

# 2 Notifications, investigations and substantiations

## Overview

### Scope of the data collection

The notification, investigation and substantiation process is broadly outlined in Chapter 1. The data in this report on child protection notifications, investigations and substantiations relate to those notifications received by community services departments between 1 July 2003 and 30 June 2004. Only child protection matters that were notified to community services departments are included in this national collection. Notifications made to other organisations, such as the police or non-government welfare agencies, are included only if these notifications were also referred to community services departments.

This report contains information on the number of, and children subject to, notifications, investigations and substantiations. As a child can be the subject of more than one notification, investigation or substantiation in a year, there are fewer children than there are total notifications, investigations and substantiations.

### Categories used for notifications and investigations

In this report, notifications are classified according to the 'type of action' taken by the community services department to respond to them. The categories used are:

- *Investigation* – the process whereby the community services department obtains more detailed information about a child who is the subject of a notification received between 1 July 2003 and 30 June 2004, and makes an assessment about the harm or degree of harm to the child and his or her protective needs. An investigation includes the interviewing or sighting of the subject child where it is practical to do so.
  - *Finalised investigation* – a notification received between 1 July 2003 and 30 June 2004 which was investigated and the investigation was completed and an outcome recorded by 31 August 2004.
  - *Investigation not finalised* – a notification received between 1 July 2003 and 30 June 2004 which was investigated but where the investigation was not completed and an investigation outcome was not recorded by 31 August 2004.
- *Dealt with by other means* – a notification that was responded to by means other than investigation, such as the provision of advice or referral to services.
- *Not investigated/not dealt with by other means* – includes all other notifications, such as those where no investigation or other action was possible.

The 'outcomes of finalised investigations' are classified as follows:

- *Substantiation* – where there was reasonable cause to believe that the child has been, was being or was likely to be abused, neglected or otherwise harmed. Substantiation does not necessarily require sufficient evidence for a successful prosecution and does not imply that treatment or case management was provided.
- *Not substantiated* – where an investigation concluded that there was no reasonable cause to suspect prior, current or future abuse, neglect or harm to the child.

Definitions of other terms used in this report are in the Glossary.

## Data and analysis

This section includes the national data on child protection notifications, investigations and substantiations for the 2003–04 financial year. For most tables, Australian totals have not been provided because the data from the states and territories are not strictly comparable. The legislation, policies and procedures of each state and territory should be taken into account when interpreting these data.

New South Wales was unable to provide data for a significant number of items in 2003–04 due to the introduction in this year of a new client information system, the Key Information Directory System (KiDS). KiDS represents a significant change in the reporting framework for child protection and out-of-home care data for New South Wales. An information Quality Framework was introduced as part of the KiDS implementation process to ensure that all published information based on KiDS data is accurate and consistent. The information quality process was still underway for a number of key data items when data were collected for this report, resulting in limited data being available.

In Tasmania, the number of notifications increased substantially because of a change in recording practices due to the introduction of central intake, known as the Child Protection Advice and Referral Service. Now every call made to the department about a particular child is recorded as a notification, whereas previously, workers made the decision locally as to whether the call was in fact a notification.

### Number of notifications, investigations and substantiations

The number of child protection notifications received between 1 July 2003 and 30 June 2004 for each state and territory is shown in Table 2.1. The number of notifications ranged from 115,541 in New South Wales to 1,957 in the Northern Territory.

The proportion of notifications that were investigated ranged from 96% in Western Australia to 18% in Tasmania (Table 2.1). This range reflects differences in the way in which jurisdictions both define and deal with notifications and investigations. In Tasmania, every call received is recorded as a notification and can be very broad and may include family issues that are responded to without the need for a formal investigation process. Until 2003–04, the process in Tasmania was similar to that in Western Australia, namely reports to the departments are screened before being classified as a notification. Only those reports where maltreatment is indicated are classified as a notification and the majority of these are subsequently investigated.

