



Disability support services: Services provided under the National Disability Agreement 2016–17

Summary

While the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is expected to largely replace the current provision of services to people with disability under the National Disability Agreement (NDA), many people were still receiving support under the NDA in 2016–17.

About 331,000 people used services

Of the 331,000 people who used services, about 2 in 3 (63% or about 208,000) used services that are expected to largely move to the NDIS as it rolls out.

The average age of service users was 35

Most service users were aged under 65 (95%), with an average age of 35. Existing service users aged 65 and over will not move to the NDIS.

About 2 in 5 service users had an intellectual or learning disability

Of all service users, 43% had an intellectual or learning disability. Service users with an intellectual primary disability continue to be the largest disability group, though this has fallen over time.

About 1 in 3 service users aged 15 and over were not in the labour force

Almost one-third (30%) of service users aged 15 and over were not in the labour force. Of those in the labour force, more than two-thirds (68%) were unemployed.

About 2 in 3 service users had an informal carer

About two-thirds (67%) of service users had an informal carer, most often their mother (73%). About 1 in 8 (13%) service users had an informal carer who was aged 65 and over.

About 29,000 service users transitioned to the NDIS

About 1 in 11 (9%) NDA service users transitioned to the NDIS during the year. Most of those who transitioned had an intellectual or learning primary disability (71%).

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1 The disability services environment

People with disability interact with every aspect of Australian life, across a multitude of social policy and program areas. Specialist disability services form one part of this broader system of supports and payments. This bulletin focuses on one area of specialist disability support—services delivered under the NDA in 2016–17.

The disability services environment is changing. Many people currently using services under the NDA will progressively transition to the NDIS, which is administered by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), as it rolls out across Australia.

1.1 The National Disability Strategy

The National Disability Strategy 2010–2020 (DSS 2017) is the mechanism under which the principles underpinning the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN 2006) are incorporated into policies and programs in Australia. It looks beyond support provided under both the NDA and the NDIS, and covers all people with disability, irrespective of whether they need or use specialist disability services. In particular, the strategy is intended to drive improvements in access to mainstream services, promote a more inclusive approach to the design of policies and programs, and ensure that all people with disability can participate and fulfil their potential as equal citizens.

1.2 The National Disability Agreement

Iterations of the NDA have governed the provision of disability support services in Australia since 1991. Under the NDA, the Australian and state and territory governments fund a range of services that aim to ensure ‘people with disability and their carers have an enhanced quality of life and participate as valued members of the community’.

Eligibility requirements vary between jurisdictions, and the actual service a person can receive is largely subject to the availability of services (for example, based on the number of available places in particular programs).

Services under the NDA are mainly delivered by block-funded providers, with funding allocated directly to the provider to deliver the services. Some alternative forms of funding available include:

- individualised or self-directed funding—where funds are allocated to a provider for a particular service user
- self-managed funding—where funds are allocated directly to the service user to buy services.

Information on the use of NDA services is collected in the Disability Services National Minimum Data Set (DS NMDS) (see Box 1.1), and summary data are presented in this bulletin.

In 2016–17, about 331,000 people used disability support services under the NDA, with 63% of these (or about 208,000) using services that are largely expected to move to the NDIS over time (that is, services other than open employment) (see Box 1.2).

Box 1.1: The Disability Services National Minimum Data Set

The DS NMDS is an annual collection and national collation of a standard set of data items on disability support services provided under the NDA. Funded agencies collect data from service users, and provide them to jurisdictions, which in turn provide them to the AIHW for national collation and reporting.

Note that:


- service user data are not collected for all NDA service types (see Section 2.2 for more information)
- counts of service users are estimates after the use of a statistical linkage key to account for people who received services from more than one service type outlet during the 12-month period (see the data quality statement for more information)
- data for Victoria and Queensland include specialist psychiatric disability services; data for other jurisdictions do not
- data for the Northern Territory from 2012–13 onwards include Basic Community Care services; data for other jurisdictions do not
- data from 2013–14 onwards are affected by the progressive introduction of the NDIS (see Section 1.4 and Chapter 5 for more information)—as a result, analysing trends in DS NMDS data over time is complex; but decreases in those services moving to the NDIS, such as state and territory-provided services and Australian Government-supported employment services, are generally expected as the NDIS continues to roll out
- both the NDIA and the Western Australian Government operated NDIS trials in Western Australia from 1 July 2014 until 30 June 2017—the DS NMDS includes the Western Australian Government-operated NDIS trial sites for those years
- the Australian Capital Territory Government did not collect DS NMDS data in 2015–16 or 2016–17.

Further information on the DS NMDS can be found on the AIHW website. This includes supplementary tables to this bulletin, data cubes, and technical information (such as data definitions and the data quality statement).

1.3 The National Disability Insurance Scheme

In July 2012, in response to the Productivity Commission's final report on the inquiry into disability care and support (Productivity Commission 2011), the Australian Government announced the introduction of the NDIS.

The NDIS provides 'reasonable and necessary supports' to help people who have a 'significant and permanent' disability. The scheme is based on an insurance model, and each individual seeking access is assessed according to a common set of criteria. Individuals who are deemed eligible receive a package of funding to purchase the supports identified in their individualised plan.



Because of the fundamental change to service provision, the NDIS is being rolled out in stages. It started in trial sites in July 2013, before progressively moving to full scheme from 1 July 2016, except in Western Australia where the state-wide roll-out of the NDIS begins 1 July 2018. The details of introduction in each jurisdiction are set out in bilateral agreements between the Australian Government and the individual state and territory governments. More information on the roll-out of the NDIS can be found in these agreements, and on the NDIS website (NDIA 2017).

The NDIA—an independent statutory agency whose role is to implement the NDIS—collects data on the NDIS, and publishes online quarterly reports.

1.4 Transition of NDA service users to the NDIS

Most existing NDA service users are expected to move to the NDIS over time, but not all will. Some people currently receiving services are not eligible to enter the NDIS (such as those aged 65 and over who are not already participants). Further, while some specialist disability support services will be rolled into the NDIS, others will continue once the NDIS is fully rolled out (see Box 1.2).

Box 1.2: Open employment services

Open employment services (Disability Employment Services), which are provided under the NDA and collected as part of the DS NMDS, will not be rolled into the NDIS. To provide data that better align with the types of services and service users shifting to the NDIS over time, selected tables in this bulletin and in the supplementary tables exclude service users who only used open employment services (see, for example, tables 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3, and supplementary tables S3.1–S3.5).

Much of the increase in open employment services in recent years is related to changes in income support policy over that time—for example, changes to compulsory work-focused activities aimed at helping Disability Support Pension recipients find work. Unlike most other NDA services, open employment services are demand driven, meaning places are not capped, and anyone who meets the eligibility criteria can access them.

For the purposes of the DS NMDS, once a service user has an approved NDIS plan and funding is available through the NDIA, they are considered to have transitioned to the NDIS and are no longer reported in the DS NMDS from the date of their transition. This includes service users receiving some component of their services from jurisdictions as cash contributions (that is, full funding responsibility transfers to the NDIA) or in-kind contributions (that is, funding and contract management responsibility remains with jurisdictions in the short to medium term). As such, it is possible for a NDIS participant to still be receiving a component of their services from jurisdictions after they have been exited from the DS NMDS.

