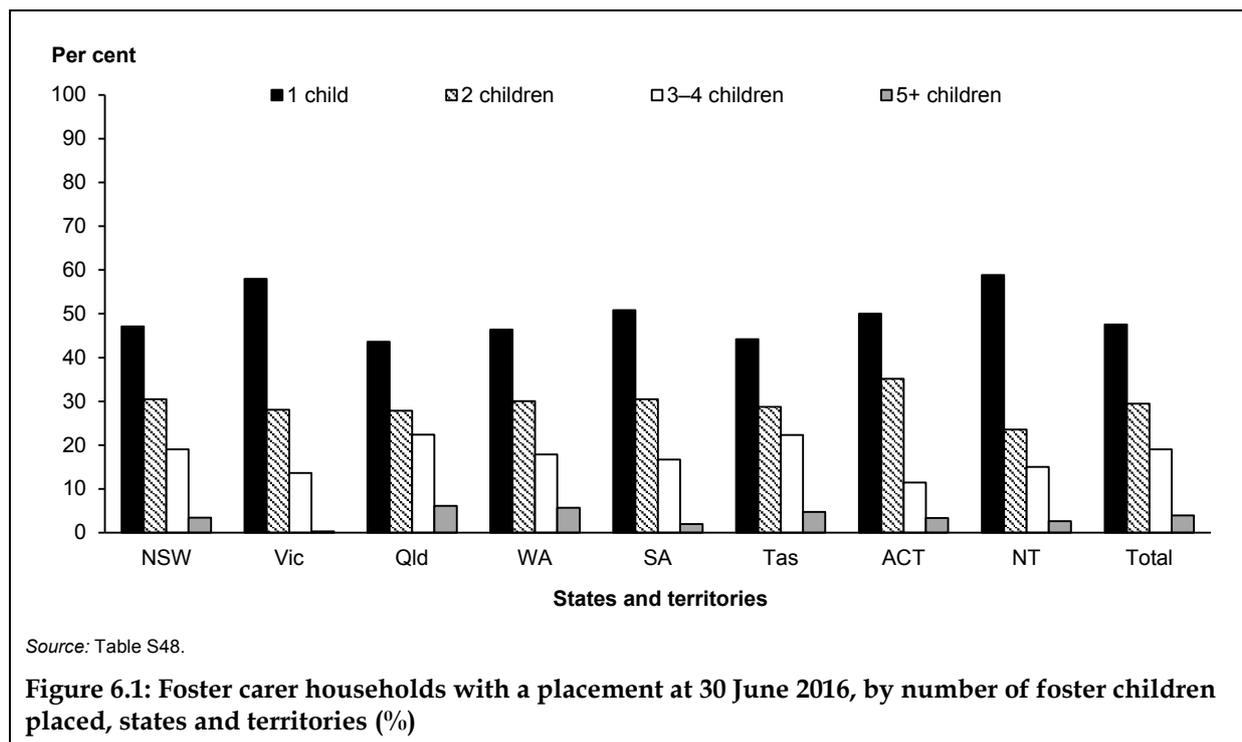
(b) Qld data include provisionally approved carer households.

(c) Prior to 2015–16, carer data for the NT were provided in aggregated format. In 2015–16, the data have been sourced from the CP NMDS and are not comparable with data for previous years.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2016.

### Number of children in placements

Across jurisdictions, 52% of foster carer households with a placement had multiple children placed with them at 30 June 2016. The percentage of carer households with multiple children placed with them ranged from 41% in the Northern Territory to 56% in Queensland and Tasmania. Most households with multiple placements had between 2 and 4 foster children placed, while nearly 4% had 5 or more children (Figure 6.1). Households with multiple children placed with them may partially reflect the fact that, in many jurisdictions, priority is given to keeping siblings together.



## Household commencements and exits

Among jurisdictions with available data, 1,971 households commenced foster care and 1,564 exited foster care in 2015–16 (Table 6.3). In Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory, more households exited than commenced foster care. With the need for foster carers increasing, the attraction and retention of appropriately skilled foster carers is a high priority across Australia (COAG 2009).

**Table 6.3: Number of households commencing and exiting foster care, states and territories, 2015–16**

Households	NSW <sup>(a)</sup>	Vic	Qld <sup>(b)</sup>	WA	SA	Tas <sup>(c)</sup>	ACT	NT <sup>(d)</sup>	Total
Households commencing foster care	491	341	515	332	118	55	27	92	<b>1,971</b>
Households exiting foster care	n.a.	568	471	199	165	56	33	72	<b>1,564</b>

- (a) NSW data include Community Services and non-government agency foster carer households. This count excludes some non-government agency carer households because there is no information collected on their commencement date. The count of carer households commencing foster care in NSW is not a count of unique carer households as some households may be authorised for more than 1 carer type. For households exiting foster care, NSW was unable to provide data for 2015–16.
- (b) Qld data do not include provisionally approved carer households that have started providing foster care but are yet to receive approval as a foster carer for this table.
- (c) In Tas, delays in administrative processes can result in carers being maintained as approved in the system when they are no longer accepting child placements. For the purpose of reporting households exiting foster care, if no termination date is recorded, a foster carer household that has not had a placement in 12 months is considered to have exited.
- (d) Prior to 2015–16, carer data for the NT were provided in aggregated format. In 2015–16, the data have been sourced from the CP NMDS and are not comparable with data for previous years.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2016.

## 6.3 Relative/kinship carer households

At 30 June 2016, there were 14,811 households with 1 or more relative/kinship care placement (Table 6.4). There were 20,044 households that had a relative/kinship placement during 2015–16.

**Table 6.4: Number of relative/kinship carer households with a placement, state and territories, at 30 June 2016 and during 2015–16**

Households	NSW <sup>(a)</sup>	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas <sup>(b)</sup>	ACT	NT <sup>(c)</sup>	Total
Households with a placement at 30 June 2016	6,965	3,689	1,436	1,171	961	219	227	143	<b>14,811</b>
Household with a placement during 2015–16	8,310	5,873	2,050	1,645	1,382	306	280	198	<b>20,044</b>