**Table 2.1: Notifications, by type of action and state and territory, 2003–04**

Type of action	NSW <sup>(a)</sup>	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT <sup>(b)</sup>
	<b>Number</b>							
Investigations finalised <sup>(c)</sup>	n.a.	11,874	23,603	2,024	6,383	935	1,400	1,011
Investigations not finalised <sup>(d)</sup>	n.a.	385	5,712	294	62	359	978	61
<i>Total investigations</i>	<i>n.a.</i>	<i>12,259</i>	<i>29,315</i>	<i>2,318</i>	<i>6,445</i>	<i>1,294</i>	<i>2,378</i>	<i>1,072</i>
Dealt with by other means <sup>(e)</sup>	n.a.	24,697	4,625	—	8,472	3,411	75	—
No investigation possible/no action <sup>(f)</sup>	n.a.	—	1,083	99	—	2,543	2,872	885
<b>Total notifications</b>	<b>115,541</b>	<b>36,956</b>	<b>35,023</b>	<b>2,417</b>	<b>14,917</b>	<b>7,248</b>	<b>5,325</b>	<b>1,957</b>
	<b>Per cent</b>							
Investigations finalised <sup>(c)</sup>	n.a.	32	67	84	43	13	26	52
Investigations not finalised <sup>(d)</sup>	n.a.	1	16	12	—	5	18	3
<i>Total investigations</i>	<i>n.a.</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>84</i>	<i>96</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>55</i>
Dealt with by other means <sup>(e)</sup>	n.a.	70	13	—	57	47	1	—
No investigation possible/no action <sup>(f)</sup>	n.a.	—	3	4	—	35	54	45
<b>Total notifications</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

(a) Data for 2003–04 from New South Wales could not be provided due to the ongoing implementation of the data system.

(b) In the Northern Territory, notifications dealt with by other means could not be separately identified and were included in the category 'no investigation possible/no action'.

(c) 'Investigations finalised' are investigations that were completed and outcomes recorded by 31 August 2004.

(d) 'Investigations not finalised' are investigations that were begun but not completed by 31 August 2004.

(e) Includes notifications that were responded to by means other than an investigation, such as referral to police, referral to family services or provision of advice.

(f) 'No investigation possible/no action' includes notifications where there were no grounds for an investigation or insufficient information was available to undertake an investigation. It also includes those cases that could not be undertaken, such as the family has relocated. It may also include some cases that were referred on or where advice was given which cannot be disaggregated from cases with insufficient reason to investigate.

## Outcomes of investigations

Although the outcomes of investigations varied across the states and territories, in all jurisdictions a large proportion of investigations were not substantiated; that is, there was no reasonable cause to believe that the child was being, or was likely to be, abused, neglected or otherwise harmed. For example, 61% of finalised investigations in South Australia and 55% in the Australian Capital Territory were not substantiated (Table 2.2).

The proportion of investigations that were substantiated ranged from 39% in South Australia to 74% in Queensland.

**Table 2.2: Outcomes of finalised investigations, by state and territory, 2003–04**

	NSW <sup>(a)</sup>	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
	<b>Number</b>							
Substantiation	n.a.	7,412	17,473	968	2,490	427	630	527
Not substantiated	n.a.	4,462	6,130	1,056	3,893	508	770	484
<b>Total finalised investigations</b>	<b>n.a.</b>	<b>11,874</b>	<b>23,603</b>	<b>2,024</b>	<b>6,383</b>	<b>935</b>	<b>1,400</b>	<b>1,011</b>
	<b>Per cent</b>							
Substantiation	n.a.	62	74	48	39	46	45	52
Not substantiated	n.a.	38	26	52	61	54	55	48
<b>Total finalised investigations</b>	<b>n.a.</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

(a) Data from New South Wales was not available due to the ongoing implementation of the new data system.

## Recent trends in notifications and substantiations

In Australia, the number of child protection notifications increased by over 21,000 in the last year, rising from 198,355 in 2002–03 to 219,384 in 2003–04 (Table 2.3). The number of notifications increased in all jurisdictions except Victoria. The number of substantiations increased between 2002–03 and 2003–04 in every jurisdiction that provided data (Table 2.4).

**Table 2.3: Number of notifications, by state and territory, 1999–00 to 2003–04**

Year	NSW <sup>(a)</sup>	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
1999–00	30,398	36,805	19,057	2,645	15,181	422	1,189	1,437	107,134
2000–01	40,937	36,966	22,069	2,851	9,988 <sup>(b)</sup>	315	794	1,551	115,471
2001–02	55,208	37,976	27,592	3,045	11,203	508	801	1,605	137,938
2002–03	109,498	37,635	31,068	2,293 <sup>(c)</sup>	13,442	741	2,124 <sup>(d)</sup>	1,554	198,355
2003–04	115,541	36,956	35,023	2,417	14,917	7,248 <sup>(e)</sup>	5,325	1,957	219,384

(a) The data for 2002–03 and 2003–04 should not be compared with previous years. New South Wales implemented a modification to the data system to support legislation and practice changes during 2003–04 which would make any comparison inaccurate.