Data from the DS NMDS show that about 29,000 NDA service users transitioned to the NDIS during 2016–17 (Table 5.1; supplementary tables S4.1–S4.5). This number is an underestimate, as it excludes data from the Australian Capital Territory Government (see Box 1.1). Most of their eligible participants moved to the NDIS during 2015–16, with the remaining service users completing transition in 2016–17.

2 Services provided under the NDA

2.1 Service type outlets

Agencies that deliver NDA services collect data against each 'service type outlet' they operate. A service type outlet is a statistical counting unit managed by an agency that delivers one type of NDA service from a discrete location (see also AIHW 2016 and Section 2.2). An agency may provide one or more NDA service types, and, as such, may collect data for one or more service type outlets.

In 2016–17, the majority (87%) of service type outlets were in the non-government sector, and most of these were income tax exempt (73% of all service type outlets) (Table 2.1).


Table 2.1: Disability support service type outlets, by service group and agency sector, 2016–17 (number)

Service group	Government			Non-government			Total
	Australian/ state/ territory	Local	Subtotal	Income tax exempt	Non-income tax exempt	Subtotal	
Accommodation support	1,394	53	1,447	5,460	664	6,124	7,571
Community support	550	34	584	2,042	235	2,277	2,861
Community access	46	70	116	3,565	421	3,986	4,102
Respite	90	57	147	1,854	324	2,178	2,325
Open employment	—	—	—	467	1,006	1,473	1,473
Supported employment	—	—	—	266	6	272	272
Advocacy, information, alternative forms of communication	13	2	15	247	41	288	303
Other support	49	79	128	212	21	233	361
Total	2,142	295	2,437	14,113	2,718	16,831	19,268
Total (%)	11.1	1.5	12.6	73.2	14.1	87.4	100.0
<i>Total (excluding open employment)</i>	<i>2,142</i>	<i>295</i>	<i>2,437</i>	<i>13,646</i>	<i>1,712</i>	<i>15,358</i>	<i>17,795</i>

For further information on agencies and service type outlets, see supplementary tables S2.2–S2.13.

2.2 Types of services provided

Under the NDA, the Australian Government is responsible for the provision of employment services for people with disability, and the states and territories for the provision of all other services. In 2016–17, 60% of service users accessed state or territory-provided services (about 198,000 service users) (Table 2.2).



The DS NMDS includes information on more than 30 individual service types, which can be grouped into the following broad service groups (tables 2.2, 2.3; Supplementary Table S2.34; see also AIHW 2016):

- Accommodation support—services that provide accommodation to people with disability, and services that provide support to enable a person with disability to remain in their existing accommodation or to move to more suitable or appropriate accommodation. About 1 in 8 (12%) service users used this group of services, which comprises:
 - large residential/institutions (less than 1%)
 - small residential/institutions (less than 1%)
 - hostels (less than 1%)
 - group homes (5%)
 - attendant care/personal care (2%)
 - in-home accommodation support (5%)
 - alternative family placement (less than 1%)
 - other accommodation support (less than 1%).
- Community support—services that provide the support needed for a person with disability to live in a non-institutional setting. About 2 in 5 (43%) service users used this group of services, which comprises:
 - therapy support (12%)
 - early childhood intervention (8%)
 - behaviour/specialist intervention (2%)
 - counselling (1%)
 - regional resource and support teams (4%)
 - case management, local coordination, and development (25%)
 - other community support (1%).
- Community access—services designed to provide opportunities for people with disability to gain and use their abilities to enjoy their full potential for social independence. About 1 in 6 (16%) service users used this group of services, which comprises:
 - learning and life skills development (14%)
 - recreation/holiday programs (3%)
 - other community access (1%).
- Respite—services that provide a short-term and time-limited break for families and other voluntary caregivers of people with disability to help support and maintain the primary caregiving relationship, while providing a positive experience for the person with disability. About 1 in 8 (12%) service users used this group of services, which comprises:
 - own home respite (1%)
 - centre-based respite/respite homes (4%)
 - host family respite/peer support respite (1%)
 - flexible respite (8%)
 - other respite (less than 1%).

- Employment services—almost half (45%) of service users used this group of services, which comprises:
 - open employment (40%)—services that provide employment assistance to people with disability in obtaining and/or retaining paid employment in the open labour market
 - supported employment (6%)—services that provide employment opportunities and assistance to people with disability to work in specialised and supported work environments.
- Advocacy, information and alternative forms of communication (for which service user data are not collected), which comprises:
 - advocacy
 - information/referral
 - combined information/advocacy
 - mutual support/self-help groups
 - alternative formats of communication.
- Other support services (for which service user data are not collected), which comprises:
 - research and evaluation
 - training and development
 - peak bodies
 - other support services.

Table 2.2: Service users, by service group and state and territory, 2016–17 (number)

Service group	NSW	Vic ^(a)	Qld ^(a)	WA ^(b)	SA	Tas	ACT ^(c)	NT ^(d)	Total	
									Number	%
Accommodation support	10,228	8,833	7,187	5,258	5,853	1,201	—	477	39,022	11.8
Community support	34,319	54,609	17,932	18,906	12,051	4,053	—	1,147	142,671	43.1
Community access	16,951	12,552	10,241	7,545	5,100	1,004	—	439	53,812	16.3
Respite	10,524	17,924	5,280	3,229	1,504	297	—	211	38,907	11.8
<i>Total state/territory services</i>	<i>53,723</i>	<i>76,807</i>	<i>25,282</i>	<i>20,039</i>	<i>15,500</i>	<i>5,144</i>	<i>—</i>	<i>1,692</i>	<i>197,616</i>	<i>59.7</i>
Open employment	41,973	32,026	32,779	8,233	12,306	3,210	1,317	476	130,925	39.6
Supported employment	6,988	4,166	2,335	2,120	2,811	374	163	106	19,048	5.8
<i>Total Australian Government services</i>	<i>48,729</i>	<i>35,988</i>	<i>35,020</i>	<i>10,251</i>	<i>15,020</i>	<i>3,573</i>	<i>1,474</i>	<i>572</i>	<i>149,184</i>	<i>45.1</i>
Total	98,333	108,924	57,605	27,727	28,456	8,478	1,474	2,172	330,984	100.0
<i>Total (excluding service users who only used open employment services)</i>	<i>58,090</i>	<i>79,388</i>	<i>26,589</i>	<i>20,787</i>	<i>16,960</i>	<i>5,365</i>	<i>163</i>	<i>1,731</i>	<i>208,423</i>	<i>..</i>

(a) Data for Victoria and Queensland include specialist psychiatric disability services. Data for other jurisdictions do not.

(b) Both the NDIA and the Western Australian Government operated NDIS trials in Western Australia from 1 July 2014 until 30 June 2017. Data for Western Australia include the Western Australian Government-operated NDIS trial sites.