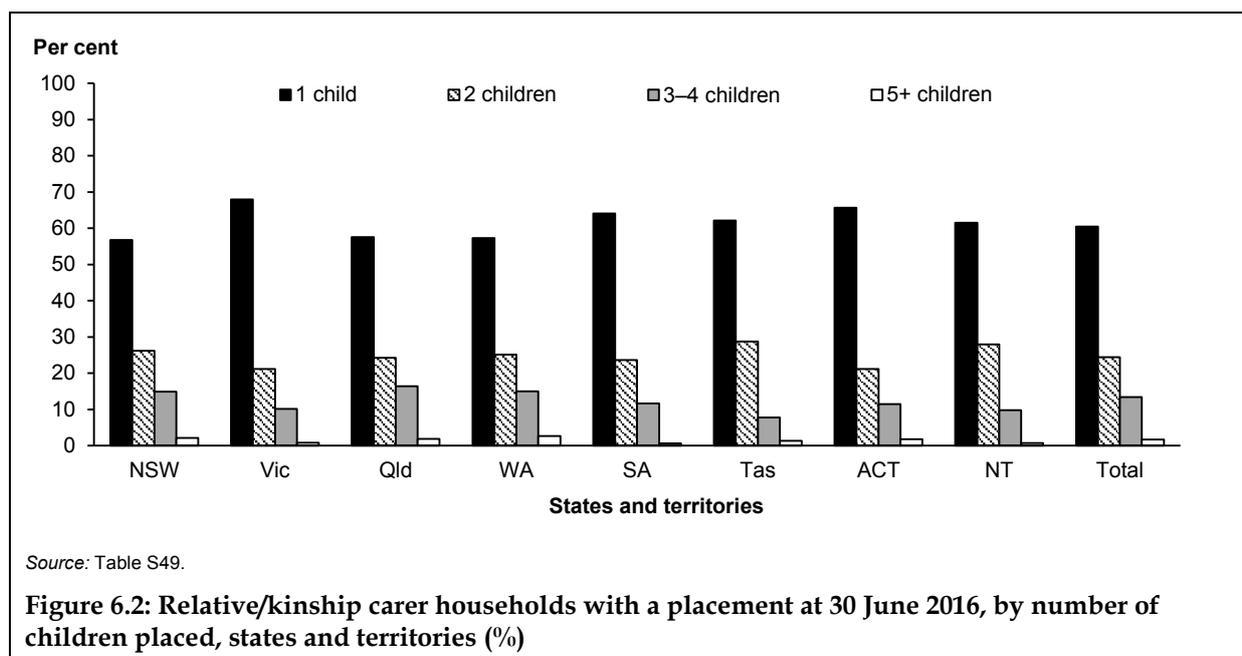
- (a) In NSW, the total number of relative/kinship carer households are those that had a placement in the past 2 years. 'Households with a placement at 30 June' includes those households that had only a short-term respite placement during the year.
- (b) In Tas, delays in administrative processes can result in carers being maintained as approved in the system when they are no longer accepting child placements. As such, the number of relative/kinship carer households reported in this table is considered to be higher than the actual number. For the purpose of reporting active relative/kinship care households, if no termination date is recorded, a relative/kinship care household that has not had a placement in 12 months is considered to be no longer active.
- (c) Prior to 2015–16, carer data for the NT were provided in aggregated format. In 2015–16, the data have been sourced from the CP NMDS and are not comparable with data for previous years.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2016.

### Number of children in placements

Across jurisdictions, 60% of relative/kinship carer households with a placement had 1 child placed with them at 30 June 2016, compared with 48% of foster carer households. These findings are similar to those for 2014–15 (AIHW 2016b).

The percentage of relative/kinship carer households with 1 child ranged from 57% in New South Wales and Western Australia to 68% in Victoria. Across Australia, 38% of households with a placement had between 2 and 4 children placed and 2% had 5 or more (Figure 6.2).



## Household commencements and exits

Among those jurisdictions with available data, 5,746 households commenced relative/kinship care and 3,618 exited relative/kinship care in 2015–16. In all jurisdictions except Tasmania and the Northern Territory, a greater number of households commenced than exited relative/kinship care (Table 6.5). A similar trend was observed in 2014–15 (AIHW 2016b).

**Table 6.5: Number of households commencing and exiting relative/kinship care, states and territories, 2015–16**

Households	NSW <sup>(a)</sup>	Vic	Qld <sup>(b)</sup>	WA	SA	Tas <sup>(c)</sup>	ACT	NT <sup>(d)</sup>	Total
Households commencing relative/kinship care	1,283	2,548	616	638	394	111	78	78	5,746
Households exiting relative/kinship care	n.a.	2,125	511	579	69	194	53	87	3,618

(a) NSW data include Community Services and non-government agency relative/kinship carer households. NSW was unable to provide data for 2015–16 for 'Households exiting relative/kinship care'.

(b) Qld data produced from the CP NMDS from 2014–15 onward are not comparable with data for previous years. Qld data do not include provisionally approved carer households that have started providing relative/kinship care but are yet to receive approval as a relative/kinship carer in this table.

(c) In Tas, delays in administrative processes can result in carers being maintained as approved in the system when they are no longer accepting child placements. For the purpose of reporting households exiting relative/kinship care, if no termination date is recorded, a relative/kinship carer household that has not had a placement in 12 months is considered to have exited.

(d) Prior to 2015–16, carer data for the NT were provided in aggregated format. In 2015–16, the data have been sourced from the CP NMDS and are not comparable with data for previous years.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2016.

# 7 Intensive family support services

This chapter provides information on children commencing intensive family support services in 2015–16 that are funded by the state and territory departments responsible for child protection. Intensive family support services aim to prevent imminent separation of children from their primary caregivers due to child protection concerns, and to reunify families where separation has already occurred. See Box 7.1 for the criteria for intensive family support services.

## 7.1 Overview and key statistics

### Key statistics

In 2015–16, there were 302 intensive family support service providers nationally (Table 7.1). The services were delivered across more than 300 locations, most of which (83%) were in capital cities or other urban centres (AIHW Intensive Family Support Services Aggregate Collection 2015–16). Nationally, almost 27,500 children aged 0–17 commenced intensive family support services during 2015–16 (Table 7.1).

**Table 7.1: Key intensive family support services statistics, 2015–16**

	Number
Number of intensive family support services	302
Number of children commencing intensive family support services	27,422

*Note:* Data reported excludes the NT. The NT does not currently fund services that provide the services as defined as Prevention or Reunification services. New services are being proposed under the Family Intervention Framework that will comply with these stated definitions.

*Source:* AIHW Child Protection Collection 2016.

### Box 7.1: Intensive family support services

To be included in the intensive family support services data collection, services must meet all the following criteria:

- They are provided explicitly to work to prevent separation or to reunify families.
- A range of services are provided as part of an integrated strategy focusing on improving family functioning and skills, rather than just 1 type of service, such as emergency or respite care.
- They are intensive in nature, averaging at least 4 hours of service provision per week for a specified short-term period (usually less than 180 days).
- Generally, referrals will come from the statutory agency and will have been identified through the child protection process.

