



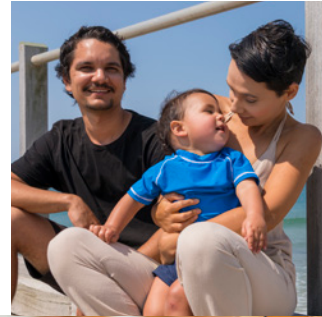
Australian Government

Australian Institute of
Health and Welfare

AIHW

Australia's welfare 2021

In brief



The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare is a major national agency whose purpose is to create authoritative and accessible information and statistics that inform decisions and improve the health and wellbeing of all Australians.

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About Australia's welfare 2021

This edition of the AIHW's biennial flagship report on welfare is comprised of the following product suite:



Australia's welfare 2021: data insights

This is a collection of articles on selected welfare topics, including an overview of the welfare data landscape, and contributions by academic experts. It is available as a print report and online as a PDF.



Australia's welfare snapshots

This is a collection of 43 web pages that present key facts on welfare in Australia, housing, education and skills, employment and income, social support, justice and safety, and Indigenous Australians. They are available online in HTML (some updated when new data are available) and as a compiled PDF.



Australia's welfare 2021: in brief

This presents key findings and concepts from the snapshots and data insights report to tell the story of welfare in Australia. It is available as a print report and online as a PDF.



Australia's welfare indicators

This is an interactive data visualisation tool that measures welfare system performance, individual and household determinants and the nation's wellbeing. It is available online in HTML.

All products can be viewed or downloaded at:
www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/australias-welfare

At a glance: *Australia's welfare*



588,000 people were employed in the welfare workforce in 2020



\$195.7 billion was spent on welfare related services and payments by Australian and state and territory governments in 2019–20



5.4 million people received an income support payment as at 25 June 2021



4.4 million people were estimated to have some form of disability in 2018



467,000 people were active participants in the National Disability Insurance Scheme as at 30 June 2021



Over one million people received support from aged care services in 2019–20



2.6 million people received Age Pension as at 25 June 2021



116,000 people were estimated to be homeless on Census night in 2016



290,500 clients were assisted by Specialist Homelessness Services in 2019–20



174,700 children aged 0–17 received child protection services in 2019–20



266,600 apprentices and trainees were training as at 30 June 2020



384,400 undergraduate students commenced in 2019



1.6 million women reported experiencing physical or sexual violence by a current or previous partner since the age of 15 in 2016

Profile of Australians



Around 25.7 million people lived in Australia at 30 June 2020



3.3% identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in 2016



The median age was 37.8 years at 30 June 2020



72% lived in *Major cities* at 30 June 2020



30% were born overseas at 30 June 2020



The employment rate (15–64-year-olds) was 75.7% in July 2021

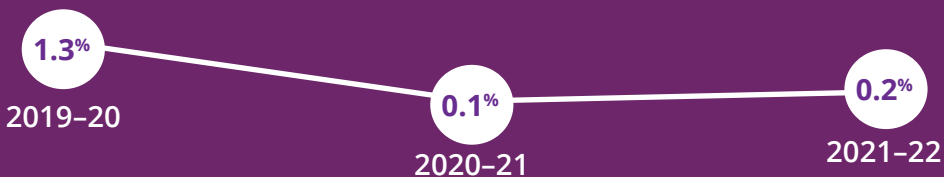


The unemployment rate was 4.6% in July 2021



Between March and April 2020, the number of employed people aged 15 and over fell by 592,100. This was the largest monthly fall in employment since the current labour force series commenced in February 1978

The COVID-19 pandemic has influenced Australia's population growth. This is expected to continue over the next few years:





1

What is welfare and wellbeing?

Broadly, welfare refers to the wellbeing of individuals, families and the community. The terms welfare and wellbeing are often used interchangeably. The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has prompted a renewed focus on issues which affect the welfare and wellbeing of Australians.

Welfare, or wellbeing, is positively or negatively affected by many factors, including housing, education, employment and social networks. These factors can also influence a person's need for welfare services and support.

Some people see welfare as primarily government-funded income support payments and welfare services, but support and services in many areas of life aid welfare and are critical to wellbeing. This can come from family, friends and the community, or from government and/or non-government organisations. Formal services and support can include:



government payments,
such as Age Pension
and JobSeeker



tax concessions



welfare services,
such as employment
services, child
protection services, and
social housing.

Find out more: [Understanding welfare and wellbeing](#)

How are health, welfare and wellbeing linked?

Our personal circumstances are key drivers of our health and wellbeing. The circumstances in which we grow, live, work and age all play a role.

Health can positively, or negatively, impact a person's wellbeing. For example, a person may suffer loneliness because of poor health, while good health may enable them to earn a sufficient income to support themselves and live independently.

Many issues also involve both health and welfare services; for example, family, domestic and sexual violence can have a serious impact on a victim's health, but also on other aspects of their life, such as their income or employment.

Find out more: [Health and welfare links](#)



2

How has COVID-19 impacted the welfare and wellbeing of Australians?

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve in Australia. For latest case numbers, see the [Australian Government Department of Health website](#).

Australians continue to experience both direct and indirect health effects from the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. These include the health effects to an individual with COVID-19, and the short and longer-term impacts of measures put in place to contain COVID-19.

To date, the spread of COVID-19 has mostly been contained by:



strong physical distancing policies



travel bans



effective contact tracing



high testing rates



personal hygiene practices



isolation procedures



Vaccines

Restrictions implemented to contain the spread of COVID-19 continue to have a serious impact on economies and societies worldwide, with travel, trade and people's ability to work, attend school and socialise, all affected. Vaccines provide hope of containing the pandemic, and it is likely that a combination of vaccines and public health measures will be needed for some time.

What is happening in Australia?

Fortunately, Australia has thus far avoided the severity of health impacts seen in many other countries, where a large number of severe cases and deaths have put a huge strain on health systems, economies and population wellbeing.

Applying the rates of cases experienced in comparable countries to the Australian population illustrates the magnitude of Australia's favourable situation. For example, if Australia had experienced the same rates seen in Sweden or the United Kingdom, there would have been over 1.6 million COVID-19 cases by early April 2021 (as opposed to around 30,000 cases).

Find out more: Chapter 3: The impact of COVID-19 on the wellbeing of Australians

While the COVID-19 pandemic has not had the extreme effects it has in many other countries, its impact in Australia has been – and continues to be – considerable, touching nearly all people and aspects of life.



Australia's welfare 2021: data insights takes an in-depth look at the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on wellbeing, employment, income, housing and homelessness from the start of the pandemic to early- to mid-2021. The circumstances in which Australians live are continuing to evolve, as reflected by the COVID-19 outbreaks in mid-2021 onwards. While some aspects of life during the pandemic change quickly, such as employment figures, others may not change that much or change may not be immediately apparent.

Throughout the course of the pandemic, the number of COVID-19 cases, deaths and measures to prevent the spread of COVID – such as lockdowns – have varied considerably across jurisdictions. As a nation, as at 22 August 2021, Australia had reported:



44,028 total
COVID-19 cases



981 total
COVID-19 deaths.



For the latest COVID-19 related information, case numbers and response, please refer to the [Australian Government Department of Health](#) or visit state and territory government websites.

Other impacts



Results from the August 2021 ANUpoll are summarised on pages 13 to 18. Findings come from the following reports:

- Biddle, N and Gray, M 2021. Tracking wellbeing outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic (August 2021): Lockdown blues. Australian National University: ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods.
- Biddle, N, Edwards, B, Gray, M, and Sollis, K 2021 (forthcoming). The impact of COVID-19 on relationship quality and parental reports of child mental health – August 2021. Australian National University: ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods.

Life satisfaction

In August 2021, average life satisfaction was lower than prior to onset of COVID-19.

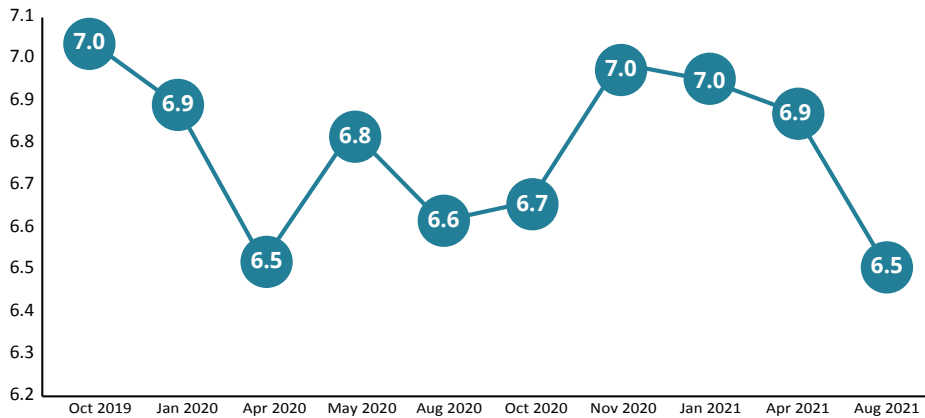
The average level of life satisfaction remained fairly stable in Australia between 2001 and 2018 (based on the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey).

However, since the onset of COVID-19 life satisfaction has had quite rapid changes over a short period of time. Average life satisfaction fell substantially during the early stages of the pandemic (from 6.9 out of 10 in January 2020 to 6.5 in April 2020), rising again as infection rates and lockdown conditions started to be eased (6.8 in May 2020).

By January 2021 the average level of life satisfaction had returned to pre-pandemic levels and this remained the case in April, however, in August life satisfaction had fallen to the same level as it was in April 2020.

