



Commissioner for Children and Young People  
Western Australia



# Profile of Children and Young People in WA 2025



## **Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people**

The Commissioner for Children and Young People proudly acknowledges and pays respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters across Western Australia and acknowledges the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation upon whose lands the Commissioner's office is located. She recognises the continuing connection to culture, lands, skies and waters, families and communities for all Aboriginal peoples.

The Commissioner and her team also pay their respects to all Elders, past and present and commit to supporting the social, cultural and physical wellbeing of the youth of today, who will be Elders of tomorrow. They recognise the knowledge, insights and capabilities of Aboriginal people, and pay respect to Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing.

### **A note about language**

Prior to colonisation Aboriginal people primarily communicated through oral use of language, were well versed in multiple languages to converse with surrounding groups for different contexts and responsibilities dependant on where you were located. Seasonal movement was quite common for hunting, gathering and other related responsibilities and language was often expressed through various forms of art, dance, songs and storytelling. The written form of language arose from the interpretation of Aboriginal words that were captured by historical documentation and non-Aboriginal linguists who relied on western interpretation of sounds. This then created various forms of spelling of Aboriginal words which can differ and are often accepted and recognised. For example, Noongar, Nyungar, Noongah.

For the purposes of this report, the term 'Aboriginal' encompasses Western Australia's diverse language groups and also recognises Torres Strait Islanders who live in Western Australia. The use of the term 'Aboriginal' in this way is not intended to imply equivalence between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, though similarities do exist.

---

# Profile of Children and Young People in WA 2025

## Acknowledgement

Special thanks are given to Perry Pokki, who undertook an internship through the McCusker Centre for Citizenship, for their contributions and assistance in preparing this publication.

## Sources

All sources have been referenced throughout.  
Data is current as of 20 January 2025.

## Suggested citation

Commissioner for Children and Young People WA 2025,  
'Profile of Children and Young People in WA – 2025',  
Commissioner for Children and Young People WA, Perth.

## Alternative formats

On request, large print or alternative formats can be obtained from:

Commissioner for Children and Young People  
Level 1, Albert Facey House, 469 Wellington St, Perth WA 6000

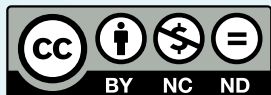
Telephone: (08) 6213 2297

Freecall: 1800 072 444

Email: [info@ccyp.wa.gov.au](mailto:info@ccyp.wa.gov.au)

Web: [ccyp.wa.gov.au](http://ccyp.wa.gov.au)

ISSN: 2652-4694



March 2025

# Contents

## The profile ..... 3

Comment on LGBTIQ+ Children and Young People ..... 4

Western Australia's children and young people ..... 6

## Population ..... 8

Births ..... 9

Geographical distribution ..... 11

Aboriginal children and young people ..... 13

Cultural background ..... 15

Disability ..... 16

Family composition ..... 17

## Childcare and education ..... 18

Childcare ..... 18

Education ..... 21

## Vulnerability ..... 26

Child poverty ..... 26

Housing and homelessness ..... 29

Developmental vulnerability ..... 31

Children and young people in child protection system ..... 35

Children and young people in the youth justice system ..... 37

# The profile



**As the Commissioner for Children and Young People, I have a statutory responsibility to monitor the wellbeing of all children and young people living in Western Australia (WA) and to advocate on their behalf.**

The Profile publication, produced annually, provides a demographic snapshot of children and young people (aged 0 to 17 years) in WA. It highlights those experiencing vulnerability and hardship, including those within the juvenile justice system, out-of-home care, with disabilities, or living in poverty.

Since our 2023 Profile, the population of those aged 0–17 has increased by 19,000.

It is concerning to see that school suspensions and exclusions continue to rise as do the number of students being homeschooled. We also continue to see challenges for children and young people in housing with more than 2,000 children and young people who are homeless and more than 12,000 awaiting housing with their families.

Whilst the Australian Early Development Census shows WA has better results than many jurisdictions, Aboriginal children and young people continue to be developmentally at risk in much higher proportions than non-Aboriginal children and young people.

Additionally, insights gathered through my Speaking Out Survey offer a deeper understanding of the health and wellbeing of young people across the state. To learn more, please visit our website: [Commissioner for Children and Young People WA](#). The next Speaking Out Survey will be undertaken this year, please refer to my website for the most up-to-date information.

While this year's report continues to reflect on the ongoing challenges, it is concerning to see minimal progress, if any, in improving outcomes for our most vulnerable children and young people. This is particularly worrying when considering the lack of sufficient support for LGBTIQ+ children and young people, a group whose vulnerability remains under-researched and inadequately addressed by current services. The data highlights a significant gap in support structures, and it is clear that more targeted action is urgently needed.

I urge both government and service providers to rethink and strengthen their approaches in order to achieve meaningful change and better outcomes for all children and young people, especially those in vulnerable situations.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jacqueline McGowan-Jones". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Jacqueline McGowan-Jones**

Commissioner for Children and Young People Western Australia



## Comment on LGBTIQ+ Children and Young People

All children have the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and mental needs, and the right to an education. We all have a responsibility to work together to deliver these rights.