(c) The Australian Capital Territory Government did not collect DS NMDS data in 2016–17.

(d) Data for the Northern Territory include Basic Community Care services. Data for other jurisdictions do not.

Notes

1. Totals for Australia might not be the sum of service components because individuals might have used services in more than one state or territory during the 12-month period.

2. Total service users might not be the sum of service group components because individuals might have used more than one service group over the 12-month period.

Table 2.3: Service users, by service group, 2012–13 to 2016–17 (number)

Service group	2012–13	2013–14 ^(a)	2014–15 ^{(a)(b)(c)}	2015–16 ^{(a)(b)(c)}	2016–17 ^{(a)(b)(c)}	Change 2012–13 to 2016–17 (%)	Change 2015–16 to 2016–17 (%)
Accommodation support	43,592	46,177	42,580	38,948	39,022	-10.5	0.2
Community support	139,142	142,549	149,001	149,541	142,671	2.5	-4.6
Community access	55,403	57,493	55,172	52,030	53,812	-2.9	3.4
Respite	38,072	39,480	38,136	38,230	38,907	2.2	1.8
<i>Total state/ territory services</i>	<i>201,675</i>	<i>207,810</i>	<i>205,722</i>	<i>202,748</i>	<i>197,616</i>	<i>-2.0</i>	<i>-2.5</i>
Open employment	108,989	111,856	125,795	126,470	130,925	20.1	3.5
Supported employment	21,877	21,295	20,585	19,852	19,048	-12.9	-4.0
<i>Total Australian Government services</i>	<i>129,698</i>	<i>132,169</i>	<i>145,539</i>	<i>145,493</i>	<i>149,184</i>	<i>15.0</i>	<i>2.5</i>
Total	312,539	321,531	333,795	331,817	330,984	5.9	-0.3
<i>Total (excluding service users who only used open employment services)</i>	<i>213,771</i>	<i>219,564</i>	<i>217,122</i>	<i>213,890</i>	<i>208,423</i>	<i>-2.5</i>	<i>-2.6</i>

(a) Data from 2013–14 onwards are affected by the staged roll-out of the NDIS.

(b) Both the NDIA and the Western Australian Government operated NDIS trials in Western Australia from 1 July 2014 until 30 June 2017. Data for those years include the Western Australian Government-operated NDIS trial sites.

(c) Some service type outlets in the Australian Capital Territory might have been less responsive in 2014–15 because of the complexities associated with the changeover to the NDIS. The Australian Capital Territory Government did not collect DS NMDS data in 2015–16 and 2016–17.

Note: Total service users might not be the sum of service group components because individuals might have used more than one service group over the 12-month period.

For more information on the use of services, see supplementary tables S2.14, S2.15, S2.20, S2.25, S2.26, S2.34–S2.43, S2.46, S2.53, S2.54, S2.65–S2.67, S2.69, S2.70, S2.72, S2.73, S3.3, S4.3.

2.3 Expenditure

In 2016–17, the Australian and state and territory governments spent \$7.8 billion on disability support services under the NDA (Table 2.4). Of this, \$7.3 billion was spent on delivering services, an average of about \$21,500 per service user (Table 2.4).

Expenditure and service user data from 2013–14 onwards are affected by the introduction of the NDIS—see SCRGSP 2018 and Supplementary Table S2.1 for more information on expenditure data, and Section 1.4 and Chapter 5 for more information on service users.

Table 2.4: Expenditure on disability support services, by service group, 2012–13 to 2016–17

Service group	2012–13	2013–14 ^(a)	2014–15 ^{(a)(b)(c)}	2015–16 ^{(a)(b)(c)}	2016–17 ^{(a)(b)(c)}	Change 2012–13 to 2016–17	Change 2015–16 to 2016–17
Expenditure (\$ million) (constant prices in 2016–17 dollars)						%	%
Accommodation support	3,628.6	3,757.7	4,014.7	4,098.8	3,724.6	2.6	-9.1
Community support	1,279.3	1,338.0	1,355.3	1,418.9	1,223.1	-4.4	-13.8
Community access	704.1	781.3	843.6	904.4	815.9	15.9	-9.8
Respite	457.6	460.2	487.7	500.3	453.2	-1.0	-9.4
Employment	727.5	701.3	742.2	721.5	699.7	-3.8	-3.0
Advocacy, information, alternative forms of communication	68.3	70.0	64.4	65.9	75.3	10.2	14.3
Other support	267.4	292.1	318.8	331.0	298.8	11.7	-9.7
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>7,132.9</i>	<i>7,400.5</i>	<i>7,823.3</i>	<i>8,040.7</i>	<i>7,290.6</i>	<i>2.2</i>	<i>-9.3</i>
Administration	507.0	517.3	519.1	546.1	462.9	-8.7	-15.2
Capital grants to non-government providers	7.7	10.0	5.3	2.5	4.5	-41.6	78.8
Total	7,649.4	7,927.8	8,349.8	8,589.3	7,758.0	1.4	-9.7
Expenditure per service user (constant prices in 2016–17 dollars)						%	%
Accommodation support	102,038	101,382	108,400	110,747	99,760	-2.2	-9.9
Community support	9,224	9,412	9,553	9,965	9,054	-1.8	-9.1
Community access	14,755	15,763	16,474	17,491	15,258	3.4	-12.8
Respite	12,834	12,331	13,434	13,829	12,333	-3.9	-10.8
Employment	5,610	5,306	5,100	4,959	4,690	-16.4	-5.4
Total	22,661	22,843	23,100	23,696	21,520	-5.0	-9.2

(a) Expenditure and service user data for 2013–14, 2014–15 and 2015–16 are affected by the introduction of the NDIS (see SCRGSP 2018 for more information on expenditure data and Section 1 for more information on service users transitioning to the NDIS).

(b) Both the NDIA and the Western Australian Government operated NDIS trials in Western Australia from 1 July 2014 until 30 June 2017. Data for those years include the Western Australian Government-operated NDIS trial sites.

(c) Some service type outlets in the Australian Capital Territory might have been less responsive in 2014–15 because of the complexities associated with the changeover to the NDIS. The Australian Capital Territory Government did not collect DS NMDS data in 2015–16 and 2016–17.

Notes

1. Excludes expenditure on, and service users of, specialist psychiatric disability services.
2. Expenditure data are sourced from the Report on government services 2018 (SCRGSP 2018). In that publication, constant prices are previous years' expenditure in current year's dollars after basing expenditure on the Australian Bureau of Statistics' General Government Final Consumption Expenditure chain price deflator.
3. Expenditure figures might not add to total because of rounding.

Sources: SCRGSP 2018: tables 15A.3 and 15A.7; DS NMDS 2016–17.

3 Characteristics of service users

3.1 Age and sex

In 2016–17, most (95%) service users were aged under 65, with an average age of 35 (tables 3.1 and 3.2). More than half (59%) were male. Male service users were generally younger than female service users—with an average age of 33 compared with 38.