Positively, experience in Australia since the onset of COVID-19 shows that life satisfaction can quickly rebound as it did in late 2020.

Life satisfaction, October 2019 to August 2021



The life satisfaction question asks how satisfied you feel about life in general, on a scale from 0 to 10. Zero means you feel 'not at all satisfied' and 10 means 'completely satisfied'. Overall, how satisfied are you with life as a whole these days? ANUPoll

As a result of COVID-19:

- in **May 2020**, **1 in 2** (51.3 %) Australians thought their life had gotten worse (including 6.5% who thought it had gotten much worse)
- in **August 2021**, **2 in 3** (65.7%) Australians thought their life had gotten worse (including 17.0 % cent who thought it had gotten much worse).

Australians in Sydney and Melbourne were more likely to feel their life worsened than others in August 2021, while those who lived outside of NSW and Victoria were the least likely.

Respondents to the ANUPoll were asked about their outlook on the longer-term (5-10 years from now). In August 2021, Australians were more likely to say that they felt more negative about the future than they were in May 2020 (56.1% and 39.9%, respectively).

Find out more: ANU Centre for Social Research & Methods: COVID-19 publications and The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey: Statistical reports

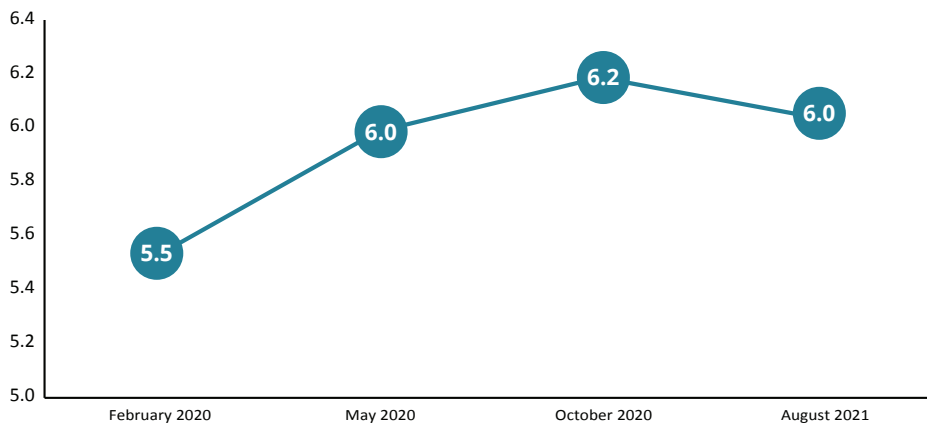
Social cohesion

COVID-19 has been associated with improvements in social cohesion

Between February (pre-COVID) and May 2020, there was a significant increase in social cohesion (people's perception of whether most people can be trusted, are fair and most of the time try to be helpful). There was then another increase in perceived social cohesion between May and October, and a slight (but not significant) decline between October 2020 and August 2021.

This measure of trust remains notably higher than it was prior to the onset of COVID-19.

Index of perceived social cohesion, February 2020 to August 2021



Respondents to the ANUPoll were asked: Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?; 'Do you think that most people would try to take advantage of you if they got the chance, or would they try to be fair?' and 'Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful or that they are mostly looking out for themselves?'. All three questions were answered on a scale of 0 to 10 and answers were combined to give an average score.

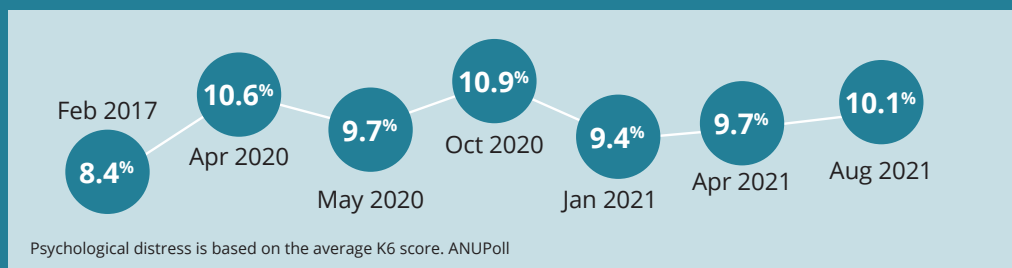
ANUPoll

Find out more: ANU Centre for Social Research & Methods: COVID-19 publications

Psychological distress

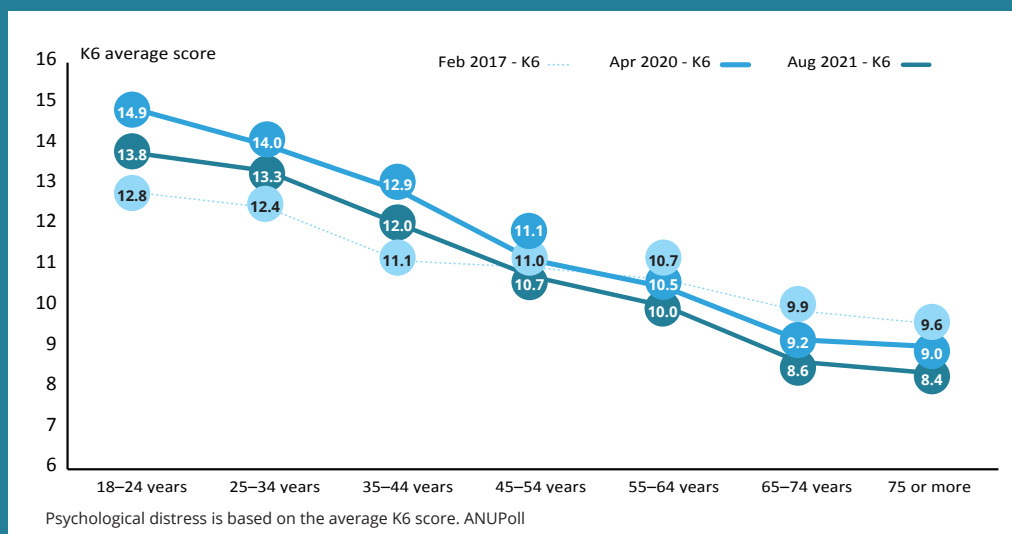
For some Australians, the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions has negatively impacted mental health. COVID-19 has been associated with rises in the level of psychological distress in Australia, especially for younger people.

The proportion of the adult population experiencing severe psychological distress was higher in August 2021 (10.1%) than it was prior to the pandemic (8.4% in February 2017).



The average level of psychological distress in Australia has shown notable changes since the onset of Covid-19 with a significant rise evident from February 2017 to April 2020. By April 2021 the average level of distress had returned to pre-pandemic levels and this remained the case in August, however there is a distinct pattern by age.

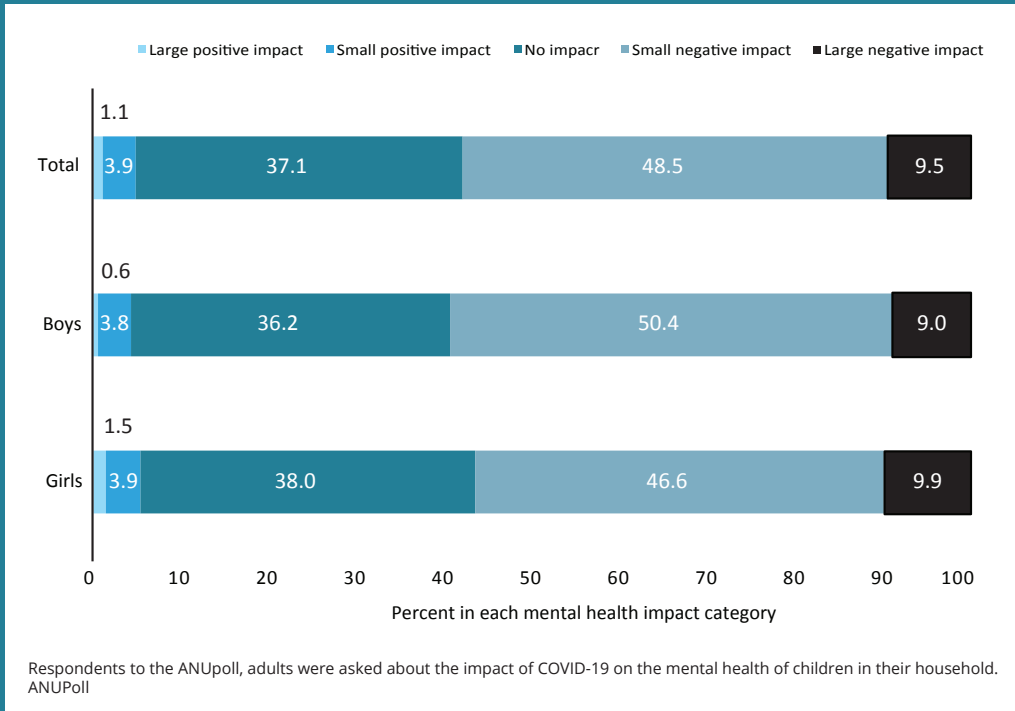
For younger people (18–44), average levels of psychological distress were higher in 2020 and 2021 (including August 2021) than they were before the pandemic, especially for those aged 18–24, while those aged 45 and above experienced either little change or improvements in their level of psychological distress.



Find out more: ANU Centre for Social Research & Methods: COVID-19 publications and Suicide & self-harm monitoring statistics

Mental health of children

According to the ANUpoll for August 2021, 1 in 2 (48.5%) adults said COVID-19 had a small negative impact on the mental health of children in their household; 9.5% reported that there was a large negative impact.



