



Disability support services: services provided under the National Disability Agreement 2015–16

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 users of disability services were still receiving support under the NDA in 2015–16.

Around 332,000 people used disability support services

In 2015–16, around 332,000 people used disability support services under the NDA. This is an underestimate as the Australian Capital Territory Government did not provide data in 2015–16 (see Box 1.1).

The average age of service users was 35

Around three-quarters (72%) of service users were aged under 50, 22% were aged 50–64 and 6% were aged 65 and over, with an average age of 35.

Many service users had an intellectual or learning disability

Forty-three per cent of service users had an intellectual or learning disability, 42% had a physical or diverse disability, 29% had a psychiatric disability and 18% had a sensory or speech disability.

Close to one-third of 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 (67%) were unemployed.

Two-thirds of service users had an informal carer

Sixty-six per cent of service users had an informal carer, most often their mother (73%). Around 1 in 8 service users (12%) had an informal carer who was aged 65 and over.

Around 3,500 service users transitioned to the NDIS

Around 3,500 NDA service users transitioned to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) during the year. This is an underestimate as the Australian Capital Territory Government did not provide data in 2015–16 (see Box 1.1).

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1 The disability services environment

The disability services environment has undergone significant change in recent years, with the endorsement of the National Disability Strategy 2010–2020, the revision of the National Disability Agreement (NDA), and the staged implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Eventually it is expected that many of the services provided under the NDA will be replaced by the NDIS. But, until the NDIS is fully rolled out, the responsibilities under the NDA remain in place, and NDA data continue to be a key source for reporting on the provision of disability support services in Australia.

1.1 The National Disability Strategy

The National Disability Strategy 2010–2020 (DSS 2016) outlines the shared national vision for achieving improved outcomes for people with disability, their families and carers. The strategy is an important mechanism to ensure the principles underpinning the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN 2006) are incorporated into policies and programs. 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 specialised 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. The latest NDA replaced the previous Commonwealth State/Territory Disability Agreement in January 2009, and was revised in December 2012 as a result of national health reforms.

Under the NDA, the Australian and state and territory governments fund a range of disability support 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 are mainly delivered by ‘block-funded’ providers, with funding allocated directly to the provider to deliver services. Some alternative forms of funding are also available. These 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 then purchase services.

Information on the use of NDA services is collected in the Disability Services National Minimum Data Set (DS NMDS) (see Box 1.1). In 2015–16, around 332,000 people used disability support services under the NDA, or around 214,000 when excluding those who only used open employment services (see Box 1.2). These numbers are underestimates as the Australian Capital Territory Government did not provide data in 2015–16.

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. Data are collected from service users by funded agencies and provided to jurisdictions, which in turn provide the data to the AIHW for national collation and reporting.

Further information on the DS NMDS can be found at: <www.aihw.gov.au/>. This includes a set of supplementary tables to this bulletin, data cubes, and technical information, such as data definitions and the data quality statement (including information on scope and interpretability).

In particular, readers should note that:

- service user data are not collected for all NDA service types (see Chapter 2 and AIHW 2016 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 1 service type outlet during the 12-month period (see the data quality statement for more information)
- data from 2013–14 are affected by the introduction of the NDIS (see also Section 1.4 and Chapter 5); in particular, the 2015–16 DS NMDS excludes data from the Australian Capital Territory Government as the transition of clients into the NDIS greatly reduced their ability to collect data under the NDA.

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 (PC 2011), the Australian Government announced the introduction of the NDIS.

The NDIS aims to help people who have a significant and permanent disability and who need assistance with everyday activities. 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 July 2016, except in Western Australia where an agreement for a nationally consistent but state-run NDIS is in place. 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 National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)—an independent statutory agency whose role is to implement the NDIS—collects data on the NDIS, and publishes them in quarterly reports.

1.4 Transition of NDA service users to the NDIS

With the progressive roll-out of the NDIS across Australia, many existing NDA service users are expected to move to the NDIS over time. But not all current NDA service users will be eligible for the NDIS (for example, people aged 65 and over); and, 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). As not all existing NDA services users will be supported under the NDIS, governments have put in place ‘continuity of support’ arrangements to ensure that these service users are not disadvantaged in the transition. More information on the transition arrangements can be found in the bilateral agreements between the Australian Government and the individual state and territory governments.

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, data excluding service users who only used open employment services are included in selected tables in this bulletin and in the supplementary tables (see, for example, tables 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3, and supplementary tables S3.1–S3.5).

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 person to be receiving services from jurisdictions after they have exited from the DS NMDS.

Data from the DS NMDS indicate that around 3,500 NDA service users transitioned to the NDIS in 2015–16 (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). The Australian Capital Territory Government estimated that most their eligible participants moved to the NDIS during 2015–16, with all existing service users expected to have completed transition by 2016–17.

2 Services provided under the NDA

2.1 Who provides services?

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 1 type of NDA service from a discrete location (see also AIHW 2016 and Section 2.2). An agency may provide 1 or more NDA service types, and, as such, may collect data for 1 or more service type outlets.