Currently, the national data collection is limited to intensive family support services and does not include other types of family support services that do not meet these criteria. Work was previously undertaken to develop a Treatment and Support Services National Minimum Data Set; however, this has not been implemented for national reporting due to limited data availability and quality.

## 7.2 Children commencing services

### Age profile

Almost half (43%) of children commencing intensive family support services were aged under 5 (among those jurisdictions with available data). However, the age distribution varied across jurisdictions – the percentage of children aged 0–4 commencing intensive family support services ranged from 31% in Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory to 53% in New South Wales (Table 7.2).

**Table 7.2: Number of children aged 0–17 commencing intensive family support services, by age at commencement of service, states and territories, 2015–16**

Age group (years)	NSW	Vic	Qld <sup>(a)</sup>	WA	SA	Tas <sup>(b)</sup>	ACT	NT	Total
<b>Number</b>									
0–4	5,397	3,400	1,657	381	297	560	115	..	11,807
5–9	3,055	2,632	1,322	320	258	626	117	..	8,330
10–17	1,761	3,117	1,034	214	145	620	135	..	7,026
Unknown	5	235	18	1	0	0	0	..	259
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,218</b>	<b>9,384</b>	<b>4,031</b>	<b>916</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>1,806</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>..</b>	<b>27,422</b>
<b>%</b>									
0–4	52.8	36.2	41.1	41.6	42.4	31.0	31.3	..	43.1
5–9	29.9	28.0	32.8	34.9	36.9	34.7	31.9	..	30.4
10–17	17.2	33.2	25.7	23.4	20.7	34.3	36.8	..	25.6
Unknown	0.0	2.5	0.4	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	..	0.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>..</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(a) Qld provides a range of services and support that fall within the definition of intensive family support services. Due to issues with data availability, the number of children reported in this measure reflects only 1 type of service, known in Qld as the Family Intervention Services. This number does not reflect the full scope of intensive family support services provided. Action is being undertaken to widen the data collection to include other intensive family support services in the future.

(b) Services in Tas are provided under the title of Integrated Family Support Services. Tas data are compiled from aggregate data provided by community-sector organisations and cannot be validated by the department. It should be noted that as data are not provided by all community-sector organisations, the reported amounts may understate the true number of clients receiving a service.

#### Notes

1. Data reported exclude data for the NT. The NT does not currently fund services that provide the services as defined as Prevention or Reunification services. New services are being proposed under the Family Intervention Framework that will comply with these stated definitions.
2. Percentages in the table may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2016.

The vast majority (86%) of children who commenced an intensive family support service were living with their parents. For those jurisdictions with available data, this ranged from 64% of children in Western Australia to 94% of children in New South Wales (Table S50).

In Queensland, a substantially higher percentage of children in out-of-home care used intensive family support services – 29% compared with 7% overall for other jurisdictions with available data.

# Appendix A: Technical notes

## Population data

In 2014, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) revised the methodology used to obtain estimates of the resident population for Indigenous and non-Indigenous children. This resulted in an increase in estimates of the number of Indigenous Australians based on the 2011 Census compared with those based on the 2006 Census (see ABS 2013a). Consequently, rates calculated with the 2011 Indigenous population estimates are lower than those based on the 2006 Census.

To maintain consistency in the denominator and allow comparisons over time, all rates for the period 2011–12 to 2015–16 were calculated using the 2011 Census-based population estimates. This includes back-cast historical estimates – population estimates used in the calculation of historical rates are available in online supplementary tables (tables S53–S56). Therefore, rates presented in this report are not comparable with rates calculated using estimates based on the 2006 Census, including those published in editions of *Child protection Australia* before *Child protection Australia 2013–14*.

For *Child protection Australia 2015–16*, the AIHW has used the following population data:

- ‘All children’ populations as at 31 December for 2009 to 2013 derived from Australian Demographic Statistics, December 2013 (ABS 2014a)
- ‘All children’ populations as at 31 December 2014 derived from Australian Demographic Statistics, December 2014 (ABS 2015a)
- ‘All children’ populations as at 31 December 2015 derived from Australian Demographic Statistics, December 2015 (ABS 2016a)
- ‘All children’ populations as at 30 June 2009 to 2014 derived from Australian Demographic Statistics, June 2014 (ABS 2014b)
- ‘All children’ populations as at 30 June 2015 derived from Australian Demographic Statistics, June 2015 (ABS 2015b)
- ‘All children’ populations as at 30 June 2016 derived from Australian Demographic Statistics, June 2016 (ABS 2016b)
- ‘Indigenous children’ populations (used to calculate Indigenous rates) derived from the Estimates and projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2001 to 2026 (Series B) (ABS 2014c)
- December Indigenous populations calculated as the average of the June population projections either side of the December. For example, the December 2013 population for Indigenous children is the average of the June 2013 and June 2014 population projections
- ‘Non-Indigenous’ populations derived by subtracting the Indigenous projection count from the All children Estimated Resident Populations (ERPs).

## Calculation of rates

### Rates for 'All children'

The rates for 'All children' on care and protection orders and 'All children' in out-of-home care were calculated using the ABS most recent population estimates for 30 June 2016 (ABS 2016b). The rates of 'All children' who were the subjects of child protection substantiations during 2015–16 were calculated using the ABS population estimates for 31 December 2015 (ABS 2016a).

#### Rates of children on care and protection orders were calculated in the following way:

$$\frac{\text{Number of children aged 0–17 on care and protection orders at 30 June 2016}}{\text{ABS estimated population of children aged 0–17 at 30 June 2016}} \times 1,000$$

#### Rates of children in out-of-home care were calculated in the following way:

$$\frac{\text{Number of children aged 0–17 in out-of-home care at 30 June 2016}}{\text{ABS estimated population of children aged 0–17 at 30 June 2016}} \times 1,000$$

#### Rates of children who were the subjects of child protection substantiations were calculated in the following way:

$$\frac{\text{Number of children aged 0–17 who were the subjects of substantiations in 2015–16}}{\text{ABS estimated population aged 0–17 at 31 December 2015}} \times 1,000$$

Note that legislation and practices differ across jurisdictions in relation to children aged 17. In some jurisdictions, children aged 17 are not substantiated and this means the number per 1,000 children who were the subjects of substantiations may be lower for those jurisdictions. Where substantiation rates are calculated for the 'less than 1' and '0–17' age groups, unborn children are excluded; these children are included in the calculation of substantiation rates for 'All children'. As population estimates do not include unborn children, the 'All children' rate may represent a slight overestimate.