(b) In 2000–01 the classification of notifications in South Australia was changed to exclude reports that did not meet the criteria of reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect.

(c) The decline in the number of notifications for 2002–03 is associated with organisational and practice changes.

(d) From 2002–03 the number of notifications increased due to changed arrangements for recording reports of concern about children and young people. Recent publicity from the inquiries conducted by the Commissioner for Public Administration has also increased public awareness of child abuse.

(e) Data for 2003–04 and previous years should not be compared because of a change in recording practices due to the centralisation of the intake service, known as the Child Protection Advice and Referral Service. Now every call about a child is recorded as a notification, whereas, previously, workers made the decision locally about whether the call was in fact a notification based on the risk to the child.

Sources: AIHW 2004a; Table 2.1.

There are a number of possible reasons for the increase in the numbers of notifications and substantiations. One may be an actual increase in the number of children who require a child protection response. This may be due to an increase in the incidence of child abuse and neglect in the community or inadequate parenting causing harm to a child. However, the increase is probably more an indication of a better awareness of child protection concerns in the wider community and more willingness to report problems to the child protection departments.

**Table 2.4: Number of substantiations, by state and territory, 1999–00 to 2003–04**

Year	NSW <sup>(a)</sup>	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT <sup>(c)</sup>	NT	Total
1999–00	6,477	7,359	6,919	1,169	2,085	97	233	393	24,732
2000–01	7,501	7,608	8,395	1,191	1,998	103	222	349	27,367
2001–02	8,606	7,687	10,036	1,187	2,230	158	220	349	30,473
2002–03	16,765	7,287	12,203	888 <sup>(b)</sup>	2,423	213	310	327	40,416
2003–04	n.a.	7,412	17,473	968	2,490	427	630	527	n.a.

(a) The data for 2002–03 and previous years should not be compared. New South Wales implemented a modification to the data system to support legislation and practice changes during 2003–04 which would make any comparison inaccurate. Data for 2003–04 were not available due to the ongoing implementation of the data system.

(b) The decrease in substantiations in 2002–03 reflects the decrease in notifications.

(c) The increase in substantiations in 2003–04 relates to the increase in notifications in the ACT.

Sources: AIHW 2004; Table 2.2.

This increased public awareness may stem from the various inquiries into child protection services that have been conducted in a number of jurisdictions in the past few years. These include:

- *Care and Support: Final Report on Child Protection Services* (Standing Committee on Social Issues 2002) – New South Wales
- *Our Best Investment: A State Plan to Protect and Advance the Interests of Children* (Layton 2003) – South Australia
- *Commission of Inquiry into the Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions* (Forde et al. 1999) and *Protecting Children: An Inquiry into the Abuse of Children in Foster Care* (Crime and Misconduct Commission 2004) – Queensland
- *Putting the Picture Together: Inquiry into Response by Government Agencies to Complaints of Family Violence and Child Abuse in Aboriginal Communities* (Gordon et al. 2002) – Western Australia
- *The Territory as a Parent: A Review of the Safety in Care in the Act and of ACT Child Protection Management* (Commissioner for Public Administration 2004) and *The Territory's Children: Ensuring Safety and Quality Care for Children and Young People. Report on the Audit and Case Review* (Commissioner for Public Administration 2004).

These inquiries generate much media interest, both locally and nationally, which heightens public interest, reinforces the need to protect children, and may in turn impact on the willingness of the general public to report suspected instances of child abuse. They also have the potential of impacting on the reported data, as departments often respond to these inquiries by introducing new, or modifying existing, policies and practices.

The jurisdictions that had the largest increase in notifications and substantiations – Queensland, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory – are good examples of this. For example, as noted above in Queensland there has been two Inquiries in the past 5 years. Both of these received intense media scrutiny which as mentioned raises public awareness of the issues. The government responded to these Inquiries by providing more resources to employ more child protection workers, which increases the department's capacity to respond. One of the outcomes of the latest Inquiry is the creation of a new department with responsibility for child protection – Department of Child Safety. Consequently there have been a number of new policies and practices which has led to improved practice and an increase in substantiations.

