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Australian Institute of
Health and Welfare

AIHW

A photograph of an elderly woman with white hair and a young girl with dark hair in buns, both smiling warmly. The woman is in the background, and the girl is in the foreground, leaning on a table. The image is partially obscured by a teal circular graphic at the bottom left.

Australia's welfare 2025

in brief

The AIHW is a corporate Commonwealth entity producing authoritative and accessible information and statistics to inform and support better policy and service delivery decisions, leading to better health and wellbeing.

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Please check the online version at www.aihw.gov.au for any amendments.



Australian Government
Australian Institute of
Health and Welfare

AIHW



The Hon Mark Butler MP
Minister for Health and Ageing
Minister for Disability and the
National Disability Insurance Scheme
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister

On behalf of the Board of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), I am pleased to present to you *Australia's welfare 2025*, as required under subsection 31(1A) of the *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987*.

The *Australia's welfare 2025* suite of products continues the AIHW tradition of delivering high quality evidence and value-added analysis on welfare and welfare services in Australia. This edition provides comprehensive coverage of welfare issues via online webpages and explores a range of topics influencing the welfare of and provision of welfare services to Australians.

I commend this report to you as a significant contribution to national information on welfare-related issues, and to the development of policies and programs in Australia.

Yours sincerely




The Hon Nicola Roxon (Chair, AIHW Board)

1 August 2025

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Message from the CEO

Each year, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) produces one of its 2 flagship reports in alternate years, Australia's health and Australia's welfare. This year marks the 17th edition of the Australia's welfare series.

Like previous editions, *Australia's welfare 2025* highlights the importance of comprehensive and comparable national data collections, analysis and insights. It offers an overview of the current state of welfare and wellbeing in Australia, while also shedding light on the data landscape that underpins these insights.

Australia's population is steadily growing, and Australians continue to enjoy a life expectancy that surpasses most countries. At the same time, Australia's population is ageing, which is driving increased demand for aged care services and higher government expenditure in this sector. Additionally, more Australians are reporting having some form of disability, and the number of individuals receiving support through the National Disability Insurance Scheme is on the rise.

Australia continues to experience low unemployment and record-high employment levels, with much of the growth in employment driven by increases among women. Older Australians aged 65 and over now represent a larger share of the workforce than in previous years. Remote work is more common, with more people working from home than before the COVID-19 pandemic.

After 2 years of decline, real household income is beginning to recover, with the fastest growth seen among the lowest income households. However, despite rising incomes, Australians are reporting the highest levels of financial stress in over a decade.

Housing affordability remains a significant challenge. Home ownership rates are falling, especially among younger Australians, and housing costs have risen sharply. Many low-income households are facing housing stress, spending more than 30% of their disposable income on housing. While the number of social housing dwellings has increased, the supply has not kept pace with the growing number of households across Australia. Specialist homelessness services are supporting a rising number of people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

High-quality welfare data plays a crucial role in understanding wellbeing, service usage, and outcomes across different population groups over time. The AIHW collaborates with various stakeholders to expand data availability and enhance the quality and timeliness of data processes – from collection to reporting. Current initiatives include a pilot data collection on specialist family and domestic violence services and a project linking specialised health and welfare services data to improve insights and support better outcomes.

Australia's welfare 2025 comprises 2 products:

- *Australia's welfare 2025: in brief* (this report) – presents a snapshot of selected key findings, offering a point-in-time overview of how Australia is faring.
- *Australia's welfare: topic summaries* – a collection of more than 30 web pages providing a comprehensive coverage of statistics on welfare services, Australians' welfare and wellbeing and ongoing data improvement activities.

Since its first release in 1993, *Australia's welfare* has served as a trusted source of authoritative and accessible welfare-related data for decision-makers, policy advisers, service providers, researchers, and the general public. I am confident this year's edition will continue to support informed decision-making in welfare policy and service delivery.

I would like to thank everyone involved in producing this report and acknowledge the valuable input provided by many experts throughout the drafting and review process.

We are committed to improving the usefulness and relevance of our flagship reports and welcome your feedback via flagships@aihw.gov.au



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Z. Bolevich', written in a cursive style.

Dr Zoran Bolevich (Chief Executive Officer, AIHW)

Acknowledgement of Country



The AIHW acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respect to the people, the cultures and Elders past and present.

Artwork "Data & Diversity", by Jay Hobbs
(proud Kuku Yalanji & Meriam-Mir Man)

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At a glance

What is welfare?

In the broadest sense, welfare refers to the wellbeing of individuals, families and the community. The terms welfare and wellbeing are often used interchangeably.

A range of interrelated factors influence wellbeing and quality of life. Feeling happy, healthy and having positive wellbeing means different things to different people and at different ages.

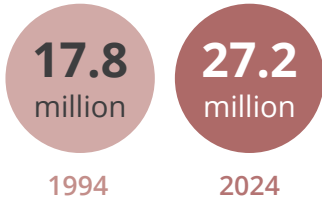
Prominent features of life, including our social connections, housing, education and work, are linked with our welfare.

Welfare services and assistance (such as income support payments and disability services) can help enhance wellbeing for people who require further support. Support can be informal – coming from family, friends and the community – or formal, provided by government and non-government organisations.

In Australia, federal and state/territory Governments fund and manage welfare services, with a growing workforce across child care, disability, and aged care.

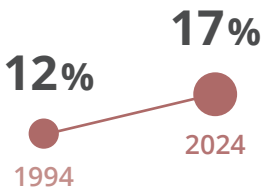
The size, age, diversity and geographic distribution of Australia's population drives the level of need and demand for welfare services, use of services and our ability to fund and deliver these services.

Australia's population is:



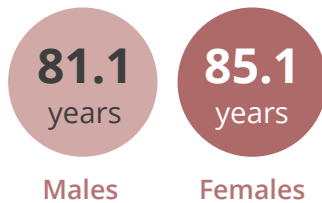
increasing in size:

from 17.8 million people at 30 June 1994 to 27.2 million at 30 June 2024, projected to reach 31.3 million by 30 June 2035 – most of Australia's population growth is from overseas migration.



ageing:

the proportion of the population aged 65 and over is increasing over time – from 12% at 30 June 1994 to 17% at 30 June 2024, and projected to increase to 24% by 2064–65.



living longer:

males born in 2021–2023 can expect to live to 81.1 years, and females to 85.1 years – up from 75.0 and 80.9, respectively in 1993. By 2034–35, life expectancy is projected to increase to 83.8 for males and 87.1 for females.

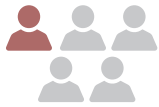
2021

3.8%



First Nations people

2022



people had disability

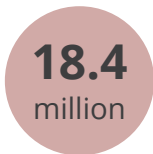
2023



born overseas

diverse:

3.8% are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) people (at 30 June 2021), 1 in 5 had disability (21% in 2022) and 1 in 3 (31% in 2023) people are born overseas.



2023-24



2034-35

increasingly located in capital cities:

the majority (68%, or 18.4 million people, in 2023-24) of Australians live in one of the 8 capital cities (up from 65% in 1994). The combined capital city population is projected to grow by 17% by 2034-35, to reach 21.7 million people.

How are we faring?

While Australia is faring well in many areas, there are still groups within our population who experience less favourable outcomes. Many rely on support from Australia's welfare system and their community.



Generally, Australians continue to have **positive community connections**, give back through volunteering, and enjoy a socially cohesive society.



Non-school qualification

58%

2015

63%

2024

Australia's **education system remains strong**. In 2024, most 4-year-olds attended preschool, school attendance in Years 1–10 was high, Year 12 attainment continued to rise, and more people aged 15–74 held non-school qualifications. **Around 3.2 million were studying, with more females than males.**



77.2%

Employment

4.2%

Unemployment

Australia has **record high employment rates** and some of the lowest rates of unemployment in recent history. Increasing female employment rates have helped drive higher employment levels over the last 50 years.



Financial stress

Real **household income has grown** between 2023 and 2024, after 2 years of declines, but around 1 in 5 people aged 15 and over are now experiencing **financial stress** – the highest in over a decade.

The proportion of the population receiving **income support has been falling** since 2012; declining faster for older Australians than for younger people.



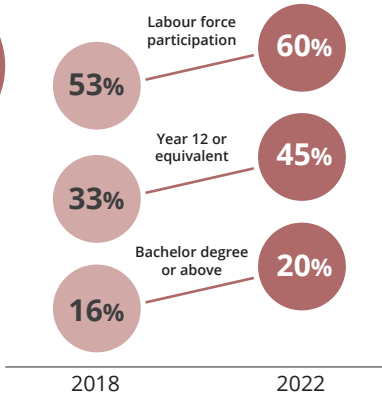
Fewer young people own their own home. The **financial burden of home ownership** has grown, with substantially higher house prices and increases to interest rates in recent years. While interest rates eased in early 2025, **many low-income households are in housing stress.**

More households are receiving government housing assistance. There are **more social housing dwellings**, but the supply has not kept pace with the growing number of households across Australia.



Demand for aged care is rising as Australia's population ages, with government spending increasing over the past five years.

More people are now using home care than permanent residential aged care.



The **number of Australians with disability is increasing**, so too is the number of people supported by the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Rates of educational attainment and labour force participation among people with disability have also increased.



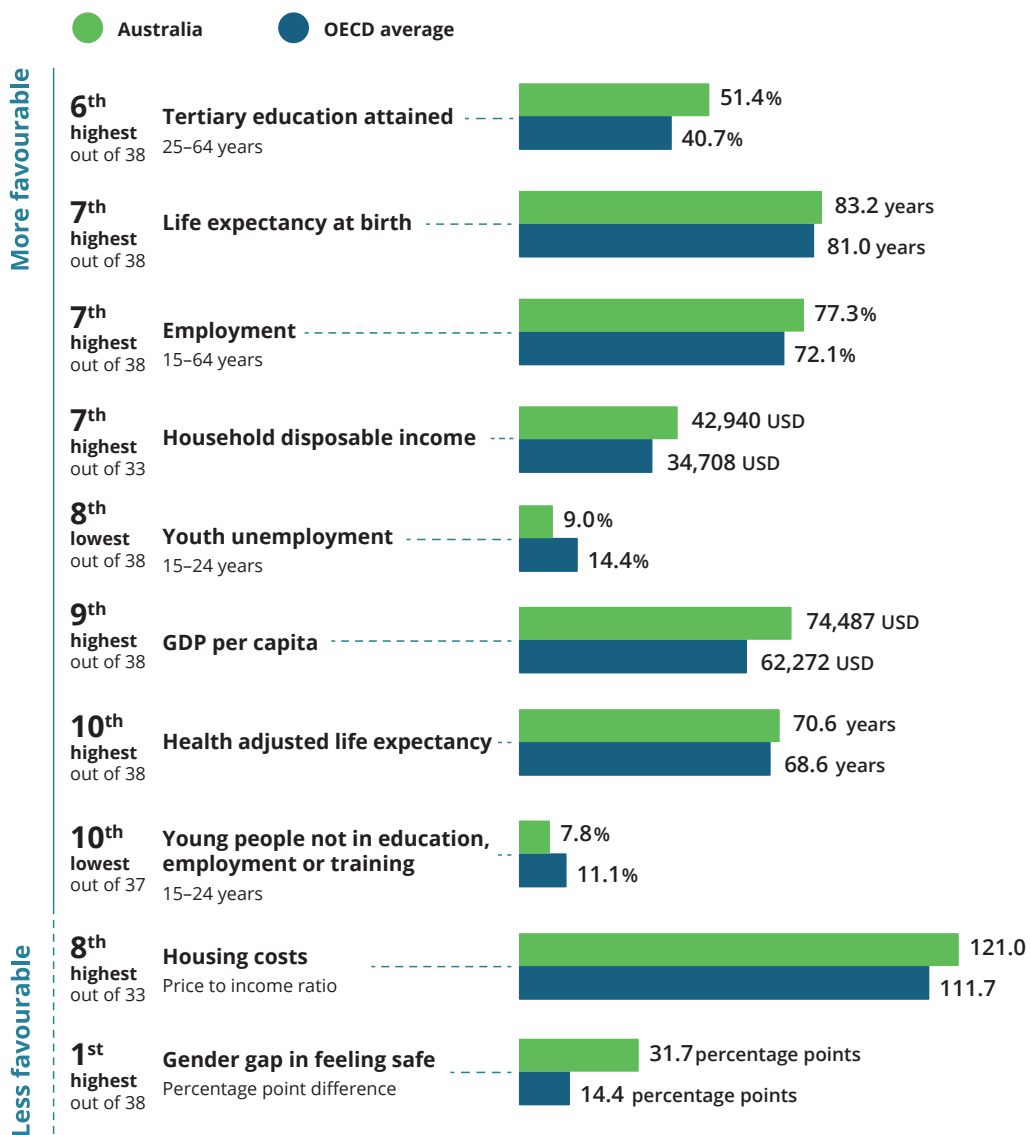
Among **First Nations people** there has been an increase in the number of children enrolled in preschool, increasing proportions of young adults attaining Year 12 or an equivalent qualification, and growing numbers of students completing higher education courses.

Home ownership and employment rates for First Nations people have also increased.

How does Australia compare?

Australia compares well with other countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), ranking more favourably on many welfare measures. For example, Australia ranked seventh highest (more favourable) out of 38 OECD countries for life expectancy in 2022. An exception to Australia doing better is where Australia ranked the highest (less favourable) out of 38 OECD countries in 2023 for having the largest gender gap in feeling safe.

Australia's ranking based on the latest year of data:





i For more, see: AIHW topic summaries Understanding welfare and wellbeing, Profile of Australia's population and International comparisons of welfare data.

Information is also drawn from:
Centre for Population.



1

Life satisfaction and connections

A person's wellbeing and life satisfaction can be influenced by environmental, social and economic factors at the individual, family and community level. Social isolation and loneliness can impact people's lives and wellbeing and affect life satisfaction.

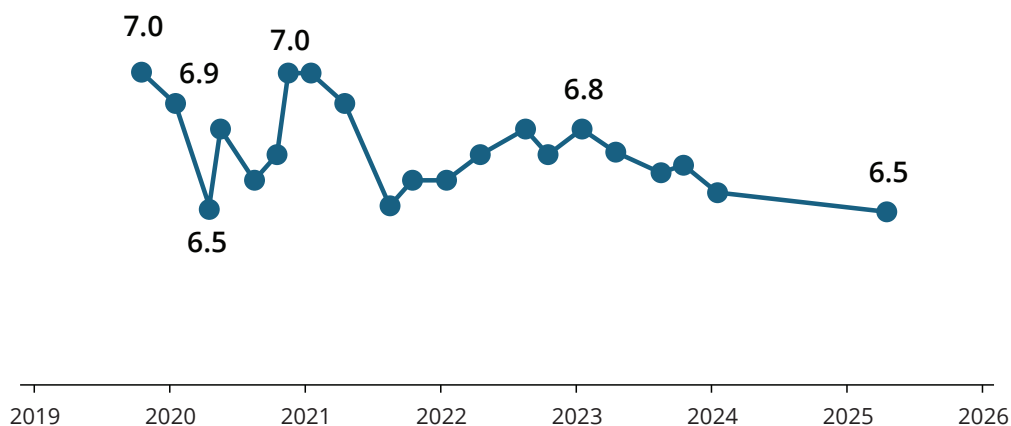
Social relationships and connectedness are positively associated with wellbeing, and societies with higher levels of social cohesion and connection are healthier, more resilient to external shocks and experience greater economic growth.

Recent decrease in life satisfaction

Life satisfaction is a measure of subjective wellbeing, reflecting how satisfied people are feeling with their lives in general. In April 2025, average life satisfaction in Australia was 6.5 out of 10 – a decline from a recent peak of 6.8 in January 2023.

Since October 2019, the average level of life satisfaction among Australians has fluctuated. In particular, life satisfaction varied widely in the first year and a half of the COVID-19 pandemic as Australians responded to rapid and widespread changes to everyday life.

Average life satisfaction is now the same as the lowest levels recorded during the COVID-19 pandemic:



Note: The life satisfaction question asks how satisfied you feel about life in general, on a scale from 0 to 10. Zero means 'not satisfied at all' and 10 means 'completely satisfied'.

Source: ANUPoll.

Australians continue to have positive connections to communities

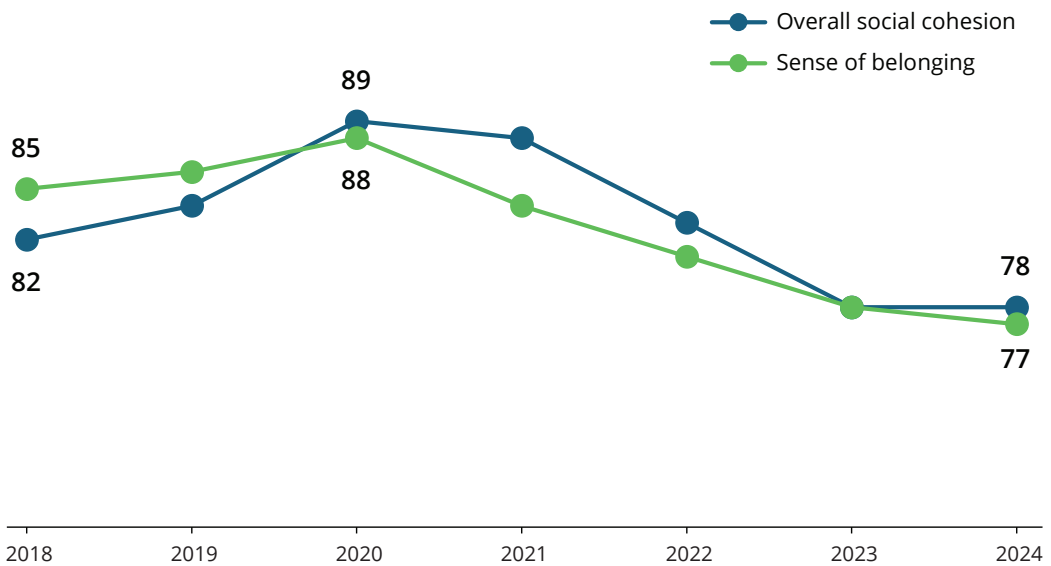
Social cohesion is about how connected and united people feel in society.

When individuals are engaged in their communities, build strong relationships and feel a sense of belonging, it can lead to better health, happiness, and overall wellbeing.

Key drivers of social cohesion include support for multiculturalism and diversity and participation in community events and volunteering.

Although social cohesion has been steady over the last 12 months, it has decreased since 2020. Prior to the pandemic, from 2018, the social cohesion score had been increasing.