### Rates for 'Indigenous' and 'non-Indigenous' children

The same basic method outlined for rates for 'All children' was used to calculate the rates for Indigenous and non-Indigenous children; however, different methodologies were used to determine the denominators.

Rates for Indigenous children on care and protection orders and Indigenous children in out-of-home care were calculated using the Indigenous population estimates for 30 June 2016 (ABS 2014c).

The rate of Indigenous children who were the subjects of child protection substantiations during 2015–16 was calculated using the average of the 30 June 2015 and 30 June 2016 Indigenous population estimates (ABS 2014c) as a proxy for 31 December 2015.

Non-Indigenous population estimates were derived by subtracting the Indigenous population estimates from the 'All children' population estimates.

Rates for states and territories with small numbers of children in their child protection data and small Indigenous populations (notably the Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania) should be interpreted carefully. Small changes in the numbers of Indigenous children in the child protection systems, or in population estimates, can have a large impact on rates.

## Rate ratio

Rates can be compared using a rate ratio, which is one rate divided by another. Rate ratios should be interpreted with caution where there are small denominators or where a large proportion of data is recorded as 'unknown'. In *Child protection Australia* reporting, rate ratios are mainly used to compare Indigenous and non-Indigenous rates and to provide a measure of the level of Indigenous over-representation. Rates are also presented to guide interpretation.

Rate ratios are not calculated where 1 or both of the rates have fewer than 5 young people in the numerator.

## Age

Age is always calculated in whole years. For example, a child who was 5 years and 9 months old is recorded as being aged 5.

Throughout *Child protection Australia 2015–16*, the AIHW has calculated age at different points in time for a child, depending on the analysis in question:

- For 30 June analyses, age was calculated as at 30 June 2016.
- For analyses of events occurring during the year, age was calculated at the relevant point in time during 2015–16:
  - for analyses of children who were the subject of a child protection notification or substantiation, age was calculated at the earliest date of notification during the period
  - for analyses of children who were admitted to, or discharged from, a care and protection order or an out-of-home care placement, age was calculated at the date of first admission and first discharge during the period.
- For analyses of children receiving child protection services, age was calculated at the earliest point of contact during 2015–16 or at 1 July 2015 if the child was on an ongoing care and protection order or in an ongoing out-of-home care placement at the beginning of the period.
- For 'average day' analyses, age was calculated on each day of the event being analysed. This means that a child or young person can potentially contribute to the reported averages for 2 different ages if the event being analysed spanned either side of their birthday. For example, a 4-year-old child, whose birthday is 19 May, is placed on a care and protection order on 1 May until 31 May. For the days before their birthday, the child would contribute to the reported average with an age of 4. From the day of their birthday until the end of the order, the child would contribute to the reported average with an age of 5.

## Average and median

Two measures of 'central tendency' (the central value or typical value for a probability distribution) are reported in *Child protection Australia 2015–16*:

- **Average (mean)** – calculated by summing all the values and dividing by the number of observations. In *Child protection Australia*, averages are used in the reporting of 'average day' numbers and the average co-occurrence of abuse and neglect.
- **Median** – the middle value of a set of observations, when arranged in order of value. Medians are often reported where data are not normally distributed, or include extreme values that would distort the average. In *Child protection Australia*, median age is reported for several aspects of the child protection system, including children receiving child protection services and children admitted to, and discharged from, out-of-home care.

## Identification of Indigenous status

### Children

The practices used to identify and record the Indigenous status of children vary across states and territories, with some jurisdictions recording large numbers of unknowns. No state or territory can validate the data on Indigenous children by other means and the quality of the data is therefore unknown.

In this collection, children are counted as Indigenous if they are identified as such in the state and territory data collections. Children whose Indigenous status is recorded as 'unknown' are excluded, where possible, from calculations of rates and proportions. The counts for Indigenous children are therefore likely to be an underestimate of the number of Indigenous children in the child protection system.

Prior to 2009–10, notifications, investigations and substantiations data for non-Indigenous children included children of unknown Indigenous status. The compilation of time series data using previously published reports should acknowledge a break in the time series between 2008–09 and 2009–10 when reporting by Indigenous status.

### Caregivers

In the out-of-home care data collection, the Indigenous status of caregivers was collected as well as the Indigenous status of children in out-of-home care. Carers who are identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are included in the Indigenous category. Where the Indigenous children were living in facility-based care specifically for Indigenous children, the caregiver was counted as Indigenous. Where children were living in other types of facility-based care, the caregiver was not counted as Indigenous.

## **Points of analysis**

### **Average day**

Counts of people subject to an event (such as a type of child protection order) on an average day are calculated by summing the number of days each person was subject to the same event during the year and dividing this total by the number of days in the financial year.

For example, the number of children and young people subject to a finalised guardianship or custody order on an average day was calculated by summing the number of days each child or young person was on this order type during the year and dividing this total by the number of days in the financial year.

For the number on an average day, components may not sum to the total as:

- people can experience different types of events on the same day (for example, 2 different, consecutive child protection orders)
- a person's age may change part way through an event
- the number on an average day is rounded to the nearest whole person.

For example, if there are 3.4 girls on an average day and 3.4 boys on an average day, the total is 6.8 children and young people. When these numbers are rounded, the corresponding table would show a count of 3 girls, 3 boys and a total of 7 children and young people.

## During the year

Counts of people during the year are calculated by counting each distinct person subject to the event of interest during the financial year. Each person is counted only once, even if that person had multiple occurrences of the event during the year. For example, when calculating the number of children and young people who were the subjects of substantiations of child protection notifications during the year, a child or young person will be counted if a notification received during the financial year was substantiated. That child, however, will only contribute a count of 1 regardless of how many notifications were substantiated for them in the financial year.

## 30 June (at the end of the financial year)

Counts of people at 30 June are calculated by counting each distinct person for whom the event of interest was ongoing at the end of the financial year. Each person is counted only once, even if that person had multiple occurrences of the event ongoing at 30 June. In instances where a child or young person has multiple child protection orders ongoing at 30 June, the child or young person is counted against the national order type that represented the highest level of intervention. In instances where a child or young person has multiple living arrangements ongoing at 30 June, the child or young person is counted against the living arrangement type that is considered their usual placement.

For example, when calculating the number of children and young people on a care and protection order at 30 June, a child or young person will be counted if they were on a care and protection order during the reporting period and the order had not ended, or ended after 30 June. If the child or young person had an ongoing finalised guardianship order and an ongoing interim order at 30 June, they would be counted in the finalised guardianship order category, as this represents the higher level of intervention of the 2 orders.

