

Child abuse and neglect in Australia

Unfortunately, more than 45,000 children in Australia are unable to live safely at home with their birth families. They may be at risk of abuse, neglect, or their parents may not be able to care for them properly for a variety of reasons such as poverty, violence, homelessness, or mental illness.

Barnardos provides a range of wraparound support services to birth families so that their children can safely stay at home or be restored to their care. Subject to investigations of abuse or neglect, some families may receive protection orders for the children, and if the courts rule a child cannot safely return home, we provide permanent foster care and open adoption.

Each year, around

3%

of all children aged 0-17 are assisted by Australia's child protection systems.



In 2019-20 there were:

174,700

children (1 in 32) received child protection services (investigation, care and protection order and/or were in out-of-home care).

486,280

notifications of child abuse or neglect = 1,300 reports each day.

67%

of children (117,700) receiving services were repeat clients.

The number of children receiving child protection services

increased 4%

over 4 years from 168,300 children in 2016-17 to 174,700 children in 2019-20.

Between 2015-16 and 2019-20, numbers rose by:

- 37% for notifications of abuse
- 11% for investigations into abuse
- 15% for substantiations of abuse

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

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Of the 6,700 children exiting to a permanency outcome,

35

were adopted through Barnardos (22% of the national total).



Children in out-of-home care

46,000 children were in out-of-home care at 30 June 2020—a rate of 8 per 1,000 children:

- 54% were in relative/kinship care
- 37% were in foster care
- 1% were in other types of home-based care

The number of children in out-of-home care increased by **7%** between 30 June 2017 and 30 June 2020 (from 43,100 to 46,000). Of these:

- 30,600 children (or 28%) had been in out-of-home care for 2 or more years.
- 39% had been in OOHC for 5 or more years.

Of the **30,600** children who had been in out-of-home care for 2 or more years at 30 June 2020, 25,200 (approximately 82%) were on long-term guardianship orders.

Of the **6,700** children exiting to a permanency outcome during 2019-20:

- 5,300 were reunified with family
- 1,200 were placed in a third-party parental care arrangement
- 162 were adopted (less than 1% of children in out-of-home care)

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



Children experiencing abuse

Children aged under 1 were most likely (16 per 1,000 children) to experience abuse.

Children from the lowest socio-economic areas (35% or 10,900) were more likely to experience abuse compared to those from the highest socio-economic areas (6% or 1,900).

A higher proportion of girls (13%) were subject to sexual abuse than boys (6%).

Boys had slightly higher percentages of substantiations for neglect and physical abuse.



Types of abuse experienced by children

Emotional abuse (54%)

including **witnessing violence** between intimate partners and adults, was the most common type of abuse followed by:

- neglect (22%)
- physical abuse (14%)
- sexual abuse (9%)

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