In 2015–16, the majority (87%) of service type outlets were in the non-government sector, and most of these were income tax exempt (74% of all service type outlets) (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Disability support service type outlets, by service group and agency sector, 2015–16 (number)

Service group	Government			Non-government			Total
	Australian/ state/ territory	Local	Subtotal	Income tax exempt	Non- income tax exempt	Subtotal	
Accommodation support	1,385	51	1,436	5,458	580	6,038	7,474
Community support	581	32	613	2,036	192	2,228	2,841
Community access	48	78	126	3,568	303	3,871	3,997
Respite	98	64	162	1,823	265	2,088	2,250
Open employment	—	—	—	479	1,038	1,517	1,517
Supported employment	2	3	5	275	1	276	281
Advocacy, information, alternative forms of communication	15	1	16	129	39	168	184
Other support	12	53	65	48	12	60	125
Total	2,141	282	2,423	13,816	2,430	16,246	18,669
Total (%)	11.5	1.5	13.0	74.0	13.0	87.0	100.0
<i>Total (excluding open employment)</i>	<i>2,141</i>	<i>282</i>	<i>2,423</i>	<i>13,337</i>	<i>1,392</i>	<i>14,729</i>	<i>17,152</i>

Note: The Australian Capital Territory Government did not collect DS NMDS data in 2015–16.

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

2.2 What services are 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 2015–16, 61% of service users accessed state or territory-provided services (around 203,000 service users) (Table 2.2).

The DS NMDS includes information on 34 individual service types, which can be grouped into the following 7 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. Around 1 in 8 service users (12%) 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 (4%); alternative family placement (less than 1%); and ‘other accommodation support’ (1%).
- Community support—services that provide the support needed for a person with disability to live in a non-institutional setting. Almost half (45%) of 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 (5%); case management, local coordination, and development (26%); and ‘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. Around 1 in 6 service users (16%) used this group of services, which comprises: learning and life skills development (13%); recreation/holiday programs (3%); and ‘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. Around 1 in 8 service users (12%) 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%); and ‘other respite’ (less than 1%).
- Employment services—almost half (44%) of service users used this group of services, which comprises:
 - open employment (38%)—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, which comprise: advocacy; information/referral; combined information/advocacy; mutual support/self-help groups; and alternative formats of communication. Service user data are not collected for this service group.
- ‘Other support’ services, which comprise: research and evaluation; training and development; peak bodies; and ‘other support services’. Service user data are not collected for this service group.

Analysing trends in DS NMDS data over time are complicated by the progressive transition of NDA services to the NDIS (see Section 1.4 and Chapter 5), but some decreases in state and territory-provided services and Australian Government supported employment services are to be expected (see Table 2.3).

Australian Government open employment services are out-of-scope for transition to the NDIS (see Box 1.2). These services are demand driven, meaning places are not capped, and anyone who meets the eligibility criteria can access them. Much of the increase in open employment services in recent years is related to changes in income support policy over that time—for example, on 1 July 2014, compulsory work-focused activities aimed at assisting people to find employment were introduced for Disability Support Pension recipients under the age of 35 who had an assessed work capacity of at least 8 hours per week.

Table 2.2: Service users, by service group and state and territory, 2015–16 (number)

Service group	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT ^(a)	NT	Total ^(a)	
									Number	%
Accommodation support	10,600	8,928	7,293	4,715	5,726	1,208	—	489	38,948	11.7
Community support	37,575	53,846	21,955	17,801	12,738	4,310	—	1,722	149,541	45.1
Community access	17,699	11,539	9,898	6,097	5,270	1,078	—	469	52,030	15.7
Respite	11,537	16,193	5,398	3,017	1,614	297	—	230	38,230	11.5
<i>Total state/territory services</i>	<i>57,472</i>	<i>73,396</i>	<i>28,509</i>	<i>19,099</i>	<i>16,932</i>	<i>5,495</i>	<i>—</i>	<i>2,476</i>	<i>202,748</i>	<i>61.1</i>
Open employment	41,135	31,608	31,004	8,140	11,218	3,019	1,329	423	126,470	38.1
Supported employment	7,457	4,252	2,338	2,215	2,883	380	250	96	19,852	6.0
<i>Total Australian Government services</i>	<i>48,315</i>	<i>35,652</i>	<i>33,228</i>	<i>10,264</i>	<i>14,011</i>	<i>3,388</i>	<i>1,575</i>	<i>512</i>	<i>145,493</i>	<i>43.8</i>
Total	101,218	105,274	58,828	26,713	28,925	8,632	1,575	2,909	331,817	100.0
<i>Total (excluding those who only used open employment services)</i>	<i>61,957</i>	<i>76,063</i>	<i>29,777</i>	<i>19,853</i>	<i>18,472</i>	<i>5,715</i>	<i>250</i>	<i>2,517</i>	<i>213,890</i>	<i>..</i>

(a) The Australian Capital Territory Government did not collect DS NMDS data in 2015–16.

Notes

1. Totals for Australia might not be the sum of service components because individuals might have used services in more than 1 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 1 service group over the 12-month period.

