

6 Data quality and future of the collection

The CSDA MDS collections are now providing national data on services funded under the CSDA, and are seen as a useful, sometimes primary, source of data in individual jurisdictions. The data are also being recognised as useful source information by service providers and others interested in national data.

The CSDA MDS collections have benefited greatly from the preceding development and testing. The ability to continue to improve will be enhanced by ongoing quality input from the disability field.

6.1 Response rates and data quality

The national rate for return of Service Forms was 97%, which was higher than the 1995 and 1996 rates of 93% and 96% respectively (Table 6.1). Victorian and Northern Territory response rates, in particular, improved since 1995.

Gaps in both the 1995 and 1996 collections, due to absence of data from one or more jurisdictions, have made national comparisons between years impossible. The 1997 collection, as the first truly national CSDA MDS collection, represents an important achievement for future national analysis of trends over time.

Table 6.1: Response rates for Service Forms, Commonwealth, States and Territories, 1995–97

	NSW	Vic.	Qld	WA	SA	Tas.	ACT	NT	Cwlth	Total
	Percentage									
1995	94	80	96	n.a.	94	88	99	67	99	93
1996	97	95	97	99	94	88	n.a.	94	94	96
1997	97	96	100	100	99	90	90	90	100	97

Notes

1. Figures are the percentage of services surveyed by each data source.
2. The response rate for Victoria in 1995 is an estimate only, due to incomplete regional records.
3. Data for CSDA services funded by Western Australia were not supplied in 1995.
4. Data for CSDA services funded by the Australian Capital Territory were not collected in 1996.
5. Data for CSDA services funded by the Commonwealth were not collected in 1996, except for those in the NIMS collection which relate to open employment services.

The notable change from the 1996 collection to this 1997 collection has been the ability to compare data from Western Australia, that is collected over a full-year period, with data from other jurisdictions. This was made possible by the use of an additional data item asking whether recipients received an active service on the selected 'snapshot' day, and has been successfully integrated. Some differences between the 1996 and 1997 collections appear to have been due to the previous difficulties in comparability between data from Western Australia and data from other jurisdictions. Hence the national picture is now more accurate in this respect.

Issues emerging from the 1997 collection are:

- The increasing use of brokerage services and individual funding packages within some jurisdictions may mean that some service recipients are not being included in the snapshot collection if the service to which they have been brokered, or which they have purchased, is not itself within the existing coverage of the collection.
- The desire to provide individually tailored services may necessitate a change in service classification.
- In the 1997 and earlier collections it is not possible to identify where individuals are recorded in more than one service type on the snapshot day, and an unknown level of double counting exists across service types. This issue is being partially addressed by the pilot testing of a linkage key within some jurisdictions for the 1998 collection.
- In other than Western Australia, the consumer data have not to date been collected in the same financial year as the service funding data (August consumer data in most jurisdictions, and end financial year service funding data). A decision has been made to bring the 1998 collection forward to a date yet to be decided, in May 1999.
- No reliable data are available from non-government organisations on the amount of their own funds spent on service provision.
- The work currently underway internationally on the revision of the WHO International Classification of Impairments Disabilities and Handicaps (ICIDH) may impact on both the disability group and frequency of support data items.
- Compatibility of CSDA MDS data items with the National Community Services Data Dictionary is being reviewed, including the Indigenous origin data item.

'Not stated' (missing data) and 'not known' ('not known' as a valid response option to some data items) responses are described in Tables 6.2 and 6.3, as a proportion of total responses for each data item. The proportion of these responses was quite low for most data items across most jurisdictions.

Key areas of concern with these response rates for the 1997 data collections, were as follows:

- Direct government-provided services in Queensland were unable to provide some data items—this has been largely corrected for the 1998 collection.
- Indigenous origin—an important indicator for national planning purposes, had 'not known' responses varying from zero to 31.3% across States and Territories (Table 6.3). A number of jurisdictions have plans underway to reduce these levels for the 1998 and 1999 collections.
- Other significant disability types—the question about the presence of other disability types—produced a high level of 'not known' responses, varying from zero to 26.7% across States and Territories.
- Country of birth—another important indicator for national planning purposes—had a high level of 'not known' responses, varying from 1.8% to 32.2% across States and Territories.
- Frequency of support or assistance needed data for the 'other day activity', 'home living', 'working' and 'managing emotion' support areas produced a high level of 'not stated' and 'not known' responses (when combined). Data for the last-mentioned support area were not collected in Western Australia.