Australia's overall social cohesion score and sense of belonging have been steady in 2023 and 2024, following several years of decline:



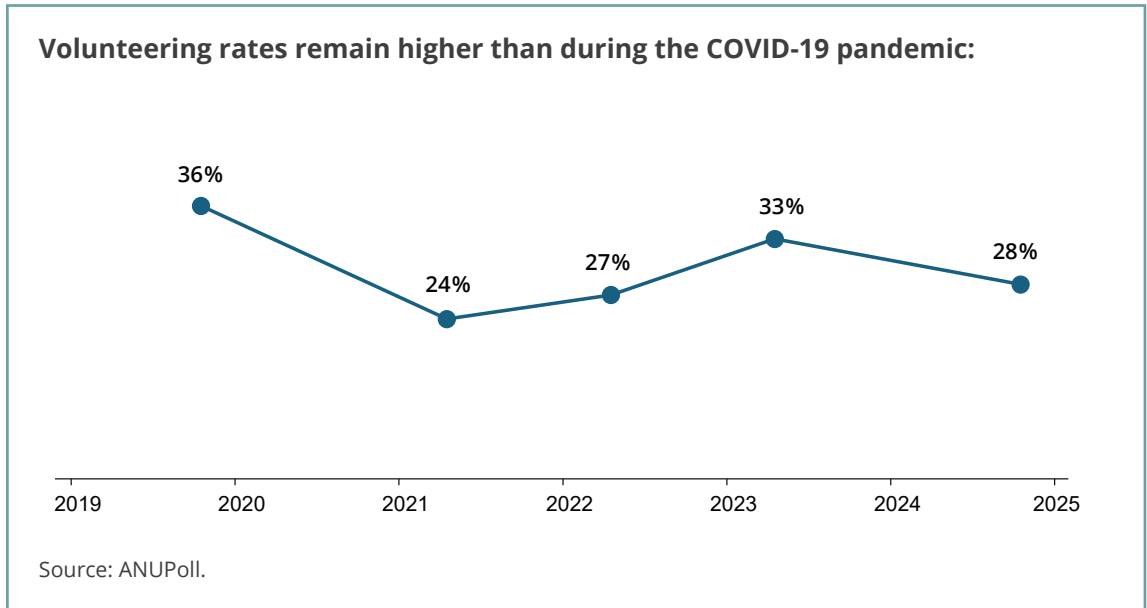
Note: Index scores are 'indexed' to 2007 (2007=100), and are calculated relative to scores recorded in this first 'baseline' survey.

Australians generally feel connected to their communities. In 2024:

- 4 in 5 (82%) adults agreed that people in their local area were willing to help their neighbours.
- 4 in 5 (81%) adults felt a sense of belonging in their neighbourhood.

People continue to contribute to community through volunteering

Around 3 in 10 (28%) people had undertaken voluntary work in the previous 12 months (in October 2024 based on ANUPoll data). This is a decline from 33% in April 2023, but higher than earlier stages of the emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic (24% in April 2021).



Prior to the pandemic, volunteering had been declining among adults over a longer period (between 2010 and 2020), as reported by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) General Social Survey.

More Australians are feeling lonely

2 in 5 (40%) Australians reported having experienced loneliness at least some of the time in the previous week, based on ANUPoll data for April 2025. This is a higher level than reported between January 2023 and January 2024, ranging from 35% to 37%.

Prior to 2023, loneliness reached its highest levels over 2021 and 2022 since 2001, as found in the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey.

More people are feeling socially isolated

Social isolation relates to having few social relationships or infrequent social contact and differs from the feeling of loneliness. In 2023, around 1 in 7 (15%) Australians aged 15 and over felt socially isolated, up from a range of 11–14% between 2001 and 2019. Social isolation peaked at 16% in 2021, coinciding with when a range of public health and social measures were in place during the emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Among people aged 15 and over, males were more likely to experience social isolation than females (17% of males and 13% of females in 2023).

Between 2020 and 2022, young people aged 15–24 were more likely to experience social isolation (ranging from 19% to 22%) than any other age group. In 2023, people aged 35–44 were more likely to experience social isolation (18%) than any other age group.

Engagement in risky gambling has increased from 2018 to 2022

Risky gambling – where ‘risky’ means people are at some risk of, or already experiencing, gambling-related harm – is one of many factors that can affect people’s life satisfaction and wellbeing. It is associated with lower overall life satisfaction, decreased mental health, high alcohol consumption and financial stress.

In 2022:

- 4.9% of Australians engaged in low-risk gambling (up from 3.7% in 2018)
- 3.1% engaged in moderate-risk gambling (up from 2.5% in 2018)
- 1.8% engaged in high-risk gambling (up from 1.1% in 2018).

Broadly, the most common gambling-related harms for those who gamble is feelings of anger/distress and impact on relationships with others.

Risky gambling is higher among men than women. In 2022, 2.4% of men (almost 310,000 men) reported high-risk gambling compared with 1.2% of women (around 157,000).

Betting – in particular, betting on sports or horse/dog races – was most common among young men, and more young men participated in betting than in the past. In 2022, 17% of men aged 18–24 and 17% of men aged 25–34 placed a bet in a regular month (up from 10% and 11% in 2015).

i For more, see: AIHW topic summaries [Social cohesion and social connection](#), [Volunteers](#), [Social isolation and loneliness](#) and [Gambling](#).

Information is also drawn from: ABS [Measuring What Matters](#); ANUPoll; and the [Household, Income and Labour Dynamics Australia \(HILDA\) Survey](#).



2

Education

Education has an overall positive effect on people's wellbeing. Higher levels of education are associated with an increased likelihood of being employed, improved income, better life satisfaction and better health.

From the skills developed during preschool and child care to the completion of Year 12 and further non-school qualifications, the education system supports people's transition to adulthood.

Half of children aged under 5 attend child care

High quality early childhood education and care (such as centre-based day care and outside school hours care) contributes to the positive social, physical, emotional, and cognitive development of children until school age.

50.4% of children aged 0–5 used Australian Government subsidised child care in the September quarter 2024; up from 49.0% in September 2022.



Older people play an important role providing unpaid child care

In 2021, 425,800 (9.7%) people aged 65 and over had spent time providing unpaid care for a child aged under 15 who was not their own (such as grandchildren and children of friends or neighbours) over the past 2 weeks. Compared with 2016, this was a similar number, but a smaller proportion (425,000 or 13%).

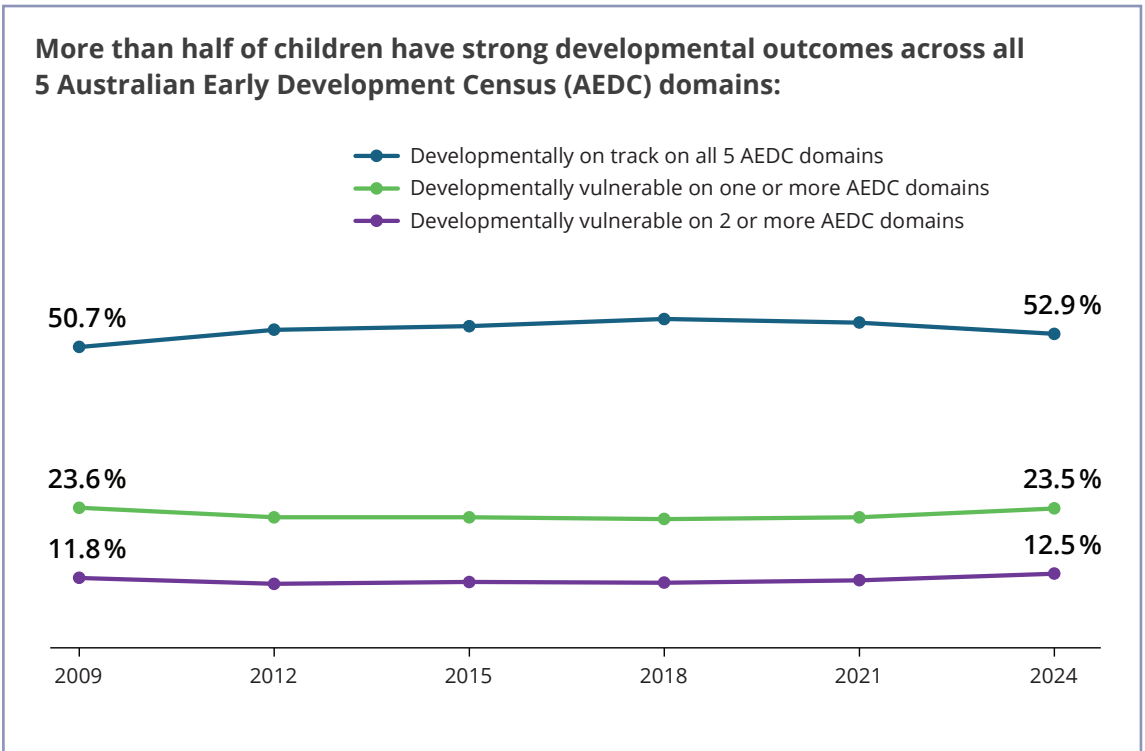
Most 4-year-olds are enrolled in preschool programs

In 2024:

- 342,000 children aged 4 or 5 were enrolled in a preschool program, a 1.3% increase compared with 2023.
- Most (90%) children aged 4 were enrolled in a preschool program.
- Of the children attending preschool, half (50%) did so through a centre-based day care service, 35% attended a dedicated preschool and 15% attended preschool programs across multiple provider types.
- \$4 or less was paid out of pocket per hour after subsidies for most preschool children (78%, or 266,000), including 105,000 children (31%) with no fees.

Around 1 in 4 children in the first year of full-time school are developmentally vulnerable

Every 3 years, an assessment is conducted across 5 domains to determine how children have developed by the time they start full-time school; some aspects include physical health, emotional maturity and communication.



NAPLAN results for 2025 are similar to 2024

Between 2008 and 2022, national average achievement in National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) scores remained stable or modestly improved. In 2023, NAPLAN measurement and reporting changed. Pre-2023 results can not be compared with those from 2023 onwards.

Between 2024 and 2025, national average scores remained stable across all Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 and all domains (reading, writing, spelling, grammar and numeracy).

In 2025, across all assessed year levels:

- female students attained a higher mean score than males in reading, writing, spelling, and grammar and punctuation
- female students attained a lower mean score than males in numeracy
- students from *Remote* or *Very remote* areas attained a lower mean score than students in other areas of Australia across all NAPLAN domains.

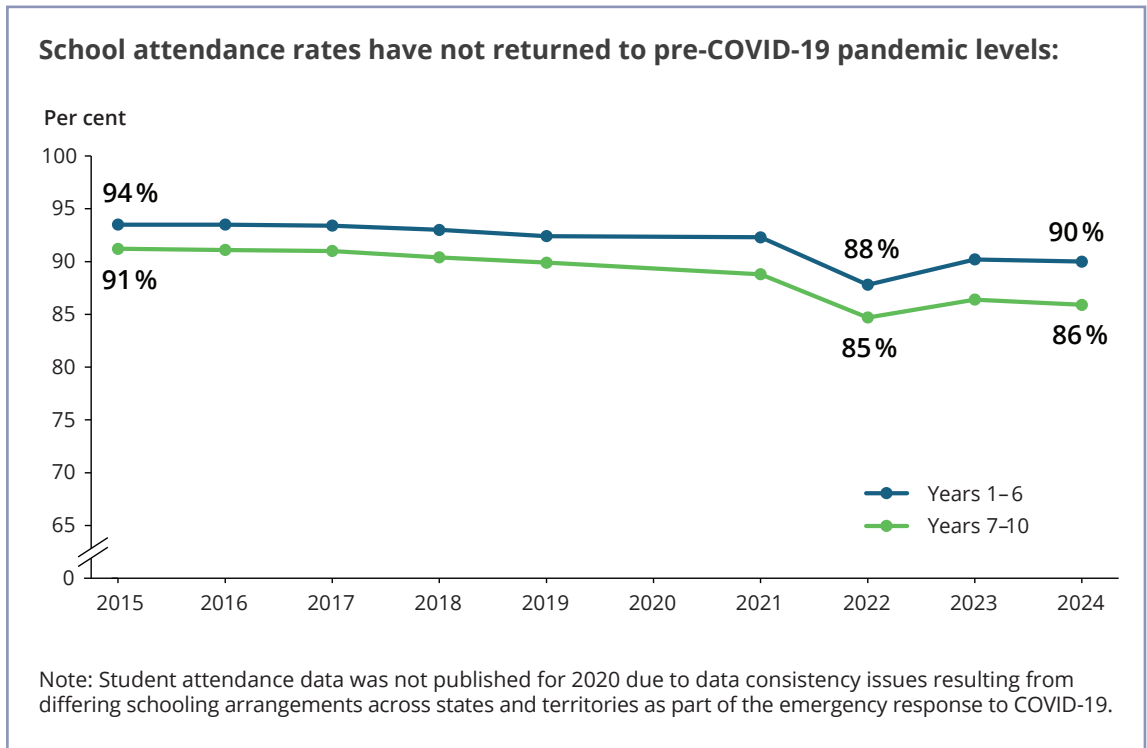
15-year-old Australian students perform higher than the average on the international PISA test

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey assesses the knowledge and skills of 15-year-old students in over 70 countries.

PISA results for 2022 show that across science, reading and mathematics, Australian students aged 15 scored higher than the average for Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. In Australia, average results in 2022 were about the same as in 2018 in mathematics, reading and science.

School attendance is declining but Year 12 attainment is increasing

The majority of children attend school, however attendance rates have declined since 2015 for students in Years 1–6 and Years 7–10.



The proportion of people with a Year 12 or equivalent qualification has increased over a decade. In 2024, 4 in 5 (79%) people aged 15–74 had attained Year 12 or equivalent or non-school qualification at certificate III level or above, up from 72% in 2015.

The proportion of Australians with a non-school qualification is increasing

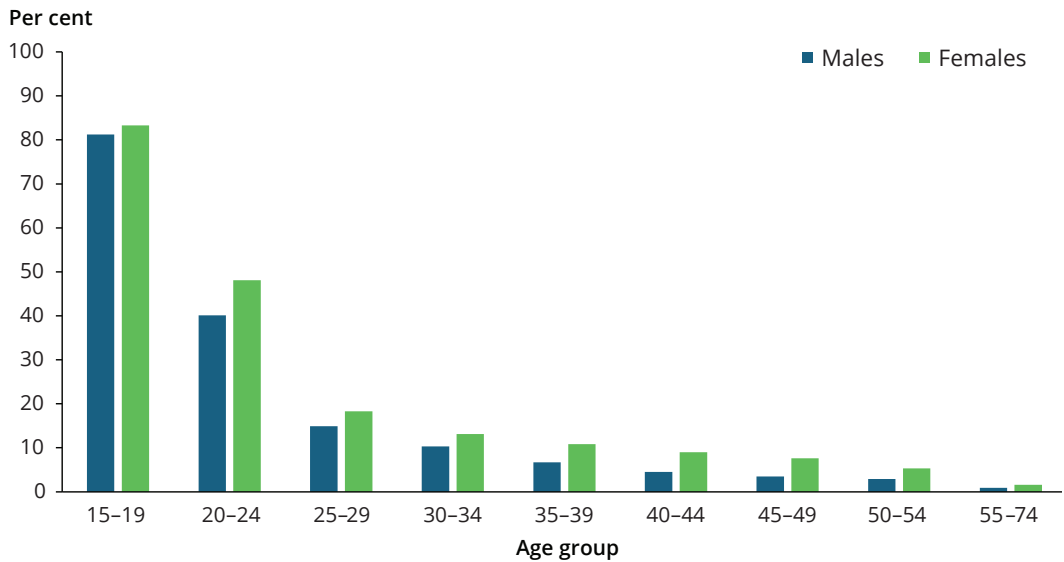
In 2024, 63% of people aged 15–74 (12.5 million people) had completed a non-school qualification such as a university degree, certificate or diploma. This is the same as in 2023, but an increase from 59% in 2015.

One-third (33%, or 6.6 million) of people aged 15–74 had a non-school qualification at the Bachelor degree level or higher and 28% (5.6 million) had a certificate, diploma, or advanced diploma as their highest non-school qualification.

3.2 million people are currently studying, more females than males

In 2024, 16% (3.2 million) of people aged 15–74 were currently studying, the same as in 2023.

Females were more likely to be currently studying than males in 2024, across all age groups:



Source: ABS Education and Work, Australia.

Of the people aged 15–74 currently studying in 2024, 2.3 million were enrolled in non-school education. People aged 20–24 were the most likely to be enrolled in study for a non-school qualification (44% of the population of that age), followed by those aged 15–19 (25%), and 25–29 (17%) in 2024.



Australia compares well with other OECD countries on attainment of tertiary education qualifications

Based on the latest year of available data, Australia ranked 6th highest (where higher is more favourable) out of 38 OECD countries for tertiary education attained by adults aged 25–64.

The number of apprentices and trainees is decreasing

In Australia, 334,000 apprentices and trainees were training at 30 September 2024; a decrease from 362,000 at 30 September 2023. Numbers of apprentices and trainees have fluctuated in recent years, with a recent high of 404,000 at 30 September 2022, following a low of 263,000 at 30 September 2020 (during the emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic).

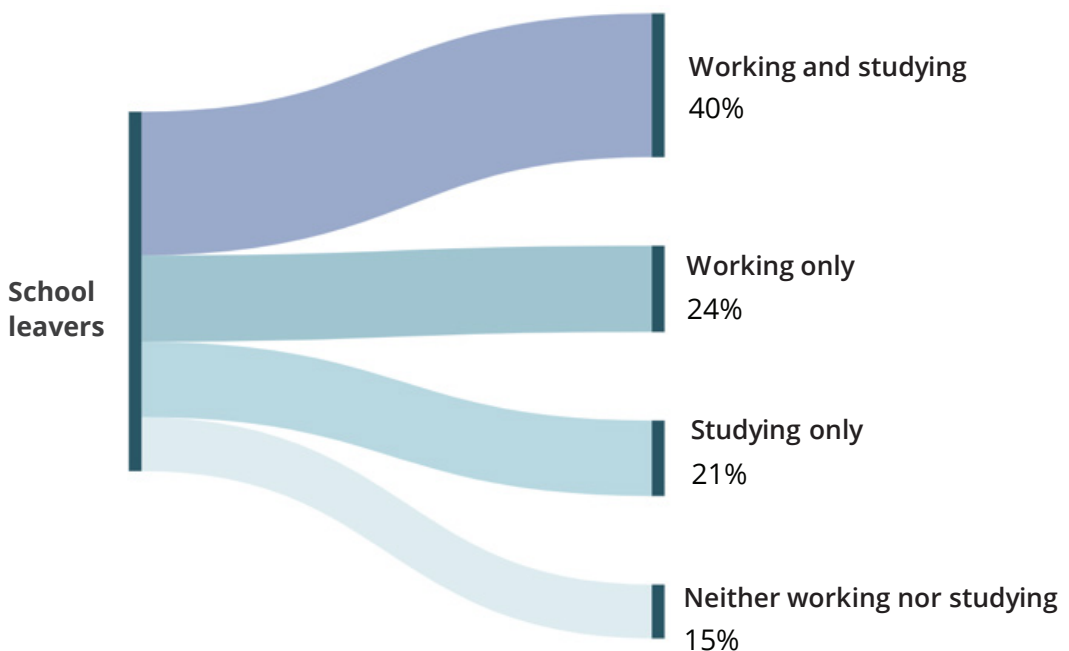
Changes in the number of people commencing apprenticeships and traineeships can be related to government wage subsidies, incentives and demand for labour in particular industries such as mining.

At 30 September 2023, more than half (55%) of apprentices and trainees who started training in 2019 had completed their apprenticeship or traineeship requirements.

The most common pathway for school leavers is further study while working

There are many pathways young people take after leaving school, including paid work and/or education.