Table 2.3: Service users, by service group, 2011–12 to 2015–16 (number)

Service group	2011–12	2012–13 ^{(a)(b)}	2013–14 ^{(a)(c)}	2014–15 ^{(a)(c)}	2015–16 ^{(a)(c)(d)}	Change 2011–12 to 2015–16 ^{(a)(b)(c)(d)} (%)	Change 2014–15 to 2015–16 ^{(c)(d)} (%)
Accommodation support	41,421	43,592	46,177	42,580	38,948	-6.0	-8.5
Community support	136,236	139,142	142,549	149,001	149,541	9.8	0.4
Community access	63,247	55,403	57,493	55,172	52,030	-17.7	-5.7
Respite	37,015	38,072	39,480	38,136	38,230	3.3	0.2
<i>Total state/territory services</i>	<i>203,371</i>	<i>201,675</i>	<i>207,810</i>	<i>205,722</i>	<i>202,748</i>	<i>-0.3</i>	<i>-1.4</i>
Open employment	112,742	108,989	111,856	125,795	126,470	12.2	0.5
Supported employment	21,353	21,877	21,295	20,585	19,852	-7.0	-3.6
<i>Total Australian Government services</i>	<i>132,949</i>	<i>129,698</i>	<i>132,169</i>	<i>145,539</i>	<i>145,493</i>	<i>9.4</i>	<i>—</i>
Total	317,616	312,539	321,531	333,795	331,817	4.5	-0.6
<i>Total (excluding those who only used open employment services)</i>	<i>215,237</i>	<i>213,771</i>	<i>219,564</i>	<i>217,122</i>	<i>213,890</i>	<i>-0.6</i>	<i>-1.5</i>

(a) From 2012–13 onwards, the Northern Territory DS NMDS data includes individuals using Basic Community Care services.

(b) In 2012–13, an activity previously classified under 'community access' in Victoria was amalgamated under 'community support'. Because of a significant overlap in service users between the 2 service groups prior to the shift, the reclassification did not result in a substantial increase in the number of community support service users.

(c) From 2013–14 onwards, the NDIS began staged roll out.

(d) The Australian Capital Territory Government did not collect DS NMDS data in 2015–16.

Note: Total service users might not be the sum of service group components because individuals might have used more than 1 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 How much was spent?

In 2015–16, the Australian and state and territory governments spent \$8.4 billion on disability support services under the NDA. Of this, \$7.9 billion was for service delivery, representing an average of around \$23,200 per service user (Table 2.4; SCRGSP 2017 see also Section 1.2). Expenditure and service user data from 2013–14 onwards are affected by the introduction of the NDIS—see SCRGSP 2017 and Supplementary Table S2.1 for more information on expenditure data, and chapters 1 and 5 for more information on service users.

Table 2.4: Expenditure on disability support services, constant prices by service group, 2011–12 to 2015–16

Service group	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14 ^(a)	2014–15 ^(a)	2015–16 ^{(a)(b)}	Change 2011–12 to 2015–16 ^{(a)(b)} (%)	Change 2014–15 to 2015–16 ^{(a)(b)} (%)
Expenditure (\$ million) (constant prices in 2015–16 dollars)							
Accommodation support	3,319.5	3,556.3	3,688.8	3,958.0	4,060.5	22.3	2.6
Community support	1,089.0	1,253.8	1,311.2	1,334.0	1,378.8	26.6	3.4
Community access	763.7	690.1	764.2	829.0	854.3	11.9	3.1
Respite	413.2	448.4	448.3	477.4	471.2	14.0	–1.3
Employment	794.7	713.1	687.5	730.8	710.7	–10.6	–2.7
Advocacy, information, alternative forms of communication	63.4	67.0	68.6	63.4	64.9	2.3	2.4
Other support	254.3	262.1	286.3	313.9	326.0	28.2	3.8
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>6,697.8</i>	<i>6,990.8</i>	<i>7,255.0</i>	<i>7,703.0</i>	<i>7,866.3</i>	<i>17.4</i>	<i>2.1</i>
Administration	537.2	496.9	507.1	511.1	537.9	0.1	5.2
Capital grants to non-government providers	3.3	7.6	9.8	5.2	2.5	–24.9	–52.6
Total	7,238.3	7,497.0	7,771.9	8,221.4	8,406.8	16.1	2.3
Expenditure per service user (constant prices in 2015–16 dollars)							
Accommodation support	95,272	100,006	99,523	106,868	109,715	15.2	2.7
Community support	8,014	9,040	9,224	9,403	9,684	20.8	3.0
Community access	13,741	14,461	15,419	16,187	16,522	20.2	2.1
Respite	11,865	12,578	12,015	13,152	13,024	9.8	–1.0
Employment	5,977	5,498	5,201	5,021	4,885	–18.3	–2.7
Total	20,850	22,210	22,394	22,745	23,174	11.1	1.9

(a) Expenditure and service user data for 2013–14 onwards are affected by the introduction of the NDIS. See SCRGSP 2017 for more information on expenditure data and chapters 1 and 5 for more information on service users moving to the NDIS.

(b) The Australian Capital Territory Government did not collect DS NMDS data in 2015–16.

Notes

1. Excludes expenditure on, and service users of, specialist psychiatric disability services.
2. Expenditure data are sourced from the *Report on government services 2016* (SCRGSP 2017). 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 2017: tables 15A.3 and 15A.7; DS NMDS 2015–16.

3 Characteristics of service users

3.1 Age and sex

In 2015–16, three-quarters (72%) of service users were aged under 50, 22% were aged 50–64 and 6% were aged 65 and over, with an average age of 35 (tables 3.1 and 3.2).

Just over half (59%) of service users were male, and they were generally younger—with an average age of 32 compared with 38 for females.

