

# Child abuse and neglect in Australia – Indigenous children

Indigenous children continue to be over-represented among children receiving child protection services, including substantiated child abuse and neglect, children on care and protection orders and children in out-of-home care.

In 2019-20:



**55,300**

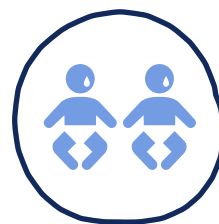
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children received child protection services, a rate of 166 per 1,000 Indigenous children. This was almost

**8 times**

the rate for non-Indigenous children (21 per 1,000).



The number of Indigenous children receiving child protection services rose between 2016-17 and 2019-20, from 49,200 to 55,300.



The rate of Indigenous children on care and protection orders was 70 per 1,000 Indigenous children,

**10 times**

the rate for non-Indigenous children (7 per 1,000).

## Geographic location

Of the children who were the subject of a substantiation from remote and very remote areas,

**88%**

were Indigenous.

In major cities

**20%**

of children subject to substantiations were Indigenous.

Children from geographically remote areas had the highest rates of substantiations, with children from very remote areas (24 per 1,000 children) more than **3 times** as likely as those from major cities (7 per 1,000).

Source – Australian Institute of Health and Welfare: Child Protection in Australia 2019-20

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## Indigenous children in out-of-home care

At 30 June 2020, about 18,900 Indigenous children were in out-of-home care—a rate of 56 per 1,000 Indigenous children, which was **11 times** the rate for non-Indigenous children.

Almost two-thirds (63%) of Indigenous children in out-of-home care were living with relatives, kin or other Indigenous caregivers. (Refer to The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle for more information).

**84%** of Indigenous children who had been in out-of-home care for 2 or more years were on long-term guardianship orders.

**The reasons for the over-representation of Indigenous children in child protection substantiations are complex. Underlying causes include:**

- the legacy of past policies of forced removal
- intergenerational effects of previous separations from family and culture
- a higher likelihood of living in the lowest socioeconomic areas
- perceptions arising from cultural differences in child-rearing practices

**Indigenous children are also over-represented in other areas related to child safety including:**

- hospital admissions for injuries and assault
- experiences of homelessness
- involvement in the youth justice system

## Types of abuse

Emotional abuse was the most common type of substantiated abuse for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children.

Indigenous children had a higher percentage of substantiations for neglect (32%) than non-Indigenous children (18%), and a lower percentage of substantiations for emotional and sexual abuse.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle outlines a preference for Indigenous children to be placed with other Indigenous people when they are placed outside their family.

The Principle has the following order of preference for the placement of Indigenous children:

- with the child's extended family and kinship networks
- within the child's Indigenous community
- with other Indigenous people

The purpose of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle is to ensure Indigenous children remain connected to their family, community, culture, and Country. Core elements include prevention, partnership, placement, participation, and connection.

Barnardos Australia complies with the The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle as we believe in keeping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children connected to family, community and Country.

Source – Australian Institute of Health and Welfare: Child Protection in Australia 2019-20

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