For people finishing Year 12 or equivalent in 2023 (aged 15–20) the most common next step in 2024 was to be employed and enrolled in non-school study:



Source: AIHW analysis of ABS Education and Work, Australia.

This chapter uses data from the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC). The AEDC is funded by the Australian Government Department of Education. The findings reported are those of the AIHW and should not be attributed to the Department of Education.

i For more, see: AIHW topic summary [Education and skills: From early childhood to tertiary education](#) and [International comparisons of welfare data](#); and AIHW [Older Australians](#).

Information is also drawn from: ABS [Education and Work, Australia](#) and [Unpaid work and care: Census](#).



3

Work

Work is generally associated with better physical and mental health and is a key factor in overall wellbeing.

Employment can enable people to support themselves, their families and their communities and underpins economic output. However there are a range of personal and structural factors that may impact a person's ability to gain work and remain employed, which can affect some groups in the community more than others.

Australia has low rates of unemployment and record high employment rates

In June 2025, 67.0% of people aged 15 and over were participating in the labour force (either employed or unemployed).



For people aged 15 and over, in June 2025, the:

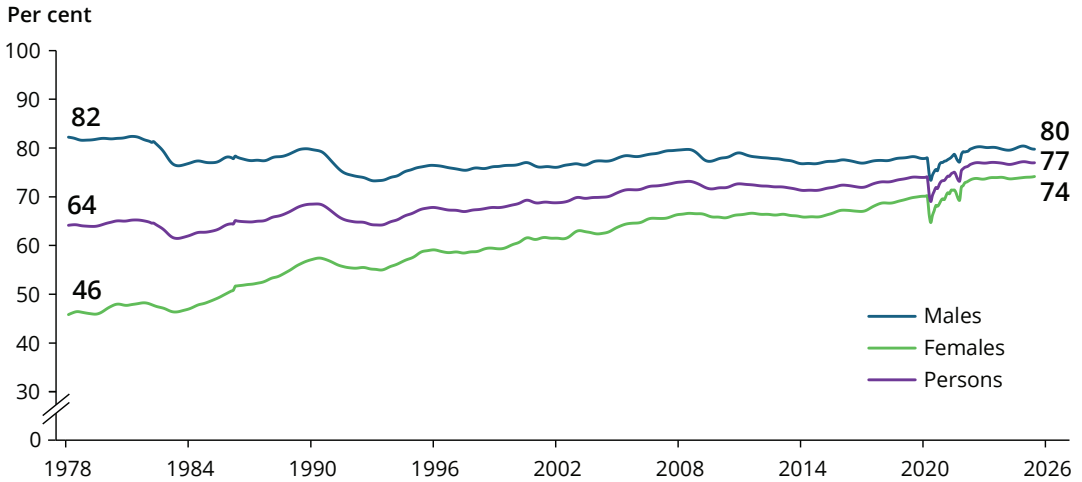
- employment rate was 64.2%
- unemployment rate was 4.2%
- underemployment rate was 5.9%.

Trend data shows that, in Australia:

- the **employment rate (for people aged 15–64)** has been steadily increasing over time – to 77.2% in June 2025. The rate increased from 64.4% in February 1978 (when the current data series began) to record highs of 77.4% in December 2024
- the **unemployment rate (for people aged 15 and over)** has been low in recent years – at 4.2% in June 2025. The rate previously peaked at 11.1% in December 1992 and again at 7.5% in July 2020, before it declined to its lowest rate in almost 50 years of 3.5% in September 2022.

The increased employment rate for people aged 15–64 has been driven by an increase in female employment (from 46.0% in February 1978 to 74.4% in June 2025). In contrast, the employment rate for males has declined, from 82.4% in February 1978 to 80.0% in June 2025.

The growth in the employment rate over the last 47 years is driven by increases in female employment (aged 15–64):



Note: Trend data are used for all series except for between April 2020 and March 2022 when the ABS recommended using seasonally adjusted data.

In more recent years, the growth in the employment rate has been driven by the strong labour market since the COVID-19 pandemic

Australia's labour force has recovered from the largest ever monthly fall in employment during the emergency response to COVID-19, (a decrease of 555,300 employed people aged 15–64 in April 2020) and the lowest employment rate observed in almost 20 years (at 69.2% in May 2020).

While there is variation across population groups, the employment rate returned to pre-pandemic levels in March 2021 (74.4%). The employment rate has continued to improve since, reaching record highs of 77.4% in December 2024 and remains similar to date.



Australia compares well with other OECD countries on employment rates

Based on the latest year of available data for people aged 15–64, Australia ranked:

- 7th highest (where higher is more favourable) out of 38 OECD countries for the employment rate
- 11th lowest (where lower is more favourable) out of 37 OECD countries for the unemployment rate.

The employment rate has increased for all age groups

Between June 1978 and June 2025, the growth in employment rates for people aged 15–64 was:

- fastest for people aged 55–64 – increasing by 21.8 percentage points from 45.5% to 67.3%
- slowest for people aged 15–24 – increasing by 2.5 percentage points from 61.1% to 63.6%.

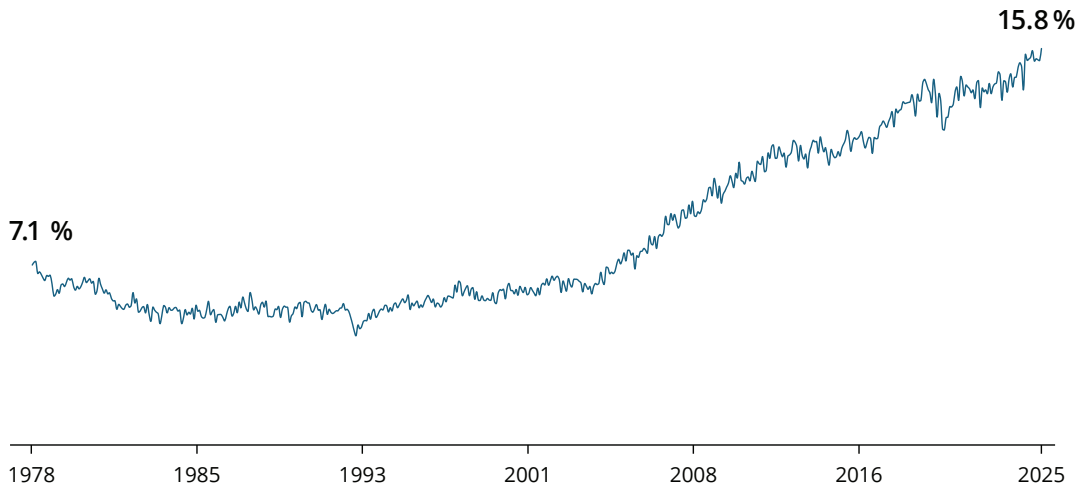
In comparison, the employment rate across other age groups increased by between 12 and 16 percentage points over this period.

Older people make up a larger share of the workforce than in previous years

The retirement age in Australia has increased in recent years, and more Australians aged 65 and over are remaining in the workforce for longer.

In June 2025, 15.8% (766,500) of older people aged 65 and over were employed, up from 6.8% in June 1978 (90,100).

Since February 1978 (when the current data series began), the employment rate has more than doubled for people aged 65 and over:



Note: Employment rates by age are based on the original series, otherwise trend data are used.

The employment rate for males aged 65 and over (18.9%) was higher than for females aged 65 and over (13.2%) in June 2025.

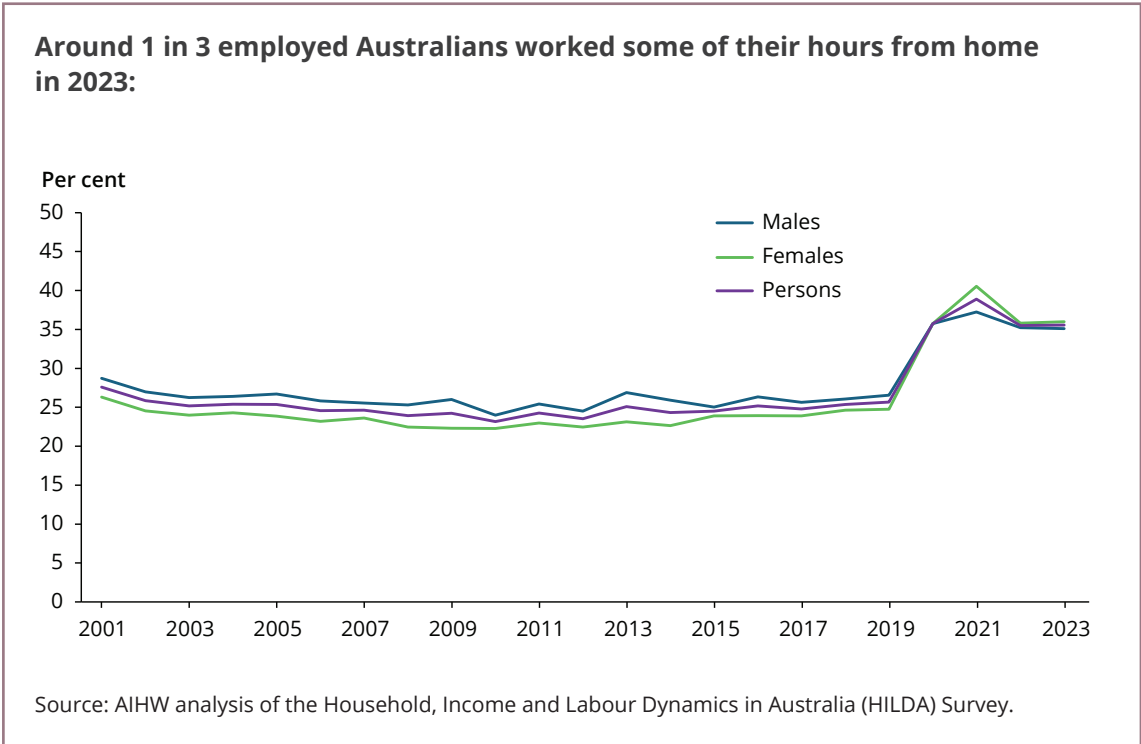
The proportion of Australians working part time has increased compared with 30 years ago

Part-time work (less than 35 hours a week) can offer flexibility to workers and can be used to balance work with other responsibilities like education or family. However, for some people working part time, full-time work is preferable.

The proportion of employed Australians working part time increased over the last 30 years, from 21.2% in January 1991 to 30.0% in June 2025. This growth of part-time employment is largely driven by increases for males from 7.9% to 19.0%; while the proportion of females working part time increased from 39.5% to 41.8%.

More people work from home than before the pandemic

The proportion of people working from home increased in 2020 when emergency measures were in place in response to COVID-19. This has not returned to pre-pandemic levels. Between 2001 and 2019, on average, 25% of employed Australians worked some hours from home. This proportion peaked at 39% in 2021, coinciding with the pandemic, decreased to 36% in 2022, and remained at 36% in 2023.



1 in 10 young people are not in work or study

Young people who are not working or studying might not have the skills needed to improve their economic situation and secure stable employment.

In May 2024, 8.5% (288,000) of people aged 15–24 were not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET). This is slightly higher than in 2023 (7.7%) and 2022 (7.6%), but lower than in 2015–2019 (average of 9.0%).



Australia compares well with other OECD countries on employment measures for young people aged 15–24

Based on the latest year of available data for people aged 15–24, Australia ranked:

- 10th lowest (where lower is more favourable) out of 37 OECD countries for the youth NEET rate (proportion not in education, employment or training) and was lower than the OECD average
- 8th lowest (where lower is more favourable) out of 38 OECD countries for the youth unemployment rate, and was lower than the OECD average.

Poor mental health and unemployment are linked

In 2023, among people aged 18–64, a high or very high risk of mental distress was estimated for:

- 51% of those unemployed
- 39% of those not in the labour force
- 23% of those employed.

i For more, see: AIHW topic summaries [Employment and unemployment](#) and [International comparisons of welfare data](#).

Information is also drawn from: ABS [Labour Force, Australia, Detailed](#).



4

Income

A person's wellbeing is influenced by many factors, but having an adequate income remains an essential component in measuring individual and household wellbeing.

For most people, income can be an indicator of a person's ability to access food, clothing, education, housing and leisure activities. A person's income is influenced by their economic circumstances, in particular their employment status and type, and how much they work. Adequate income can help people support themselves, their families, and their broader communities.

For those needing support, Australia's social security system aims to support people who cannot, or cannot fully, support themselves, by providing targeted payments and assistance. The main Government funded income support payments include Age Pension, Disability Support Pension, student payments, and support payments for carers, parents and unemployed people.

Real wages have recovered, with growth in nominal wages and moderating inflation

Nominal wages have been growing

Wages are the primary source of income for about 3 in 5 adults. Wages are often measured by average weekly ordinary time earnings (AWOTE), which are a full-time employee's average weekly pay before tax, and without any overtime or bonuses added. Nominal wages referred to here are actual AWOTE (not adjusted for inflation).



Over the year to November 2024:

- nominal wages were \$1,976, up from \$1,396 in November 2012
- annual growth in nominal wages reached 4.6%; the highest growth since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in May 2020 (4.8% growth).

Inflation has been moderating since late 2024

Accounting for inflation (measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI)) when reporting on trends in wages is important to determine if wage increases are actually improving workers' ability to afford goods and services or just keeping up with rising costs. This is typically referred to as real wages. Inflation may cause individuals to be worse off if nominal (typically referred to as actual/unadjusted) wages growth is slower than inflation.

- Since mid-2021, inflation had been rising; it peaked at 7.8% in December 2022 (the highest rate of inflation since March 1990, at 8.9%).
- Inflation has since moderated to 2.4% in both the December quarter 2024 and the March quarter 2025 (the lowest rate of inflation since March 2021).

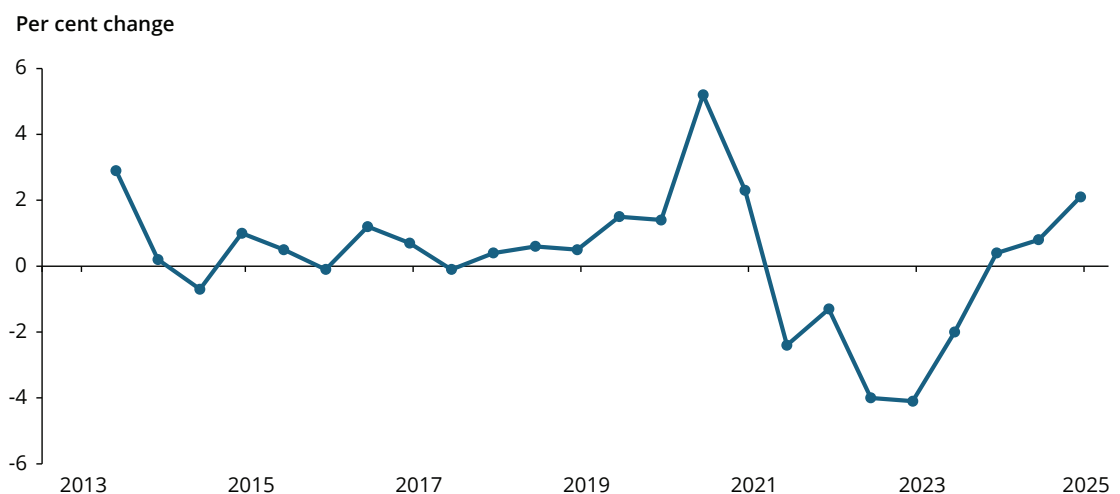
Real wages have recovered

Over the year to November 2024:

- real wages (real AWOTE) were \$1,976, up from \$1,908 in November 2012
- annual growth in real wages reached 2.1%; higher than levels of growth seen before the COVID-19 pandemic (1.4% in November 2019).

Between 2021 and 2023, inflation was higher than the growth in nominal wages. This meant that incomes did not keep pace with rising living costs, and real wages declined. Since 2023, as the growth in nominal wages was stronger than inflation, real wages growth has begun to improve.

Since 2023, growth in real wages has started to improve:



- Prior to 2020, annual growth in real wages was generally low, ranging from a decline of 0.7% in May 2014 to growth of 1.4% in November 2019.
- Following the COVID-19 pandemic peak (5.2% growth over the year to May 2020), real wages experienced several years of annual declines between May 2021 (2.4% decline) and May 2023 (2.0% decline); including the peak decline of 4.1% over the year to November 2022.

Real household income has grown, following two years of declines

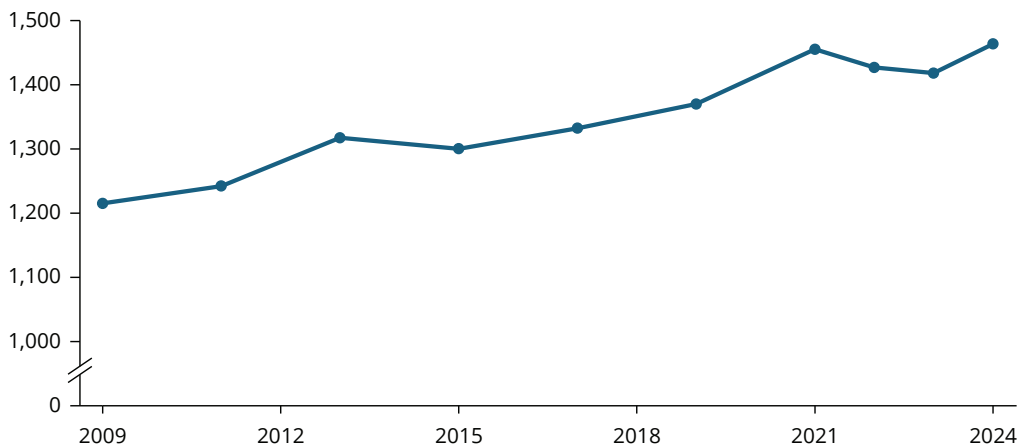
While wages data provide important information on income and living standards for individuals, household income data is also useful as it accounts for households who share resources and expenses, or flexible or irregular work patterns. Household incomes are equivalised, to take into account different household size and composition, enabling income levels between households to be compared. Similar to real wages, real equivalised household income has been adjusted for inflation.

In 2024, real household income (median real equivalised household disposable income) was \$1,464 per week; an increase of 3.2% since 2023 (\$1,418) and 20% since 2009 (\$1,215).

- Between 2021 and 2023, real household disposable income fell by an average of 1.3% per year.
- By 2024, real household income recovered to similar levels as in 2021 (\$1,455).

Real household income growth has turned around, after 2 consecutive years of declines:

Median real household income per week (\$)



Not all households experience income growth equally

Changes in real household income varied between households, depending on their level of income (income quintiles). Between 2023 and 2024:

- higher-income households (households in income quintiles 4 and 5) had the fastest real income growth (both 3.5% growth)
- the lowest income households (quintile 1) had the slowest real income growth (0.3% growth).

Over a longer time period, between 2021 and 2024 all income quintiles reported falls in real income except those in the lower-income quintiles:

- the lowest income households were the only ones to record growth in real incomes (3.1% growth for quintile 1; 0.9% growth for quintile 2)
- middle and higher-income households (quintiles 3, 4 and 5) each had falls in real incomes (declines of 1.3% for quintile 3, 3.1% for quintile 4 and 1.8% for quintile 5).