The overall sex and age distribution of service users has remained relatively stable over the 5 years to 2015–16.

Table 3.1: Service users, by mean age and sex, 2011–12 to 2015–16

Sex	2011–12		2012–13		2013–14		2014–15		2015–16	
	Mean age (years)	%	Mean age (years)	%	Mean age (years)	%	Mean age (years)	%	Mean age (years)	%
Male	31.6	59.1	31.3	59.1	31.4	59.2	32.1	58.9	32.4	58.7
Female	37.2	40.9	37.0	40.9	37.2	40.8	37.9	41.1	38.3	41.3
Total^(a)	33.9	100.0	33.6	100.0	33.7	100.0	34.5	100.0	34.9	100.0

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

Notes

1. Percentages are of the total excluding service users for whom sex was not stated.
2. The Australian Capital Territory Government did not collect DS NMDS data in 2015–16.

Table 3.2: Service users, by age group and sex, 2015–16

Sex	0–49		50–64		65 and over		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Male	148,197	62.0	37,577	51.1	9,011	47.2	194,785	58.7
Female	90,881	38.0	36,014	48.9	10,074	52.8	136,969	41.3
Not stated	55	..	3	..	5	..	63	..
Total	239,133	100.0	73,594	100.0	19,090	100.0	331,817	100.0

Notes

1. Percentages are of the total excluding service users for whom sex was not stated.
2. The Australian Capital Territory Government did not collect DS NMDS data in 2015–16.

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 2015–16, 6% of service users were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with most aged under 50 (84%) (Table 3.3; Figure 3.1; Supplementary Table S2.21).

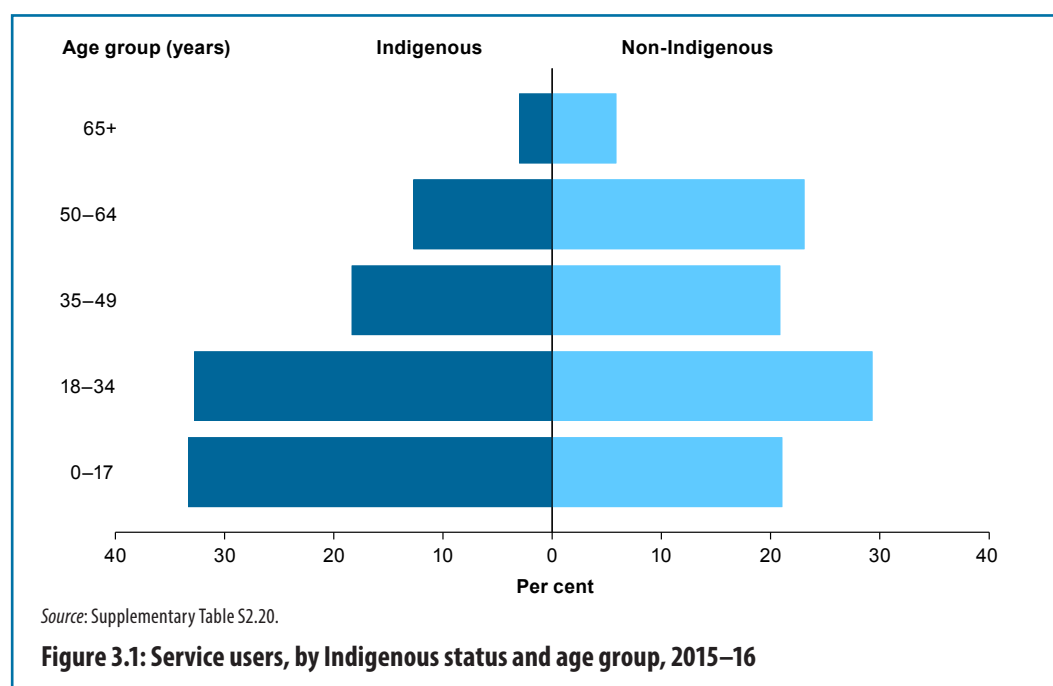
Table 3.3: Service users, by Indigenous status, 2011–12 to 2015–16

Year	Indigenous		Non-Indigenous		Not stated/ not collected ^(a)		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
2011–12	16,937	5.7	282,128	94.3	18,551	..	317,616	100.0
2012–13	17,406	5.8	283,306	94.2	11,827	..	312,539	100.0
2013–14	18,021	5.8	291,631	94.2	11,879	..	321,531	100.0
2014–15	19,031	5.9	302,736	94.1	12,028	..	333,795	100.0
2015–16	19,290	6.0	300,097	94.0	12,430	..	331,817	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.

Notes

1. Percentages are of the total excluding service users for whom Indigenous status was not stated/not collected.
2. The Australian Capital Territory Government did not collect DS NMDS data in 2015–16.



In 2015–16, almost 2 in 5 Indigenous service users lived in *Major cities* (39%), compared with around 2 in 3 non-Indigenous service users (67%) (Supplementary Table S2.20). A further 29% lived in an *Inner regional* area, 21% lived in an *Outer regional* area, and 11% lived in a *Remote* or *Very remote* area, and did so in higher proportions than non-Indigenous service users (23%, 9%, and 1%, respectively).

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 2015–16, 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). This has remained relatively stable over the 5 years to 2015–16.