In modelling undertaken by the Australian National University (ANU), negative impacts of COVID-19 were lower for older and younger respondents; those born overseas; and those who lived in non-capital city NSW, capital cities other than Sydney or Melbourne, and non-capital cities outside NSW and Victoria.

Find out more: [ANU Centre for Social Research & Methods: COVID-19 publications](#)

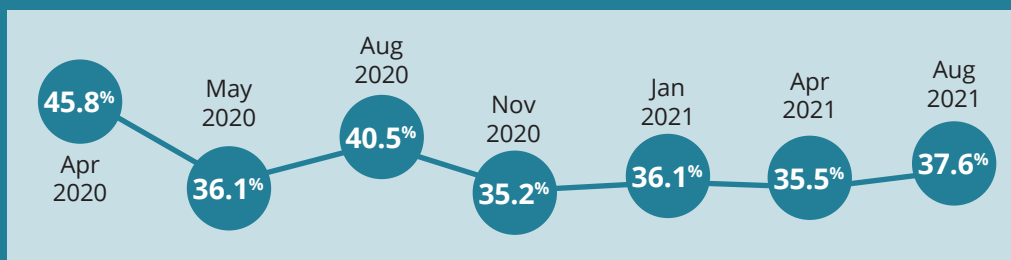
Social isolation and loneliness

ANUpoll respondents were asked 'In the past week, how often have you felt lonely?'

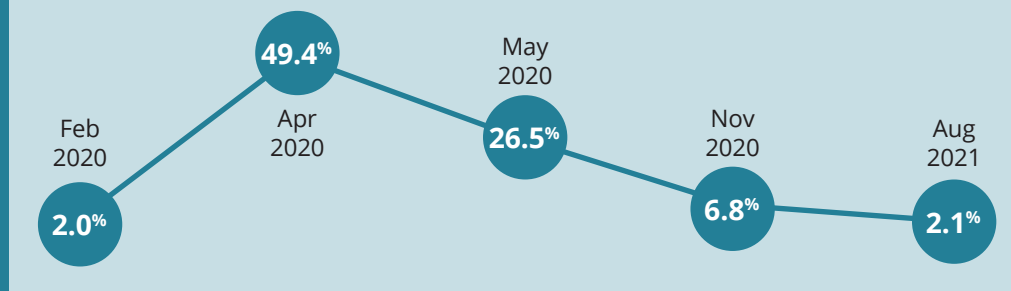
Social isolation and loneliness can be harmful to both mental and physical health. Some of the measures implemented to manage the COVID-19 pandemic have the potential to exacerbate pre-existing risk factors for social isolation and loneliness, such as living alone.

Young people aged 18–24 were more likely than other age groups to have felt lonely at least some of the time in April 2020 (63.3%).

The proportion of Australians experiencing loneliness reached a high point of 45.8% in April 2020. The proportion of the population who had experienced loneliness fell from April to May 2020 (36.1%) but rose from May to 40.5% in August 2020. However, this rise only occurred in Victoria. The increase between April and August 2021 was driven by a large rise in reported loneliness in Sydney (increase from 35.3% to 44.3%), with the rest of Australia showing little change over this period.



The proportion of people who said that they never met socially with friends, relatives or work colleagues peaked at 49.4% in April 2020 but had returned to pre-pandemic levels in August 2021:



Find out more: Social isolation and loneliness and Suicide & self-harm monitoring statistics

Education

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted teaching and learning across all states and territories. While some have been able to maintain a capacity for classroom learning, others have had to quickly adapt to an entirely online learning environment.

Preliminary NAPLAN results for 2021 suggest that the pandemic had little impact on students' literacy and numeracy overall, however the full impact of COVID-19 on learning and teaching is yet to be fully understood.



In May 2020, 76% of adults with children had kept them home from child care or school due to COVID-19.

Family, domestic and sexual violence

The social restrictions and resulting economic challenges from COVID-19 raises concerns about the potential for increases in family, domestic and sexual violence. A number of measures have been put in place to help mitigate these potential impacts, including funding for extra support services, such as counselling and a national information campaign.

An online survey of 15,000 women found that during the 3 months to May 2020:



4.6% of women experienced physical or sexual violence from a current or former cohabiting partner.



65% of this 4.6% said the violence had started or escalated since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Find out more: Family, domestic and sexual violence and Chapter 3: The impact of COVID-19 on the wellbeing of Australians

Child protection

The extra challenges on families posed by the COVID-19 pandemic may make some children more vulnerable to abuse and neglect. At the same time, during the most severe COVID-19 lockdowns, the restrictions on social interactions potentially limit opportunities for child abuse and neglect to be detected and reported.



Notifications to child protection services fell during the 'first wave' of COVID-19 in April 2020, and increased once most restrictions eased in May/June 2020.

Find out more: [Child protection](#) and [Chapter 3: The impact of COVID-19 on the wellbeing of Australians](#)



Aged care residents

Given that older people are at greater risk of poorer outcomes from COVID-19 and that aged care residents often live in close proximity to each other and require frequent support from care providers, the aged care sector remains a high risk setting. The long-term isolation from other residents, and particularly from family, also has the potential to substantially increase loneliness of residents and adversely affect their general wellbeing.

Find out more: [Chapter 3: The impact of COVID-19 on the wellbeing of Australians, Aged care and Aged care for Indigenous Australians.](#)

People with disability

People with disability may be disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic due to their increased risk of infection, and higher co-morbidities, along with underlying health conditions such as chronic diseases and respiratory illness. People with disability are also impacted by disruptions to their regular support services, the increased likelihood of staying at home and increased expenses. Some people with disability are impacted due to their inability to maintain social distancing.

Find out more: Chapter 7: Australia's changing disability data landscape, Specialised supports for people with disability

The Indigenous story

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities are at high risk of COVID-19 outbreaks and severe outcomes due to a range of health and socioeconomic inequalities including reduced access to services, barriers to treatment (including lack of cultural safety) and high rates of chronic disease.

As of 15 August 2021, there had been 293 confirmed COVID-19 cases among Indigenous Australians since the start of the pandemic.

This included 145 confirmed cases since the beginning of 2021 (1.3% of all cases in the period), and 148 in 2020 (0.5%).

Find out more: Chapter 3: The impact of COVID-19 on the wellbeing of Australians



Housing and homelessness

While the public health consequences of COVID-19 have been much more moderate in Australia than in other countries thus far, the pandemic and subsequent emergency measures introduced to reduce the spread of the virus nevertheless had a substantial impact.

What did we anticipate would happen?

Initially, substantial negative impact to property values and rents was expected, as well as the potential for surging homelessness.



The Commonwealth Bank's 'worst case scenario' projection envisaged a 32% fall in house prices over a three-year time horizon.



However, house prices were only briefly dampened by the 2020 recession. By Quarter 1 2021, prices were rising at their fastest quarterly rate since 2009.

How did Australian governments respond?

The Commonwealth and state and territory governments enacted emergency measures to protect both existing renters and homeless people from negative impacts. Although broader in scope and intent, the most important of these measures for housing were the JobKeeper payment and Coronavirus Supplement for income support recipients (including those receiving the JobSeeker Payment).

Impact on homelessness



In the 6 months to September 2020, pandemic Emergency Accommodation (EA) programs saw over 40,000 people assisted by the 4 active states (Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia).

Having protected many vulnerable homeless people from COVID-19 community transmission when rates were high, all 4 states made substantial efforts and commitments to assist EA service users into longer-term tenancies – whether in social or private rental housing.

Impact on the private housing market

Among the existing private renter market, many households will have benefited directly or indirectly from the rare situation of rental price deflation that has affected many capital city locations during 2020. For some, this has made it much easier to negotiate a reduced rent (or to quit an over-expensive home for one offered at a lower price). In many regional settings, however, those aspiring local homebuyers and renters are facing greater competition to secure suitable properties, and longstanding low-income tenants are likely to face growing affordability stress into the future as higher housing demand gradually filters through the market through rising rents.

Find out more: Chapter 5: COVID-19 effects on housing and homelessness: the story to mid-2021

Income and employment

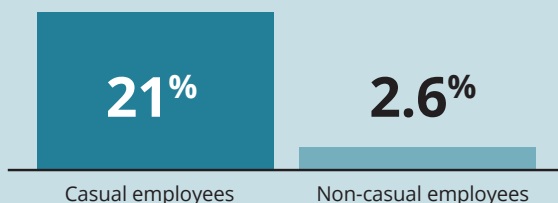
The shutdown of non-essential businesses and activities has a large impact on the Australian economy, with many suddenly finding themselves without a job.

Impact on employment

Between March and April 2020, the number of employed people aged 15 and over fell by 592,100. This was the largest monthly fall in employment since the current labour force series commenced in February 1978. By July 2021, the total number of employed people had recovered to above its March 2020 level, reaching its highest level on record.

The impact on employment was not evenly spread across the Australian population during 2020.

Between February and May 2020, casually employed workers accounted for 63% of job losses. Over this period, the number of employees declined by:



Young people (aged 15–24) had the largest drop in employment rates (the percentage of the population who are employed) but recovered by May 2021:



Capital cities had the largest fall in employment compared with other areas between March and May 2020.



Impact on income support payment receipt

There were 861,000 additional income support recipients between March and June 2020. Over this period, the number of recipients of:



unemployment
payments rose by 82%



student payments
rose by 32%



parenting payments
rose by 12%

In the 12 months to June 2021, the number of income support recipients continued to decline from 5.8 million to 5.4 million, reflecting the easing of restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. However, recipient numbers in June 2021 were still 7.4% higher than in March 2020, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic impacting on business in Australia.