Table 6.2: 'Not stated' response rates for Service and Consumer Form data items, Commonwealth, States and Territories, 1997

Data item	NSW	Vic.	Qld	WA	SA	Tas.	ACT	NT	Cwlth
Percentage									
Service items									
Staff hours	0.8	1.1	30.5	0.7	3.2	0	1.9	0	0.2
Income sources	0	0.4	42.4	31.5	2.9	0	0	0	0
Operating hours per day	0	1.3	0.3	16.4	2.3	0	0	0	0
Operating days per week	0	1.1	0.3	16.2	1.4	0	0	0	0
Operating weeks per year	0	1.1	0.3	16.0	1.7	0	0	0	0
Typical 1996–97 daily consumer numbers	0.1	3.7	8.0	37.3	3.2	0.8	0	0	0.1
Total 1996–97 consumer numbers	0	3.3	0.6	1.3	3.5	0.8	0	0	2.8
Consumer items									
Age	0.3	1.3	0.6	0.5	0.8	1.6	0.2	0	0
Sex	0.1	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.1	0.2	0	0
Country of birth	0.1	0.5	0.1	0	0.2	0	0.2	0	0
Indigenous origin	0.1	2.7	0.2	0	0.1	0	0.4	0	0
Method of communication	0.2	1.1	0.2	0	0	0	0.2	0	0
Main language spoken at home	<0.1	0.9	0.1	0	0	0.1	0.2	0	0
Primary disability type	0.1	1.5	<0.1	0.5	0.2	0	0.4	0	0.1
Other significant disability types	<0.1	3.9	0.3	0	<0.1	0	0.4	0	0
Frequency of support or assistance needed:									
Self-care	<0.1	0.6	0.1	0	0	2.3	0.2	0.3	0
Mobility	<0.1	0.6	0.1	0	0	0	0.2	0	0
Communication	<0.1	0.6	0.1	0	<0.1	0	0.2	0	0
Social skills	0.1	0.5	<0.1	0	0	0	0.2	0	0
Managing emotions	0.1	0.6	0.1	n.a.	0	0	0.2	0	0
Learning	<0.1	0.6	0.1	0	<0.1	0	0.2	0	0
Working	0.1	1.1	0.1	0	0	0.1	0.2	0	<0.1
Home living	0.1	0.6	0	0	<0.1	0	0.2	0	0
Self-direction	<0.1	0.5	0	0	<0.1	0	0.2	0	0
Other day activity	<0.1	0.7	<0.1	0	0	0	0.2	0	0
Main income source	<0.1	2.6	0.2	0.1	0.1	0	0.2	0	0
Living arrangement/accommodation type	<0.1	1.2	0.1	0	0	0	0.2	0	<0.1

Notes

1. Figures are the percentage of total data item responses for each data source.
2. Data on service income source and some service recipient data items were not collected for CSDA directly provided 'Intellectual Disability Service' services funded by Queensland.
3. Data on managing emotions for recipients of CSDA services funded by Western Australia were not collected.

There has been a significant improvement in the proportion of 'not known' responses in the data from Western Australia since 1996. In 1996, there were much higher levels of 'not known' responses for Western Australia in many data items, reflecting the lack of snapshot day data, such that care needed to be taken with comparisons to other jurisdictions. The use of annual client data also skewed the data for those service types with a higher turnover of clients within the year, as compared to data from other jurisdictions for the snapshot day. For 1997, these problems have been greatly lessened, with the ability to largely identify those people receiving a service on the nominated snapshot day.