Table 3.4: Service users, by country of birth (English Proficiency Group countries), 2011–12 to 2015–16

Year	Born in Australia ^(a)		Born overseas, EPG 1		Born overseas, EPG 2–4		Not stated/not collected ^(b)		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
2011–12	258,527	86.5	12,810	4.3	27,493	9.2	18,786	..	317,616	100.0
2012–13	260,863	87.0	12,109	4.0	26,882	9.0	12,685	..	312,539	100.0
2013–14	267,189	86.7	12,575	4.1	28,471	9.2	13,296	..	321,531	100.0
2014–15	275,774	85.9	14,006	4.4	31,224	9.7	12,791	..	333,795	100.0
2015–16	273,781	85.9	13,920	4.4	30,946	9.7	13,170	..	331,817	100.0

(a) Includes external territories; excludes Norfolk Island.

(b) 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.

Notes

1. Percentages are of the total excluding service users for whom country of birth was not stated/not collected.
2. The Australian Capital Territory Government did not collect DS NMDS data in 2015–16.

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

The DS NMDS collects information on a broad categorisation of disabilities defined in terms of the impairment of body structure or function, limitations in activity, or restrictions in participation (termed ‘disability group’). Disability group is not a diagnostic grouping, and there is not a 1-to-1 correspondence between a health condition and a disability group. The individual disability groups can be further categorised into 4 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—that is, the disability 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 types of disability that cause them difficulty, referred to as ‘other significant disability group’. On average, each service user reported around 2 disability groups (Supplementary Table S2.33).

Many service users had an intellectual or learning disability. In 2015–16, 42% had an intellectual or learning disability as their primary disability, or 43% when ‘other significant disability’ is included (Table 3.5). Of these, most had an intellectual disability—25% of service users as a primary disability, or 28% when ‘other significant disability’ is included.

Table 3.5: Service users, by primary or other significant disability group, 2015–16

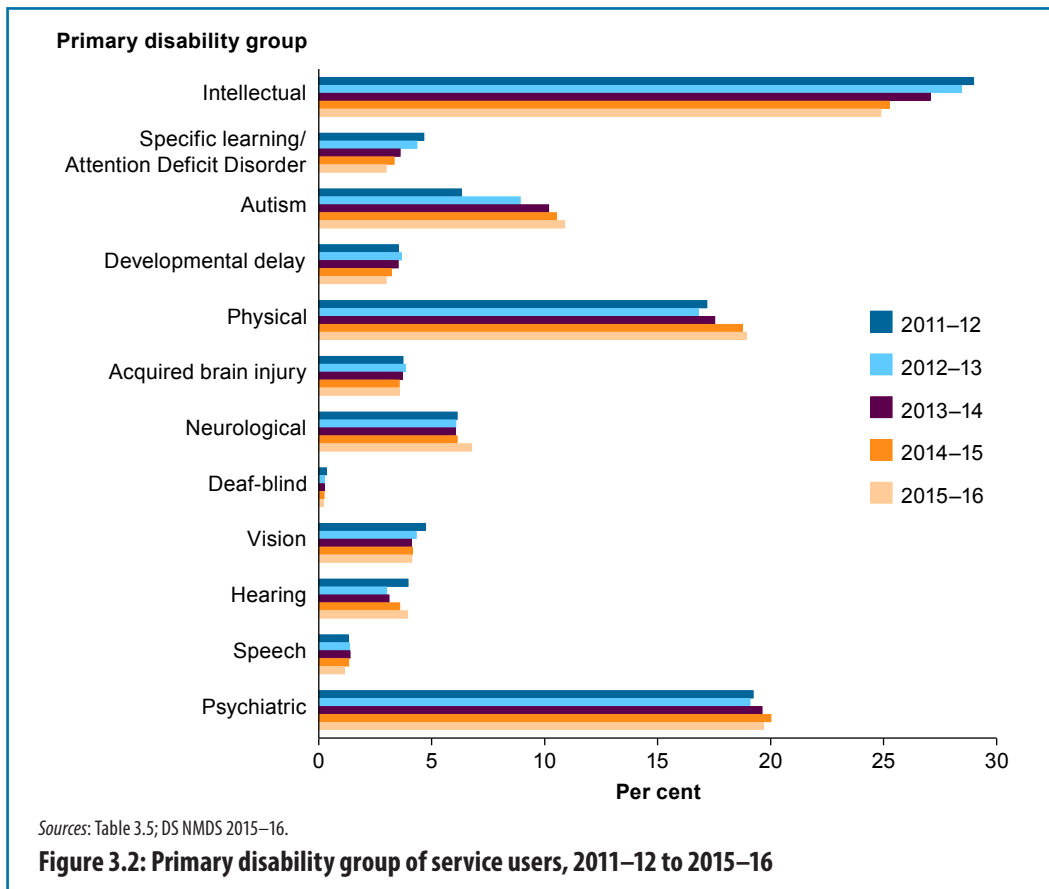
Disability group	Primary disability group		Other disability group		Total disability group	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<i>Intellectual/learning</i>	130,512	41.7	36,389	11.0	143,922	43.4
Intellectual	77,841	24.9	15,875	4.8	93,716	28.2
Specific learning/ Attention Deficit Disorder	9,329	3.0	11,245	3.4	20,574	6.2
Autism	34,027	10.9	10,215	3.1	44,242	13.3
Developmental delay	9,315	3.0	1,575	0.5	10,890	3.3
<i>Physical/diverse</i>	91,577	29.3	64,368	19.4	139,322	42.0
Physical	59,233	18.9	46,822	14.1	106,055	32.0
Acquired brain injury	11,176	3.6	4,113	1.2	15,289	4.6
Neurological	21,168	6.8	21,877	6.6	43,045	13.0
<i>Sensory/speech</i>	29,358	9.4	32,081	9.7	59,903	18.1
Deaf-blind	669	0.2	1,107	0.3	1,776	0.5
Vision	12,860	4.1	11,211	3.4	24,071	7.3
Hearing	12,304	3.9	8,052	2.4	20,356	6.1
Speech	3,525	1.1	16,884	5.1	20,409	6.2
<i>Psychiatric</i>	61,566	19.7	34,764	10.5	96,330	29.0
Total^(a)	313,013	100.0	331,817	100.0	331,817	100.0