Table 3.1: Service users, by sex and mean age (years), 2012–13 to 2016–17

Sex	2012–13		2013–14 ^(a)		2014–15 ^{(a)(b)(c)}		2015–16 ^{(a)(b)(c)}		2016–17 ^{(a)(b)(c)}	
	Mean age (years)	%	Mean age (years)	%	Mean age (years)	%	Mean age (years)	%	Mean age (years)	%
Male	31.3	59.1	31.4	59.2	32.1	58.9	32.4	58.7	32.7	58.8
Female	37.0	40.9	37.2	40.8	37.9	41.1	38.3	41.3	38.2	41.2
Total ^(d)	33.6	100.0	33.7	100.0	34.5	100.0	34.9	100.0	34.9	100.0

(a) Data from 2013–14 onwards are affected by the staged roll-out of the NDIS.

(b) Both the NDIA and the Western Australian Government operated NDIS trials in Western Australia from 1 July 2014 until 30 June 2017. Data for those years include the Western Australian Government-operated NDIS trial sites.

(c) Some service type outlets in the Australian Capital Territory might have been less responsive in 2014–15 because of the complexities associated with the changeover to the NDIS. The Australian Capital Territory Government did not collect DS NMDS data in 2015–16 and 2016–17.

(d) Includes service users for whom sex was 'not stated'.

Note: Percentages are of the total excluding service users for whom sex was 'not stated'.

Table 3.2: Service users, by sex and age group (years), 2016–17

Sex	0–49		50–64		65 and over		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Male	147,136	61.9	38,993	51.0	8,274	50.3	194,403	58.8
Female	90,383	38.1	37,467	49.0	8,173	49.7	136,023	41.2
Not stated	534	..	15	..	9	..	558	..
Total	238,053	100.0	76,475	100.0	16,456	100.0	330,984	100.0

Note: Percentages are of the total excluding service users for whom sex was 'not stated'.

For additional data on service users by age and sex, see supplementary tables S2.16, S2.17, S2.19, S2.20, S2.21, S2.23, S2.28, S2.35–S2.37, S2.62–S2.64, S2.69, S3.1, S3.2, S4.1, S4.2.

3.2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

In 2016–17, 6% of service users were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Table 3.3). Most (85%) Indigenous service users were aged under 50, 14% were aged 50–64, and less than 2% were aged 65 and over (Figure 3.1; Supplementary Table S2.21). Indigenous service users were generally younger than non-Indigenous service users, with an average age of 28 compared with 35 (Supplementary Table S2.20).

Almost 2 in 5 (39%) Indigenous service users lived in *Major cities*, compared with more than 2 in 3 (67%) non-Indigenous service users (Supplementary Table S2.20). A further 30% lived in an *Inner regional* area (compared with 23% for non-Indigenous service users), 21% lived in an *Outer regional* area (compared with 9%), and 11% lived in a *Remote* or *Very remote* area (compared with 1%).

Table 3.3: Service users, by Indigenous status, 2012–13 to 2016–17

Year	Indigenous		Non-Indigenous		Not stated/ not collected ^(a)		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
2012–13	17,406	5.8	283,306	94.2	11,827	..	312,539	100.0
2013–14 ^(b)	18,021	5.8	291,631	94.2	11,879	..	321,531	100.0
2014–15 ^{(b)(c)(d)}	19,031	5.9	302,736	94.1	12,028	..	333,795	100.0
2015–16 ^{(b)(c)(d)}	19,290	6.0	300,097	94.0	12,430	..	331,817	100.0
2016–17 ^{(b)(c)(d)}	19,307	6.1	298,385	93.9	13,292	..	330,984	100.0

(a) Includes service users who only used recreation/holiday programs (service type 3.02) and who did not provide a response. This service type was not required to complete this data item.

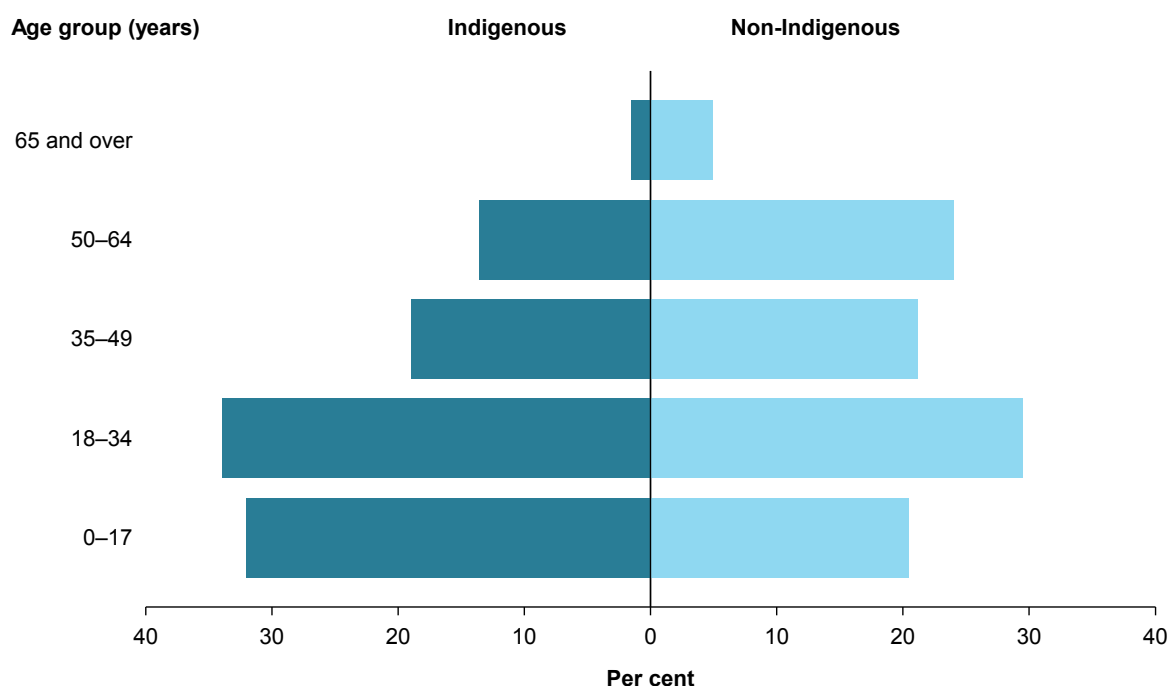
(b) Data from 2013–14 onwards are affected by the staged roll-out of the NDIS.

(c) Both the NDIA and the Western Australian Government operated NDIS trials in Western Australia from 1 July 2014 until 30 June 2017. Data for those years include the Western Australian Government-operated NDIS trial sites.

(d) Some service type outlets in the Australian Capital Territory might have been less responsive in 2014–15 because of the complexities associated with the changeover to the NDIS. The Australian Capital Territory Government did not collect DS NMDS data in 2015–16 and 2016–17.

Note: Percentages are of the total excluding service users for whom Indigenous status was ‘not stated/not collected’.

Figure 3.1: Service users, by Indigenous status and age group (years), 2016–17



Source: DS NMDS 2016–17.