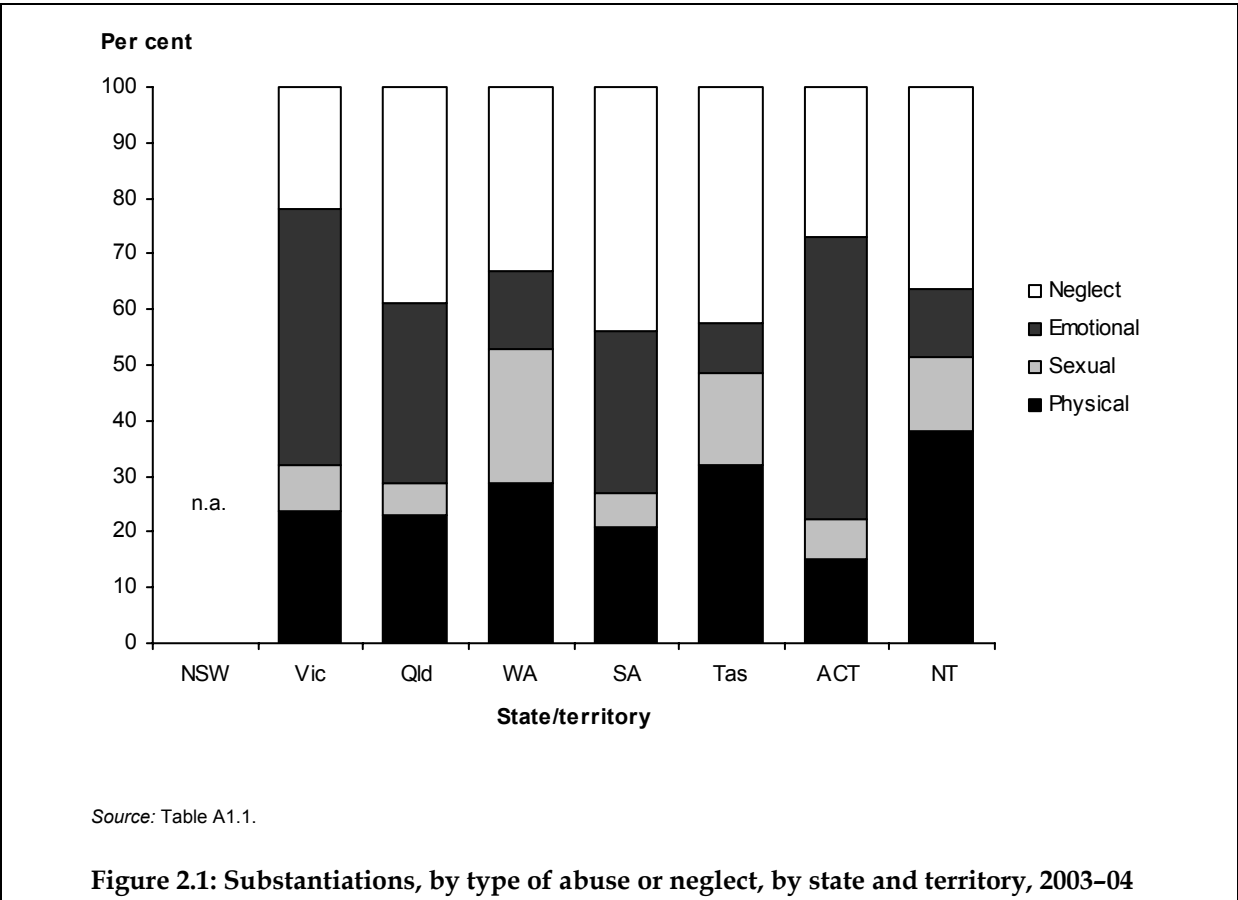
In Tasmania, the department changed how notifications were recorded. Instead of workers locally screening calls to determine if the call was a notification, central intake was

introduced, so now every call about a particular child is treated as a notification. As a result notifications increased from 741 in 2002-03 to 7,248 in 2003-04.

In the Australian Capital Territory, prior to 2002-03, child concern reports were not included in the notification count. These reports are now included in this category and this has increased notifications from 801 in 2001-02 to 5,325 in 2003-04. Also, during 2003-04 there were two Inquiries into the effectiveness of the child protection system. Like Queensland, the media coverage of these Inquiries helped raise the profile of child protection.

**Substantiations and type of abuse and neglect**

Substantiations are classified into one of the following four categories depending on the main type of abuse or neglect that has occurred: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, or neglect. It is not always clear what type of abuse, neglect or harm has occurred, and how a substantiation is classified varies according to the policies and practices of the different jurisdictions.



In Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania, the most common type of abuse was neglect; in Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory, it was emotional abuse; and in the Northern Territory physical abuse was the most common type (Figure 2.1 and Table A1.1).