(a) Primary disability group was not stated/not collected for 18,804 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.

Notes

1. 'Other significant disability group' and 'total disability group' totals and broad groups are not the sum of components, because individuals may report no other significant disability or report multiple types of disability.
2. The Australian Capital Territory Government did not collect DS NMDS data in 2015–16.

Service users with an intellectual primary disability were the largest group across the 5 years to 2015–16, though this has fallen over time—proportionally from 29% of service users in 2011–12 to 25% in 2015–16, and by 9% in terms of the number of service users (Figure 3.2). Over the same period, service users with autism rose substantially—proportionally from just over 6% of service users in 2011–12 to just under 11% in 2015–16, and by 83% in terms of the number of service users.



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.

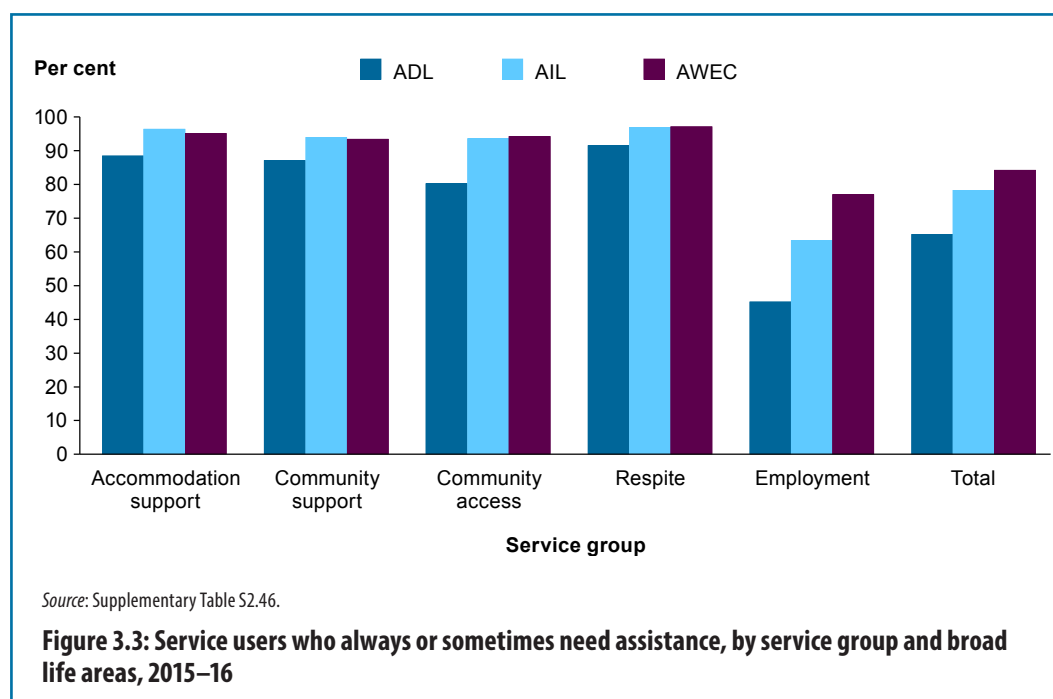
3.5 Functional need

People with disability might require assistance to perform activities in different areas of their lives. The DS NMDS includes 9 data items to indicate at least some of the functional needs of service users in selected life areas (see supplementary tables S2.44 and S2.45). The level of assistance required can vary from not needing assistance at all to always needing assistance, with a person's need evaluated in comparison with a person of the same age without disability.

The 9 life area activities can be grouped into 3 broad life areas—'activities of daily living' (ADL), 'activities of independent living' (AIL), and 'activities of work, education and community living' (AWEC). In 2015-16, the majority of service users needed at least some assistance in 1 or more of the 3 broad life areas (Figure 3.3):

- 65% always or sometimes needed assistance with ADL
- 78% always or sometimes needed assistance with AIL
- 84% always or sometimes needed assistance with AWEC.

This is affected by the inclusion of open employment service users, who generally had a lower level of functional need (Supplementary Table S3.5; see also Section 2.2).



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 2015–16, more than half (53%) of service users lived with family, almost one-quarter (24%) lived with others (such as sharing with a friend or a non-related carer), and almost one-quarter (23%) lived alone (Table 3.6).