JobSeeker Payment and Coronavirus Supplement

Two key economic support packages to support Australians affected by the COVID-19 related business restrictions included the introduction of the Coronavirus Supplement for working-age income support recipients and short-term policy changes to the JobSeeker Payment (such as waiving assets tests, waiting periods, and mutual obligation requirements).

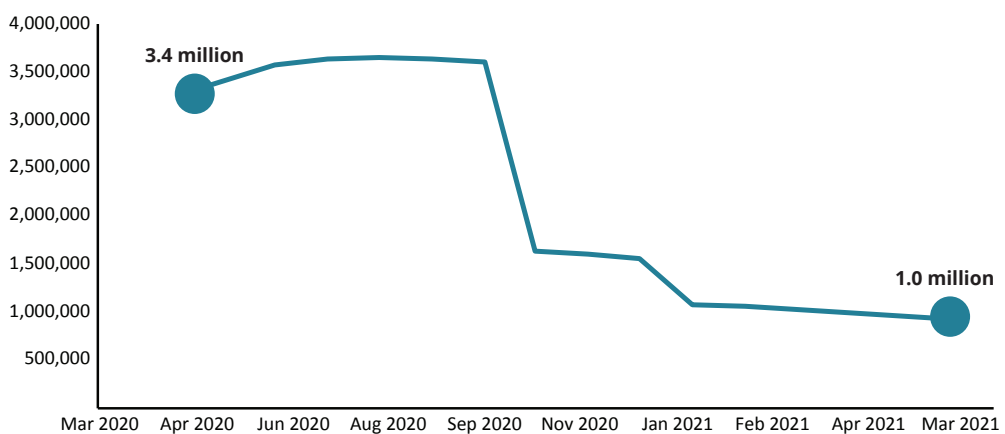
The number of recipients of unemployment payments (JobSeeker and Youth Allowance (other)) rose by 454,800 in April 2020 and by 289,900 in May 2020, reaching 1.6 million in May 2020, and by May 2021 was still 27% higher than in March 2020 (1.13 million compared with 891,300). In July 2021, there were 1.09 million recipients of unemployment payments.

JobKeeper Payment

The Australian Government introduced the JobKeeper Payment to support the economy during the COVID-19 pandemic by helping to keep businesses trading and people employed.

In April 2020, the first month of the JobKeeper Payment, around 3.4 million employees received the payment increasing to a peak of 3.7 million by July 2020, and then declining to 3.6 million by September 2020 and 1.0 million by March 2021 when the program ended.

Number of individuals receiving the JobKeeper (April to September 2020) and JobKeeper Extension (October 2020 to March 2021) Payment



Find out more: Chapter 4: The impacts of COVID-19 on employment and income support in Australia

Looking ahead



The precise course of the COVID-19 pandemic remains unknown. The vaccine rollout is underway and accelerating.

The full picture on how all of these factors have affected the wellbeing of Australians is important to continue to track, and will continue to emerge as more data become available.



3

Welfare in Australia - an overview

For information on the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, see *Chapter 2 How has COVID-19 impacted the welfare and wellbeing of Australians?*

How much do we spend on welfare?



More than \$195 billion spent on welfare

The Australian Government and state and territory governments spent an estimated \$195.7 billion on welfare related services and payments in 2019–20. Of this:



66% was for cash payments



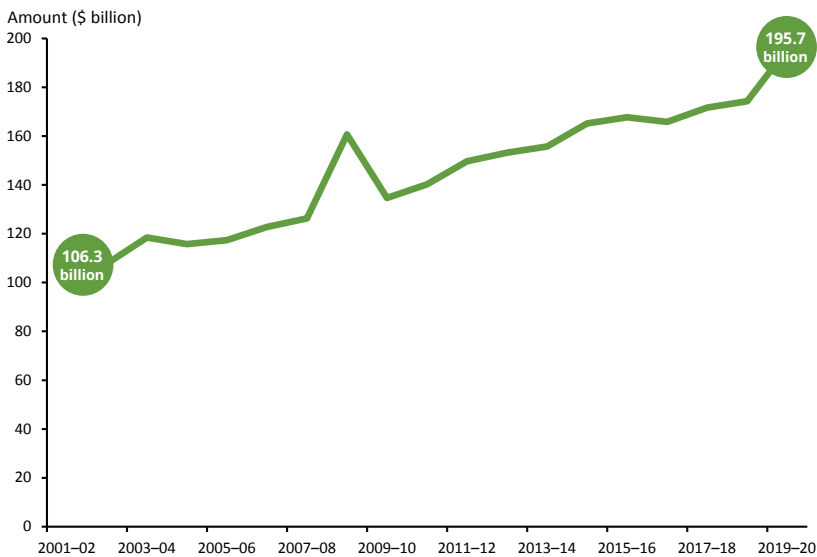
33% was for welfare services



1.5% was for departmental administration costs.

Welfare spending grew by 12% (\$21.5 billion) since 2018–19. The main driver of this high growth rate was the economic measures that the Australian Government implemented from March 2020 in response to COVID-19.

Total government welfare expenditure, constant prices, 2001–02 to 2019–20



Find out more: [Welfare expenditure](#)

What does the welfare workforce look like?



In 2020, over 588,000 people were employed in the welfare workforce, making up 4.6% of Australia's working population.



Since 2010, the welfare workforce has increased by 53%. Over the same period, the total Australian workforce grew by 15%.

Profile of welfare workers

(based on the latest available data)



85% female



2.3% Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people



Average age 41.8 years



50% work part time



Average weekly earnings of \$839

Find out more: [Welfare workforce](#)

Why do we give to charity?



The most common reason Australians say they gave to charity is because 'it's a good cause or charity'

In 2018–19, the total amount claimed by individual taxpayers on donations to charity was \$3.9 billion, a real increase of 1.1% from the previous year. The Giving Australia 2016 study reported the top 3 reasons why people gave as:



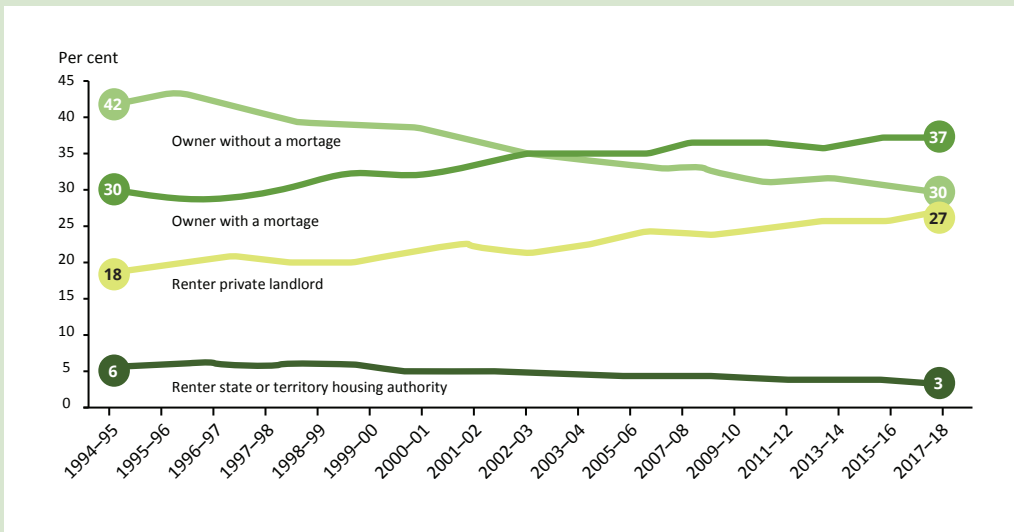
Find out more: [Philanthropy and charitable giving](#)

How many Australians are home owners?



Since the mid-1960s, home ownership rates have remained at around 67–70%

Survey of Income and Housing data shows that in the 20 years to 2017–18, the proportion of households owning their home without a mortgage has decreased and private rental agreements increased:



Home ownership rates have fallen most for younger people. The proportion renting from private landlords has increased among younger households (under 35 years) over recent years (54% in 2016 compared with 47% in 2006).

Find out more: [Home ownership and housing tenure](#)

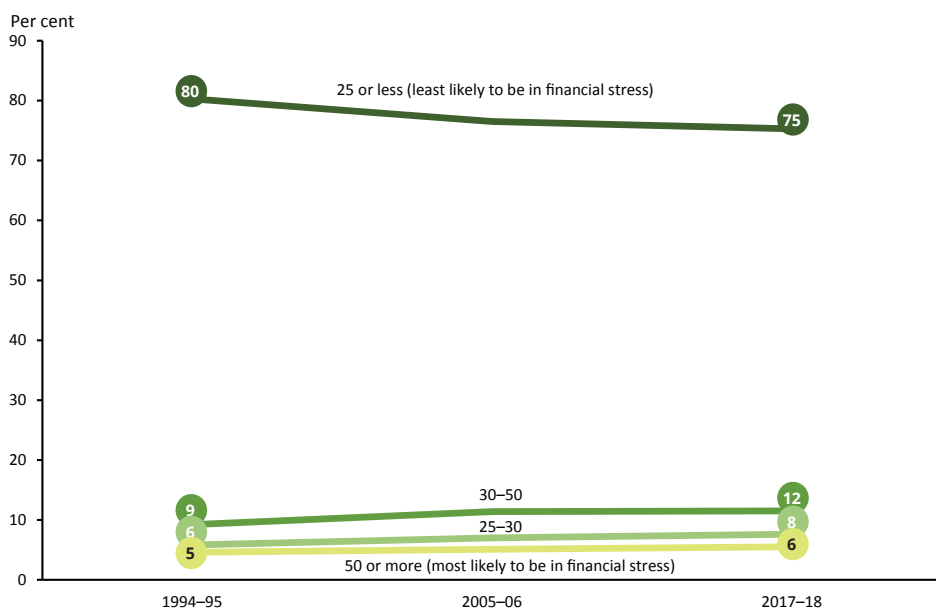
How much do Australians spend on housing?