These variations in the distribution of types of abuse or neglect across jurisdictions are likely to result from differences in what is classified as a substantiation as well as differences in the types of incidents that are substantiated. In Tasmania and the Northern Territory, a relatively high proportion of substantiations were classified as physical abuse whereas there

The high proportion of substantiations of emotional abuse is a relatively new phenomenon. For example, in 1998–99 physical abuse was the most common form of abuse substantiated in all jurisdictions except Queensland (AIHW 2000). The changing pattern of type of abuse may be due to the changing characteristics of the families notified. For example, a Victorian study in 2002 showed that in 2001–02 at least 73% of the parents of children in substantiated cases in Victoria had at least one issue or problem such as domestic violence, alcohol or substance abuse or a psychiatric disability. This is a large increase from the 41% of parents that experienced these difficulties in 1996–97 (VDHS 2002).

## Characteristics of children

### Number of children

The number of child protection notifications and substantiations is greater than the number of children who were the subject of a notification or substantiation. This is because some children are the subject of more than one notification and/or substantiation in any one year. For example, in 2003–04 in Queensland there were 35,023 notifications compared with 25,009 children who were the subject of a notification, and 17,473 substantiations compared with 12,741 children who were the subject of a substantiation (Table 2.5).

These data indicate that a number of children across Australia were the subject of more than one substantiation during 2003–04. It is not possible to calculate the exact proportion of children who were the subject of more than one notification or substantiation, however, as some children may be the subject of more than two notifications or substantiations in the year. While these data would be available within the jurisdictions, they are not collected nationally.

**Table 2.5: Number of notifications and substantiations and number of children who were the subject of a notification and/or substantiation, by state and territory, 2003–04**

	NSW <sup>(a)</sup>	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
Children in notifications	71,445	27,970	25,009	2,259	10,195	5,236	2,770	1,678
Total notifications	115,541	36,956	35,023	2,417	14,917	7,248	5,325	1,957
Children in substantiations	n.a.	7,026	12,741	929	1,953	329	489	492
Total substantiations	n.a.	7,412	17,473	968	2,490	427	630	527

(a) Data on substantiations for 2003–04 were not available due to the ongoing implementation of the data system.

Note: Includes children aged 0–17 years and children of unknown age.

### Sex and age

In all jurisdictions girls were more likely to be the subject of a substantiation of sexual abuse (Table A1.2). There were about twice as many girls as boys who were the subject of a substantiation of sexual abuse. This is consistent with victimisation studies of sexual assault (Cook, David & Grant 2001; Carmody & Carrington 2000). On the other hand, boys were more likely to be the subject of a substantiation of physical abuse, except in the Australian Capital Territory (caution should be taken with the Australian Capital Territory figures due to the small numbers of children involved).

In relation to age, the number of children who were the subject of a substantiation was larger in the younger age categories and there were fewer children aged 15 years and over (Table A1.3). Rates of children by age are discussed in the following section.

## Rates of children in substantiations

There were significant differences between states and territories in the rates of children who were the subject of a child protection substantiation. In 2003–04, Queensland and the Northern Territory had the highest rates of children who were the subject of a substantiation: 14.0 per 1,000 children in Queensland and 8.7 per 1,000 in the Northern Territory (Table 2.6). The rates of children who were the subject of a substantiation were lowest in Western Australia and Tasmania: 2.0 and 3.0 per 1,000 respectively.

Much of the variation in rates across jurisdictions is likely to be due to differences in policies and approaches to child protection matters. The relatively low rates of children in substantiations in Western Australia are because reports relating to concerns about children that do not involve maltreatment are screened out of the child protection system and dealt with separately. The high rates in Queensland are in part related to the broader definition of child abuse and neglect or harm used in these jurisdictions.

## Trends in rates of children in substantiations

The trends in rates of children in substantiations also varied across jurisdictions. In the period 1998–99 to 2003–04, in almost all the jurisdictions, the rates of children in substantiations fluctuated. A steady increase in rates occurred only in Queensland, from 4.2 to 14.0 per 1,000 (Table 2.6). Some of this increase across the jurisdictions could be due to a number of factors, including a greater community willingness to report cases of suspected abuse.