Table 3.6: Service users, by living arrangement, 2011–12 to 2015–16

Year	Lives alone		Lives with family		Lives with others		Not stated/ not collected ^(a)		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
2011–12	58,324	20.8	150,325	53.6	71,550	25.5	37,417	..	317,616	100.0
2012–13	59,355	21.2	151,128	54.0	69,332	24.8	32,724	..	312,539	100.0
2013–14	63,566	21.9	156,537	54.0	69,601	24.0	31,827	..	321,531	100.0
2014–15	70,905	23.7	155,669	52.1	72,283	24.2	34,938	..	333,795	100.0
2015–16	65,791	23.1	150,295	52.8	68,394	24.0	47,337	..	331,817	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.

Notes

1. Percentages are of the total excluding service users for whom living arrangement was not stated/not collected.
2. The Australian Capital Territory Government did not collect DS NMDS data in 2015–16.

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

More than 1 in 5 service users who lived in a private residence had an intellectual primary disability (22%), 21% had a physical primary disability, 19% had a psychiatric primary disability, and 13% had autism (Supplementary Table S2.31).

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 (77% and 63%, respectively) (Supplementary Table S2.31). Around 12% of those living in a supported accommodation facility had a psychiatric primary disability.

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 2015–16, 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 in the data, who, by definition, are likely to be in the labour force (Table 2.2; Table 5.1; Supplementary Table S3.1).

For those in the labour force—that is, who were either employed or looking for work—around two-thirds (67%) were unemployed and one-third (33%) were employed (Supplementary Table S2.16).

The most common source of income of service users aged 16–64, regardless of their labour force status, was the Disability Support Pension (55%), followed by other pension or benefit (32%) (Supplementary Table S2.29).

Of employed service users aged 16–64, more than half (59%) were also receiving the Disability Support Pension. Of service users aged 16–64 who received the Disability Support Pension, 40% were not in the labour force, 33% were in the labour force but unemployed, and 26% were employed (Supplementary Table S2.29).

Consistent with non-Indigenous service users, around one-third (32%) of Indigenous service users aged 15 and over were not in the labour force (Supplementary Table S2.20). But those in the labour force were less likely to be employed than their non-Indigenous counterparts—21% of those aged 15 and over who were in the labour force were employed, compared with 34% of their non-Indigenous counterparts.

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.

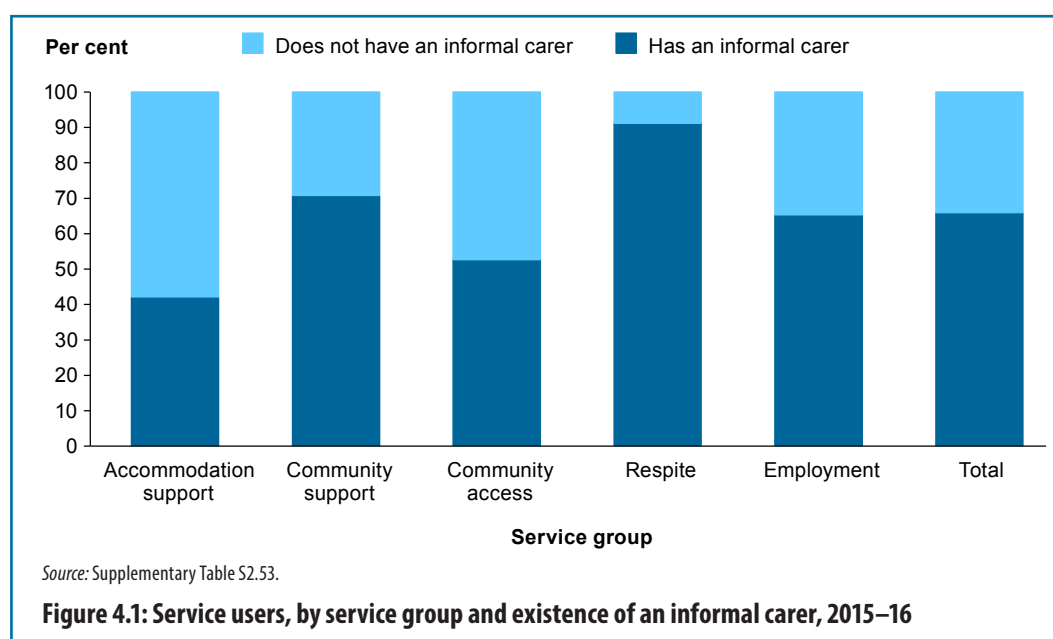
4 Informal care

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 the 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 2015–16, around 2 in 3 service users had an informal carer (66%) (Figure 4.1). Of the service users who had an informal carer:

- most (83%) reported that their informal carer was also their primary carer—that is, an informal carer who helps with 1 or more of the activities of daily living (self-care, mobility or communication) (Supplementary Table S2.50)
- the majority (86%) had a female carer, most often their mother (73% of all carers, or 85% of female carers) (Supplementary Tables S2.50)
- 9% were cared for by their spouse or partner—as service user age 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)
- 12% had a carer aged 65 and over—with almost three-quarters (73%) of these being their parent, most often their mother (59%) (supplementary tables S2.50 and S2.57).