Australians are spending more of their income on housing

Access to good quality, affordable housing is fundamental to wellbeing. In 2017–18, 5.5% of households spent at least 50% of their gross income on housing costs, an increase from 4.6% in 1994–95.

Housing costs as a proportion of household income, 1994–95, 2005–06 and 2017–18



How affordable is housing?



Affordability is important for Australians wanting to buy a home and for those renting

Low-income households (lowest 40% of household income distribution) are more likely to lack the resources to deal with financial impacts arising from critical life events and/or housing market factors, often leading them to need additional housing assistance. Low-income households that spend more than 30% of gross household income on housing costs are in financial housing stress. In 2017–18:

- more than 1 million low-income households were in housing stress
- households with low income in the private rental market spent a higher percentage of their income on housing costs (32%) than low-income households who owned their home with or without a mortgage (29% and 6.0%, respectively).

Who experiences homelessness?



116,000 people are estimated to be homeless

People experiencing homelessness, and those at risk of homelessness, are among Australia's most socially and economically disadvantaged. On Census night in 2016, more than 116,000 people were estimated to be homeless in Australia. Living in severely crowded housing is the most common type of homelessness.

Find out more: [Housing affordability](#) and [Homelessness and homelessness services](#)

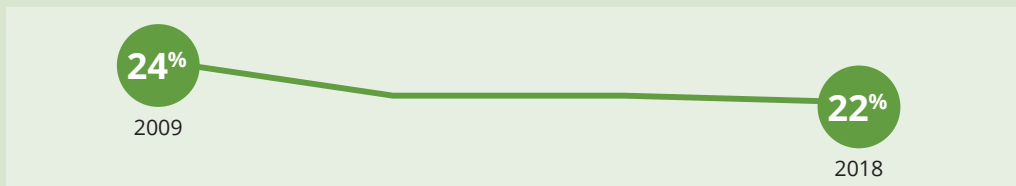


Are children ready for school?



1 in 5 children developmentally vulnerable in their initial year of formal schooling

The early childhood years are a time when children begin to learn to communicate and get along with others, as well as adapt their behaviour, emotions and attention. In 2018, 22% of children were classified as developmentally vulnerable on one or more of the 5 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) domain(s).



Find out more: [Transition to primary school](#)

How do students perform?



NAPLAN scores have generally improved across all domains, except writing

Higher levels of education are generally associated with increased likelihood of being employed, being in good health, and reporting life satisfaction. From 2008 to 2021, National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) mean scores have generally improved across all domains, except writing.

NAPLAN mean score, 2008 and 2021

Domain	Year 3	Year 5	Year 7	Year 9
Reading	↑	↑	↑	↓
Writing*	↑	↓	↓	↓
Spelling	↑	↑	↑	↑
Grammar and punctuation	↑	↑	↑	↑
Numeracy	↑	↑	↑	↑

- ↑ Statistically significant increase from base year.
- ↓ Statistically significant decrease from base year.
- ↑ Increase from base year (not statistically significant).
- ↓ Decrease from base year (not statistically significant).
- * Writing comparison is for 2011 and 2021

Find out more: [School student engagement and performance](#)

How many students are continuing education?

Participation in secondary school enables young people to develop their skills and knowledge, increasing their productivity and often leading to higher personal earnings and improved health and wellbeing outcomes.

In 2020:



89% of people aged 20–24 had attained Year 12 (or equivalent) or a non-school qualification of Certificate III or above, an increase from 83% in 2008



266,565 apprentices and trainees were training in Australia, down 3.9% from 2019



44% of students aged 15–64 were enrolled with a higher education institution



15% were enrolled with a TAFE institution

Find out more: [Apprenticeships and traineeships](#), [Higher education and vocational education](#) and [Secondary education: School retention and completion](#)

How many Australians are employed?

Employment underpins the economic output of a nation and enables people to support themselves, their families and their communities.

In July 2021, the seasonally adjusted:



employment rate
(per cent of the 15–64
population) was 75.7%



unemployment rate
(per cent of the labour
force) was 4.6%



underemployment rate
(per cent of labour force)
was 8.3%

In May 2021, those aged 15–24 had the:



lowest
employment
rate (62%)



highest
unemployment
rate (10.7%)



highest
underemployment
rate (15.8%)

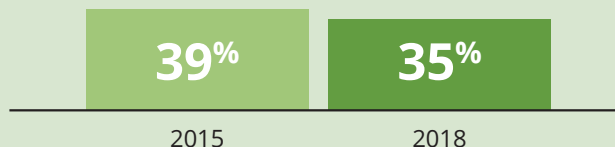
Find out more: [Employment and unemployment](#)

Gambling in Australia



Lotteries are the most common form of gambling in Australia

Gambling is a major public policy issue in Australia, affecting the health and wellbeing of individuals and families in a range of ways. The estimated proportion of Australian adults that gambled in a typical month decreased between 2015 and 2018:



Gambling on land-based products (for example, lotteries, pokies) reduced from May to July 2020 (during COVID-19 restrictions), while frequency and spending on racing and sports betting remained stable or increased, especially among young men.

Find out more: [Gambling](#)

How many young people are under youth justice supervision?



Fewer young people are in youth justice supervision

On an average day in 2019–20, 5,323 young people (aged 10 and over) were under youth justice supervision, a 4% decrease since 2015–16. Most (84%) young people under supervision were supervised in the community, and 16% were in detention.

Find out more: [Youth justice](#)

Who is in prison?



Almost three-quarters of prison entrants had been in prison before

Over the decade to 2020, Australia's prison population increased:



Find out more: [Adult prisoners](#)

How common is family, domestic and sexual violence?

1 in 6 women have experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or former partner since the age of 15

Family, domestic and sexual violence occurs across all socioeconomic, demographic and age groups, but predominantly affects women and children.



1 in 6 women
17% or 1.6 million

have experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or previous partner since the age of 15



1 in 16 men
6.1% or 548,000



1 in 4 women
23% or 2.2 million

have experienced emotional abuse by a current or previous partner since the age of 15



1 in 6 men
16% or 1.4 million



1 in 5 women
18% or 1.7 million

have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15



1 in 20 men
4.7% or 429,000

Since 2012, there has been an increase in the proportion of women who experienced sexual violence, from 1.2% in 2012 to 1.8% in 2016.

Find out more: [Family, domestic and sexual violence](#)



Indigenous Australians



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience disadvantage across almost all measures of health and welfare when compared with non-Indigenous Australians. However, in recent years, there has been progress across a range of areas.

Population profile

In 2016, there were an estimated 798,400 Indigenous Australians, representing 3.3% of the total Australian population.

In 2018–19, among Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over:



74% (357,400 people) recognised an area as a homeland/ traditional country



66% (314,200 people) identified with a tribal group, language, clan, mission or regional group



24% (130,500 people) lived on their homeland.

Find out more: [Profile of Indigenous Australians](#)

Housing

The rate of Indigenous Australian home owners (with or without a mortgage) has remained constant over recent years – 30% in 2012–13; 29% in 2014–15; and 31% in 2018–19.

In 2016, 79% of Indigenous Australians were living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing. In recent years, the proportion of Indigenous households living in overcrowded conditions fell:

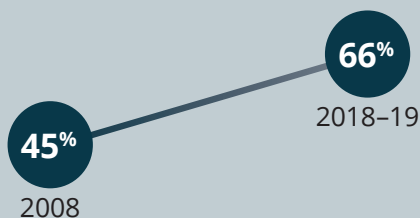


Find out more: [Indigenous housing](#)

Education and skills

In 2018, 35% of Indigenous children were assessed as developmentally on track on all 5 domains of the Australian Early Development Census.

Improvements have been made in educational attainment for Indigenous Australians in recent years. For example:



Year 12 or equivalent attainment for those aged 20–24 increased



Higher education course completions increased by 108% between 2010 and 2019.

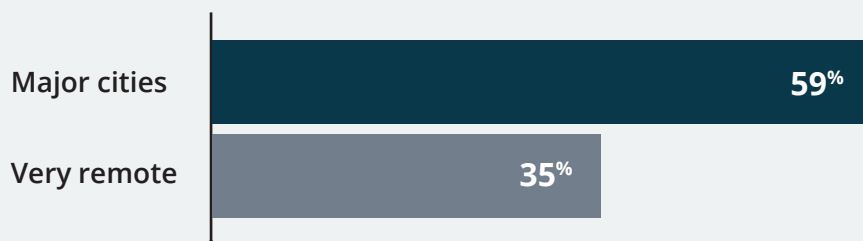
Find out more: [Indigenous education and skills](#)

Employment

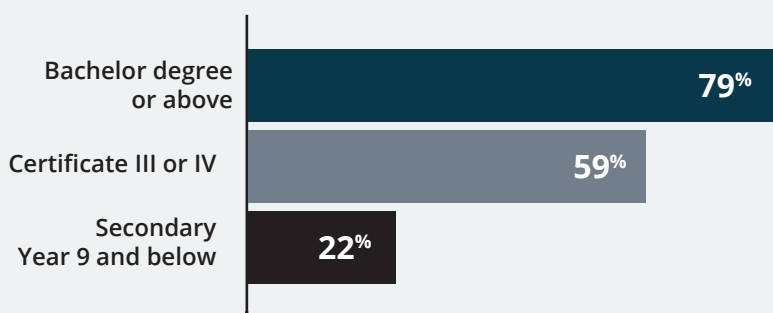
The adjusted employment rate for Indigenous Australians aged 15–64 has remained stable, at around 49% between 2008 and 2018–19 (adjusted for the effect of changes and closure of the Community Development Employment Projects scheme).