For additional data on service users by Indigenous status, see supplementary tables S2.16, S2.17, S2.19–S2.21, S2.43, S2.48, S2.60, S2.69, S3.1, S3.2, S4.1, S4.2.

3.3 Country of birth

In 2016–17, the majority (86%) of service users were born in Australia, and 14% were born overseas—10% in a predominantly non-English-speaking country and 4% in a predominantly English-speaking country (Table 3.4).

Table 3.4: Service users, by country of birth (English Proficiency Group countries)^(a), 2012–13 to 2016–17

Year	Australia ^(b)		Born overseas, EPG 1		Born overseas, EPG 2–4		Not stated/not collected ^(c)		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
2012–13	260,863	87.0	12,109	4.0	26,882	9.0	12,685	..	312,539	100.0
2013–14 ^(d)	267,189	86.7	12,575	4.1	28,471	9.2	13,296	..	321,531	100.0
2014–15 ^{(d)(e)}	275,774	85.9	14,006	4.4	31,224	9.7	12,791	..	333,795	100.0
2015–16 ^{(d)(e)(f)}	273,781	85.9	13,920	4.4	30,946	9.7	13,170	..	331,817	100.0
2016–17 ^{(d)(e)(f)}	273,139	85.9	13,705	4.3	31,096	9.8	13,044	..	330,984	100.0

- (a) English Proficiency Group (EPG) is a way of categorising countries based on how well English is generally spoken. EPG1 countries are those in which English is the main language spoken. EPG 2–4 countries are those in which English is not the main language spoken. Being from a predominantly non-English-speaking country does not necessarily indicate that a service user lacks proficiency in English.
- (b) Includes external territories, excludes Norfolk Island.
- (c) Includes service users who only used recreation/holiday programs (service type 3.02) and who did not provide a response. This service type was not required to complete this data item.
- (d) Data from 2013–14 onwards are affected by the staged roll-out of the NDIS.
- (e) Both the NDIA and the Western Australian Government operated NDIS trials in Western Australia from 1 July 2014 until 30 June 2017. Data for those years include the Western Australian Government-operated NDIS trial sites.
- (f) Some service type outlets in the Australian Capital Territory might have been less responsive in 2014–15, because of the complexities associated with the changeover to the NDIS. The Australian Capital Territory Government did not collect DS NMDS data in 2015–16 and 2016–17.

Note: Percentages are of the total excluding service users for whom country of birth was ‘not stated/not collected’.

For additional data on service users by country of birth, see supplementary tables S2.16, S2.17, S2.22, S2.69, S3.1, S3.2, S4.1, S4.2.

3.4 Disability group

Disability group is a broad categorisation of disability based not only on underlying health conditions but also on impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. It is not a diagnostic grouping, nor is there a one-to-one correspondence between a health condition and a disability group.

The individual disability groups collected in the DS NMDS can be further categorised into four broader groups—intellectual or learning, physical or diverse, sensory or speech, and psychiatric (see Table 3.5 for the composition of these broad groups).

In the DS NMDS, service users are asked to record their primary disability group—that is, the one that most clearly reflects their experience of disability, and which causes them the most difficulty in everyday life (not just within the context of the support offered). They are also asked about any other disability that causes them difficulty, referred to as ‘other significant disability group’. On average, each service user reported about 2 disability groups (Supplementary Table S2.33).

In 2016–17, 42% of service users had an intellectual or learning disability as their primary disability, or 43% when ‘other significant disability’ is included (Table 3.5).

Table 3.5: Service users, by disability group, 2016–17

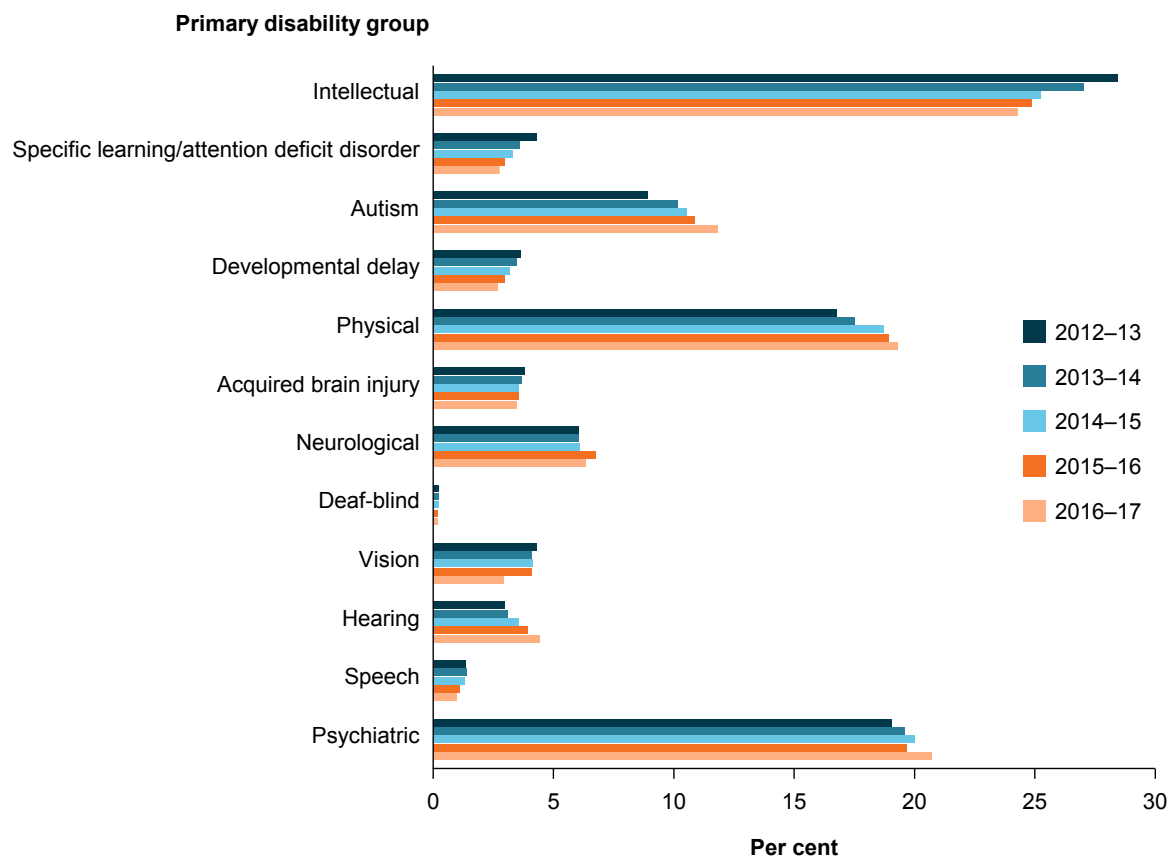
Disability group	Primary disability group		Other significant disability group		Total disability group	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<i>Intellectual/learning</i>	129,584	41.6	36,175	10.9	142,705	43.1
Intellectual	75,705	24.3	16,525	5.0	92,230	27.9
Specific learning/ attention deficit disorder	8,576	2.8	10,991	3.3	19,567	5.9
Autism	36,914	11.8	10,376	3.1	47,290	14.3
Developmental delay	8,389	2.7	1,587	0.5	9,976	3.0
<i>Physical/diverse</i>	90,926	29.2	64,808	19.6	139,834	42.2
Physical	60,155	19.3	47,623	14.4	107,778	32.6
Acquired brain injury	10,939	3.5	4,233	1.3	15,172	4.6
Neurological	19,832	6.4	21,554	6.5	41,386	12.5
<i>Sensory/speech</i>	26,759	8.6	30,649	9.3	56,056	16.9
Deaf-blind	625	0.2	1,097	0.3	1,722	0.5
Vision	9,166	2.9	10,907	3.3	20,073	6.1
Hearing	13,842	4.4	7,832	2.4	21,674	6.5
Speech	3,126	1.0	15,725	4.8	18,851	5.7
<i>Psychiatric</i>	64,578	20.7	36,361	11.0	100,939	30.5
Total^(a)	311,847	100.0	330,984	100.0	330,984	100.0