In 2022–23, Australia’s overall level of income inequality (measured by the Gini coefficient which ranges between 0 and 1, with a lower number representing less inequality) was 0.304 (compared with 0.321 in 2021–22 and 0.290 in 2019–20 during the COVID-19 pandemic).



Australia compares well with other OECD countries for household disposable income, but income inequality could be better

Based on the latest year of available data:

- Australia’s household disposable income – the income a household has left after paying taxes and other deductions, that can be spent or saved – was higher than the OECD average and ranked 7th highest (where higher is more favourable) out of 33 OECD countries.
- Australia had the same level of household income inequality as the OECD average.
- Australia ranked equal 20th highest (where higher is less favourable) out of 35 OECD countries for household income inequality, meaning that household income in Australia is less evenly distributed across households than 19 OECD countries, but more evenly distributed than 14 OECD countries.

More people are experiencing financial stress

In 2023, around 21% of people aged 15 and over felt some level of financial stress, the highest level of financial stress in over a decade (21% in 2012), increasing from a recent low of 18% in 2021–2022.



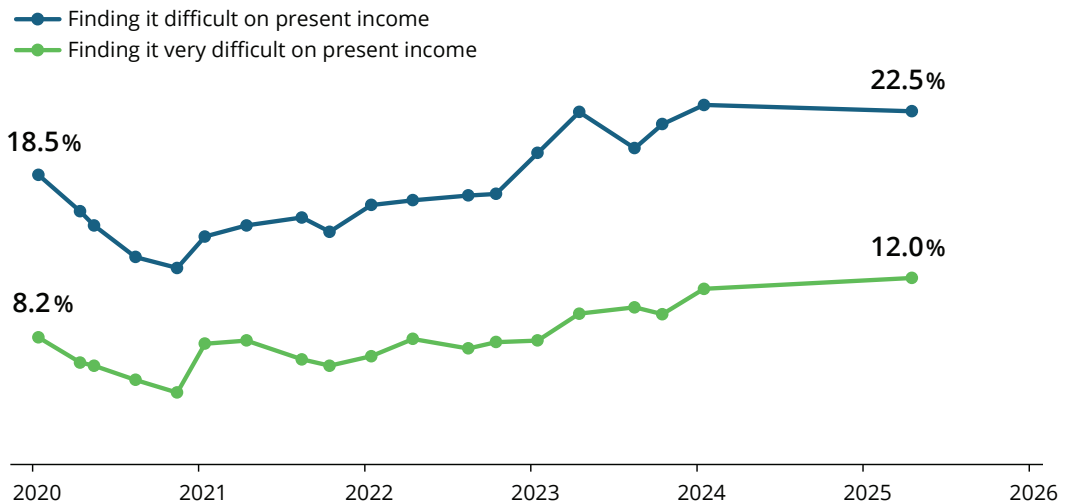
1 in 20 (4.9%) people reported missing out on meals in 2023, the highest since data were first collected in 2001, compared with an average of 3.3% between 2001 and 2019.

In 2023, financial stress was reported by:

- 43% of single parents
- 37% of renters
- 31% of people who had had a serious personal injury or illness in the past year.

In April 2025, 35% of adults found it difficult or very difficult getting by on their current income. This is higher than levels reported in February 2020 (pre-COVID-19 pandemic) and higher than levels reported throughout the first few years of the pandemic when financial subsidies were available to assist households through the emergency response to COVID-19.

Financial stress remains at levels higher than during the COVID-19 pandemic:



Note: Respondents have been asked 'Which of the following descriptions comes closest to how you feel about your household's income nowadays' with four response options: Living comfortably on present income; Coping on present income; Finding it difficult on present income; and Finding it very difficult on present income.

Source: ANUPoll.

Renters, single parents and 35–49-year-olds are at a higher risk of experiencing financial stress

In 2023, people aged 35–49 were more likely to experience any form of financial stress than people in any other age group. People who were more likely to experience any financial stress also included:

- single parents relative to couples without children
- renters relative to owners without a mortgage
- people living in the most disadvantaged areas relative to people living in the most advantaged areas.

People who experience severe psychological distress are more likely to also experience financial stress

High levels of financial stress can impact people's wellbeing, raising levels of psychological distress, anxiety and depression.

In April 2025:

- 12.5% of adults were experiencing severe psychological distress, up from 8.4% in February 2017
- around 7 in 10 (68%) adults who experienced severe psychological distress also experienced financial stress
- 3 in 10 (30%) adults who did not experience severe psychological distress experienced financial stress.

The proportion of the population receiving income support has declined



5.3 million Australians aged 16 and over received income support at 28 March 2025 (or 24% of all people aged 16 and over).

The proportion of people aged 16 and over receiving income support has fallen, from 26% in March 2012 to 24% in March 2025. Over the same period, the number of people receiving income support has grown, from 4.8 million in 2012 to 5.3 million in 2025.

Receipt of income support payments increased steeply in 2020 following social distancing and business-related restrictions aimed at reducing the spread of COVID-19. It increased from 14% of the population aged 16–64 receiving an income support payment in March 2020 to 20% in June 2020. By June 2022, income support receipt had returned to pre-pandemic levels (14%).

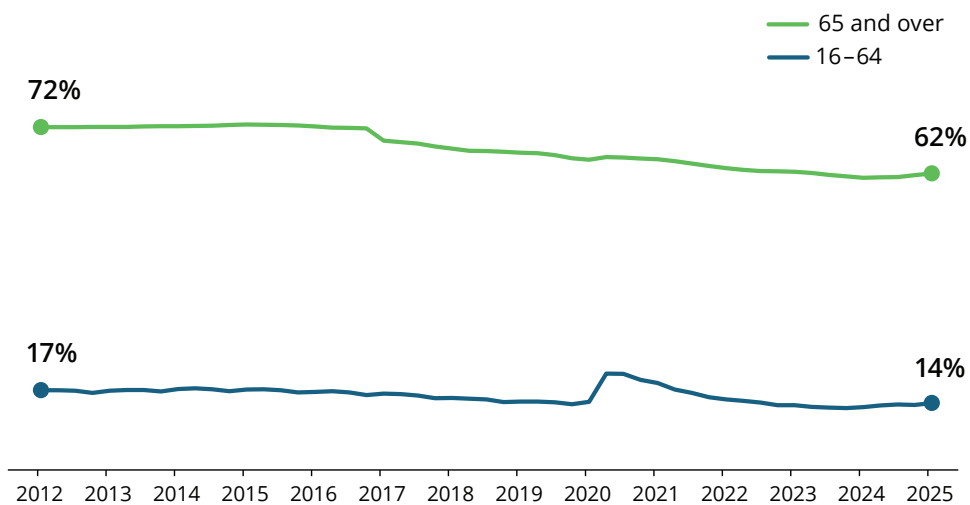
Older people make up over half of those receiving income support

Among people aged 16 and over who received income support payments, at 28 March 2025:

- 2.9 million people (or 55%) were aged 65 and over
- 2.4 million people (or 45%) were aged 16–64.

The proportion of older people aged 65 and over receiving income support has fallen, from 72% in March 2012 to 62% in March 2025; over the same period the number has increased, from 2.3 million in March 2012 to 2.9 million in March 2025.

The proportion of older Australians receiving income support has declined faster than younger people:



Source: AIHW analysis of DSS (Income support recipients – monthly time series).

Age Pension is the most common income support payment received by older people aged 65 and over:

- 9 in 10 (91%) older people who were receiving income support received Age Pension in March 2025.
- The proportion of all people aged 65 and over receiving Age Pension has declined, from 70% (2.2 million) in March 2012 to 56% (2.7 million) in March 2025.

The decline in the proportion of older people receiving Age Pension has been influenced by a range of factors, including gradual increases to the qualifying age for Age Pension, greater superannuation savings and extended workforce participation. People are continuing to receive other income support payments for longer before transitioning to the Age Pension.

At 28 March 2025, 277,000 older people aged 65 and over received other income support payments including Disability Support Pension, Carer Payment and JobSeeker Payment.

Females are more likely than males to receive an income support payment



At 28 March 2025, of people aged 16–64, females (16%, or 1.4 million) were more likely to receive income support payments than males (12%, or 1.0 million).

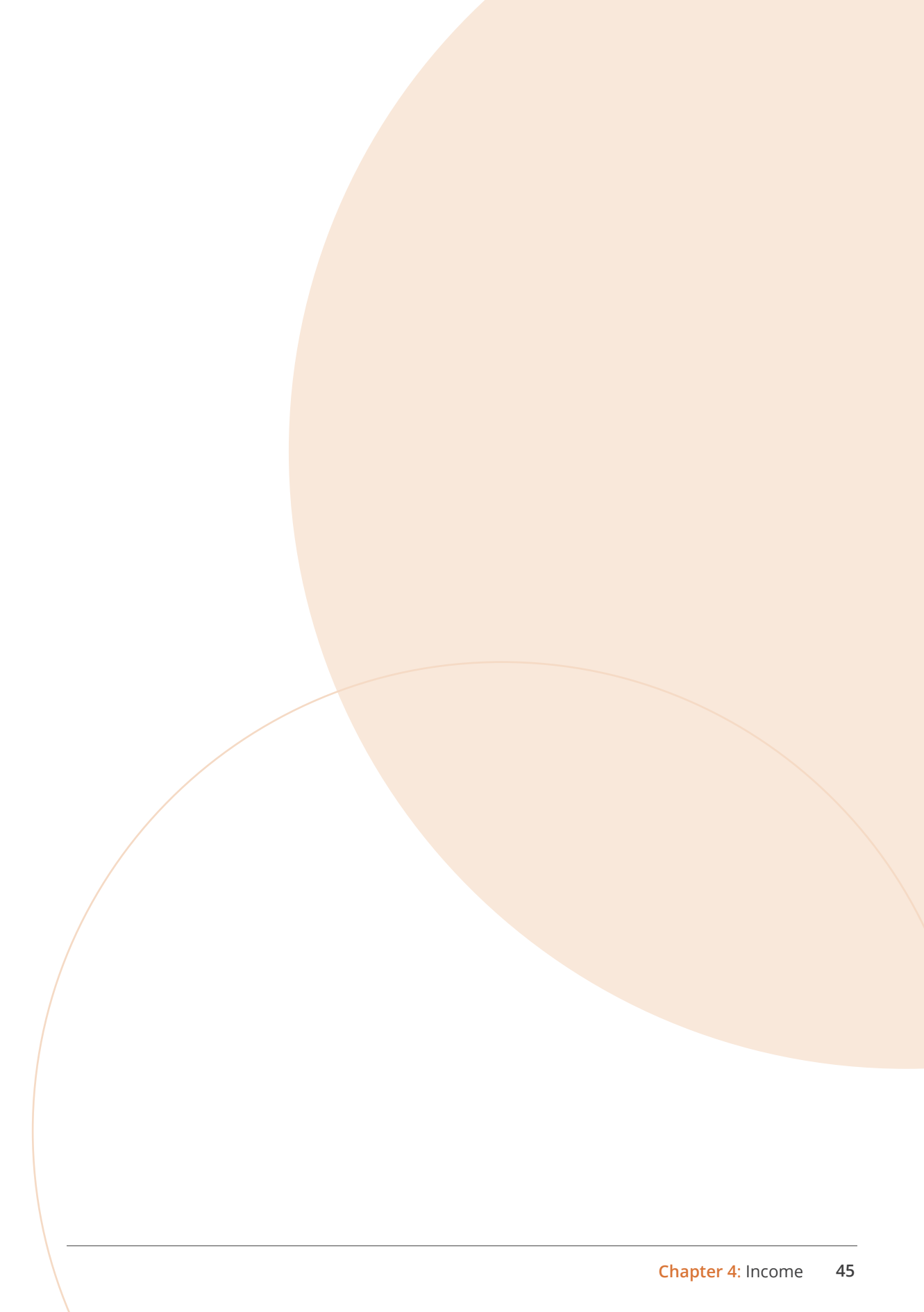
For people aged 16–64:

- females were the predominant recipients of parenting payments (93% of recipients were female) and Carer Payment (72%); reflected by women typically managing the share of informal care responsibilities (68% of informal (primary) carers were women)
- males were more likely than females to receive unemployment payments or Disability Support Pension.

For people aged 65 and over, women (58%, or 1.5 million) were more likely to receive the Age Pension than men (53%, or 1.2 million).

i For more, see: AIHW topic summaries [Income and income inequality](#), [Income support payments for the working age population](#), [Income support for older Australians](#), [Informal carers](#) and [International comparisons of welfare data](#).

Information is also drawn from: [ANUPoll](#) and [DSS Income support recipients - monthly time series](#).





5

Housing

Access to safe, adequate housing is central to the health and wellbeing of individuals and families. Secure and affordable housing is the basis for social connectedness and contributes to health and wellbeing.

Many Australians experience life events that place them at an increased risk of experiencing housing stress or homelessness; for example, loss of a job, relationship breakdown, illness and family and domestic violence. Lack of affordable housing and household financial stress can exacerbate the likelihood of people becoming homeless.

Various government assistance is available to people facing difficulty meeting the cost of housing, to those unable to secure a home in the private market, and to those at risk of, or experiencing homelessness. Assistance includes financial support, government-owned public housing and specialist homelessness services.

Fewer young people own their own home

In 2021, two-thirds (67%) of households in Australia were homeowners – including outright owners (32%) and those with mortgages (35%). Over one-quarter (26%) were in private rental accommodation.

In the 20 years between 1999–2000 and 2019–20, the proportion of households owning their home without a mortgage declined (from 39% to 30%), while households with a mortgage increased (from 32% to 37%) and households in private rental agreements also increased (from 20% to 26%).

Home ownership rates have declined since 1971, especially among younger age groups, while older generations have maintained higher ownership levels. Between 1971 and 2021, home ownership rates declined the most among those aged under 35:

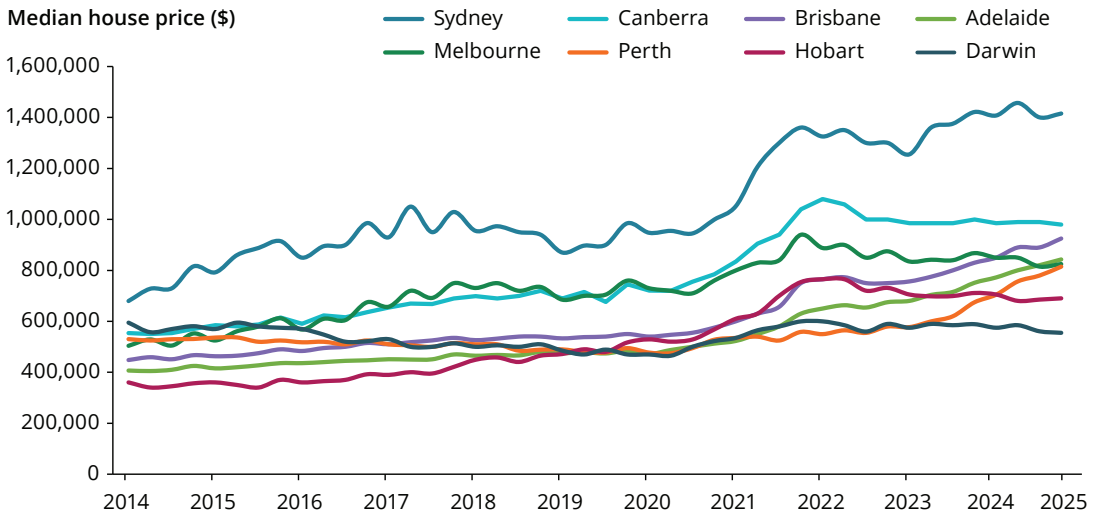
- 25–29-year-olds (from 50% to 36%)
- 30–34-year-olds (from 64% to 50%).

Among 50–54-year-olds, home ownership also declined from 80% in 1996 to 72% in 2021.

Housing has become more expensive

Between 2014 and 2024, the median transfer price for established houses in capital cities, where most Australians live, increased substantially. Prices were highest in Sydney, where the median house transfer price increased from around \$680,000 in the first quarter of 2014 to around \$1.4 million in the last quarter of 2024. The price paid for housing in non-capital city areas also generally increased over the same period, however dwellings in these areas were usually less expensive than dwellings in capital city areas.

Median house prices in the capital cities have grown rapidly over a decade:



Note: Values are property price at transfer in current prices (does not account for inflation).

Source: AIHW Housing data dashboard.

In the second quarter of 2025, the average loan size for a household with a mortgage was around \$678,000 and \$674,000 for investors.

Increasing interest rates have had an impact over recent years

The Reserve Bank of Australia increased the cash rate from a historic low of 0.1% in May 2022 to 4.35% in November 2023, substantially increasing mortgage repayments and the financial burden on those with a mortgage

During the same time, rents paid (as measured by the Consumer Price Index) substantially increased, reaching a record annual growth of 7.8% over the year to March 2024. Since then, the change in rents paid has moderated, growing 5.5% over the 12 months to March 2025.

1 in 5 rental households are low-income households in housing stress

An estimated 1.26 million low-income households were in financial housing stress in 2024–25, spending more than 30% of their disposable income on housing.

Measuring housing affordability and financial housing stress is not straightforward. Housing stress is a term typically used to describe lower-income households – those in the lowest two quintiles of income – that spend more than 30% of gross income on housing costs. This focus on people with low-to-moderate incomes is because they may be less likely to be able to adapt and respond to financial-related shocks, such as an unexpected job loss or dramatic rise in the price of rental accommodation.

In 2024–25:

- 1 in 5 (21%) households in the private rental market were low-income households in financial stress
- 1 in 7 (15%) households with a mortgage were low-income households in financial stress.



Australian households are spending more of their disposable income on rent and mortgages, compared with the OECD average

For median housing cost burden – the proportion of disposable income spent on rent or mortgages – Australia ranked (based on the latest year of available data):

- 18th highest (where higher is less favourable) out of 37 OECD countries for rent burden
- 3rd highest (where higher is less favourable) out of 35 OECD countries for mortgage burden.

More households are receiving government housing-related assistance

Various forms of government assistance are available to people facing difficulty meeting the cost of housing and to those unable to secure a home in the private market.

Financial assistance

Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) supports eligible households in receipt of social security payments with the cost of rent. People receiving CRA usually live in private rental accommodation or in Community Housing, which is a type of social housing.

Around 1.4 million income units (individuals or group of related persons) received CRA in December 2024, up from 1.3 million in June 2014. Around two-thirds of CRA income units were receiving Age Pension, Disability Support Pension or JobSeeker Payment as their primary government payment.



While CRA supports people with the cost of housing, around 521,000 (39%) income units receiving CRA were in rental stress (spending more than 30% of their gross income on rent) after receiving CRA at December 2024.

The largest group of income units in rental stress in December 2024 were those who also received JobSeeker (around 161,000 income units) as their primary payment type.

Social housing

Social housing is low-cost or subsidised rental housing provided to eligible Australians by government or non-government (including not-for-profit) organisations.



At June 2024, there were around 452,000 social housing dwellings in Australia, home to around 830,000 Australians.

Between June 2006 and June 2024, the number of social housing dwellings increased by 45,200 dwellings. However, the supply of social housing dwellings has not kept pace with growth in the overall number of households in Australia. Since 2008 there was an overall decline in the proportion of households living in social housing, with a most recent peak of 4.8% in 2011 before declining to 4.1% in 2024.