In 2018–19, the employment rate among Indigenous Australians of working age:

decreased with increasing remoteness



increased with higher levels of education



Find out more: [Indigenous employment](#)

Income and finance

The median equivalised household income for Indigenous Australians grew 29% between 2002 and 2018–19, twice the growth rate of non-Indigenous Australians (14%) over the same period after accounting for inflation.

Between 2014–15 and 2018–19, the proportion of working age Indigenous Australians relying on a government pension or allowance as their main income source fell:



Find out more: [Indigenous income and finance](#)

Community safety

- Between 30 June 2017 and 30 June 2020, there was an 11% increase in Indigenous Australian children in out-of-home care (from 51 per 1,000 to 56 per 1,000).
- Between 2010–11 and 2019–20, the rate of Indigenous Australian youth under justice supervision declined by 29%.
- Between 30 June 2006 and 30 June 2020, the age-standardised imprisonment rate of adult Indigenous Australians increased by 63%, from 1,333 to 2,081 per 100,000.

Find out more: [Indigenous community safety](#)

Disability support

At 31 March 2021, active Indigenous National Disability Insurance Scheme participants in:



Remote and very remote areas received the highest annualised average support amounts of \$109,000



the Northern Territory received the highest annualised average support amounts of \$159,000.

As at June 2021, 53,900 Indigenous Australians were receiving the Disability Support Pension, making up 7.2% of total recipients of this payment.

Find out more: [Disability support for Indigenous Australians](#)

Older Indigenous Australians

Between 30 June 2016 and 30 June 2020:



the rate of home care use for Indigenous Australians aged 50 and over increased from 16 to 23 per 1,000



the number of Indigenous Australians in residential aged care rose from 1,539 to 1,916.

Find out more: [Age care for Indigenous Australians](#)





4

Welfare services and support for Australians

People may access welfare services and support temporarily when circumstances and need arise (for instance, emergency temporary accommodation for bushfire affected communities), or long term (for instance, the Disability Support Pension). When an event triggers change in a person's life, it is often the point at which that person contacts government support services.

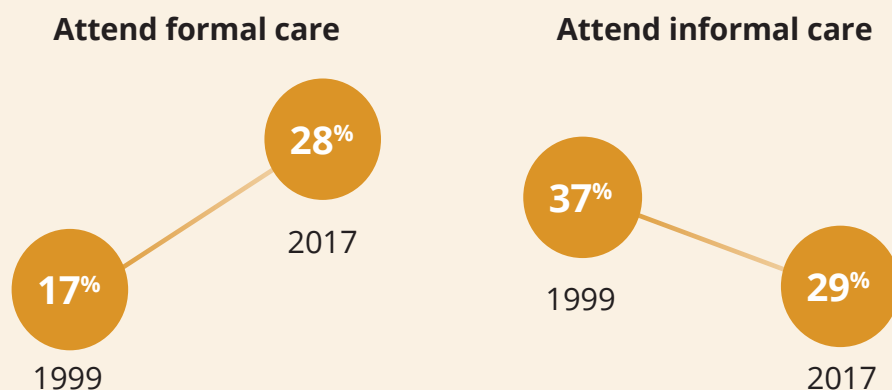
Children



More children receiving formal care

Early childhood education and care programs assist parents with their caring responsibilities. In 2017, 49% of children aged 0–12 attended formal care (for example, family day care) or informal care (for example, grandparents) as a usual form of care.

Between 1999 and 2017, the proportion of children aged 0–11 who attended formal or informal care shifted:



Most adoptions are by people the child already knows

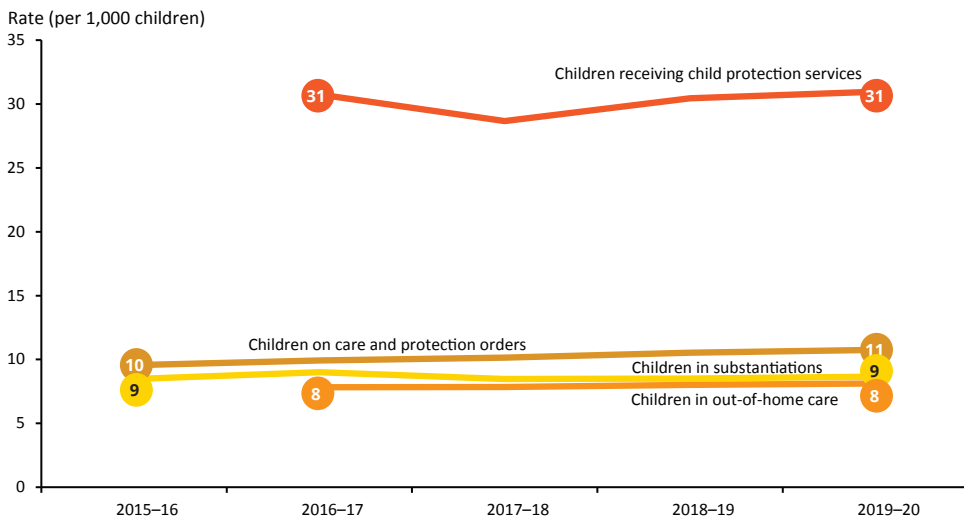
Adoption is one option used to provide permanent care for children not able to live with their families. There were 334 finalised adoptions in Australia in 2019–20, down from 514 adoptions in 2000–01. Known child adoptions, where the child and adoptive parents knew each other before adoption, made up 75% of all adoptions in 2019–20.



1 in 32 children receive child protection services

In 2019–20, 174,700 Australian children aged 0–17 received child protection services. These include investigations, care and protection orders and/or out-of-home care placements. This equates to a rate of 31 per 1,000 children.

Children in the child protection system, by service type, 2015–16 to 2019–20



Find out more: [Childcare and early childhood education](#), [Adoptions and Child protection](#)

Older people

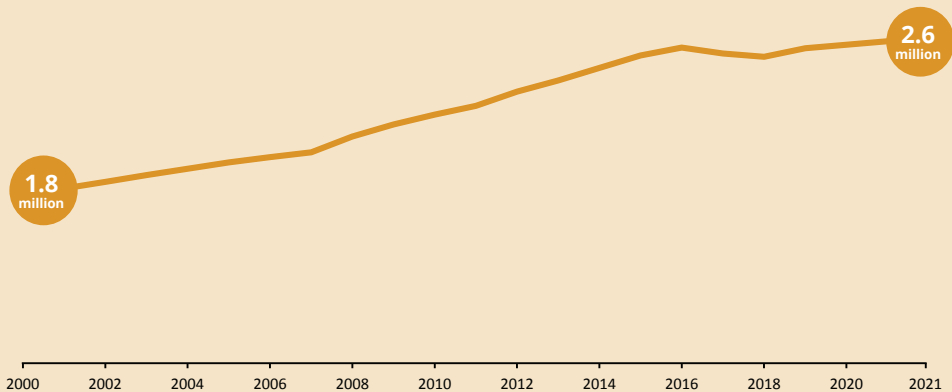


Over one million people use aged care services

Aged care services provide support to a large and growing number of older Australians. In 2019–20, over one million people received support from aged care services in Australia.

The most common income support payment for older Australians is Age Pension. As at 25 June 2021, 2.6 million people received Age Pension, equating to 62% of the population aged 65 and over.

Since 2001, the number of people receiving Age Pension has increased:



Find out more: [Aged care](#) and [Age pension](#)

People with disability

In 2018, approximately 4.4 million Australians or 18% of the population had some form of disability.

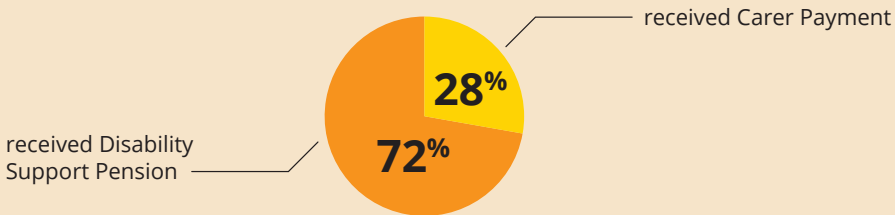


Around 467,000 people are active NDIS participants



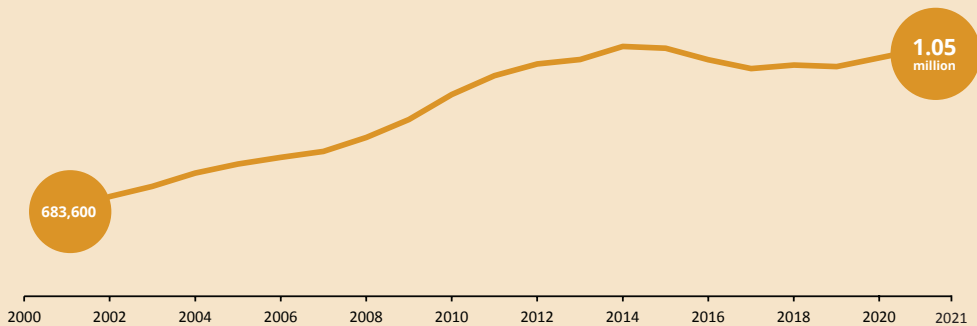
For those who need support, specialist services are available to assist participation in all aspects of everyday life. At 30 June 2021, around 467,000 people were active participants in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), and were in receipt of an individual support package.