(a) Primary disability group was ‘not stated/not collected’ for 19,137 service users (which includes service users who only used recreation/holiday programs (service type 3.02) and who did not provide a response). The total for ‘primary disability group’ excludes these records, while the total for ‘total disability group’ includes these records.

Note: ‘Other significant disability group’ and ‘total disability group’ totals are not the sum of components, because individuals may report none or multiple ‘other significant disability groups’.

Of those, most had an intellectual disability—24% of all service users as a primary disability, or 28% when ‘other significant disability’ is included. Service users with an intellectual primary disability continue to be the largest disability group, though this has fallen over time (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2: Primary disability group of service users, 2012–13 to 2016–17



Sources: Table 3.5; DS NMDS 2016–17.

For additional data on service users by disability group, see supplementary tables S2.16, S2.17, S2.20, S2.28–S2.33, S2.37, S2.43, S2.49, S2.70, S2.73, S3.1, S3.2, S4.1, S4.2.

3.5 Functional need

People with disability might require assistance to perform activities in different areas of their lives. The DS NMDS collects information on the functional needs of service users against nine selected life areas. A person’s level of need is evaluated in comparison with a person of the same age without disability.

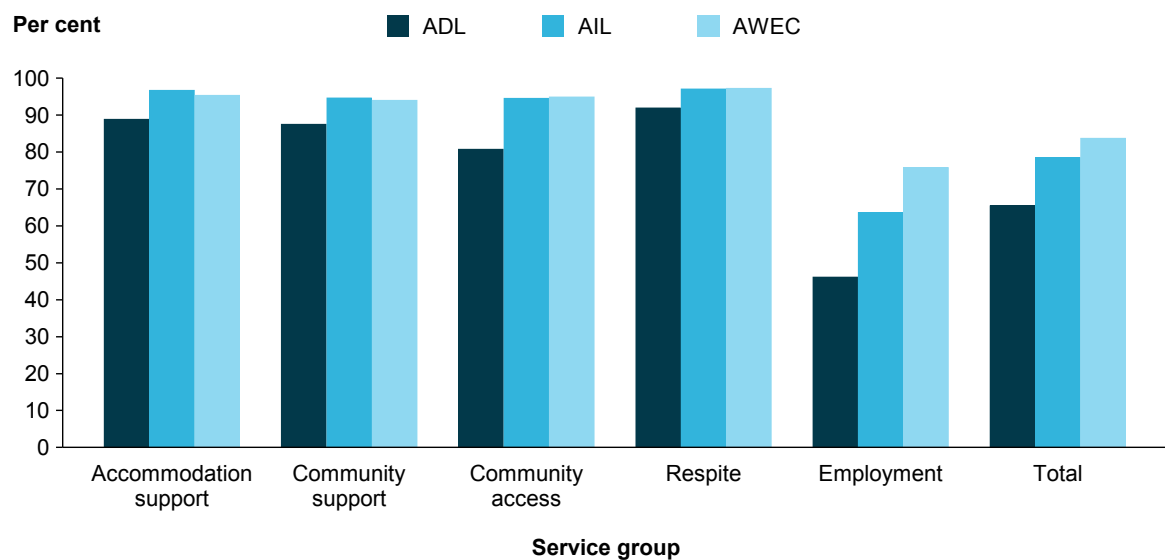
These nine life area activities can be grouped into three broader life areas—‘activities of daily living’ (ADL), ‘activities of independent living’ (AIL), and ‘activities of work, education, and community living’ (AWEC). In 2016–17, the majority of service users needed at least some assistance in one or more broad life area, with:

- 65% always or sometimes needing assistance with activities of daily living
- 78% always or sometimes needing assistance with activities of independent living
- 84% always or sometimes needing assistance with activities of work, education, and community living (Figure 3.3; see also supplementary tables S2.44 and S2.45 for composition of these life areas).

These estimates are affected by users of open employment services (see Section 2.2), who generally have a lower level of functional need. When service users who used only open employment services are excluded from the data:

- 84% of service users always or sometimes needed assistance with activities of daily living
- 94% always or sometimes needed assistance with activities of independent living
- 94% always or sometimes needed assistance with activities of work, education, and community living (Supplementary Table S3.5).

Figure 3.3: Service users who always or sometimes need assistance, by service group and broad life area, 2016–17



Source: Supplementary Table S2.46.

For additional data on service users and their need for assistance in a life area, see supplementary tables S2.16, S2.17, S2.44–S2.49, S2.61, S3.1, S3.2, S3.5, S4.1, S4.2, S4.5.

3.6 Living arrangement

In 2016–17, half (50%) of service users lived with family, one-quarter (25%) lived alone, and one-quarter (25%) lived with others, such as sharing with a friend or a non-related carer (Table 3.6).

Table 3.6: Service users, by living arrangement, 2012–13 to 2016–17

Year	Lives alone		Lives with family		Lives with others		Not stated/ not collected ^(a)		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
2012–13	59,355	21.2	151,128	54.0	69,332	24.8	32,724	..	312,539	100.0
2013–14 ^(b)	63,566	21.9	156,537	54.0	69,601	24.0	31,827	..	321,531	100.0
2014–15 ^{(b)(c)(d)}	70,905	23.7	155,669	52.1	72,283	24.2	34,938	..	333,795	100.0
2015–16 ^{(b)(c)(d)}	65,791	23.1	150,295	52.8	68,394	24.0	47,337	..	331,817	100.0
2016–17 ^{(b)(c)(d)}	73,356	25.0	147,936	50.4	72,363	24.6	37,329	..	330,984	100.0

(a) Includes service users who only used recreation/holiday programs (service type 3.02) and who did not provide a response. This service type was not required to complete this data item.

(b) Data from 2013–14 onwards are affected by the staged roll-out of the NDIS.

(c) Both the NDIA and the Western Australian Government operated NDIS trials in Western Australia from 1 July 2014 until 30 June 2017. Data for those years include the Western Australian Government-operated NDIS trial sites.