## Socioeconomic area

*Child protection Australia* reporting uses the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), developed by the ABS to analyse socioeconomic status (ABS 2013c).

The SEIFA comprises 4 indexes that are constructed using information from the 5-yearly Census of Population and Housing. These indexes are the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage, the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage, the Index of Economic Resources and the Index of Education and Occupation.

The Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD) is used to compare the average level of socioeconomic advantage and disadvantage. The IRSAD is the

SEIFA index used in this report, ranking geographical areas on a continuum from 'most disadvantaged' to 'least disadvantaged' using a combination of income, education, employment, occupation, housing and other Census variables (ABS 2013c). These Census variables relate to both advantage and disadvantage, including low levels of income and education, as well as high levels of education and income. This index can be used to measure both disadvantage and advantage. A high score indicates a relatively high level of advantage and a relatively low level of disadvantage. An area containing some relatively disadvantaged people and some relatively advantaged people may have a low score on the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage, due to the levels of disadvantage, but a relatively high score on the IRSAD, due to the existence of both advantage and disadvantage. Population-based quintiles are used.

Socioeconomic status is measured by allocating the relevant SEIFA population-based (2011 population) quintile score to postcode information available for the child or young person. Invalid, missing or unknown postcodes of last known home address were excluded from the analysis.

Some postcode areas were split between 2 or more areas with different SEIFA scores. Where this was the case, the data were weighted according to the proportion of the population of the postcode area in each SEIFA area.

The SEIFA represents the average of all people living in the area, and not the socioeconomic status of a particular individual living in the area. Therefore, socioeconomic analyses in *Child protection Australia* reporting indicate the level of socioeconomic advantage and disadvantage in the area corresponding to the postcode information available for the child or young person, not the level of socioeconomic advantage and disadvantage of the child or young person or their family.

If inferences are made about individuals in an area based purely on SEIFA (the characteristics of the area in which they live), they could be misleading. This brings the potential for error in any conclusions, referred to as the ecological fallacy. Area-level and individual-level socioeconomic disadvantage are interrelated but distinct concepts, and thus are measured differently. Using its Socio-Economic Index for Individuals, the ABS found that the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory have the greatest proportions of highly socioeconomically diverse neighbourhoods and, as an aggregate measure, SEIFA captures only a fraction of the true level of disadvantage being experienced in these jurisdictions. SEIFA information used at a suburb or postcode level can have the effect of minimising the actual levels of disadvantage in some areas (ABS 2011).

## Remoteness

*Child protection Australia* reporting uses the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Remoteness Structure developed by the ABS to analyse the remoteness of a child's usual place of residence at the time of notification and the remoteness of a child's living arrangement (ABS 2014d).

The ASGS Remoteness Structure comprises of broad geographical regions— Remoteness Areas (RAs), which share common remoteness characteristics. This report uses RAs that divide Australia into 5 categories— *Major cities, Inner regional, Outer regional, Remote* and *Very remote* Australia (ABS 2014d).

RAs are based on the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA+), developed by the University of Adelaide. ARIA+ is based on road distances to services centres and is used

in conjunction with the ABS's Statistical Area Level 1 (SA1) to determine the remoteness of a particular region in Australia (ABS 2014d).

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) uses postcodes to match remoteness information to child protection data. These data include postcode at notification and postcode of living arrangement. Records with invalid, missing or unknown postcodes at notification and of living arrangements were excluded from the analysis; additionally, New South Wales was excluded from the analyses of remoteness at notification as data were not available. A small number of postcodes were split between 2 or more remoteness areas. For these instances, the data were weighted according to the proportion of the population of the postcode area in each remoteness area.

# Glossary

**Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA+):** The ARIA provides classification of the level of accessibility to goods and services (such as general practitioners, hospitals and specialist care) based on the proximity to these services (measured by road distance).

**administrative arrangement:** An agreement with a child protection department, which has the same effect as a court order of transferring custody or guardianship. This arrangement can also allow a child to be placed in out-of-home care without going through the courts.

**adoption:** A legal process involving the transfer of the rights and responsibilities for the permanent care of a child from the child's parent(s) to their adoptive parent(s). The legal relationship between the child and the parent(s) is severed and any legal rights that existed from birth regarding the birth parent(s), such as inheritance, are removed. In relation to the adoptive parents, the legal rights of the adopted child become the same as they would be if the child had been born to the adoptive parent(s).

**age:** The age of a person in completed years, or 'unborn' for those in utero and 'less than 1' where age is between live birth and under 1 year. The tables containing information for notifications, investigations and substantiations show age at the time of notification. The tables containing information on children on orders by type of living arrangements and children in out-of-home care at 30 June show age at 30 June 2016. Tables containing information on admissions or discharges show age at the time of first admission or discharge. For intensive family support services, age is shown as at the commencement of the service.

**agency:** A body funded by state and territory departments responsible for child protection to provide services.

**anonymous:** Of unknown name.

**Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC):** Common framework defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics for collection and dissemination of geographically classified statistics. The ASGC was implemented in 1984 and the final release was in 2011. It has been replaced by the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS).

**Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS):** Common framework defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics for collection and dissemination of geographically classified statistics. The ASGS replaced the Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) in July 2011.

**capital city:** A state or territory capital city.

**care and protection order:** A legal order or arrangement that gives child protection departments some responsibility for a child's welfare. See also **finalised guardianship or custody order, finalised third-party parental responsibility order, finalised supervisory order, interim and temporary order** and **administrative arrangement**.

**child:** A young person aged 0–17.

**child care personnel:** People engaged in providing occasional, part-time or full-time day care for children.

**child concern report:** Report to a community services department regarding concerns about a child, where there is no indication that a child may have been, or is at risk of being, harmed

through abuse or neglect. This may include concerns about a child's welfare related to the quality of their home environment or the standard of care that they are receiving.

**child protection and support services:** Those departments in each state and territory that are responsible for child protection matters.

**children receiving child protection services:** Children who are the subjects of an investigation of a notification, on a care and protection order, and/or in out-of-home care.

**children subject to orders:** Children aged 0–17 on a care and protection order or other formal arrangement, or children aged 18 or under who were discharged from those care and protection orders/arrangements. See also **care and protection order**.

**custody order:** See **finalised guardianship or custody order**.

**dealt with by other means:** Describes a notification responded to by means other than an investigation, such as by providing advice or referring to services. Notifications dealt with by other means are divided into 2 categories: **notification in process** and **notification resolved without investigation**.

**departmental officer:** Any person employed by a state or territory department responsible for child protection who is not classified under any other 'source of notification' category.