In 2023–24, 83% of newly allocated social housing was provided to households in greatest need – meaning, for example, they were experiencing or at risk of homelessness or their safety was at risk in their current accommodation – up from 74% in 2013–14.



Compared with other countries, Australia's social rental dwelling stock is low

Based on the latest year of available data, Australia ranked 19th highest (where higher is less favourable) out of 31 OECD countries for relative size of the social rental housing stock (as a share of total number of dwellings).

The number of people experiencing homelessness has grown but the rate has slowed

Homelessness is a complex issue. Causes of homelessness can be structural, for example, a lack of affordable housing, unemployment and poverty. It can also be due to, or exacerbated by, personal circumstances such as family and relationship breakdown, poor physical or mental health, intellectual disability, drug and alcohol use and gambling.

On Census night in 2021:



Around **122,500** people were estimated to be experiencing homelessness in Australia; an increase of 6,000 people since 2016.



The rate of people experiencing homelessness was **48** people per 10,000 population; down from 50 per 10,000 in 2016.

Of people experiencing homelessness on Census night in 2021:

- around 2 in 5 (39%) were living in a severely crowded dwelling. Other forms of homelessness included living in supported accommodation (20%), staying temporarily with other households (14%) and sleeping rough (6.2%).
- over half (58%) were younger than 35.

Specialist homelessness services provide support to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness

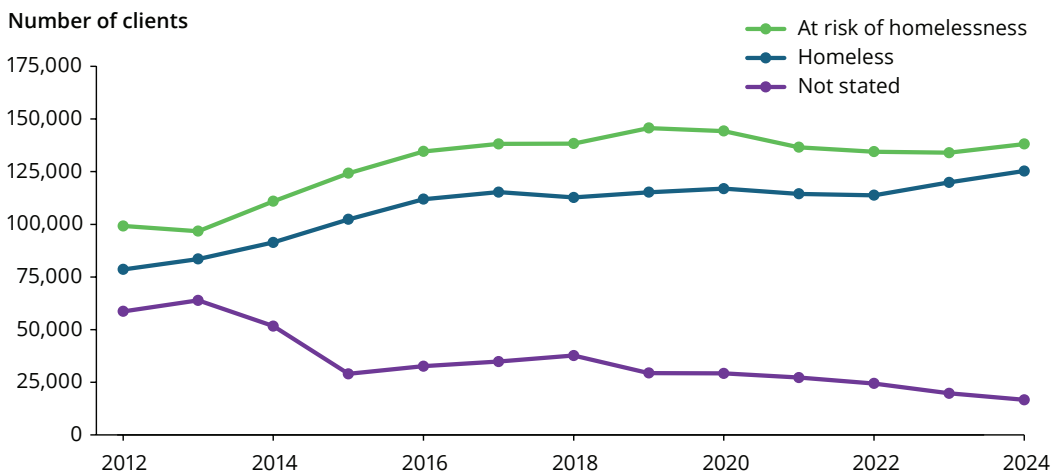
Across Australia, specialist homelessness services (SHS) provide services aimed at prevention, early intervention and crisis assistance to support people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Funding of the SHS system is a set amount each year. Consequently, the number of people supported reflects the total capacity of the support system and is not a reflection of the total underlying level of need.

SHS agencies supported 280,000 people in 2023–24, an increase from 236,000 in 2011–12, but a decrease from a peak of 290,000 in 2019–20. This is equivalent to a rate of 105.1 people per 10,000 population in 2023–24. The rate of SHS clients has decreased each year since 2016–17, when it was 119.2 per 10,000 population.

When people start receiving SHS support they may be experiencing or at risk of homelessness. This is called their ‘housing situation at the start of support’. Just under half (48%, or 125,000) of SHS clients were experiencing homelessness at the start of support in 2023–24, and 52% were at risk of homelessness.

More people start SHS support at risk of homelessness compared with experiencing homelessness:



Between 2017–18 and 2022–23, the number of SHS clients rough sleeping (had no shelter or were living in an inadequate dwelling) at some point during their contact with an SHS agency increased; from 36,800 clients (13% of all SHS clients) to 43,000 clients (16%).

SHS agencies support people to avoid homelessness

Among the 98,200 SHS clients who finished support in 2023–24, and began support at risk of homelessness, most (88,800 clients, or 90%) ended support housed; around 1 in 10 (9,400 clients, or 9.6%) ended support homeless.



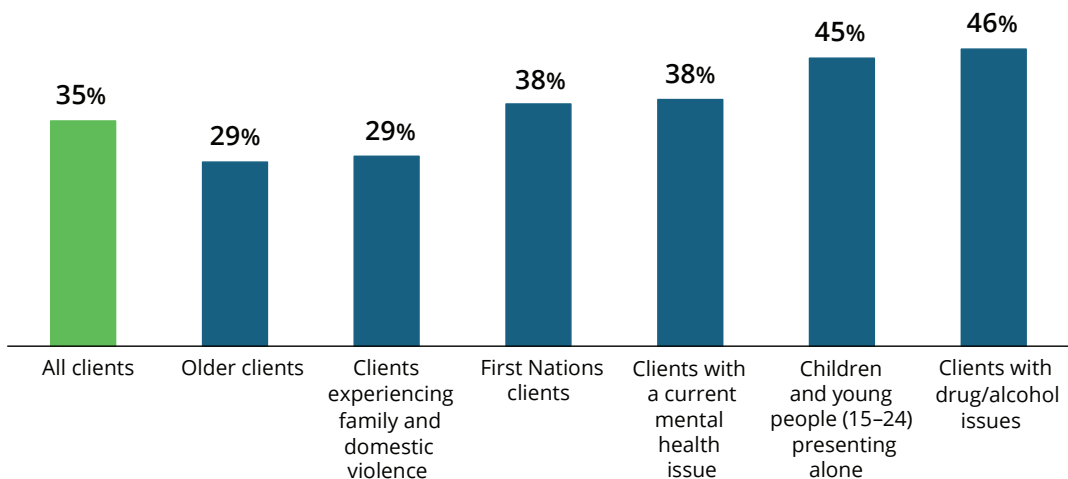
In 2023–24, of the 79,400 SHS clients who were known to be experiencing homelessness at the start of support, around 1 in 3 (34%, or 26,900) ended support housed:

- 13,300 (17% of the 79,400 clients experiencing homelessness) were in private housing
- 12,400 (16%) were in social housing.

When SHS clients start support experiencing homelessness, SHS support is less likely to result in clients being housed. In 2017–18, around 38% of clients experiencing homelessness at the start of support were housed by the end of support; by 2023–24 the proportion had fallen to 34%.

Some groups are more likely to experience homelessness at the end of SHS support than others. For example, during 2023–24, children and young people aged 15–24 presenting alone to agencies for support were more likely than most other groups to be experiencing homelessness at the start (56%) and end of support (45%).

A high proportion of children and young people presenting alone for support were experiencing homelessness when support ended:



A person is defined as experiencing persistent homelessness when they have been experiencing homelessness for 8 months or more out of a 24-month period.

The number of SHS clients experiencing persistent homelessness has been increasing; from 29,000 clients in 2018–19 to 38,000 in 2023–24. The greatest increase was for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) people, increasing by nearly 4,500 (from 8,000 to 12,500) people over the period.

Causes of death among people who received SHS support in their last year of life

Between 2012–13 and 2021–22, around 12,500 people received SHS support in their last year of life.

The following uses 'SHS clients' to refer to people who received specialist homelessness services support in their last year of life. Non-SHS clients refers to people who died who did not receive SHS support in their last year of life.

1.8x

The death rate of SHS clients was up to 1.8 times the rate of non-SHS clients throughout 2012–13 to 2021–22.

SHS clients who had known recent periods of rough sleeping died at around double the rate of SHS clients experiencing other forms of homelessness or those not experiencing homelessness (around 1 in every 100 SHS clients, or 0.7–1.0% compared with between 0.2–0.5% clients experiencing other forms of homelessness and housing situations). The death rate among SHS clients rough sleeping is important because the number of SHS clients rough sleeping at some point during their contact with an SHS agency has been increasing over recent years.

Accidental poisoning and suicide were the most common underlying causes of death among SHS clients, together accounting for around one-quarter to one-third (27–33%) of all SHS client deaths throughout 2012–13 to 2021–22. Around 1 in 6 (16%) people who died by accidental poisoning in Australia in 2021–22 were SHS clients.

The median age at death among SHS clients, including those experiencing and at risk of homelessness was 49 years, in part reflecting the younger age profile of SHS clients. SHS clients experiencing homelessness had a median age at death of 46 years, several years younger than SHS clients not experiencing homelessness (54 years).

These findings demonstrate the impact of homelessness on the lives of some of Australia's most vulnerable people. The AIHW respectfully acknowledges those who have died who are described in this work.

i For more, see: AIHW topic summaries [Housing affordability](#), [Housing assistance, Homelessness and homelessness services](#), [Home ownership and housing tenure](#), [AIHW Commonwealth Rent Assistance in Australia: quarterly data](#), [Specialist Homelessness Services annual report](#), [People receiving specialist homelessness services support in the last year of life](#) and [Housing data dashboard](#).

Information is also drawn from: [ABS Consumer Price Index](#) and [Estimating Homelessness: Census](#); and [OECD Affordable Housing Database](#).



6

Disability

Increasingly, disability is recognised as something that affects most people, to varying degrees and at different life stages. A person with disability may experience an impairment, activity limitation and/or participation restriction. Disability can be related to genetic disorders, illnesses, accidents, ageing, injuries or a combination of these factors. A range of formal and informal supports are available to people with disability, whether it is for intermittent or longer-term support.

1 in 5 Australians have disability, and numbers are increasing

In 2022, 5.5 million Australians (21% of the population) had some form of disability, up from 4.4 million people in 2018 (18%).

Several factors have contributed to this rise, including an ageing population, an increase in prevalence of some long-term health conditions, a growing awareness of disability and changes in data collection methods.

In 2022:



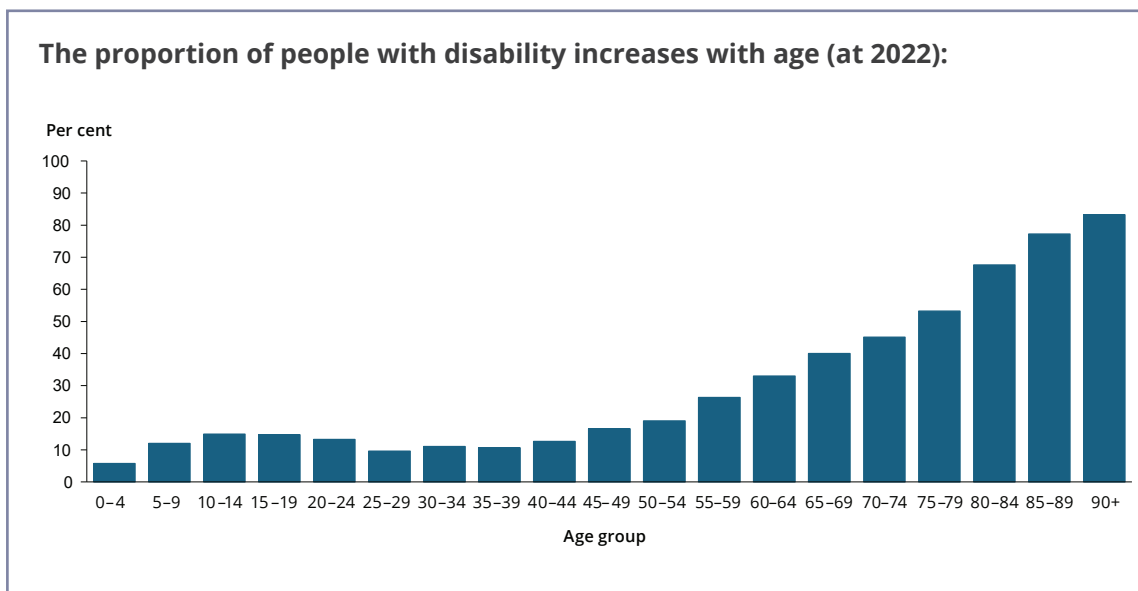
3 in 4 (75%) people with disability reported a physical condition as their main condition, down from 77% in 2018 and 78% in 2015.



1 in 4 (25%) reported a mental or behavioural disorder as their main condition, up from 23% in 2018 and 22% in 2015.

Disability is more common at older ages

In 2022, 5.7% of those aged 0–4 had some level of disability, rising to 40% of those aged 65–69, and to 83% of those aged 90 and over. This means that the longer we live, the more likely we are to experience some form of disability.



For children and young people (aged 0–24), in 2022, 2 in 3 (67%) reported their main condition as mental or behavioural disorder; 1 in 3 (34%) reported a physical condition.

Disability rates are increasing among children and older people

Among children aged 0–14, an estimated 519,000 had disability in 2022; up from 357,000 in 2018. In 2022:

- 5.7% of children aged under 5 had disability; an increase from 3.7% in 2018 (or 27,900 more children)
- 14% of children aged 5–14 had disability; up from 9.6% in 2018 (or 134,000 more children).

Among older people aged 65 and over, just over half (52%, or 2.3 million people) had disability in 2022; up from 50%, or 1.9 million in 2018.

Increasing number of NDIS recipients

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is Australia's main provider of specialist disability services and is designed to provide people who have permanent and significant disability with the reasonable and necessary support needed to participate in everyday life.

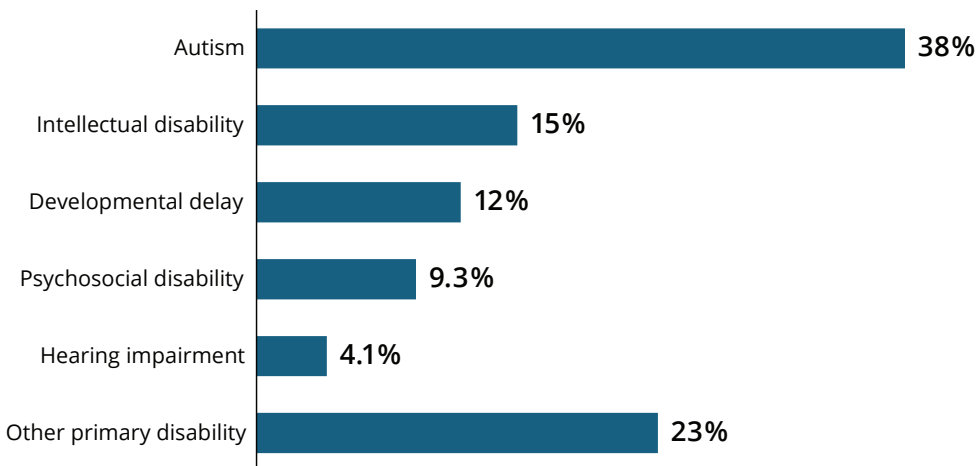
The NDIS had around 693,000 active participants with approved plans at 31 December 2024 – an increase from 467,000 at 30 June 2021.

The NDIS provides support to people who enter the scheme under the age of 65. People aged 0–14 make up the greatest proportion of participants (42%), followed by those aged 15–44 (34%), 45–64 (18%) and 65 and over (5.2%).



In 2023–24, Australian and state and territory Governments contributed \$42.4 billion to the NDIS, up from \$36.9 billion in 2022–23 (accounting for inflation).

The primary disability groups among NDIS participants (at 31 December 2024) were:

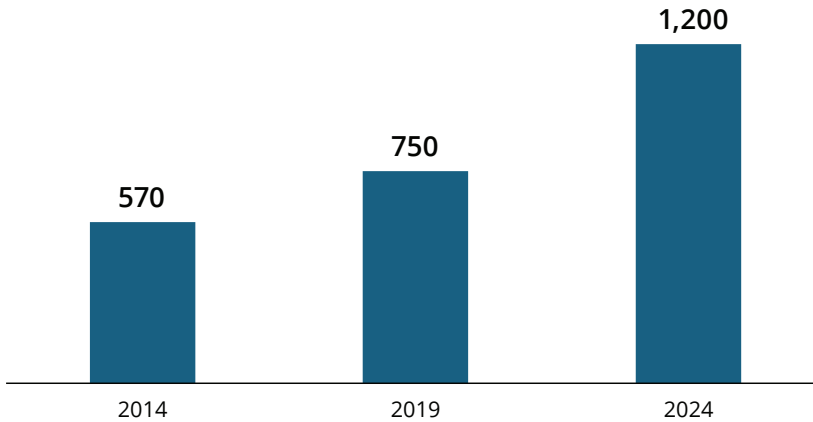


In recent years, while the overall NDIS participant numbers have grown, some sub-groups had higher growth rates than others. For example, NDIS participants with a primary disability of autism has grown by 14% over the year to December 2024, and 15% over the previous year (to December 2023), compared with 7.2% and 13% annual growth rates in the same 2 years for the total number of NDIS participants.

The disability and aged carer workforce has more than doubled

There were an estimated 333,000 people employed as carers of people with disability and older people in 2024; a greater than two-fold increase from 133,000 in 2014.

The rate of professional carers (per 100,000 population) has increased from 2014:



More people receive Disability Support Pension than in 2001

The Disability Support Pension (DSP) is the primary income support payment for people aged 16 and over with disability who have a reduced capacity to work because of their impairment that is likely to persist for more than two years.

At 27 December 2024, 815,000 people aged 16 and over received the Disability Support Pension.

Over the past 2 decades, the number of DSP recipients:

- aged 16–64 grew from 623,000 in June 2001 to a peak of 802,000 in June 2012 before steadily declining to 665,000 in December 2024
- aged 65 and over increased from 2,900 in June 2001 to 150,000 in December 2024.

The number of people aged 65 and over receiving DSP more than doubled between September 2017 and December 2024 – from 59,500 to 150,000 (or from 1.6% to 3.2% of the population aged 65 and over) mainly due to increases in the qualifying age for Age Pension from 65 to 67.

Fewer people are now supported by disability employment services

There were around 245,000 participants in the Australian Government managed Disability Employment Services (DES) at 31 December 2024, a decline from 316,000 participants in June 2021. This decline is due to a range of factors, including eligibility changes to the DES program made in 2021 and a stronger labour market demand post COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns.

In line with falling participant numbers, DES achieved around 70,000 employment placements in 2023–24, a decrease from around 107,000 placements in 2021–22.

Rates of educational attainment and labour force participation among people with disability have increased

Reflecting changing patterns in education in Australia, among people with disability aged 15 and over (living in households):

- 45% had completed Year 12 or equivalent in 2022, an increase from 33% in 2018
- 1 in 5 (20%) had a Bachelor degree or above in 2022, an increase from 16% in 2018.



Improvements can be seen in the transition to employment. In 2024, 59% of Vocational Education and Training graduates with disability (aged 15 and over) were employed on completion of training. This presents an increase from 56% in 2016 and 45% in 2020, but below the 62% peak in 2023.

For people with disability aged 15–64 (living in households):

- the labour force participation rate was 60.5% in 2022; up from 53.4% in 2018
- over half (56%) were employed in 2022; up from 48% in 2018
- the unemployment rate was 7.5% in 2022; down from 10.3% in 2018.