(d) Some service type outlets in the Australian Capital Territory might have been less responsive in 2014–15 because of the complexities associated with the changeover to the NDIS. The Australian Capital Territory Government did not collect DS NMDS data in 2015–16 and 2016–17.

Note: Percentages are of the total excluding service users for whom living arrangement was 'not stated/not collected'.

The majority (81%) of service users lived in a private residence. Other types of residential settings included boarding houses or private hotels (5%), domestic-scale supported-living facilities (such as group homes) (5%), and supported accommodation facilities (3%) (Supplementary Table S2.16).

Most of the service users who lived in a domestic-scale supported-living facility or in a supported accommodation facility had an intellectual primary disability (71% and 59%, respectively) (Supplementary Table S2.31). This compares with about 1 in 5 (21%) of those living in a private residence.

For additional data on service users by living arrangement and/or residential setting, see supplementary tables S2.16, S2.17, S2.20, S2.23, S2.31, S2.47, S3.1, S3.2, S4.1, S4.2.

3.7 Employment and income

In the DS NMDS, service users are considered to be in the labour force if they are aged 15 and over, and are either employed or looking for work. In 2016–17, nearly one-third (30%) of service users aged 15 and over were not in the labour force (Supplementary Table S2.16). This was influenced by the large number of open employment service users, who, by definition, are likely to be in the labour force (tables 2.2 and 5.2; Supplementary Table S3.1). For those in the labour force, about two-thirds (68%) were unemployed, and one-third (32%) were employed (Supplementary Table S2.16).

About one-third (31%) of Indigenous service users aged 15 and over were not in the labour force, which was similar to their non-Indigenous counterparts (29%) (Supplementary Table S2.20). But those in the labour force were less likely to be employed than their non-Indigenous counterparts (20% compared with 33%).

In the DS NMDS, service users aged 16 and over are asked about their main source of income. The most common source of income of service users aged 16 and over was the Disability Support Pension (52%), followed by 'other pension or benefit' (35%) (Supplementary Table S2.16).

More than half (58%) of employed service users aged 16–64 reported the Disability Support Pension as their main source of income, compared with about one-third (32%) of those who were unemployed (Supplementary Table S2.29). In contrast, unemployed service users were more likely to report another pension or benefit as their main source of income (63%) than those who were employed (9%).

For additional data on service users by labour force status and main source of income, see supplementary tables S2.16, S2.17, S2.20, S2.27, S2.29, S2.30, S2.68, S2.72, S2.73, S3.1, S3.2, S4.1, S4.2.

4 Informal carers

Informal carers play an important role in the lives of many people with disability. An informal carer is a person—such as a family member, friend or neighbour—who provides regular and sustained care and assistance to the person requiring support. This includes people who might receive a pension or benefit associated with their caring role, but does not include people, either paid or voluntary, whose services are arranged by a formal service organisation. Informal carers provide essential support either in place of, or in addition to, NDA services. They might also be the recipient of services under the NDA, such as respite services.

In the DS NMDS, information is collected on whether a service user has an informal carer, as well as some characteristics of that carer—for example, whether the carer was a primary carer, whether the carer lived with the service user, the relationship of the carer to the service user (from which the carer's sex can be derived), and the age group of the carer.

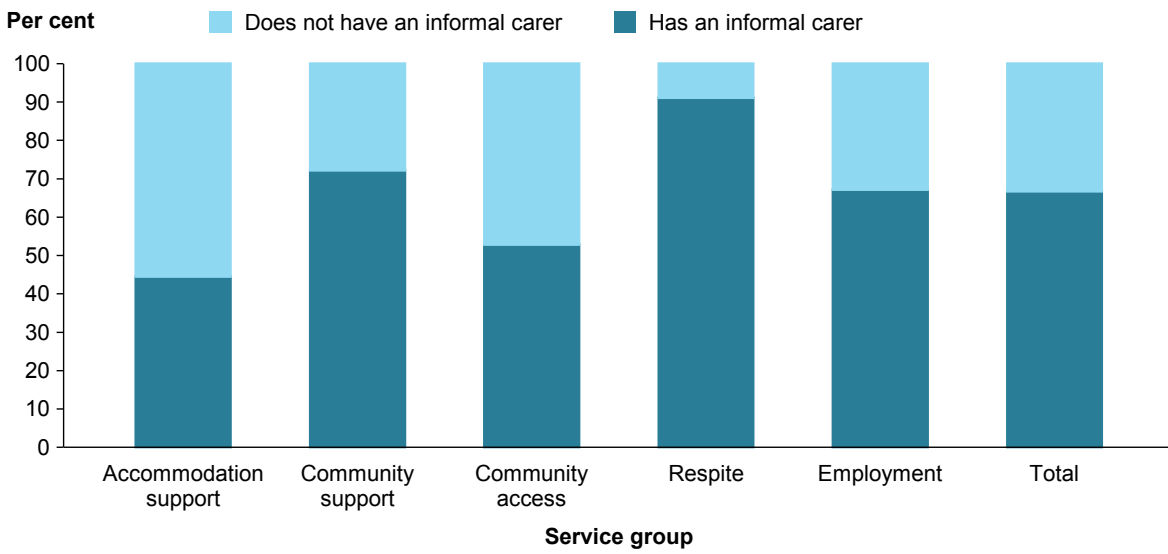
In 2016–17, about 2 in 3 (67%) service users had an informal carer (Figure 4.1). Of those:

- most (83%) reported that their informal carer was also their primary carer—that is, an informal carer who helps with one or more activities of daily living (self-care, mobility, or communication) (Supplementary Table S2.50)
- most (85%) had a female carer, most often their mother (73% of all carers, or 85% of female carers) (Supplementary Tables S2.50)
- about 1 in 11 (9%) were cared for by their spouse or partner—as the age of the service user increased, the likelihood of a spouse or partner being the carer also rose, with being cared for by a spouse or partner the most common informal care arrangement for service users aged 65 and over (58%) (Supplementary Table S2.56)
- about 1 in 8 (13%) had a carer aged 65 and over—with almost three-quarters of these being their parent (74%), most often their mother (60%) (supplementary tables S2.50 and S2.57).

Accommodation support service users were the least likely to have an informal carer (44%), particularly those living in institutional accommodation (20%) and group homes (34%) (Figure 4.1; Supplementary Table S2.53).



Figure 4.1: Service users, by service group and existence of an informal carer, 2016–17



Source: Supplementary Table S2.53.

For additional data on service users with an informal carer, see supplementary tables S2.50–S2.62, S3.4, S4.4.

5 Service users who transitioned to the NDIS

About 29,000 NDA service users transitioned to the NDIS during 2016–17 (Table 5.1; see also Section 1.4 and Box 5.1). This equates to about 9% of all service users, or 14% when those who only used open employment services are excluded.