As at 25 June 2021, 1.05 million people received the Disability Support Pension (DSP) or Carer Payment in Australia, equating to 5.1% of the population aged 16 and over. Of these:

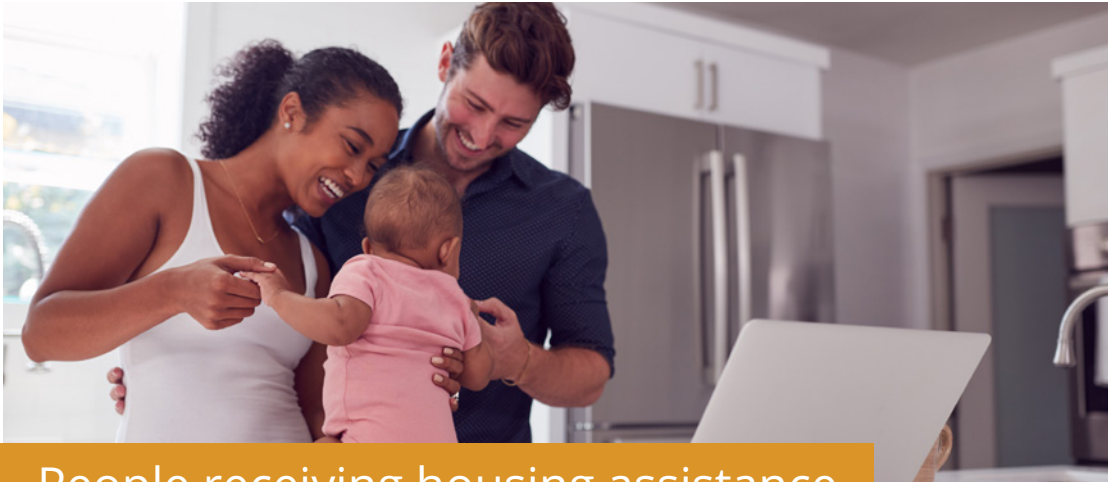


The number of DSP or Carer Payment recipients has increased by 54% over the last 2 decades, reflecting population growth as well as key policy changes over this period (including increases to the qualifying age for Age Pension and closure of various payments and allowances).

The proportion of the population aged 16 and over receiving the DSP or Carer Payment has remained relatively stable, around 5-6% over this period.



Find out more: [Specialised supports for people with disability and Disability Support and Pension Carer Payment](#)



People receiving housing assistance



There are 802,000 occupants in the 3 main social housing programs

Many people cannot afford to rent or buy a home, so government programs provide Australians with housing assistance. In 2019–20, around 802,000 occupants were in Australia’s 3 main social housing programs:

- 70% were in public housing
- 23% were in community housing
- 6% were in state owned and managed Indigenous housing.

Housing assistance targets specific vulnerable groups, such as people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. In 2019–20, 76% of newly allocated public housing dwellings were provided to households in greatest need; up from 74% in 2013–14.

Separate to social housing, Australians on low or moderate incomes renting through the private rental market may be able to receive government assistance with the cost of housing.

Just over 1.7 million income units (individuals or families) received Commonwealth Rent Assistance at the end of June 2020.

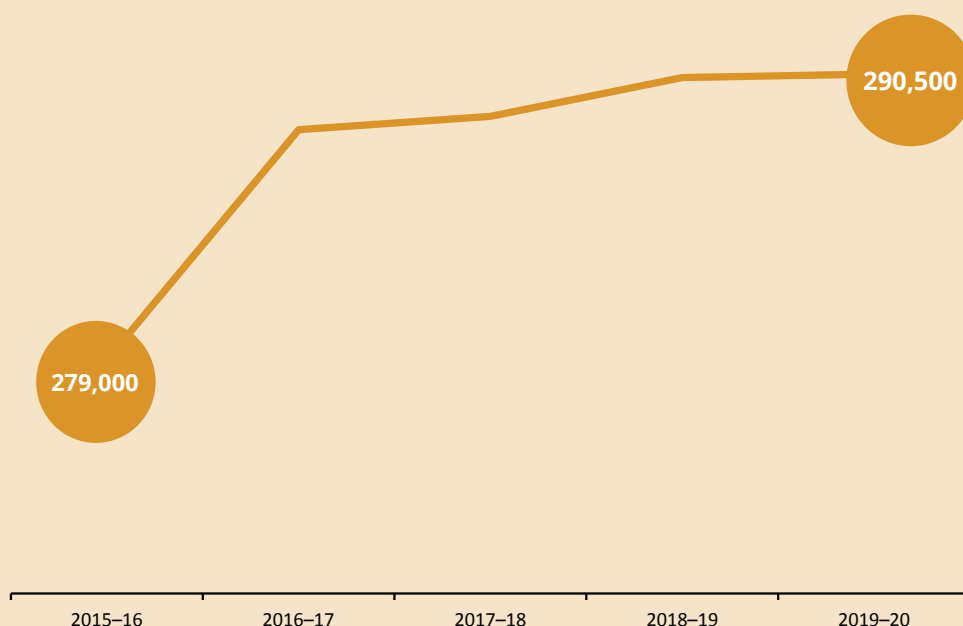
Find out more: [Housing assistance](#) and [Housing assistance in Australia](#)

People accessing homelessness services



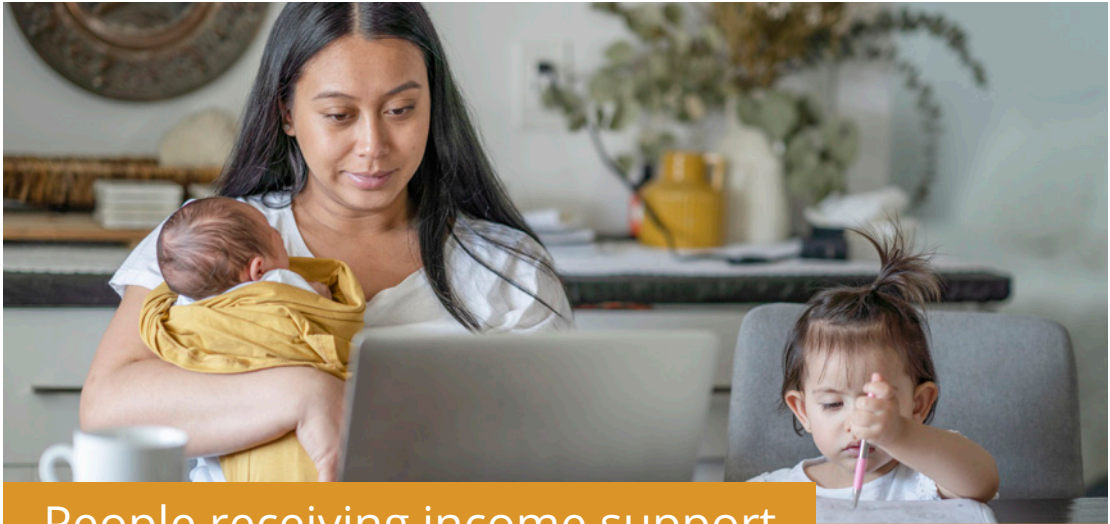
Number of people accessing specialist homelessness services increasing

Across Australia, Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) agencies provide services aimed at prevention and early intervention, crisis and post crisis assistance to support people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Between 2015–16 and 2019–20, the number of clients assisted by SHS agencies increased:



Responses to family, domestic and sexual violence are provided informally in the community and formally through welfare services. In 2019–20, SHS agencies assisted around 119,200 clients who had experienced domestic and family violence. Of these clients, most (90% of adult clients) were female.

Find out more: [Homelessness and homelessness services](#) and [Family, domestic and sexual violence](#)



People receiving income support



As at 25 June 2021, 5.4 million people received an income support payment

Australia's social security system aims to support people who cannot, or cannot fully, support themselves, by providing targeted payments and assistance. As at 25 June 2021, 5.4 million people (or 26% of the population aged 16 and over) received an income support payment. Of these:



48% (2.6 million people) received Age Pension



21% (1.1 million people) received unemployment payments

(JobSeeker or Youth Allowance (other))



20% (1.05 million people) received disability-related payments

(Disability Support Pension or Carer Payment)



6.0% (321,000 people) received parenting payments

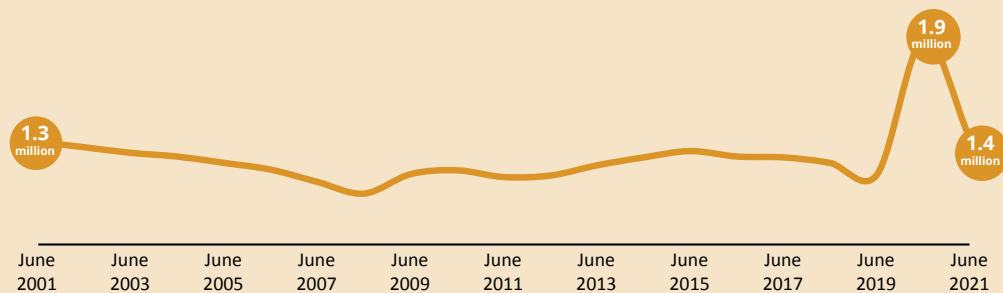


5.0% (270,100 people) received student payments



0.2% (8,500 people) received other payments

In June 2020, the number of unemployment or parenting payment recipients was at its highest level in 2 decades:



