



At a Glance

Australia's Children: In Brief

A summary of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's annual report outlining the latest national data on how Australia's children are faring.¹

Key data for child and family services

- ◆ **4.7 million children** aged 0-14 live in Australia. **1 in 17** (5.9%) children **were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander**
- ◆ **1 in 11** (8.9%) children **were born overseas**
- ◆ **1 in 5** (21%) children **live in the lowest socioeconomic areas**
- ◆ In 2017-18, around **489,000 low-income households had at least one child** aged 0-14

These households had an average disposable income (the amount left over after income tax, Medicare levy and, if applicable, Medicare levy surcharge have been deducted) of \$558 per week.

There were 317,000 households with children aged 0-14 whose gross household income was at least 50% government pensions and allowances. The proportion of households reliant on government support payments differed according to family type, reflecting how childrearing responsibilities can limit a person's ability to gain employment, particularly when there are no other parents in the household to share parenting duties. 39% of one-parent families were reliant on government pensions and allowances.

- ◆ In 2015, **1 in 14** (7.4% or 329,000) children aged 0-14 **had some level of disability**
An estimated 219,000 children aged 5-14 (7.6%) had schooling restrictions or had schooling restrictions and core activity limitations.
- ◆ According to the Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, it is estimated that about **1 in 6** (15%, or 669,000) children aged 0-14 **lived in households where one or both parents had disability**
Around **38,900 children provided informal care to a parent with disability** – 5.8% of all children with a parent with disability.
- ◆ According to the Young Minds Matter Survey, in 2013-14, an estimated **1 in 7** children and adolescents aged 4-11 (almost 14% or 314,000) **met the criteria for a medical diagnosis of a mental disorder** in the 12 months before the survey

The 2 most common mental disorders among children were attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) (8.2%) and anxiety disorders (6.9%). Mental disorders were more common among:

- children with 1 parent or carer (22%) than children with 2 parents or carers (12%)
- children living in families with poor family functioning (34%) than children living in families with very good family functioning (11%)
- children living in the lowest socioeconomic areas (19%) than children living in the highest socioeconomic areas (12%).

The 3 most common types of health service providers reportedly used by children were: general practitioner (30%), paediatrician (23%) and psychologist (20%).

- ◆ **1 in 5** (18%) children **lived in one-parent families** – usually with their mother
- ◆ In 2016, around **19,400** (0.4%) children aged 0-14 **were homeless** on census night
The majority of these (62%) were living in severely overcrowded dwellings. One-quarter (25%) were living in supported accommodation for the homeless, 8.1% were staying temporarily with other households and around 2.9% were 'sleeping rough' (living in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out).

- ◆ In 2017, **3 in 5** (59% or 925,900) children aged 0-4 usually **attended some form of child care**

Nearly **296,000** (90%) eligible children **were enrolled in a preschool program** in the year before full-time school. The majority (80% or 236,000) were aged 4; around 56,000 (19%) were aged 5 and the remaining 3,500 (1.2%) were aged 3.

- ◆ Almost **4 in 5** (78%) children **are ready for school**. Around **1 in 5** children (22%) were **developmentally vulnerable** on 1 or more domains at school entry, and 11% were vulnerable on 2 or more domains

- ◆ In 2016, 1 in 6 women and 1 in 9 men said that when they were children (aged under 15), they experienced physical and/or sexual abuse

- ◆ In 2018, police data from 6 states showed there were around **3,900 assaults** against children aged 0-14 that were **considered to be family violence**

There were also around **3,100 sexual assaults** against children perpetrated **by a family member**.

In 2016-17, there were over 600 hospitalisations of children aged 0-14 due to assault.

In 2016, over half of parents who had experienced violence from a previous partner said their children had seen or heard the violence – 68% of women and 60% of men.

- ◆ In 2017-18, there were around **116,000** children aged 0-12 who **had 1 or more notifications to child protection** authorities (in states and territories with available data – excluding New South Wales). Around **26,400** children **had 1 or more notifications substantiated**

The most commonly substantiated primary abuse type in 2017-18 was emotional abuse (59% of substantiations), followed by neglect (18%).

- ◆ At 30 June 2018, around **33,100** children aged 0–12 **were living in out-of-home care**

- ◆ In 2018, there were over 9,000 cases of sexual assault, kidnapping/abduction, robbery and blackmail/extortion offences against children aged 0-14

- ◆ In 2017-18, around **13,800 criminal offences were committed by children** aged 10–14

- ◆ On an average day in 2017–18, there were almost **1,100** children aged 10–14 **under youth justice supervision**

The rate of children aged 10-14 under **youth justice supervision decreased** from 95 per 100,000 children in 2008-09 to 73 per 100,000 in 2017-18

ⁱ Data in this summary sheet is largely included verbatim from the report.

The full report can be found here:

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/d7bac9ef-8a15-4ee3-a854-25c6052ba478/aihw-cws-72.pdf.aspx?inline=true>

Please note: Unless otherwise stated, a child is defined as aged 0-12 years.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2019, *Australia's children: in brief*, AIHW, Canberra.