**Table 2.6: Rates of children aged 0–16 years who were the subject of a substantiation, per 1,000 children, by state and territory, 1998–99 to 2003–04**

Year	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
1998–99	4.4	6.3	5.1	2.5	5.2	1.1	5.2	n.a. <sup>(a)</sup>
1999–00	3.9	6.3	5.6	2.3	5.0	0.7	2.5	6.2
2000–01	4.4	6.6	7.3	2.4	5.0	0.9	2.7	5.8
2001–02	4.8	6.6	8.3	2.4	5.3	1.4	2.7	5.8
2002–03	7.5 <sup>(b)</sup>	6.3	10.1	1.9 <sup>(c)</sup>	5.8	1.8	3.6	5.7
2003–04	n.a. <sup>(d)</sup>	6.4	14.0	2.0	5.9	3.0	6.7	8.7

(a) Data for the 1998–99 financial year were not available from the Northern Territory.

(b) The data for 2002–03 and previous years should not be compared. New South Wales implemented a modification to the data system to support legislation and practice changes during 2002–03 which would make any comparison inaccurate.

(c) The decline in the number of notifications for 2002–03 is associated with organisational and practice changes.

(d) Data for 2003–04 was not available due to the ongoing implementation of the data system.

Sources: AIHW 2004a; Table 2.8.

## Rates by age

Rates of children who were the subjects of substantiations generally decreased with age. In all jurisdictions except Tasmania, children aged under 1 year were the most likely to be the subject of a substantiation and children aged 15–16 years the least likely (Table 2.7). In Western Australia, for instance, the rate for children aged less than 1 year was 5.0 per 1,000 compared with 0.8 per 1,000 for young people aged 15–16 years.

Age is one of the factors that child protection workers take into consideration when determining the time taken to respond to a notification, the type of response and whether a notification will be substantiated, with younger children being regarded as the most



vulnerable. The High Risk Infants Service Quality Initiatives Project in Victoria, for example, was developed to better identify and respond to children aged less than 2 years who were regarded as being at high risk of child abuse and neglect (VDHS 1999). Other jurisdictions also have special procedures in place to protect younger children.

**Table 2.7: Children aged 0–16 years in substantiations: rates per 1,000 children, by age and state and territory, 2003–04**

Age (years)	NSW <sup>(a)</sup>	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
< 1 year	n.a.	15.6	25.1	5.0	9.1	2.4	14.7	22.6
1–4 years	n.a.	7.3	15.9	2.2	7.3	2.5	8.6	13.0
5–9 years	n.a.	5.9	14.9	2.1	6.6	2.5	6.3	6.5
10–14 years	n.a.	5.9	13.6	1.8	5.2	2.3	5.3	6.6
15–16 years	n.a.	3.3	6.2	0.8	1.8	1.5	3.2	1.5

(a) New South Wales was unable to provide data due to the ongoing implementation of the data system.

*Notes*

1. Refer to Table A1.2 for numbers for this table.
2. Due to the small numbers involved, children aged 17 years were not included in this table.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

### Rates of children in substantiations

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are more likely to be the subject of a substantiation than other children. In 2003–04 in all jurisdictions, except Tasmania, the substantiation rate for Indigenous children was higher than the rate for other children (Table 2.8). The rate ratio provides a summary measure of the rate of Indigenous children who were the subject of a substantiation compared with the rate for other children. In Victoria, for example, the rate of Indigenous children who were the subject of a substantiation was nearly ten times higher than the rate for other children, whereas in South Australia the rate was over eight times higher.

**Table 2.8: Children aged 0–16 years who were the subjects of substantiations: number and rates per 1,000 children, by Indigenous status and state and territory, 2003–04**

State/territory	Number of children			Rate per 1,000 children			Rate ratio Indigenous /other
	Indigenous	Other	Total	Indigenous	Other	Total	
New South Wales	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Victoria	700	6,323	7,023	57.7	5.9	6.4	9.8
Queensland	1,192	11,481	12,673	20.8	13.6	14.0	1.5
Western Australia	322	599	921	11.2	1.4	2.0	8.0
South Australia	441	1,499	1,940	39.9	4.7	5.9	8.4
Tasmania	12	317	329	1.6	3.1	3.0	0.5
Australian Capital Territory	44	441	485	25.3	6.2	6.7	4.1
Northern Territory	375	116	491	16.2	3.5	8.7	4.7

*Notes*

1. Due to the small numbers involved, children aged 17 years were not included in this table.
2. NSW was unable to provide these data due to the ongoing implementation of the data system.
3. Data from Tasmania should be interpreted carefully due to the low incidence of workers recording Indigenous status at the time of the substantiation.