In 2022, there was a 4.4 percentage point gap in the unemployment rate for people aged 15–64 with (7.5%) and without (3.1%) disability. The gap decreased from 5.7 percentage points in 2018 (10.3% and 4.6%, respectively).

The gap in income remains for people with and without disability

People with disability (aged 15–64) had a median gross income of \$575 per week in 2022, compared with \$1,055 per week for people without disability (aged 15–64).

There has been no progress reducing the disability income gap over time – the difference in the median gross income for people (aged 15–64) with and without disability was \$480 per week in 2022 (unadjusted for inflation), similar to 2018.

What housing support is provided to people with disability?



Most (97%) people with disability lived in the community, that is, in private dwellings, in 2022.

Appropriate housing for people with disability can be difficult to get or maintain without assistance.

- Almost 2 in 5 (38%) social housing households had at least one person with disability at June 2024, up from 35% in 2020.
- People with disability wait on average 547 days for public housing in 2023–24, up from 413 days in 2020–21, but down from a recent peak of 637 days in 2022–23.

3 in 5 people with disability have their needs for assistance fully met

The availability and provision of support to people with disability can reflect positive attitudes such as respect, value and inclusion and create a sense of wellbeing.

In 2022, 62% of people with disability (of all ages) living in households had their needs for assistance with activities of daily living fully met. This assistance could be formal (provided by organised services) or informal (provided by relatives, friends or neighbours).

Among people with disability who needed assistance with activities of daily living, 35% had an unmet need for formal assistance – they either needed more assistance than they received (22%), or needed assistance but did not receive any (13%), in 2022.

Australia's 3 million carers provide vital support for people with disability and older people

Informal carers are people who provide care to those who need it within the context of an existing relationship, such as a family member, a friend or a neighbour.

In 2022:

- an estimated 3 million Australians (12% of the population) reported being an informal carer, an increase from 2.6 million (11% of the population) in 2018.
- an estimated 1.2 million people were primary carers (responsible for the majority of informal care to a person) and of these, 43.8% had disability themselves.

1 in 4 people with disability report experiencing loneliness

In 2021, 26% of Australians with disability (aged 15 and over) reported experiencing loneliness. In comparison, a smaller proportion (16%) of people without disability reported experiencing loneliness at this time.



9 in 10 people with disability (aged 15 and over) reported in 2022 they had not experienced discrimination due to disability in the last 12 months.

- i** For more, see: AIHW topic summaries [People with disability – specialised support services](#), [Income support payments for the working age population](#), [Income support for older Australians](#) and [Social cohesion and social connection](#); and AIHW Australia's [Disability Strategy Outcomes Framework](#), [People with disability in Australia](#) and [Housing assistance in Australia](#).

Information is also drawn from: [ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers](#) and [Children and young people with disability](#).



7

Aged care

The aged care system aims to promote the wellbeing and independence of older people, by enabling them to stay in their own homes or assisting them in residential care. The system is undergoing a major transformation under the new *Aged Care Act 2024* which focuses on improving quality and safety, protecting the rights of older people and ensuring the financial sustainability of aged care providers. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a real and ongoing impact on older people living in residential aged care, with ongoing monitoring of outbreaks and staff and resident cases.

Australia has an ageing population – increasing the demand for aged care now and into the future

Between 30 June 1994 and 30 June 2024:

- the number of people aged 65 and over grew from 2.1 million to 4.7 million
- the percentage of the population aged 65 and over increased from 12% to 17%.

The proportion of people aged 65 and over is projected to increase to 24% by 2064–65.

This will result in increased demand for aged care.

The aged care system offers a continuum of care under 3 main types of services:

- Home support provides entry-level services focused on supporting individuals with tasks of daily living to enable them to be more independent at home and in the community.
- Home care is a more structured, comprehensive package of home-based support that can include help with household tasks, personal care and clinical care.
- Permanent residential care provides support and accommodation for people who have been assessed as needing higher levels of care than can be provided in the home, and the option for 24-hour nursing care.

There are also several types of short-term and flexible care, and services for specific population groups available that extend across these 3 service types including respite care, transition care and short-term restorative care.

The demands on the aged care system are growing

There are increasing numbers of aged care assessments

Aged care assessments consider people's circumstances and care needs, and where relevant, approve people to receive certain government-subsidised aged care services. To qualify for assessment, you must have care needs and be aged 65 years or older, or aged 50 and over if you are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness.

Between 2019–20 and 2023–24:

- the number of home support assessments completed increased by 34%, from around 243,000 to 325,000
- the number of comprehensive assessments (for eligibility for entry into home care and residential care, and other short-term and flexible care types) completed increased by 16%, from around 188,000 to 218,000.



The 218,000 comprehensive assessments completed in 2023–24 resulted in 156,000 approvals of eligibility for home care and 127,000 approvals of eligibility for permanent residential care.

Wait times for aged care

There are many stages between first contact and receipt of care which can be influenced by the availability of assessment services, places and packages, individual preferences and choice in respect of accessing care. Not all of these factors can be categorised as 'waiting times' so a proxy measurement of 'elapsed time' is used in some reporting.

There have been improvements in wait/elapsed times at certain stages of the process, but not for all:

- The median elapsed time between referral for a **comprehensive assessment** and approval increased from 12 days in 2019–20 to 22 days in 2023–24.
- The median elapsed time between approval and package committed decreased for **home care**, from 299 days in 2019–20 to 118 days in 2023–24.
- The median elapsed time between approval and entry fluctuated for **permanent residential care**, from 148 days in 2019–20 to a peak of 163 days in 2020–21 and then decreased to 136 days in 2023–24.

Wait times are just one marker of the quality of aged care. A range of other quality measures, such as pressure injuries and use of physical restraint, are also publicly reported each quarter for residential aged care.

The number of aged care places is increasing

Between 30 June 2017 and 30 June 2024, the total number of places increased for:

- residential care (up 11% from 201,700 to 224,700)
- transition care and short-term restorative care (up 55% from 4,400 to 6,800)
- other flexible care (up 21% from 4,500 to 5,500).

The supply of these aged care places is managed by the Australian Government, taking into consideration the size of the older population.

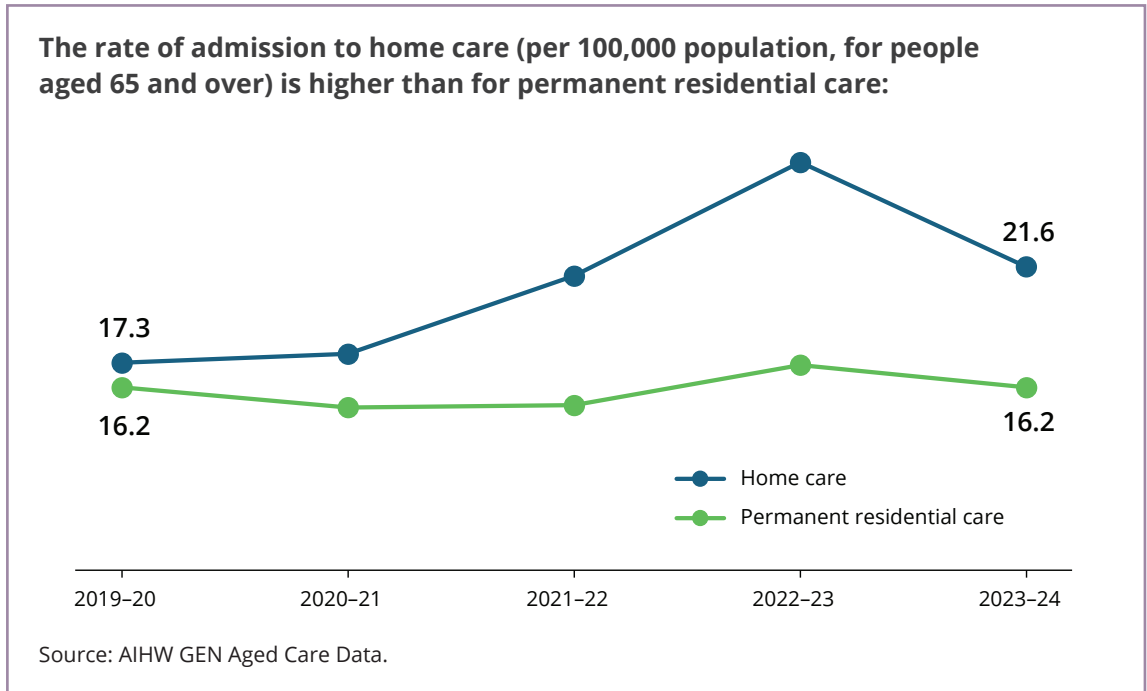
Admissions to aged care are increasing

Short-term and flexible aged care provides support services for a limited time, typically a few weeks or months. A person can access these programs multiple times in a year.

The number of admissions to short-term and flexible aged care has increased – from 112,000 in 2019–20 to 121,000 in 2023–24.

Admissions for home care and permanent residential aged care have also increased. During 2023–24, there were:

- 102,000 admissions to home care, up from 73,700 in 2019–20
- 75,600 admissions to permanent residential care, up from 69,500 in 2019–20.



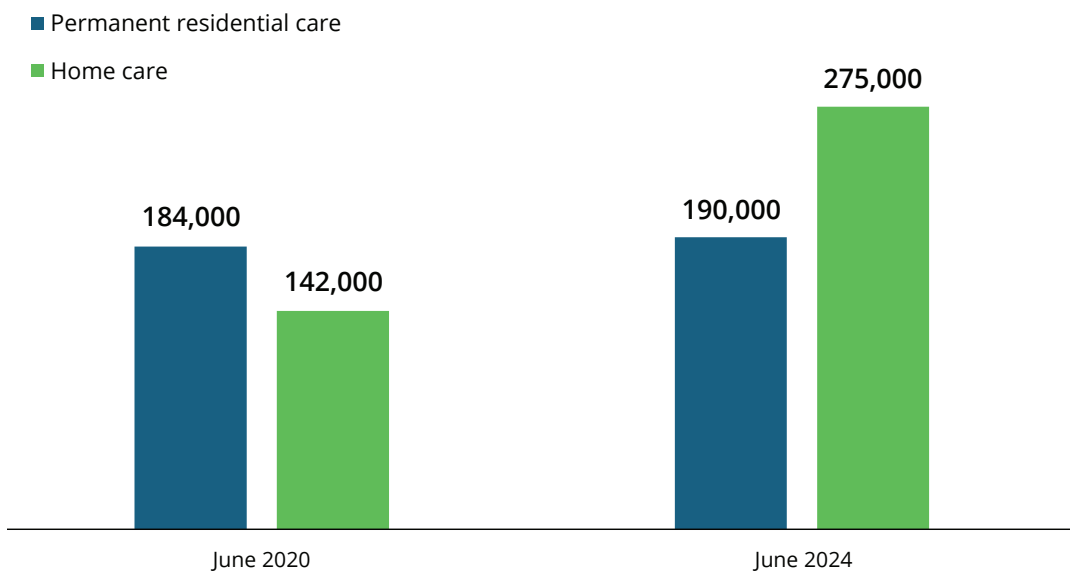
Between 2019–20 and 2023–24, after adjusting for the ageing population, the rate of admissions to home care increased by 25% (from 17.3 to 21.6 per 1,000 population aged 65 and over) but admissions to permanent residential care remained the same (16.2).

Home support is the most widely used type of aged care

The decision about whether to remain at home or enter residential aged care is driven by a wide range of factors, but there can be a strong preference among individuals and families for older people to remain in their homes for as long as they are able.

- 835,000 people accessed entry-level home support services during 2023–24; down from 839,000 people in 2019–20.
- 275,000 people were using home care at 30 June 2024; up from 142,000 people at 30 June 2020.
- 190,000 people were using permanent residential care at 30 June 2024; up from 184,000 people at 30 June 2020.

More people are now using home care than residential aged care:



Source: AIHW GEN Aged Care Data.

Between 2020 and 2024, after adjusting for the ageing population, the rate of home care use increased from 33 to 59 per 1,000 population aged 65 and over; the rate of permanent residential care use decreased from 43 to 41 per 1,000 population aged 65 and over.

2 in 3 people using permanent residential care (66%) and home care (66%) were women, at 30 June 2024.

This is partly because women's life expectancy exceeds men's, so there are more women at older ages needing care than men.

The majority of people in permanent residential aged care have dementia or mobility needs



More than half (54%) of people living in permanent residential aged care were living with dementia; about 131,000 people in 2021–22.



Most (96%) people living in permanent residential care at 30 June 2024 were assessed as having some mobility needs. Nearly 2 in 5 (39%) residents were assessed as being 'not mobile'.

Work is underway to reduce the number of younger people in residential aged care

With the exception of younger people (under the age of 65) who are eligible for residential aged care, the Australian Government is working to reduce the number of younger people entering residential aged care, and to help younger people who are already living in residential aged care to move into age-appropriate accommodation.

For younger people aged under 65 (excluding First Nations people aged 50–64), there were:

- 37 first admissions into permanent residential aged care during January to March 2025; down from 55 people during January to March 2024
- 959 people living in permanent residential aged care at 31 March 2025; a decrease of 414 people from 31 March 2024.

Mobility issues are common in permanent residential aged care, particularly among younger residents. At 30 June 2024, the proportion of people in the not mobile category was highest among people under the age of 50 (72%), followed by those aged 50–54 (54%) and 55–59 (52%).

Government spending on aged care services has grown

In 2023–24, Australian and state and territory Governments spent almost \$36.4 billion on aged care, with the largest proportion (59%, or \$21.5 billion) spent on residential care. The majority of government expenditure (99%) on aged care comes from the Australian Government. Total government spending in 2023–24 was 47% higher than it was during 2019–20 at \$24.7 billion (accounting for inflation, measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI)).



Government spending per person for the aged care target population (First Nations people aged 50 or over and non-Indigenous people aged 65 or over) has increased by 29%; from \$5,789 to \$7,452 per person between 2019–20 and 2023–24 (accounting for inflation).

The aged care workforce has increased in recent years

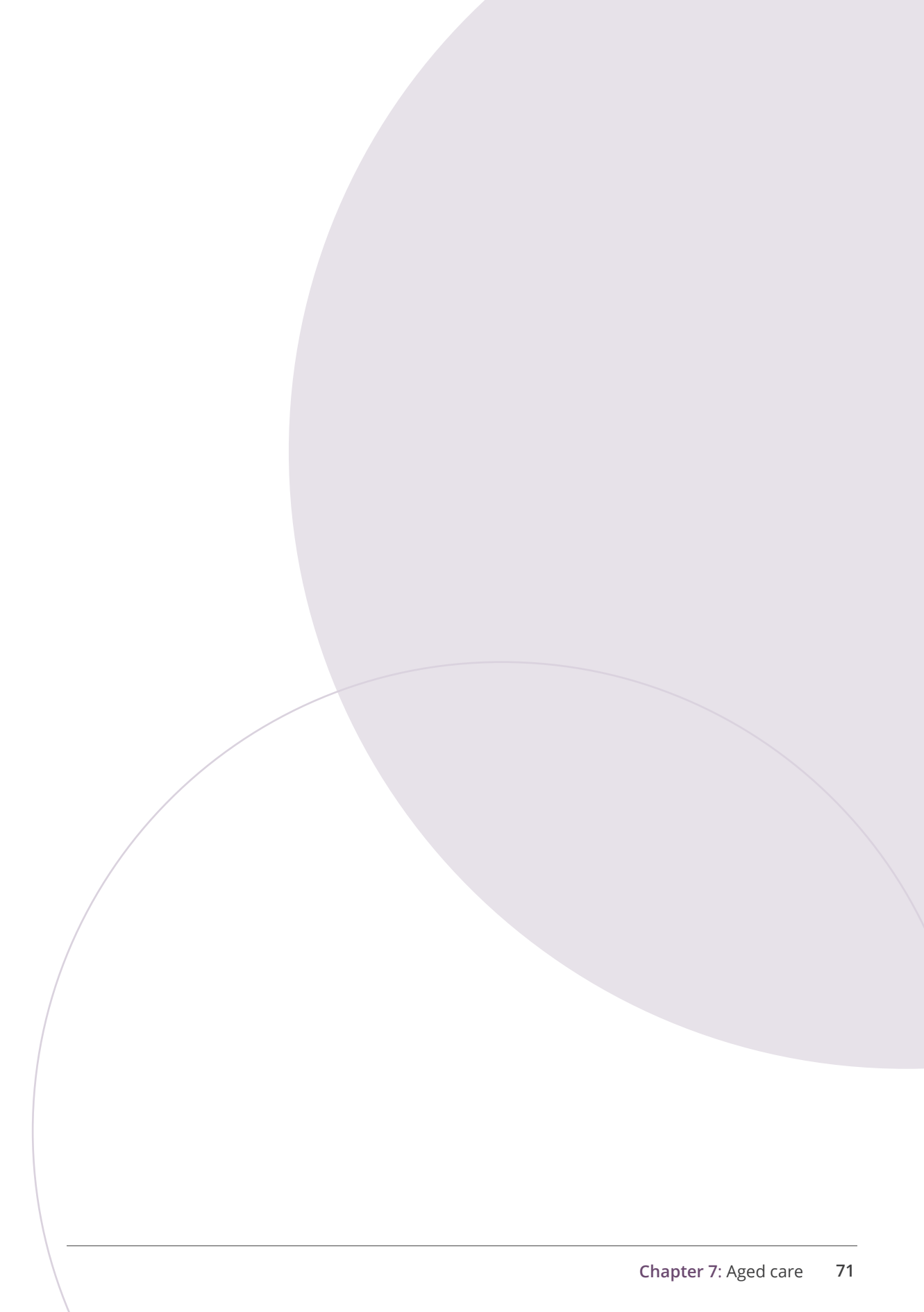
Aged care workers play a critical part in the aged care experience of older Australians and their families. Recruiting, training and retaining a workforce capable of delivering high quality care is an ongoing challenge for the sector. Recent investment in the workforce includes funding to support increases to aged care award wages from 30 June 2023, 1 January 2025 and 1 March 2025, with funding also committed to support two future award wage increases on 1 October 2025 and 1 August 2026.

In 2023, an estimated 549,000 people were employed across the 5 service care types, with 3 in 4 (75%) being direct care workers such as personal care workers, nurses and allied health professionals. Note some people may work for multiple providers, or across different service care types, and data may overstate the size of the workforce.

Between 2020 and 2023, the total estimated number of staff in:

- residential aged care decreased from 277,700 to 273,000 while the number of nursing and personal care workers increased from 195,000 to 210,000
- home care increased from 80,300 to 170,000
- home support increased from 76,100 to 97,900.

i For more, see: AIHW topic summaries [Aged care](#) and [Profile of Australia's population](#); and AIHW [GEN Aged Care Data](#) and [Dementia in Australia](#).