According to service group, those who used respite services were the most likely to report having an informal carer (91%) (Figure 4.1). Accommodation support service users were the least likely to have an informal carer (42%), particularly those living in institutional accommodation (17%) and group homes (33%) (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

In 2015–16, around 3,500 NDA service users transitioned to the NDIS (Table 5.1; see also Section 1.3 and Box 5.1). This equates to around 1% of all service users and 2% of service users excluding those who only used open employment services. This is an underestimate as the Australian Capital Territory Government did not provide data to the DS NMDS in 2015–16.

Table 5.1: Service users who transitioned to the NDIS^(a), by state and territory, 2013–14 to 2015–16 (number)

Year	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT ^(b)	NT ^(c)	Total ^(b)
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

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

(b) The Australian Capital Territory Government did not collect DS NMDS data in 2015–16. Data for 2015–16 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.

(c) The NDIS commenced in the Northern Territory on 1 July 2014 for people up to age 65 living in the Barkly region, but no NDA service users transitioned to the NDIS in the Northern Territory in 2014–15 or 2015–16.

Notes

- Row totals might not be the sum of components, because individuals might have used services in more than 1 state or territory during the 12-month period.
- 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.
- Service users of Australian Government services and state/territory services are merged in this table.

Open employment services will not be rolled into the NDIS (see Chapter 1), so comparisons in this chapter are made with both the overall service user population, and with service users excluding those who only used open employment services. In comparison with these groups, service users who transitioned to the NDIS were generally:

- younger—an average age of 19, compared with 35 for all service users, and 32 for service users excluding those who only used open employment services
- more likely to be Australian born—97% compared with 86% and 90%
- more likely to have an intellectual or learning disability—76% as a primary disability group compared with 42% and 56%, and 22% as another significant disability group compared with 11% and 13%

- far more likely to be employed when they were in the labour force—66% compared with 33% and 58%
- more likely to live with family—80% compared with 53% and 70% (Table 5.2; see also chapters 2, 3 and 4).

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.

Box 5.1: Important notes about data on service users transitioning to the NDIS

Readers should note that some of the differences observed between service users who transitioned to the NDIS and other NDA service users are the result of the age-specific focus on children and young people in some NDIS sites. For example, the relatively younger age profile of transitioned service users was affected by the age-specific sites in Tasmania (with an average age of 16) and South Australia (with an average age of 10), as well as the fact that people aged 65 and over are not eligible to enter the NDIS (Supplementary Table S4.1).

There are several reasons why NDIA-published data on people with an approved and active NDIS plan might not match the 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.

Table 5.2: Service users who transitioned to the NDIS, selected characteristics and comparisons, 2015–16

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 (%)	12.0	18.2	11.7
Service group—community support (%)	83.4	69.9	45.1
Service group—community access (%)	16.5	24.3	15.7
Service group—respite (%)	14.1	17.9	11.5
Service group—supported employment (%)	8.6	9.3	6.0
Age—mean age (years)	19.4	32.0	34.9
Sex—male (%)	66.7	59.5	58.7
Country of birth—Australian born (%)	96.5	90.1	85.9
Indigenous status—Indigenous (%)	7.5	6.6	6.0
Primary disability group—intellectual/learning disability (%)	75.9	55.8	41.7
Other significant disability group—intellectual/learning disability (%)	22.2	12.8	11.0
Always or sometimes need assistance with ADL (%)	92.0	83.5	65.1
Always or sometimes need assistance with AIL (%)	96.0	93.5	78.2
Always or sometimes need assistance with AWEC (%)	96.6	93.3	84.2
Living arrangement—lives with family (%)	80.3	69.6	52.8
Living arrangement—lives alone (%)	4.6	11.0	23.1
Residential setting—private residence (%)	85.9	77.2	80.7
Residential setting—domestic-scale supported living facility (%)	8.5	7.7	5.2
Residential setting—supported accommodation facility (%)	3.6	4.3	2.8
Residential setting—boarding house/private hotel (%)	0.1	0.8	4.9
Not in the labour force (aged 15 and over) (%)	53.7	55.6	30.0
In the labour force (aged 15 and over)—employed (%)	65.9	58.3	33.2
In the labour force (aged 15 and over)—unemployed (%)	34.1	41.7	66.8
Has an informal carer (%)	81.0	63.8	65.8

(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.

Note: The Australian Capital Territory Government did not collect DS NMDS data in 2015–16.

Acknowledgments

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Abbreviations

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

Symbols

—	nil or rounded to zero
..	not applicable

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Related publications

This bulletin is part of an annual series that also includes supplementary data tables and data cubes. These can be downloaded for free from the AIHW website.

Index of supplementary tables

Section	National level data	State/territory level data
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Service user characteristics	S2.14–S2.27	S2.14–S2.19, S2.21, S2.23, S2.24
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Service users excluding those who only used open employment services	S3.1–S3.5	S3.1–S3.4
Service users who transitioned to the NDIS	S4.1–S4.5	S4.1–S4.4

The following AIHW publications relating to disability might also be of interest:

- AIHW 2017. Life expectancy and disability in Australia. Cat. no. DIS 66. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2016. Health status and risk factors of Australians with disability 2007–08 and 2011–12. Cat. no. DIS 65. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2015. Access to health services by Australians with disability 2012. Bulletin no. 129. Cat. no. AUS 191. Canberra: AIHW.

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