The reasons for the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection substantiations are complex. The report *Bringing Them Home* (National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families (HREOC 1997)) examined the effect of child welfare policies on Indigenous people. It noted that some of the underlying causes of the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child welfare system include:

- the legacy of past policies of the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families
- intergenerational effects of previous separations from family and culture
- poor socioeconomic status
- cultural differences in child-rearing practices.

### Trends in the rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

Since 1998–99 the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in substantiations has fluctuated across the jurisdictions; however, it has increased substantially in all jurisdictions except Tasmania and Western Australia (Table 2.9).

Improvements in the quality of the data on Indigenous status are one of the major issues to be considered when analysing trends for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Increases in the rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system over time may be due to improvements in the quality of the data.

**Table 2.9: Rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–16 years who were the subject of a substantiation, per 1,000 children, by state and territory, 1998–99 to 2003–04**

Year	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas <sup>(a)</sup>	ACT <sup>(a)</sup>	NT
1998–99	15.2	n.a. <sup>(b)</sup>	9.3	10.9	25.6	1.1	14.3	n.a. <sup>(c)</sup>
1999–00	13.2	48.5	9.3	11.9	31.6	0.5	3.7	7.7
2000–01	14.9	50.9	12.4	12.6	29.4	0.3	12.1	6.8
2001–02	15.4	48.4	14.3	13.6	31.8	0.3	6.6	9.7
2002–03	31.9 <sup>(d)</sup>	55.3	15.6	9.6 <sup>(e)</sup>	32.0	2.5	19.4	8.6
2003–04	n.a. <sup>(f)</sup>	57.7	20.8	11.2	39.9	1.6	25.3	16.2

(a) Rates from Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory should be interpreted with care due to the small numbers. Any fluctuation in the numbers of children has a large impact on the rates.

(b) Indigenous data were not available from Victoria in 1998–99.

(c) Data for the 1998–99 financial year were not available from the Northern Territory.

(d) The data for 2002–03 and previous years should not be compared. New South Wales implemented a modification to the data system to support legislation and practice changes during 2002–03 which would make any comparison inaccurate.

(e) The decline in the number of substantiations is due to the decreased number of notifications.

(f) New South Wales were unable to provide data due to the ongoing implementation of the data system.

Note: Data differ from previous reports due to updated Indigenous population projections.

Source: Table 2.8.

### Types of abuse and neglect

The pattern of substantiated abuse and neglect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children differs from the pattern for other children. Indigenous children were more likely than other children to be the subject of a substantiation of neglect. For example, in Western Australia, 43% of Indigenous children in substantiations were the subject of a substantiation of neglect, compared with 27% of other children. In the Northern Territory, the corresponding percentages were 40% and 26% respectively (Table 2.10).

**Table 2.10: Children who were the subject of a substantiation: type of abuse or neglect, by Indigenous status and state and territory, 2003–04 (per cent)**

Type of abuse or neglect	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
<b>Indigenous children</b>								
Physical abuse	n.a.	24	26	32	17	42	16	36
Sexual abuse	n.a.	5	4	17	5	—	9	10
Emotional abuse	n.a.	46	26	8	34	8	50	13
Neglect	n.a.	25	44	43	45	50	25	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>n.a.</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Other children</b>								
Physical abuse	n.a.	24	24	27	27	33	16	39
Sexual abuse	n.a.	9	7	29	8	18	7	26
Emotional abuse	n.a.	46	34	17	28	9	52	9
Neglect	n.a.	21	36	27	36	40	25	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>n.a.</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

*Notes*

1. The number of Indigenous children who were the subject of a substantiation should be interpreted with caution due to small numbers in Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory.
2. For details on the coding of Indigenous status see Appendix 2.
3. Refer to Table A1.4 for numbers for this table.

## **Additional data on notifications and substantiations**

### **Source of notifications**

Child protection notifications made to community services departments come from a range of different sources. Data on the sources of notifications for finalised investigations show that the most common sources of those notifications in 2003–04 were school personnel, police and parents or guardians (Table 2.11). In Queensland, for instance, school personnel were the source of the notifications for 15% of finalised investigations, police were the source of 15% and parents/guardians were the source of 14%.