8

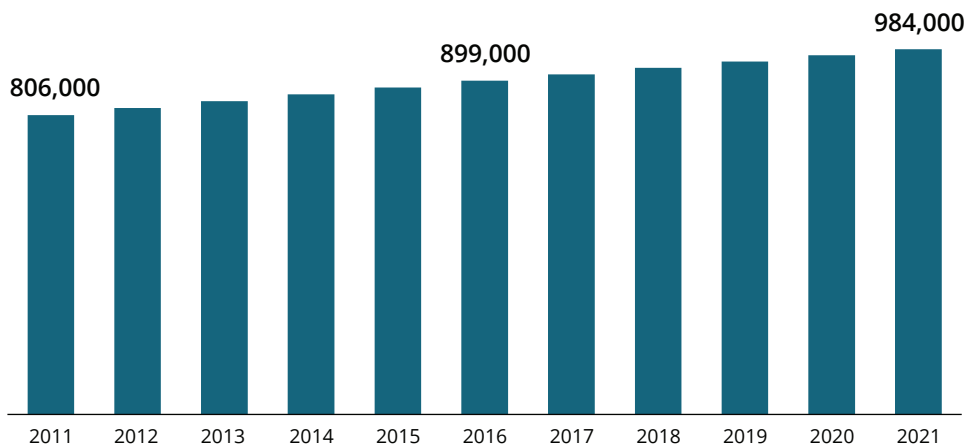
First Nations people

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) people are the first peoples of Australia. They are not one group but rather comprise hundreds of groups that have their own distinct set of languages, histories and cultural traditions. The welfare and wellbeing of First Nations people can be positively influenced by a range of factors such as connection to Country and caring for Country, knowledge and beliefs, language, self-determination, family and kinship, and cultural expression. Increased rates of educational attainment, employment and home ownership all assist to help close the gap between First Nations and non-Indigenous Australians.

Population profile

At 30 June 2021, there were an estimated 984,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) people living across Australia, an increase of 22% from 30 June 2011 (an estimated 806,000 people).

The number of First Nations people in the Australian population increased between 2011 and 2021:



Growth in the number of First Nations people can be influenced by both demographic factors (the number of births, deaths and migration) as well as non-demographic factors (including changing identification and improved Census coverage). A large increase was observed between the 2016 and 2021 Censuses. Around 57% of the increase in the number of First Nations people between 2016 and 2021 was due to non-demographic factors – in previous censuses (2011–2016) this change was 39%.

First Nations people have strong connections to their family, community and culture. In 2022–23, among First Nations people aged 18 and over, an estimated:

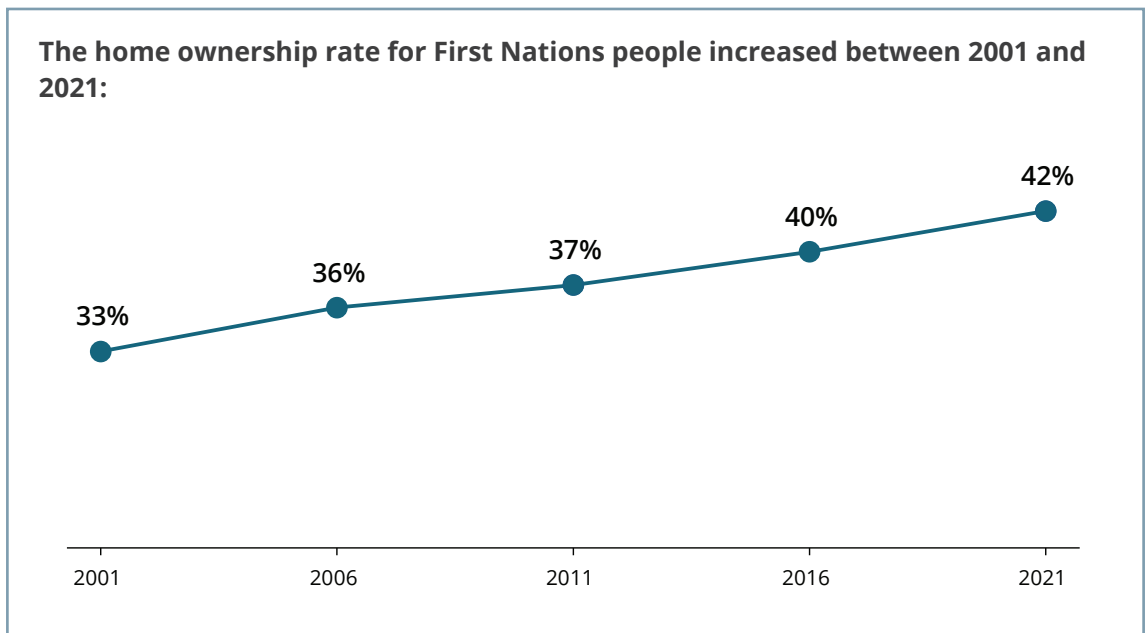
- 76% (440,000 people) recognised an area as a homeland/traditional country
- 66% (382,000 people) identified with a tribal group, language, clan, mission or regional group
- 22% (127,000 people) lived on their homeland.

15% (150,800 people) of the First Nations population lived in *Remote and very remote* areas in 2021, a decrease from 19% in 2016. This decline is due to the relative increase in the proportion of people identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in non-remote areas.

The median age of First Nations people has increased – from 21 years in 2011, to 23 in 2016 and 24 in 2021.

Housing

More than half (56%) of First Nations households were renting (private or in social housing), while 42% were owner-occupiers (with or without a mortgage), in 2021.



In 2021, 81% of First Nations people were living in appropriately sized housing (not overcrowded); an increase from 69% in 2001.

During the same period, the gap between First Nations people and non-Indigenous Australians living in appropriately sized housing (not overcrowded) narrowed from 24 to 12 percentage points.

Education and skills

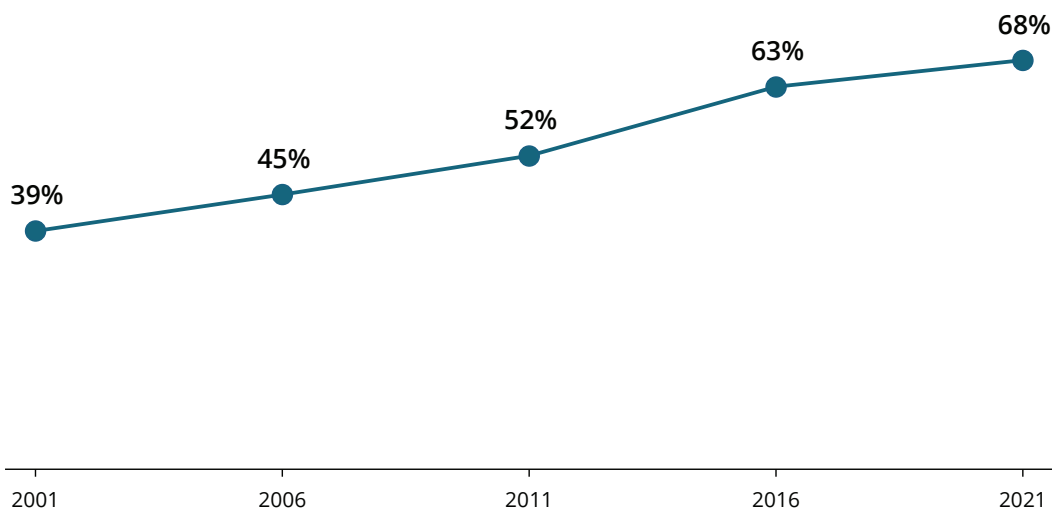


The proportion of First Nations children (aged between 4 and 5) enrolled in a year before full-time schooling preschool program increased from 77% (14,600 children) in 2016 to **86% (19,800 children)** in 2023.

In 2024, around 1 in 3 (34%) First Nations children were assessed as developmentally on track on all 5 domains of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC). In 2025, the percentage of First Nations students assessed as 'exceeding' or 'strong' in the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) reading results ranged from around 41% in Year 5 to around 32% in Year 9.

Between 2014 and 2024, overall school attendance rates for First Nations students in Years 1 to 10 decreased, from 84% to 77%. The decline was greater for those in Years 7–10 than in Years 1–6.

The proportion of First Nations people aged 20–24 who had attained a Year 12 or equivalent, or a non-school qualification at Certificate level III or above has increased since 2001:



Between 2011 and 2023:

- the number of First Nations students enrolled in university almost doubled, from 11,800 to 23,300
- the number of higher education course completions by First Nations students more than doubled, from 1,800 to 3,800.



In 2021, 47% of First Nations Australians aged 25–34 (50,700) had completed a tertiary qualification as their highest educational attainment (Certificate III and above). The proportion has more than doubled, up from 19% in 2001.

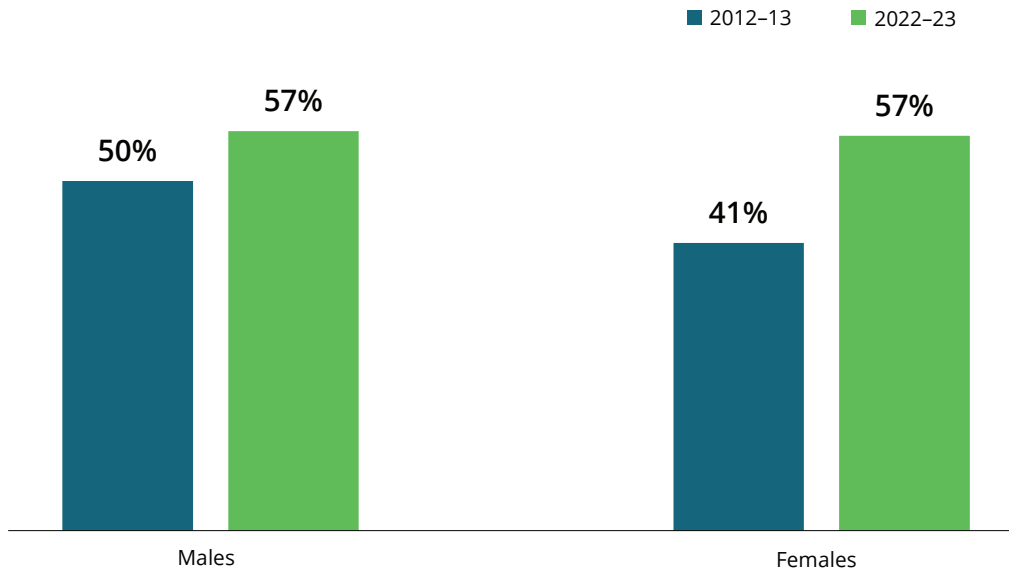
Educational outcomes for First Nations people differ by remoteness and are lowest in remote and very remote areas:

- The school attendance rate was around 25 percentage points lower for First Nations students (Years 1 to 10) in *Very remote* areas (55%) than those in *Major cities* and *Inner regional* areas (both 80%), in 2024.
- The proportion of First Nations people aged 20–24 who had attained a qualification at Year 12 or equivalent, or Certificate level III or above ranged from 42% in *Very remote* areas to 76% in *Major cities*, in 2021.

Employment

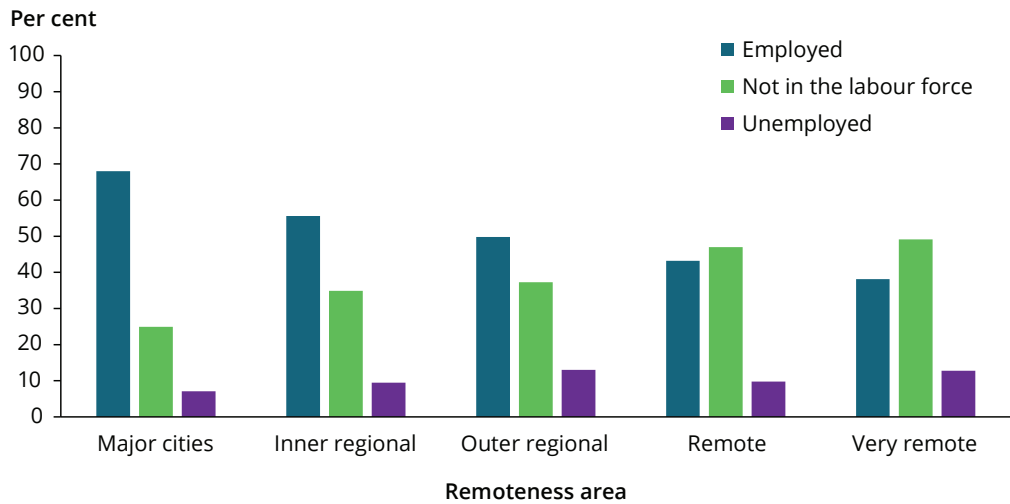
In 2022–23, 57% of First Nations people (aged 15–64) were employed, an increase from 46% in 2012–13.

Between 2012–13 and 2022–23, females (aged 15–64) saw greater growth in employment than males (aged 15–64):



Employment rates for First Nations people increase with higher levels of education. For example, in 2022–23, First Nations people aged 15–64 with a Bachelor degree or higher had an employment rate of 94%, compared with 37% for those with secondary Year 10 or 11, or Certificates I/II and 25% for those with secondary Year 9 and below.

The proportion of First Nations people (aged 15–64) unemployed or not in the labour force tend to increase with increasing remoteness (2022–23):



Closing the Gap target

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap targets include an increase in the proportion of First Nations people aged 25–64 who are employed to 62% by 2031. This target is on track to be met, increasing to 56% in 2021 from 51% at baseline in 2016.

In 2022–23, First Nations people were less likely to be employed than non-Indigenous Australians, but as level of education increased, the gap narrowed, with no gap among people with a Bachelor degree or higher.

Income and finance

The median weekly equivalised household income – the midpoint amount of money of all households when ordered from lowest to highest, after adjusting for household size and composition – for First Nations households was \$830 in 2021.

Between 2016 and 2021, the median weekly equivalised household income (accounting for inflation) for First Nations households grew by 18% (from \$701 to \$830), compared with growth of 11% for other households.

At 28 March 2025, 49% (341,300) of First Nations people aged 16 and over received income support. First Nations people made up 6.4% of all people receiving income support, at March 2025.

In 2021, of First Nations people aged 15 and over:

- 27% (65,400) were living in a household that was experiencing rental stress, a decrease from 30% (54,900) in 2016
- 12% (13,400) were living in a household that was experiencing mortgage stress, a decrease from 18% (14,100) in 2016.

In 2022–23, 4 in 10 (41%, or 198,800) First Nations households experienced food insecurity due to not having enough money for groceries in the previous 12 months.

Safety and justice for First Nations people

Safety for individuals and communities is important for physical and mental wellbeing, as it supports better community engagement and quality of life. However, this sense of wellbeing is disrupted by the continued impacts of historical injustices, such as, socioeconomic marginalisation, child removal, family violence, incarceration, the pervasive effects of intergenerational poverty and the persistent impacts of racism.

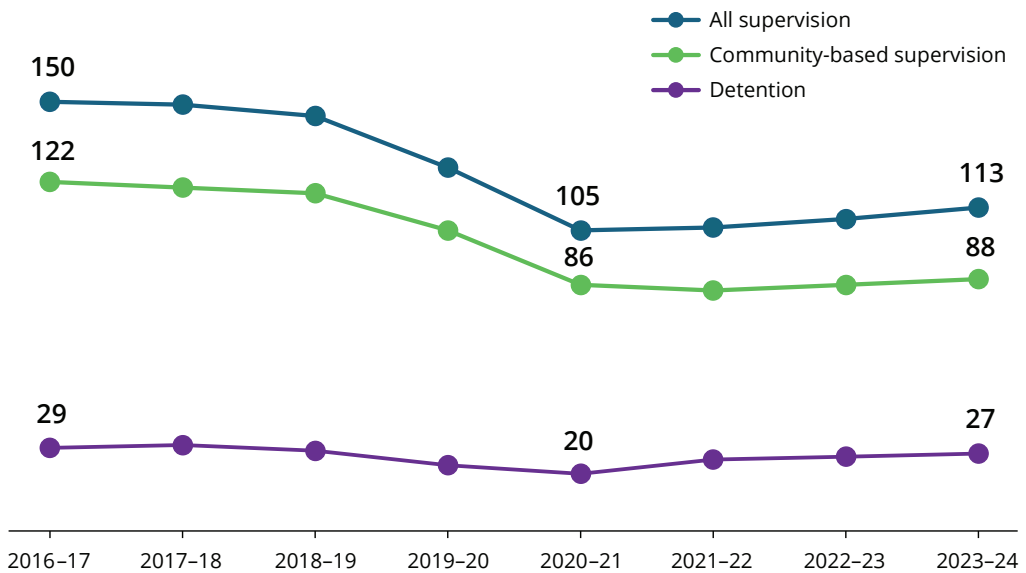
The most recent data available (2018–19) shows that an estimated 30,900 First Nations people aged 15 and over had experienced physical harm in the previous 12 months. Of those, 2 in 3 (67% or 20,800) reported the perpetrator was a family member.

At 30 June 2023, 19,700 First Nations children were in out-of-home care (a rate of 57 per 1,000). Almost two-thirds (63%) of these children were placed with First Nations or non-Indigenous kin or with another First Nations carer. The proportion has remained steady since 2017–18.

Young people in Australia who have been sentenced, or are awaiting sentencing, may be placed under supervision in the community or in detention facilities. Community-based and community-led services within and/or alongside the justice system can connect First Nations people to culture and promote positive outcomes, including culturally appropriate prevention, early intervention, diversion and support services. Initiatives include circle sentencing, restorative justice practices, and culturally tailored support services.

The rate of First Nations young people (aged 10–17) under supervision on an average day declined from 150 to 113 per 10,000 people between 2016–17 and 2023–24. Lower rates during this period may be partly related to the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a substantial impact on the operation of courts.

There has been little change in youth justice detention rates (per 10,000 people) for First Nations people aged 10–17 under sentenced supervision in recent years:



Note: Data were not available for the Northern Territory in 2023–24 for all supervision and community-based supervision. First Nations young people (aged 10–17) in the Northern Territory account for roughly 10% of First Nations young people under community-based supervision or in detention. Some data are included from the period during which COVID-19 and related social restrictions were present in Australia, specifically between March 2020 and June 2022.

Disability support

In 2022–23 an estimated 37% (or around 368,000) of First Nations people had disability; 7.0% of First Nations people (or around 69,200) had severe or profound disability.

In December 2024, 67,800 First Nations people were receiving Disability Support Pension, making up 8.3% of total recipients.

The number and proportion of First Nations National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants has increased over time – from 51,200 (7.9% of NDIS participants) in March 2023 to 58,100 (8.1% of NDIS participants) in March 2025.

Among the First Nations NDIS participants on 31 March 2025:

- the average annualised committed support per participant was \$84,000
- those in *Remote and very remote* areas received the highest average annualised support amounts of \$126,000 per participant.

Aged care

Among First Nations people aged 50 and over:

- 23,700 (12%) accessed home support services during 2023–24
- 8,800 (4.6%) were using home care at 30 June 2024
- 2,300 (1.2%) were using residential aged care at 30 June 2024.