Box 5.1: About data on service users transitioning to the NDIS

Some of the differences between service users who transitioned to the NDIS and other NDA service users are the result of the staged transition to the NDIS. For example, the relatively younger age profile of transitioned service users in Tasmania (with an average age of 22) and South Australia (with an average age of 15) is a result of the age-specific focus on children and young people during the NDIS roll-out in these jurisdictions (Supplementary Table S4.1). More information on the transition arrangements can be found in the bilateral agreements between the Australian Government and each state and territory.

continued

Box 5.1 (continued): About data on service users transitioning to the NDIS

There are several reasons why NDIA-published data on people with an approved and active NDIS plan might not match DS NMDS data on NDA service users who transitioned to the NDIS. In particular, the NDIA data include people who have not been reported as part of the DS NMDS, such as those who were referred directly to the NDIS. This is especially the case for very young children and those who meet the early intervention eligibility requirements under the NDIS. It is also possible for an NDA service user to have exited NDA services before their NDIS plan approval date. In such cases, they would not appear in the DS NMDS data as having transitioned to the NDIS.

Not all NDIA service users will move to the NDIS. Service users who transitioned in 2016–17, as well as those who used services that are likely become part of the NDIS in the future, generally had a higher level of functional need than other service users, and were more likely to need at least some assistance in one or more broad life area (Table 5.2). They were also more likely to have an intellectual or learning disability, live with their family, receive the Disability Support Pension, and not be in the labour force.

For additional data on service users who transitioned to the NDIS, see supplementary tables S4.1–S4.5. For additional data on service users excluding those who only used open employment services, see tables 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, and supplementary tables S3.1–S3.5.

Table 5.1: Service users who transitioned to the NDIS, by state and territory, 2013–14 to 2016–17 (number)

Year	NSW	Vic ^(a)	Qld ^(a)	WA ^(b)	SA	Tas	ACT ^(c)	NT ^(d)	Total
2013–14	1,329	1,901	2	3	403	576	—	—	4,200
2014–15	1,049	231	—	103	237	60	189	—	1,866
2015–16	1,593	84	235	390	1,099	45	88	—	3,520
2016–17	18,348	5,486	3,282	268	1,064	405	100	94	28,970

(a) Data for Victoria and Queensland include specialist psychiatric disability services. Data for other jurisdictions do not.

(b) Both the NDIA and the Western Australian Government operated NDIS trials in Western Australia from 1 July 2014 until 30 June 2017. Data for Western Australia include the Western Australian Government-operated NDIS trial sites.

(c) Some service type outlets in the Australian Capital Territory might have been less responsive in 2014–15, because of the complexities associated with the changeover to the NDIS. The Australian Capital Territory Government did not collect DS NMDS data in 2015–16 and 2016–17. Data for these years in the Australian Capital Territory column largely represent service users of Australian Government-supported employment services. Service users might also have moved between jurisdictions during the 12-month period.

(d) Data for the Northern Territory include Basic Community Care services. Data for other jurisdictions do not. While the NDIS commenced in the Northern Territory on 1 July 2014 for people up to age 65 living in the Barkly region, no NDA service users were reported by the Northern Territory Government as transitioned to the NDIS in 2014–15 or 2015–16.

Notes

1. The table represents people who were reported in the DS NMDS during the collection period who then transitioned to the NDIS. It might not represent all service users who have transitioned to the NDIS.
2. Row totals might not be the sum of components, because individuals might have used services in more than one state or territory during the 12-month period.
3. Service users might appear as transitioned to the NDIS in jurisdictions in which the NDIS has not commenced. This is because a service user identified as transitioning to the NDIS has moved between jurisdictions during the 12-month period.
4. Service users of Australian Government services and state/territory services are merged in this table.

Table 5.2: Service users who transitioned to the NDIS, by selected characteristics, 2016–17

Selected characteristics	Service users who transitioned to the NDIS ^(a)	Service users excluding those who only used open employment	All service users
Service group—accommodation support (%)	23.5	18.7	11.8
Service group—community support (%)	61.3	68.5	43.1
Service group—community access (%)	32.0	25.8	16.3
Service group—respite (%)	22.5	18.7	11.8
Service group—supported employment (%)	11.8	9.1	5.8
Age—mean age (years)	29.0	31.5	34.9
Sex—male (%)	61.7	60.1	58.8
Country of birth—Australian-born (%)	93.0	90.2	85.9
Indigenous status—Indigenous (%)	5.6	6.4	6.1
Primary disability group—intellectual/learning disability (%)	70.6	57.1	41.6
Other significant disability group—intellectual/learning disability (%)	21.4	13.1	10.9
Always or sometimes need assistance with ADL (%)	88.9	83.9	65.4
Always or sometimes need assistance with AIL (%)	96.4	94.2	78.4
Always or sometimes need assistance with AWEC (%)	96.5	93.8	83.7
Living arrangement—lives with family (%)	70.9	70.0	50.4
Living arrangement—lives alone (%)	7.2	10.3	25.0
Residential setting—private residence (%)	76.2	77.2	81.2
Residential setting—domestic-scale supported living facility (%)	9.4	7.8	5.0
Residential setting—supported accommodation facility (%)	6.3	4.4	2.6
Residential setting—boarding house/private hotel (%)	0.8	0.8	5.2
Not in the labour force (aged 15 and over) (%)	55.5	56.0	29.6
In the labour force (aged 15 and over)—employed (%)	59.3	58.5	32.4
In the labour force (aged 15 and over)—unemployed (%)	40.7	41.5	67.6
Main source of income—Disability Support Pension (aged 16 and over) (%)	87.0	80.2	51.8
Main source of income—other pension or benefit (aged 16 and over) (%)	4.2	8.8	35.3
Has an informal carer (%)	69.0	64.6	66.7

(a) Represents people who were reported in the DS NMDS during the collection period who then transitioned to the NDIS and might not represent all service users who have transitioned to the NDIS.

Acknowledgments

The successful completion of the DS NMDS owes much to the service users and service providers who contributed information, and to staff of the Australian Government and state and territory government agencies who collected jurisdictional data and reviewed the draft report. The 2016–17 DS NMDS and outputs were prepared by Felicity Murdoch and Juliet Butler of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, with contributions from Brendan Brady, Mark Cooper-Stanbury (Disability and Ageing Unit Head) and Louise York (Community Services Group Head).

Abbreviations

ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ADL	activities of daily living
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
AIL	activities of independent living
AWEC	activities of work, education, and community living
DS NMDS	Disability Services National Minimum Data Set
EPG	English proficiency group
NDA	National Disability Agreement
NDIA	National Disability Insurance Agency
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
Qld	Queensland
SA	South Australia
Tas	Tasmania
Vic	Victoria
WA	Western Australia

Symbols

—	nil or rounded to zero
..	not applicable

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This bulletin is part of an annual series that also includes supplementary data tables and data cubes. These, and other reports related to disability and disability services, can be downloaded from <www.aihw.gov.au>.

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Bulletin 144

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ISSN 2205-5010 (PDF)
ISSN 1446-9820 (Print)

ISBN 978-1-76054-369-3 (PDF)
ISBN 978-1-76054-370-9 (Print)

Suggested citation

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2018. Disability support services: Services provided under the National Disability Agreement 2016–17. Bulletin no. 144. Cat. no. AUS 223. Canberra: AIHW.

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Published by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

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