Table 6.3: 'Not known' response rates for Consumer Form data items, Commonwealth, States and Territories, 1997

Data item	NSW	Vic.	Qld	WA	SA	Tas.	ACT	NT	Cwith
	Percentage								
Country of birth	1.8	2.3	32.1	5.5	2.3	3.3	6.5	1.8	3.5
Indigenous origin	2.0	1.8	31.3	5.2	3.3	19.1	6.1	0.9	8.9
Method of communication	0.8	0.4	20.6	6.5	2.7	0.3	1.0	0.6	0.2
Main language spoken at home	1.9	1.3	31.8	7.9	2.1	0.7	5.7	6.7	2.0
Other significant disability types	3.0	3.3	21.7	26.7	5.2	7.9	5.7	3.7	0
Frequency of support or assistance needed:									
Self-care	1.3	1.5	1.7	8.0	2.0	1.9	4.7	0.9	2.3
Mobility	0.7	0.7	9.5	7.1	2.0	0	1.2	0.6	2.2
Communication	0.6	0.7	3.9	6.9	1.5	0	0.8	0.3	1.7
Social skills	1.4	2.5	2.0	8.7	3.2	0.7	6.1	2.1	3.9
Managing emotions	2.5	3.4	6.0	n.a.	5.4	2.4	8.0	1.5	3.6
Learning	1.8	3.0	22.2	10.6	4.6	2.4	5.1	2.4	2.7
Working	4.3	6.6	20.5	11.1	6.4	11.0	5.3	11.0	2.2
Home living	2.6	3.6	2.1	10.9	3.0	4.4	2.0	1.2	15.7
Self-direction	1.4	2.6	21.5	9.0	3.0	1.0	3.7	0.9	2.5
Other day activity	2.2	2.7	2.2	18.0	4.1	3.4	3.5	5.2	18.7
CDA income source: child under 16 yrs	3.4	2.0	4.4	9.9	2.1	1.3	6.5	0.3	0
Main income source: person 16 yrs or more	2.1	2.3	24.9	5.9	5.3	5.8	5.7	2.7	3.1
Living arrangement/accommodation type	0.7	0.5	0.5	3.5	2.1	0.5	4.5	1.5	1.4

Notes

1. Figures are the percentage of total data item responses for each data source.
2. Data on some service recipient data items were not collected for CSDA directly provided 'Intellectual Disability Service' services funded by Queensland.
3. Data on managing emotions for recipients of CSDA services funded by Western Australia were not collected.

6.2 Ongoing data development

This 1997 collection forms part of an ongoing data development and collection process. After each annual collection, changes are implemented for the following collection. The process for change involves both the MDS Network and the Disability Services Subcommittee. Key changes from the 1996 collection to the 1997 collection are given in Appendix 2. The collection in 1998 will be very similar to that for 1997, but will include a range of refinements and clarifications, also detailed in Appendix 2.

In February 1998, the MDS Network discussed many development issues. Subsequently the DSSC accepted some recommendations including:

- dropping the service income question from the Service Form for 1998;
- trialing a linkage key in selected jurisdictions;
- collecting an estimate of consumer numbers over the week before snapshot day, to relate to the staff hours data item already collected; and
- bringing the snapshot day forward to a date in May for the 1999 collection.

6.3 Data quality and future collections

There are a number of issues, in addition to those described previously, which have the potential to impact on the CSDA MDS collection in the near future:

- ways of reducing respondent burden and more effectively integrating the CSDA MDS collection with other data requirements of jurisdictions;
- a possible variation of the 'snapshot' day style of collection, particularly for respite and recreation services, many of which do not operate on any one selected day (or even within the week prior to the day);
- the use of service type to describe supply of services and 'vertical' service categories are inadequate in light of the need to deliver flexible services designed around people's individual needs and circumstances;
- new funding formulae and new performance indicators have been developed, and new forms of accountability of funded agencies and funding departments have significant implications for data collection;
- the recognised need for the disability field to coordinate developments on a national indicator of 'support needs' in relation to the ability to deliver flexible services designed around people's individual needs and circumstances;
- technical capabilities have changed significantly in the computing field and the disability service field;
- interactions with those responsible for developing minimum data sets for Home and Community Care services and mental health services;
- alignment of the CSDA MDS and other related collections within national information modelling and planning, in particular with the National Community Services Data Dictionary (NCSDD); and
- quantity and quality of services received by individuals (quantity may be partly addressed by the linkage key pilot test, if successful).

There are thus a range of issues which suggest that it may be time for a more holistic overhaul of the CSDA MDS collection.