Find out more: [Income and income support and Unemployment and parenting income support payments payments](#)

People accessing employment services

The Australian Government funds employment services so those on income support who may not be serviced by the private sector have access to support that will help them find and keep a job. The number of participants registered with the main employment services programs were:



1.0 million for jobactive as at 30 June 2021



315,500 for the Disability Employment Services program as at 30 June 2021



79,000 for ParentsNext as at September 2020

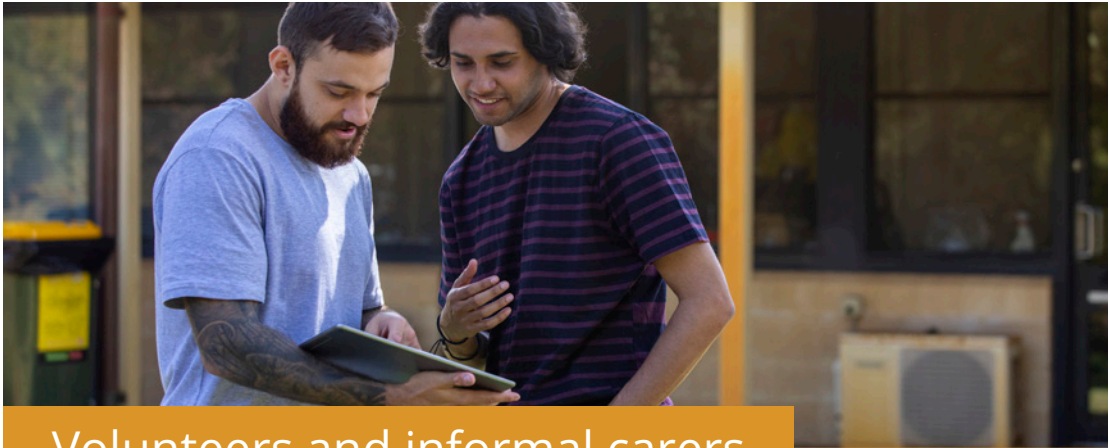


35,900 Transition to Work participants as at 31 July 2021



29,600 Community Development Program participants in March 2020.

Find out more: [JobKeeper and employment services](#)



Volunteers and informal carers

Volunteers substantially benefit their communities through providing important services to others.

The proportion of Australians volunteering declined since the onset of the pandemic:



In 2019, the most common types of organisations where people volunteered were:



Sports and recreation (39%)



Religious groups (23%)



Education and training (22%)



Welfare/health (12%).

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 2018, there were 2.65 million people who provided informal care in Australia.

Find out more: [Volunteers](#) and [Informal carers](#)



5

How do we compare internationally?

Comparing welfare and wellbeing data between Australia and the other member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) helps to inform policy, planning and decision-making.

Australia performs well against many measures of welfare and wellbeing, including life satisfaction, air quality and quality of support networks. However, there is also room for improvement. Australia doesn't rank highly on work-life balance and has a high rate of employees working very long hours.

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

○ Australia ● OECD countries



Find out more: [International comparisons of welfare data](#)



6

The importance of welfare data in Australia

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic transformed the way data are thought about and used internationally. From the start of the pandemic in Australia, data have been at the forefront of public discussion and understanding, and have been pivotal for decision makers. There has been a strong demand for timely data and this will have a long-lasting impact on the data system in Australia.



COVID-19 has impacted the data landscape in many ways. For example:

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare data: Since the onset of the pandemic, there was a strong concern that any economic downturn could have a considerable negative impact on the number of deaths by suicide.

Data on deaths by suicide normally have a reporting lag of 12–18 months – such a lag is not viable in a crisis. The AIHW began to compile data from existing suicide registers as part of its work on suicide and self-harm. These registers can provide data on the number of suspected suicides within days. This showed that, despite initial fears, COVID-19 has not, to date, been associated with a rise in suicide rates.

In addition, the AIHW has been compiling detailed data on the use of mental health services for use within government since April 2020.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data: From mid-March 2020, the ABS introduced a range of COVID-19 related products, including:



new releases on jobs and wages (weekly data published fortnightly)



preliminary monthly data on areas such as retail trade and overseas travel



new provisional mortality statistics.

The ABS also quickly developed 2 rapid-turnaround surveys – the Household Impacts of COVID-19 Survey and a survey of business conditions and sentiments – to assess the impacts of the pandemic on businesses, people and households.



Filling the gaps: Data linkage

High-quality and comprehensive data are critical to inform policy, the delivery of services and the evaluation of services. Data linkage (a process combining information from multiple databases, while preserving privacy) is increasingly being used to link across health and welfare data sets. Examples include the:



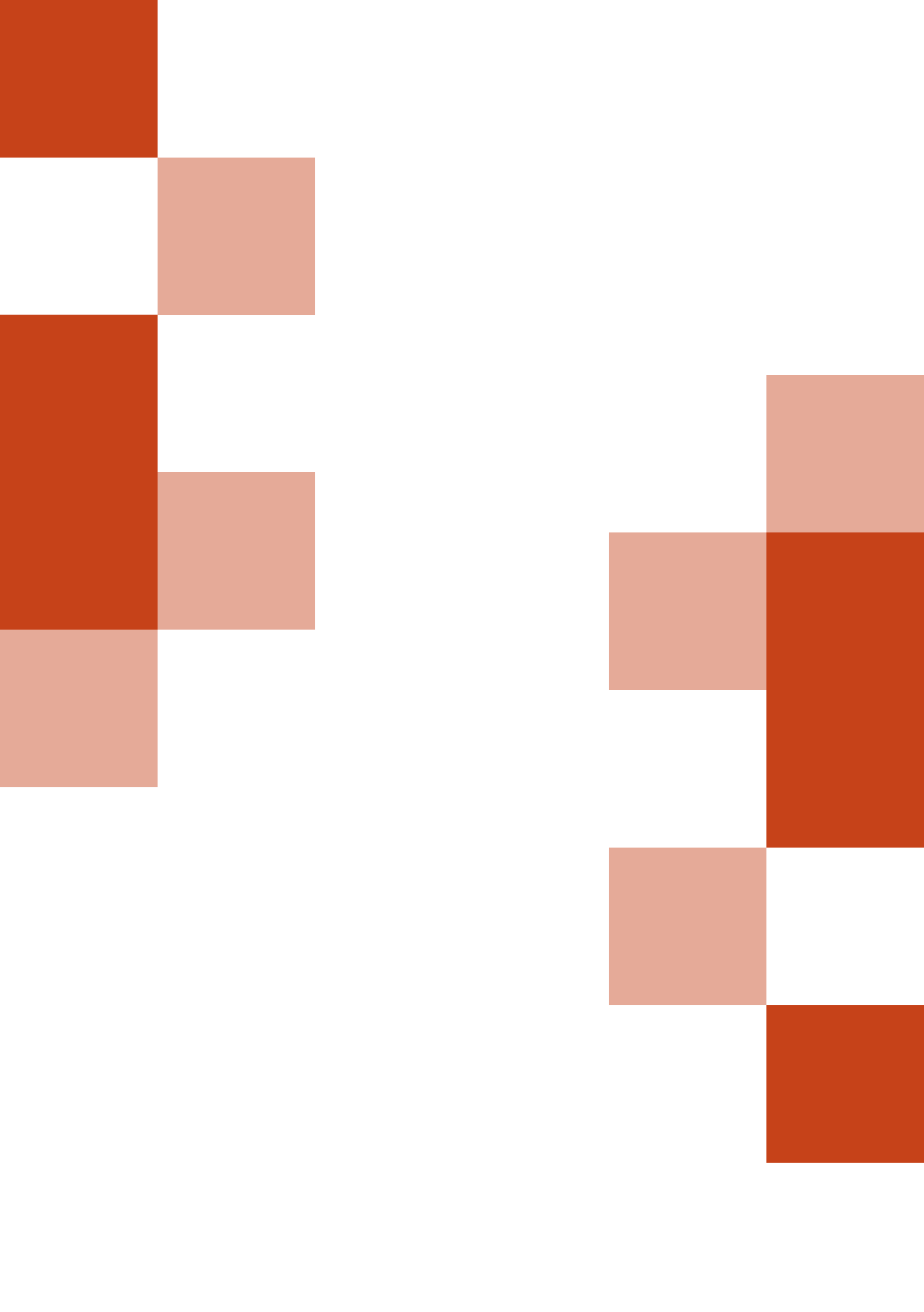
ABS' Multi-Agency Data
Integration Project



National Integrated Health
Services Information
Analysis Asset

The AIHW is working to expand the availability of longitudinal data by the linkage of cross-sectional data from individuals that occur in different data sets and over time.

Find out more: [Chapter 1: The importance of welfare data, Australian Bureau of Statistics](#)



Australia's welfare 2021: in brief tells the story of welfare in Australia with key findings on housing, education and skills, income and employment, social support, justice and safety, and Indigenous Australians.

Australia's welfare 2021 is the 15th biennial welfare report of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. This edition continues the new format and expanded product suite:

- *Australia's welfare 2021: data insights*
- *Australia's welfare snapshots*
- *Australia's welfare 2021: in brief*
- *Australia's welfare indicators*



Stronger evidence,
better decisions,
improved health and welfare