**Table 2.11: Finalised investigations, by source of notification and state and territory, 2003-04 (per cent)**

Source of notification	NSW <sup>(a)</sup>	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
Subject child	n.a.	—	3	3	1	2	—	—
Parent/guardian	n.a.	8	14	13	9	6	10	4
Sibling	n.a.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other relative	n.a.	8	11	8	8	10	—	12
Friend/neighbour	n.a.	6	14	6	11	7	9	7
Medical practitioner	n.a.	4	2	1	3	—	1	4
Other health personnel	n.a.	6	—	—	2	3	3	2
Hospital/health centre	n.a.	5	5	12	7	4	10	15
Social worker	n.a.	2	5	—	5	5	1	3
School personnel	n.a.	17	15	11	18	19	14	8
Childcare personnel	n.a.	1	1	2	1	1	1	1
Police	n.a.	20	15	18	19	15	17	25
Departmental officer	n.a.	6	4	15	5	10	7	5
Non-government organisation	n.a.	14	4	4	—	8	11	10
Anonymous	n.a.	—	2	1	2	—	3	2
Other	n.a.	2	6	6	7	10	12	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>n.a.</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

(a) New South Wales was unable to provide these data due to the ongoing implementation of the data system.

*Notes*

1. 'Other' category may include the person responsible.
2. Refer to Table A1.5 for numbers for this table.

## Family type

Data on the type of family in which children in substantiations were living were available from most jurisdictions. However, it is important to note that a family member with whom the child was living may not have been the person responsible for the abuse, neglect or harm to the child. It should also be noted that the family type is recorded at different times during the process (see Note 1 under Table 2.12).

Compared with the distribution of family types in the Australian population, a relatively high proportion of substantiations involved children living in female-headed one-parent families and in two-parent step or blended families, whereas a relatively low proportion of substantiations involved children living in two-parent intact families. For example, in Western Australia, 36% of substantiations involved children from female one-parent families, 4% involved children living in male one-parent families, 20% involved children from two-parent step or blended families, and 29% involved children from two-parent intact families (Table 2.12). In comparison, in 2003, 17% of all Australian children lived in female one-parent families, 2.5% lived in male-headed one-parent families, 8% lived in two-parent step or blended families and 72% lived in two-parent intact families (ABS 2004a).

Children of female sole parents accounted for a relatively high proportion of children in substantiations. However, the children of male sole parents are also over-represented in relation to their frequency in the general population. This becomes evident when these data are translated into rates of substantiations in relation to the size of the population group. For example, in Victoria the rate of substantiations for children in female sole-parent families

was 17.0 per 1,000, and the rate for children in male-headed one-parent families was 13.3 per 1,000 (Table 2.12; unpublished ABS data).

There are likely to be a number of reasons for the over-representation of one-parent families in substantiations. For instance, sole parents are more likely to:

- have low incomes and be financially stressed
- suffer from social isolation
- have less support from their immediate family.

These are all factors that have been associated with child abuse and neglect.

**Table 2.12: Substantiations, by type of family in which the child was residing,<sup>(a)</sup> 2003–04**

Family type	NSW <sup>(a)</sup>	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT
				<b>Number</b>				
Two parent—intact	n.a.	2,088	4,689	274	677	189	188	197
Two parent—step or blended	n.a.	492	3,938	196	529	49	78	48
Single parent—female	n.a.	2,924	6,479	350	1,061	114	241	182
Single parent—male	n.a.	418	814	42	97	26	25	34
Other relatives/kin	n.a.	426	358	68	69	14	5	44
Foster	n.a.	77	—	21	1	15	6	4
Other	n.a.	247	1,169	10	15	20	9	5
Not stated	n.a.	740	26	7	41	—	78	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>n.a.</b>	<b>7,412</b>	<b>17,473</b>	<b>968</b>	<b>2,490</b>	<b>427</b>	<b>630</b>	<b>527</b>
				<b>Per cent</b>				
Two parent—intact	n.a.	31	27	29	28	44	34	38
Two parent—step or blended	n.a.	7	23	20	22	11	14	9
Single parent—female	n.a.	44	37	36	43	27	44	35
Single parent—male	n.a.	6	5	4	4	6	5	7
Other relatives/kin	n.a.	6	2	7	3	3	1	9
Foster	n.a.	1	—	2	—	4	1	1
Other	n.a.	4	7	1	1	5	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>n.a.</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

(a) New South Wales could not provide these data.

*Notes*

1. The type of family the child was living in is recorded at different points for each jurisdiction. In Queensland and Tasmania, it is categorised as where the child was living when the abuse, neglect or harm occurred. In Western Australia it is at the time of the notification. In the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory, family type was categorised as where the child was living at the time of investigation. For Victoria, it was at the time of the substantiation. WAITING FOR SA.
2. Queensland does not have a category for 'foster parent'—these have been included in 'Other'.