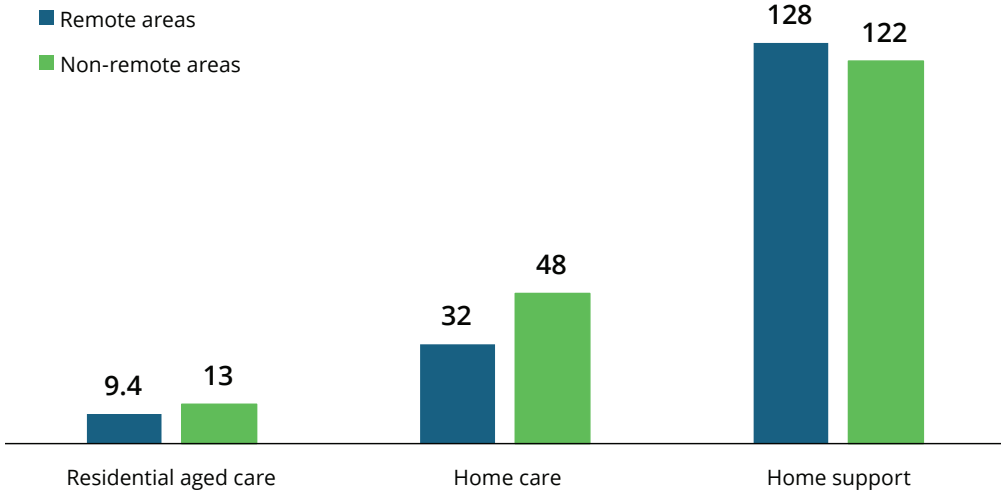
Between 30 June 2020 and 30 June 2024, the number of First Nations people aged 50 and over:

- using home care increased from 3,400 to 8,800 people (a rate increase from 21 to 46 per 1,000 population)
- in residential aged care increased from 1,900 to 2,300 (rates remained at around 12 per 1,000 population).

There is variation in the use of aged care among First Nations people by remoteness area, with:

- higher rates of people using home care in non-remote areas compared with remote areas (48 and 32 people per 1,000 population, respectively) on 30 June 2024
- higher rates of people using residential aged care in non-remote areas compared with remote areas (13 and 9 per 1,000, respectively) on 30 June 2024
- lower rates of people accessing home support services in non-remote areas compared with remote areas (122 and 128 per 1,000, respectively) in 2023–24.

Among First Nations people aged 50 and over, rates of aged care service use (per 1,000 population) differed by remoteness area:



Note: Services delivered through a flexible aged care program, including the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program and the Multi-Purpose Services Program, are not included.

This chapter uses data from the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC). The AEDC is funded by the Australian Government Department of Education. The findings reported are those of the AIHW and should not be attributed to the Department of Education.

- i** For more, see: AIHW topic summaries [Profile of First Nations people](#), [Aged care for First Nations people](#), [Housing circumstances of First Nations people](#), [Education of First Nations people](#), [Employment of First Nations people](#), [Income and finance of First Nations people](#), [Safety and justice for First Nations people](#) and [Specialised support and informal care for First Nations people with disability](#); and AIHW [Regional Insights for Indigenous communities](#) and [GEN Aged Care Data](#).

Information is also drawn from: [ABS National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey](#).



9

Justice and safety

Feeling and being safe and free from violence are important to shaping and protecting our wellbeing.

Experiences of crime, violence, abuse and neglect can have serious impacts on individuals, families and communities. Various support systems work to protect people from abuse and violence; and these systems respond to keep people safe.

The number of children in contact with the child protection system has remained stable over time

In 2023–24, 179,000 children (aged under 18) came into contact with the child protection system. This includes:

- 121,000 children who were subjects of investigations for alleged child maltreatment notifications
 - 70,100 children who were on care and protection orders and/or
 - 55,300 children who were in out-of-home care placements.
- The rate of children who came into contact with the child protection system has remained relatively stable between 2019–20 and 2023–24, at around 31 per 1,000 children.
 - The rate of children in out-of-home care decreased to 7.7 per 1,000 children at 30 June 2024, from 8.2 per 1,000 at 30 June 2020.

Children in the child protection system may be at greater risk of interacting with youth justice systems or homelessness services

- About 2 in 3 (65%) young people aged 10 and over under youth justice supervision during 2022–23 had received a child protection service in the previous 10-year period.
- 8,300 children (aged under 18) on care and protection orders were clients of specialist homelessness services during 2023–24.

Fewer young people are under youth justice supervision than in previous years

Around 4,200 young people (aged 10 and over) were under youth justice supervision (excluding the Northern Territory) on an average day in 2023–24, a decrease from almost 5,200 in 2019–20.

Just over 9,200 young people were under youth justice supervision at some time during 2023–24.

The rate of youth justice supervision on an average day decreased from 16 to 12 per 10,000 people aged 10–17 from 2019–20 to 2023–24.

On an average day in 2023–24, young people (aged 10 and over) under youth justice supervision were more likely to be:

- male (80% of young people under supervision)
- aged 14–17 (73%)
- supervised in the community (82%).

Data were not available for the Northern Territory in 2023–24 for all supervision and community-based supervision. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) young people (aged 10–17) in the Northern Territory account for roughly 10% of First Nations young people under community-based supervision or in detention.

Many young people under youth justice supervision have been supervised previously, and are also involved with other services

- About two-thirds (64%) of young people aged 10 and over under youth justice supervision in 2023–24 had been supervised in a previous year.
- 1 in 3 (33%) young people aged 10–17 under youth justice supervision between 1 July 2012 and 30 June 2016 also received alcohol and other drug treatment services (30 times higher than the general population of the same age, 1%).

Adults in prison are in greater need of welfare services and supports than Australians generally



The prison population grew from almost 33,800 at 30 June 2014 to around 44,400 at 30 June 2024; an increase in the imprisonment rate of 186 to 208 per 100,000 adults.

Adults in prison are some of the most vulnerable people in society. They often come from disadvantaged backgrounds, and can experience higher rates of homelessness, unemployment, mental health conditions, and drug and alcohol abuse than the general population.

Of surveyed adults entering or leaving prison in 2022:

- about half (51%) of prison entrants reported a previous diagnosis of a mental health condition, including drug and alcohol abuse
- a smaller proportion (20%) of prison entrants reported they had completed the equivalent of Year 12 compared with the general population (77%)
- around half (46%) of prison entrants reported they were unemployed during the 30 days before prison
- around half (48%) of prison dischargees expected to be homeless on release from prison.

1 in 5 adults had experienced family, domestic and sexual violence

Some readers may find this content distressing. For support, information and counselling contact **1800RESPECT** on **1800 737 732** or visit the **1800RESPECT** website.

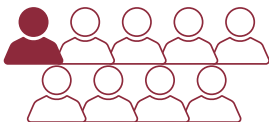
In 2021–22, 3.8 million (20%) adults had experienced physical and/or sexual family and domestic violence since the age of 15; 2.7 million women and 1.1 million men.

Family violence occurs within family relationships, and domestic violence is a type of family violence that occurs between current or former intimate partners. Both family violence and domestic violence include a range of behaviour types.

Partner violence and sexual violence impacts many Australians:

1 in 6 women

1 in 18 men



1 in 9 adults

Have experienced **physical or sexual violence** by a partner since the age of 15

1 in 4 women

1 in 7 men



1 in 5 adults

Have experienced **emotional abuse** by a partner since the age of 15

1 in 6 women

1 in 13 men



1 in 8 adults

Have experienced **economic abuse** by a partner since the age of 15

1 in 5 women

1 in 16 men



1 in 7 adults

Have experienced **sexual violence** since the age of 15

Between 2016 and 2021–22 there was a decrease in the proportion of women who had experienced physical and/or sexual partner violence in the previous 12 months, and a decrease in the proportion of women and men who had experienced partner emotional abuse. The proportion of women who had experienced sexual violence remained stable.

Awareness of and attitudes towards violence against women have improved over time

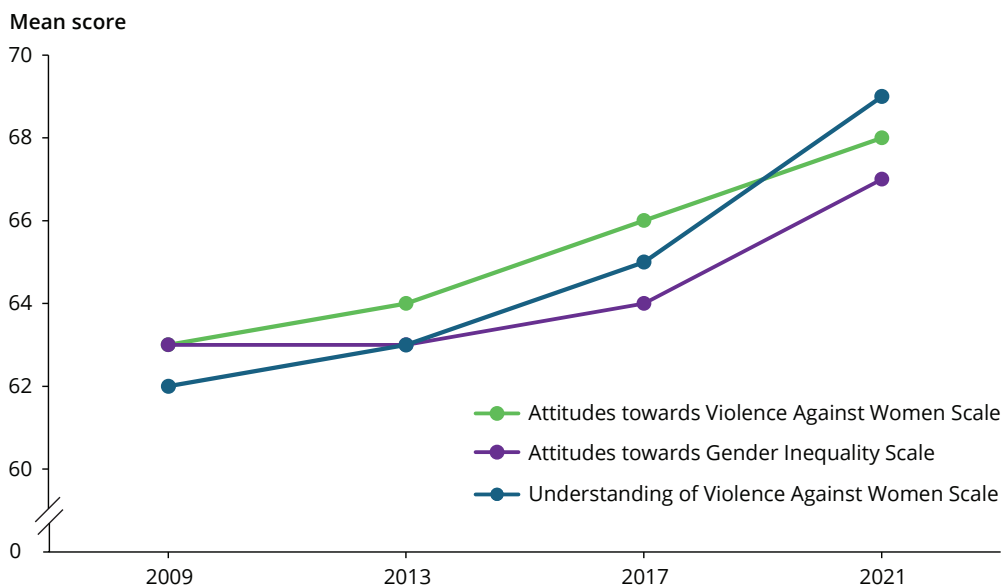
Community understanding of family, domestic and sexual violence (FDSV) is critical for primary prevention, early intervention and promoting greater workforce support for individuals experiencing FDSV across the community.

Community attitudes relating to FDSV shape the social context in which violence takes place, including attitudes towards violence against women, gender roles and relationships, and responses to violence. They play a role in the prevention of violence, the likelihood of reporting, and public, professional and victim-survivors' own responses and help-seeking behaviours.

The National Community Attitudes Survey measures the level of community understanding of, and attitudes towards, violence against women as well as attitudes that reject gender inequality.

Between 2009 and 2021, there were positive shifts in community understanding of violence against women and community rejection of gendered violence and inequality, but there is still room for improvement.

In 2021, more Australians understood and rejected violence against women and gender inequality, compared with 2009:



Note: Mean scores are from 1 to 100. A higher mean score indicates a higher level of understanding of violence against women and/or higher rejection of problematic attitudes.

i For more, see: AIHW topic summaries [Child protection](#), [Youth justice](#), [Adults in prison](#) and [Family, domestic and sexual violence](#) and AIHW [Family, domestic and sexual violence subsite – National targets](#) and [Specialist homelessness services annual report](#).

See also, Chapter 10 [Improving welfare data](#) on pages 92 and 93.



10

Improving welfare data

High quality welfare-related data can provide reliable information on people's wellbeing, service use and outcomes, and can show how these change over time, both within and across population groups.

The AIHW works closely with others to expand the range of available data and improve the quality and timeliness of information processes, from collection to reporting. Work to develop a pilot collection on specialist family and domestic violence services and a project to link specialised health and welfare-service use data are just two examples of current data improvement activities the AIHW is progressing.

A wealth of information is collected from various sources about people's wellbeing, factors that influence wellbeing (such as socioeconomic conditions and community networks) and use of welfare services. Data can be used to meet an immediate need (such as informing service delivery) and contribute to other longer-term purposes (such as research and policy development). When used well, quality data can lead to improved outcomes for Australians.

Data development activities may focus on improving data from the point of collection (for example, expanding the range of available data) through to improving the ways insights are drawn (for example, linking established individual datasets to gain more comprehensive insights than are possible by looking at data sets in isolation). The goal of data development is for information and data to be more accessible, timely, purposeful, consistent, accurate and reliable.

What is the AIHW doing to improve welfare data?

Across the welfare data landscape, the AIHW is working on and supporting various data development activities. These include work to:

- **improve identification of First Nations people**
by promoting best practice in collecting Indigenous status including monitoring and analysing data quality across welfare data collections
- **expand and enhance data about priority population groups**
such as people with disability, through the National Disability Data Asset (via the National Health Data Hub) and work in expanding the number and quality of progress measures reported against Australia's Disability Strategy Outcomes Framework
- **develop new data collection standards**
for example progressing the Aged Care National Minimum Data Set to improve the consistency and utility of aged care data and establishing the National Aged Care Data Asset (via the National Health Data Hub) to support aged care research and policy analysis
- **fill data gaps**
such as those relating to family, domestic and sexual violence, through expanded national reporting, consultation and preparation for a planned pilot data collection (see case study), and new data linkages to better understand these types of violence
- **expand the breadth of data available**
for example by improving the breadth of information in the Child Protection National Minimum Data Set items, and ensure the collection can respond to emerging government reporting requirements, such as capturing early intervention data
- **improve the frequency of data collection and reporting**
for example more frequent reporting of recipients of Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) and the impact of CRA on rental stress
- **creating a person-centred view for a key population group**
such as through establishment of the Child Wellbeing Data Asset that will enable a more holistic understanding of how children and young people move between government services and fill data gaps
- **harness technology, electronic records and information systems**
for example by collecting national prisoner health data through administrative systems, rather than only the current, entirely separate data collection.

Work is underway to expand existing major national enduring linked datasets

Data linkage (a process combining information from different data collections while preserving privacy) builds upon the value of individual data sets to provide a more comprehensive view of people's service use, pathways and outcomes. It may also allow us to better identify specific groups of people who aren't captured well in an individual data set.

Australia has been at the forefront of developing data linkage systems and using linked data. While the complexity and scale of data linkages have expanded substantially in recent years, the increased capacity to facilitate data sharing within existing legislations has enabled national enduring linked data sets to be developed that make data linkage more efficient and accelerate the analysis of the linked data.



The AIHW has undertaken a large number of data linkage projects that draw together data from multiple sources to better understand the health and welfare of Australians and the interactions they have with health and welfare services.

Recent efforts have enhanced the national data linkage infrastructure, underpinned by the [National Health Data Hub](#) (NHDH), the ABS [Person Level Integrated Data Asset](#) (PLIDA) and state/territory linkage systems.

This improved data infrastructure supports major data asset initiatives in areas such as (but not limited to):

- disability (the [National Disability Data Asset](#))
- ageing (the [National Aged Care Data Asset](#))
- family and domestic violence
- child wellbeing (the [Child Wellbeing Data Asset](#))
- interactions between health and welfare service use.

An emerging source of information about people with disability is the National Disability Data Asset, a joint initiative of the AIHW, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Department of Health, Disability and Ageing and all state/territory Governments. The National Disability Data Asset is overseen by new co-governance arrangements between the disability community and governments.

Over time, this will give a more complete picture of people with disability, assisting governments to improve supports and services for people with disability.

The following 2 case studies showcase:

1. work to build a new data set from the ground up
2. new work to link existing health and welfare data sets to provide unique insights.

Case study 1

Improving data about family and domestic violence

The current lack of national data on specialist family and domestic violence (FDV) services leads to limited understanding of demand and unmet demand for services, and outcomes experienced by the victim-survivors.

The AIHW, with funding from the Australian Government Department of Social Services, is developing a prototype (pilot) data collection on government-funded specialist crisis FDV services provided to victim-survivors.

The project addresses several core national policy priority areas, including:

- creating nationally consistent data on specialist crisis FDV services, with harmonised definitions
- developing methodology for the measurement of, and improving understanding of, demand and unmet demand for services
- increasing data on victim-survivors of FDV that is linkable to other sources to provide insights into long-term outcomes for victim-survivors.

The pilot data collection is a foundational piece of work towards developing a national data collection, which could be expanded and applied to additional specialist family, domestic and sexual violence services over time. It aims to help fill the current data gaps in evidence to support service policy, planning, management and investment, and population-level research and reporting.

For support, information and counselling contact **1800RESPECT** on **1800 737 732** or visit the **1800RESPECT** website.

Case study 2

New insights about health and welfare service use

The AIHW has created a linked data set to gain greater insight into specialised health and welfare service use and the prevalence of death (including suicide and acute and chronic substance use) – in particular, their relationship with risk factors, protective factors and other social determinants.

This study comprises more than a decade of data on millions of people who received support due to housing insecurity, and people receiving treatment for drug and/or alcohol use. It also includes data for a smaller number of people's primary health care service use prior to death.

For example:

- The death rate of specialist homelessness services (SHS) clients was around 1.8 times the rate of people not receiving SHS support in 2021–22.
- A higher proportion of SHS clients who were rough sleeping (0.7–1.0%) died each year compared with SHS clients experiencing other forms of, or not experiencing, homelessness (0.2–0.5%).
- The death rate of specialist alcohol and other drug (AOD) treatment services clients was 3.4 times the rate of people not receiving specialist AOD treatment services in 2021–22.

Work is underway to explore the:

- intersection between the clients of SHS and/or specialist AOD treatment services
- patterns of primary health service use prior to death
- risk factors associated with specific causes of death, including suicide and accidental overdose.

The AIHW is engaging with health and welfare government policy areas to understand emerging issues and critical evidence gaps.

Some readers may find this content distressing. For support, information and counselling you can contact **Lifeline** on **13 11 14**.

i For more, see: AIHW topic summary [Improving Australia's welfare data](#).

About Australia's welfare 2025

The *Australia's welfare 2025: in brief* brings together the latest key findings from more than 30 topic summaries.

Australia's welfare: topic summaries are web pages that present information and data on the welfare system, welfare of Australians and factors that can affect our wellbeing. Some topic summaries are updated as new data become available. Topic summaries can be viewed at www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/australias-welfare.

Welfare and wellbeing

- Improving Australia's welfare data
- International comparisons of welfare data
- Profile of Australia's population
- Social cohesion and social connection
- Social isolation and loneliness
- Understanding welfare and wellbeing

Education, employment and income

- Education and skills: From early childhood to tertiary education
- Employment and unemployment
- Income and income inequality
- Income support payments for the working age population
- Income support for older Australians

Supports and services

- Adoptions
- Aged care
- Gambling
- Informal carers
- Philanthropy and charitable donations
- People with disability – specialised support services
- Volunteers

Housing

- Housing affordability
- Housing assistance
- Homelessness and homelessness services
- Home ownership and housing tenure

Justice and safety

- Adults in prison
- Child protection
- Family, domestic and sexual violence
- Youth justice

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

- Profile of First Nations people
- Education of First Nations people
- Employment of First Nations people
- Income and finance of First Nations people
- Housing circumstances of First Nations people
- Specialised support and informal care for First Nations people with disability
- Aged care for First Nations people
- Safety and justice for First Nations people

Topic summary feature: Urban density and equity of access to social services


About the AIHW

The AIHW is an independent statutory Australian Government agency with more than 35 years of experience working with health and welfare data.

We create and provide meaningful information and statistics for the benefit of the Australian people, on a range of health and welfare topics.

Our role is to:

- develop, maintain and promote statistical information standards for the health, community services and housing assistance sectors
- collect and manage data on health and welfare issues, including from state, territory and federal Government agencies
- analyse and release a range of health and welfare products (data and reports) to key policy areas, to support better policy and service delivery decisions
- enhance data resources with the addition of new health and welfare data assets to the AIHW's data holdings to fill data gaps in the health and welfare sectors
- modernise the presentation and availability of national health and welfare products to meet the needs of diverse audiences such as state, territory and federal Government agencies, universities, research centres, and non-government organisations.


 For more, see: [AIHW About us](#).


Australia's welfare 2025: in brief presents a holistic summary of welfare and wellbeing in Australia with key findings on housing, education and skills, employment and income, social support, and justice and safety.



Australia's welfare 2025 is the 17th biennial welfare report of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.





The product suite comprises:

- Australia's welfare: topic summaries
- Australia's welfare 2025: in brief

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