**emotional abuse:** Any act by a person having the care of a child that results in the child suffering any kind of significant emotional deprivation or trauma. Children affected by exposure to family violence are also included in this category.

**family:** Includes **parent/guardian, sibling** and **other relative/kin**.

**family care:** A type of care where the child is residing with parents (natural or adoptive) or other relatives/kin (other than parents) who are not reimbursed. See also **relatives/kin who are not reimbursed**.

**family group home:** A home for children provided by a department or community-sector agency that has live-in, non-salaried carers who are reimbursed and/or subsidised for providing care.

**finalised guardianship or custody order:** Order involving the transfer of legal guardianship to the relevant state or territory department or non-government agency. This order involves considerable intervention in the child's life and that of their family, and is sought only as a last resort. A guardianship order conveys responsibility for the welfare of the child to the guardian (for example, for the child's education, health, religion, accommodation and financial matters). It does not necessarily grant the right to the daily care and control of the child, or the right to make decisions about the daily care and control of the child, which are granted under custody orders.

A custody order is generally an order that places a child in the custody of either the state or territory department responsible for child protection, or a non-government agency. It usually involves the child protection department's being responsible for the daily care and requirements of the child, while the parent retains legal guardianship. Custody alone does not bestow any responsibility regarding the long-term welfare of the child.

Finalised guardianship or custody orders can be a **long-term order** or a **short-term order**.

**finalised investigation:** A notification received between 1 July 2015 and 30 June 2016 that was investigated, with the investigation completed and an outcome recorded by 31 August 2016. The cut-off point of 31 August is applied to allow time for investigating notifications

made close to the end of the previous financial year. The 'outcomes of finalised investigations' are classified into 2 categories: *substantiated* and *not substantiated*.

**finalised supervisory order:** Order giving the department responsible for child protection some responsibility for a child's welfare. Under this order, the department supervises and/or directs the level and type of care that is to be provided to the child.

A child under a supervisory order is generally under the responsibility of his or her parents and the guardianship or custody of the child is unaffected. Finalised supervisory orders are therefore less interventionist than finalised guardianship or custody orders, but require the child's parent or guardian to meet specified conditions, such as medical care of the child.

**finalised third-party parental responsibility order:** Order transferring all duties, powers, responsibilities and authority to which parents are entitled by law to a nominated person(s) whom the court considers appropriate. The nominated person may be an individual, such as a relative, or an officer of the state or territory department responsible for child protection. Third-party parental responsibility may be ordered in the event that a parent is unable to care for a child, with parental responsibility then transferred to a relative, or other nominated person.

Finalised third-party parental responsibility orders can be a **long-term order** or a **short-term order**.

**formal shared care:** Where a case plan exists for children to live in family care and to have regular planned periods in out-of-home care.

**foster care:** A form of out-of-home care where the caregiver is authorised and reimbursed (or was offered but declined reimbursement) by the state/territory for the care of the child. (This category excludes relatives/kin who are reimbursed.) There are varying degrees of reimbursement made to foster carers.

**foster carer household:** A private household containing 1 or more foster carers:

- who have undergone the relevant screening/selection and approval process
- who have received authorisation from the relevant department or agency to enable a child to be placed in their care
- for whom reimbursement is available from the state or territory government for expenses incurred in caring for the child (there are varying degrees of reimbursement made to foster carers)
- who are part of an ongoing review process.

**friend/neighbour:** An unrelated person or acquaintance who is known to, or lives in close proximity to, the subject child or their family, or to the person believed to be responsible for the abuse or neglect.

**guardianship order:** See **finalised guardianship or custody order**.

**home-based out-of-home care:** Care provided for a child who is placed in the home of a carer, who is reimbursed (or who has been offered but declined reimbursement) for the cost of care of that child. There are 4 categories of home-based out-of-home care: **relatives/kin who are reimbursed**, **foster care**, **third-party parental care** and **other home-based out-of-home care**.

**hospital/health centre personnel:** Any person not elsewhere classified who is employed at a public or private hospital or other health centre or clinic.

**households commencing care:** Includes all carer households that, during the year ended 30 June, received authorisation from the relevant department or agency to enable a child to be placed in their care, regardless of whether a child was placed in their care in that period. This includes households that received provisional authorisation (which may be in order to facilitate a placement) while formal approval/registration was being finalised – these households are included only once – at the time of provisional authorisation (and not again when full authorisation is received). Households commencing care for the first time are included. Households whose existing authorisation has been renewed as part of a standard ongoing review process are excluded. Households receiving authorisation to provide respite care only (and not also authorisation to provide general foster or relative/kinship care) are excluded.

**households exiting care:** Includes any carer household that, at some point during the year ended 30 June, were no longer authorised by the relevant department or agency to have a child placed in their care. For example, the carer household may have voluntarily withdrawn/deregistered, or the relevant department or agency may have formally revoked their authorisation. Households changing from provisional authorisation to full authorisation are excluded.

**immigration (Guardianship of Children) orders:** Orders made under the *Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act 1946*. Under this Act, the Minister for Immigration is the legal guardian for unaccompanied humanitarian minors (children under 18 who have entered Australia without a relative to care for them); however, the minister may assign custody of the child to a willing and suitable person in the jurisdiction where a child resides. The assigned person becomes responsible for all matters concerning the child's daily activities, care and welfare. This category captures the arrangements of such children, who are subsequently placed with carers funded by the departments responsible for child protection.

**independent living:** Accommodation including private board and lead tenant households.

**Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD):** One of the set of **Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas** for ranking the average socioeconomic conditions of the population in an area. It is a ranking of the relative advantage or disadvantage of an area that uses a combination of Census variables relating to both advantage and disadvantage including income, education, employment, occupation, and housing.

**Indigenous:** Describes children of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Island descent who identify, and are identified as, an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

**Indigenous status:** The status of a person who identifies as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which they live. See also **Indigenous, non-Indigenous** and **unknown Indigenous status**.

**intensive family support services:** Services that aim to prevent imminent separation of children from their primary caregivers because of child protection concerns, and those services that aim to reunify families where separation has already occurred.

**interim and temporary order:** Order covering the provision of a limited period of supervision and/or placement of a child. Parental responsibility under this order may reside with the parents or with the department responsible for child protection. 'Unfinalised orders' (such as applications to the court for care and protection orders) are also included in this category, unless another finalised order is in place.

**investigation:** The process whereby the relevant department obtains more detailed information about a child who is the subject of a notification received between 1 July 2015 and 30 June 2016. Departmental staff assess the harm, or degree of harm, to the child and their protective needs. An investigation includes sighting or interviewing the child where it is practical to do so. See also **investigation in process**, **investigation closed – no outcome possible** and **finalised investigation**.

**investigation closed – no outcome possible:** An investigation begun for a notification made between 1 July 2015 and 30 June 2016 that was not able to be finalised in order to reach the outcome of ‘substantiated’ or ‘not substantiated’ and for which files were closed for administrative purposes. This may happen, for example, in cases where the family has relocated. These investigations were completed between 1 July 2015 and 30 June 2016.

**investigation in process:** An investigation begun for a notification received between 1 July 2015 and 30 June 2016 which was not completed nor an outcome recorded by 31 August 2016.

**known carer adoption:** Adoption by the foster parent(s) or other non-relative(s) who has been caring for a child in out-of-home care, and has had the responsibility for making decisions about the daily care and control of the child for the relevant period (as specified by the relevant state/territory department) before the adoption.

**living arrangement:** The type of care in which a child on an order was residing. See also **residential care**, **foster care**, **family group home**, **home-based out-of-home care** and **family care**.

**living situation:** The type of care in which the child or children in the family lived at the time of case commencement for intensive family support services. See also **family care**, **out-of-home care**, **formal shared care** and **other living arrangement**.

**location:** The site at which the intensive family support service workers are based. If an agency has more than 1 location, each location must be counted.

**long-term care:** Children who had been continuously in out-of-home care for 2 or more years.

**long-term guardianship carers:** Carers who have a child placed with them under an order where parental responsibility is transferred to them. See also **finalised third-party parental responsibility order**.

**long-term order:** Transfers guardianship/custody to the nominated person for a specified period greater than 2 years, generally until the child reaches the age of 18.

**medical/health personnel:** Includes **medical practitioner**, **hospital/health centre personnel** and **other health personnel**.

**medical practitioner:** Registered medical practitioner; includes both general practitioners and specialists in hospitals or in the community.

**neglect:** Any serious act or omission by a person having the care of a child that, within the bounds of cultural tradition, constitutes a failure to provide conditions that are essential for the healthy physical and emotional development of a child.

**non-government organisation:** Any non-government organisation that provides services to the community on a not-for-profit basis, and is not classified under any other **source of notification** category.

**non-Indigenous:** Describes children who have not been identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent; this excludes children of unknown Indigenous status.

**notification:** Contact made to an authorised department by persons or other bodies alleging child abuse or neglect, child maltreatment or harm to a child.

**notification in process:** Notification where the decision to investigate has not been reached.

**notification resolved without investigation:** Notification responded to by means other than an investigation, such as by providing advice or referring to services.

**not stated:** Describes information that was unknown or not recorded.

**not substantiated:** Describes a notification received between 1 July 2015 and 30 June 2016 where an investigation concluded that there was no reasonable cause to suspect prior, current or future abuse, neglect or harm to the child.

**other health personnel:** Any person engaged in supplementary, paramedical and/or ancillary medical services. This includes nurses, infant welfare sisters, dentists, radiographers, physiotherapists, pharmacists, and so on. It does not include social workers and non-medical hospital/health centre personnel.

**other home-based out-of-home care:** A care type where the child was in home-based out-of-home care, other than with relatives/kin who are reimbursed or in foster care.

**other living arrangement:** Living arrangement not otherwise classified, including unknown living arrangement. For children on orders, this includes any placements made in disability services, psychiatric services, juvenile justice facilities, specialist homelessness services and overnight child care services, boarding schools, hospitals, hotels/motels and the defence forces. These living arrangements may have rostered and/or paid staff and are generally not a home-like environment.

**other out-of-home care:** Out-of-home care placements that are not otherwise categorised, including unknown placement types. This includes boarding schools, hospitals, hotels/motels and the defence forces.

**other relatives/kin:** Relative(s) of the child (other than parents), including grandparents, aunts, uncles or cousins. The relationship can be full, half or step, or through adoption, and can be traced through, or to, a person whose parents were not married to each other at the time of their birth. This category also includes members of Indigenous communities who are accepted by that community as being related to the child.

**other source of notification:** All other persons or organisations not classified by any other source of notification category (for example, ministers of religion or government agencies and instrumentalities not elsewhere classified) and anonymous notifiers.

**other urban:** Cities and towns other than a capital city.

**out-of-home care:** Overnight care for children aged 0–17, where the state makes a financial payment or where a financial payment has been offered but has been declined by the carer. See also **residential care**, **family group home**, **foster care**, **relative/kinship care**, **independent living** and **other out-of-home care**.

**parent/guardian:** A natural or substitute parent, spouse of a natural parent, adoptive parent or spouse of an adoptive parent, or any other person who has an ongoing legal responsibility for the care and protection of a child.

**permanency planning:** The processes undertaken by state and territory departments responsible for child protection to achieve a stable long-term care arrangement (which can be broadly grouped as reunification, third-party parental responsibility orders, long-term finalised guardianship/custody/care and adoption).

**permanent care order:** See **finalised third-party parental responsibility order**.

**physical abuse:** Any non-accidental physical act inflicted upon a child by a person having the care of a child.

**police:** Any member of a Commonwealth, state or territory law enforcement agency.

**prevention services:** Services specifically aimed at assisting families in order to prevent imminent separation of children from their primary caregivers for child protection reasons.

**provisionally approved carer household:** Households that have received provisional authorisation (which may be in order to facilitate a placement of a child), while formal approval/registration is being finalised. This category is only used for jurisdictions where the type of the provisional authorisation is not recorded until the approval/registration process is finalised.

**relative kinship care:** A form of out-of-home care where the caregiver is:

- a relative (other than parents)
- considered to be family or a close friend
- a member of the child or young person's community (in accordance with their culture)
- reimbursed by the state/territory for the care of the child (or who has been offered but declined reimbursement).

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, a kinship carer may be another Indigenous person who is a member of their community, a compatible community or from the same language group.

**relative/kinship carer household:** A private household containing 1 or more relative/kinship carers:

- who have undergone the relevant screening/selection and approval process
- who have received authorisation from the relevant department or agency to enable a relative/kinship child to be placed in their care
- for whom reimbursement is available from a government authority or non-government organisation for expenses incurred in caring for the child (there are varying degrees of reimbursement made to relative/kinship carers)
- who are part of an ongoing review process.

**relatives/kin who are not reimbursed:** Relatives/kin (other than parents) who are not reimbursed by the state/territory for the care of the child.

**relatives/kin who are reimbursed:** Where the caregiver is:

- a relative (other than parents)
- considered to be family or a close friend
- a member of the child or young person's community (in accordance with their culture)
- reimbursed by the state/territory for the care of the child (or who has been offered but declined reimbursement).

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, a kinship carer may be another Indigenous person who is a member of their community, a compatible community or from the same language group.

**remoteness classification:** Each state and territory is divided into several regions based on their relative accessibility to goods and services (such as general practitioners, hospitals and specialist care) as measured by road distance. These regions are based on the **Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA+)** and defined as Remoteness Areas by either the **Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC)** (before 2011) or the **Australian Statistical Geographical Standard (ASGS)** (from 2011 onwards) in each Census year.

**residential care:** A type of care where the placement is in a residential building whose purpose is to provide placements for children and where there are paid staff.

**respite care:** A form of out-of-home care used to provide short-term accommodation for children and young people where the intention is for the child to return to their prior place of residence. Respite placements include:

- respite from birth family, where a child is placed in out-of-home care on a temporary basis for reasons other than child protection (for example, the child's parents are ill or unable to care for them on a temporary basis; as a family support mechanism to prevent entry into full-time care; as part of the reunification process; or as a shared care arrangement)
- respite from placement, where a child spends regular, short and agreed periods of time with a carer other than their primary carer.

**respite-only carer:** Carer households that provide only respite care (see **respite care**).

**reunification services:** Services that seek to reunify families where separation of children from their primary caregivers has already occurred for child protection reasons.

**school personnel:** Any appropriately trained person involved in instructing, or imparting knowledge to, children or in providing direct support for this education. This includes teachers, teachers' aides, school principals and counsellors who work in preschool, kindergarten, primary, secondary, technical, sporting or art-and-crafts education.

**sexual abuse:** Any act by a person having the care of a child that exposes the child to, or involves the child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards.

**short-term order:** Transfers guardianship/custody to the nominated person for a specified period of 2 years or less.

**sibling:** A brother or half-brother, sister or half-sister, whether natural (that is, biological), adopted or foster.

**social worker/welfare worker/psychologist/other trained welfare worker:** Any person engaged in providing a social- or welfare-work service in the community.

**socioeconomic status:** An indication of how 'well off' a person or group is. In this report, socioeconomic status is mostly reported using the **Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas**, typically for 5 groups, from the most disadvantaged (worst off) to the least disadvantaged (best off).

**Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas:** A set of indexes, created from Census data that aim to represent the socioeconomic status of Australian communities and identify areas of advantage and disadvantage. The index value reflects the overall or average level of disadvantage of the population of an area; it does not show how individuals living in the same area differ from each other in their socioeconomic status. This report uses the **Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage**.

**source of notification:** The person or organisation that initially made a child protection notification to the relevant authority. The source is classified according to the relationship to the child allegedly abused, neglected or harmed. The source of notification is reported under 12 categories: **subject child, family, friend/neighbour, medical/health personnel, social worker, school personnel, child care personnel, police, departmental officer, non-government organisation personnel, other source of notification** and **not stated**.

**substantiation of notification:** Child protection notification made to relevant authorities during the current year (for example, 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016) that was investigated (with the investigation finalised by 31 August) and where it was concluded that there was reasonable cause to believe that the child had been, was being, or was likely to be, abused, neglected or otherwise harmed. Substantiation does not necessarily require sufficient evidence for a successful prosecution and does not imply that treatment or case management was provided. Substantiations may also include cases where there is no suitable caregiver, such as children who have been abandoned or whose parents are deceased.

**third-party parental care:** placements for children on third-party parental responsibility orders. See **finalised third-party parental responsibility order, long-term guardianship carers**.

**third-party parental responsibility order:** See **finalised third-party parental responsibility order**.

**type of abuse or neglect:** One of the 4 types, or categories, of substantiations: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect. Each category includes findings of actual harm or significant risk of harm. Where more than 1 type of abuse or neglect has occurred, the substantiation should be classified to the type likely to be the most severe in the short term or to place the child most at risk in the short term – or, if such an assessment is not possible, classified to the most obvious form of abuse or neglect. See also **physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse** and **neglect**.

**type of action for notification:** Action taken by the department responsible for child protection in response to a notification. See also **investigation** and **dealt with by other means**.

**type of placement:** The type of out-of-home care in which a child was residing. See also **residential care, family group home, home-based out-of-home care, independent living** and **other out-of-home care**.

**unknown Indigenous status:** Describes children whose Indigenous status was unknown.

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## Related publications

This report, *Child protection Australia 2015–16*, is part of an annual series. Supplementary population data tables (those with a prefix of S) are part of the *Child protection Australia 2015–16* release. These tables, as well as earlier editions of the report, can be downloaded for free from the AIHW website <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/child-protection-publications/>>.

The following AIHW publications relating to children, youth and families might also be of interest:

- AIHW 2011. *Young Australians: their health and wellbeing 2011*. Cat. no. PHE 140. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2011. *National outcome measures for early childhood development: development of indicator-based reporting framework*. Cat. no. PHE 134. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2011. *Headline indicators for children’s health, development and wellbeing 2011*. Cat. no. PHE 144. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2012. *A picture of Australia’s children 2012*. Cat. no. PHE 167. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2013. *Scoping reportable measures for the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009–2020: supporting outcome 1*. Cat. no. CWS 45. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2013. *National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009–2020: technical paper on operational definitions and data issues for key national indicators*. Cat. no. CWS 44. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2014. *Indigenous child safety*. Cat. no. IHW 127. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2014. *Hospitalised injury in children and young people 2011–12. Injury research and statistics series no. 91*. Cat. no. INJCAT 167. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2014. *A new approach to national child protection data: implementation of the Child Protection National Minimum Data Set. Child welfare series no. 59*. Cat. no. CWS 50. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2015. *Educational outcomes for children in care: linking 2013 child protection and NAPLAN data*. Cat. no. CWS 54. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2015. *Developing a linked data collection to report on the relationships between child protection and youth justice supervision. Data linkage series no. 20*. Cat. no. CWS 55. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2015. *Australia’s welfare 2015. Australia’s welfare series no. 12*. Cat. no. AUS 189. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2016. *Young people in child protection and under youth justice supervision 2014–15. Data linkage series no. 22*. Cat. no. CSI 24. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2016. *Permanency planning in child protection: a review of current concepts and available data 2016. Child welfare series no. 64*. Cat. no. CWS 58. Canberra: AIHW.

During 2015–16, 162,175 (30.2 per 1,000) Australian children received child protection services (investigation, care and protection order and/or were in out-of-home care). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were 7 times as likely as non-Indigenous children to have received child protection services. This report also showed that children from geographically remote areas were more likely to be the subject of a substantiation, or be in out-of-home care than those from major cities.