LGBTIQ+ children and young people report that they experience more barriers to getting their basic needs in housing, health, education, safety and connection to community. Rainbow Realities, one of the only comprehensive compilations of data on LGBTIQ+ individuals in Australia, reported 23.6 (1,501) per cent of LGBTIQ+ youth, aged 14–25,<sup>1</sup> experienced at least one form of homelessness in their lives, with 11.5 per cent experiencing homelessness in the past 12 months.<sup>2</sup> Sixty per cent (2,516) felt unsafe or uncomfortable in secondary school due to their sexuality or gender in the past 12 months, with this number growing marginally for trans and nonbinary individuals.<sup>3</sup>

Despite evidence that LGBTIQ+ children and young people are experiencing significant challenges, they are largely invisible in government administrative data and national data sets because systematic collection of demographic data is rarely inclusive of diverse sex, sexuality and gender. Without further research specifically exploring these groups, we cannot understand their experiences, and without that understanding, we are unable to provide effective support.

LGBTIQ+ youth are more likely to struggle with mental health and substance abuse when compared to cisgender and heterosexual children and young people. We must prevent this gap from expanding and further disadvantaging LGBTIQ+ children and young people. The CCYP urges others to go beyond tolerating LGBTIQ+ children and young people, and to listen and actively support. These children and young people form a vulnerable demographic, and it is vital that we place our focus on them in the coming years. The children and young people within our communities deserve nothing less.

1 As there is limited data on LGBTQ+ children, we have reported research which included participants aged 14–25.

2 Amos N et al (2023) Rainbow Realities: In-depth analyses of large-scale LGBTQ+ health and wellbeing data in Australia. Melbourne, Australia: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, P 73.

3 Amos N et al (2023) Rainbow Realities: In-depth analyses of large-scale LGBTQ+ health and wellbeing data in Australia. Melbourne, Australia: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, P 91.

## Resources and Organisations for LGBTIQA+ children and young people in WA

**Living  
Proud**

[livingproud.org.au](http://livingproud.org.au)



**Trans Folk  
of WA**

[transfolkofwa.org](http://transfolkofwa.org)



**Freedom  
Centre**

[freedom.org.au](http://freedom.org.au)

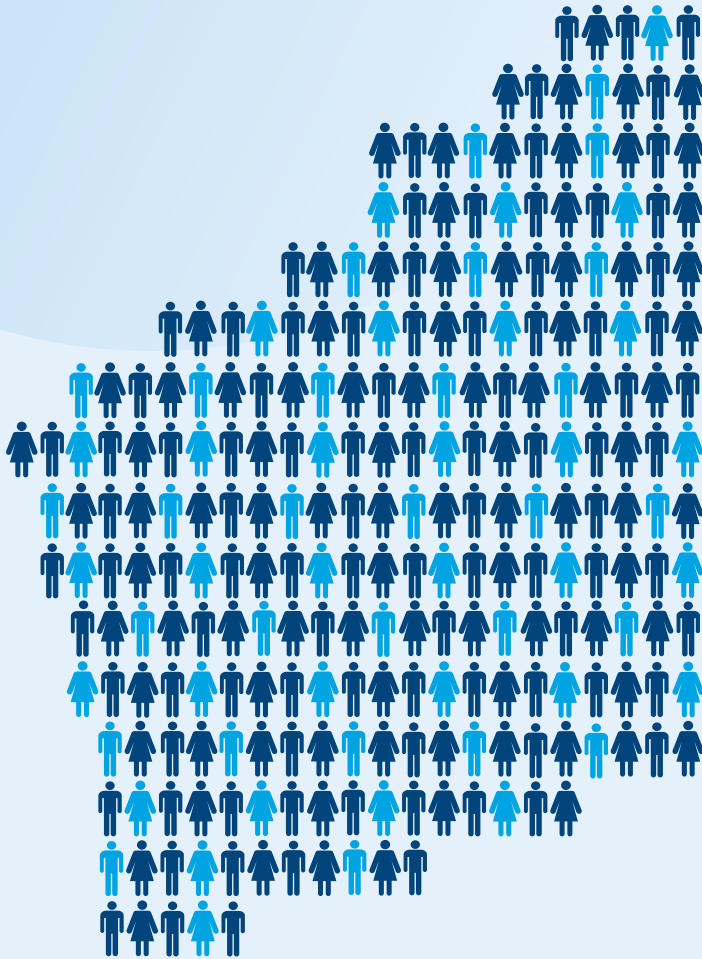


**QLife**

[qlife.org.au](http://qlife.org.au)



# Western Australia's children and young people

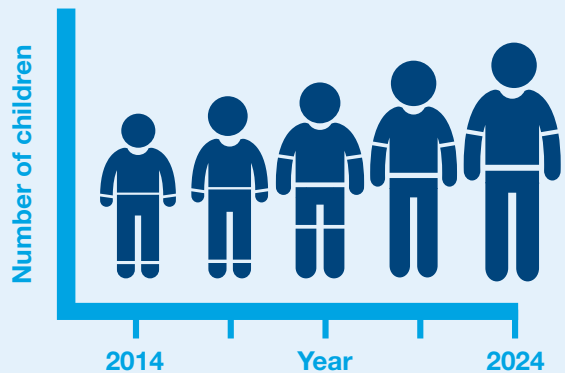
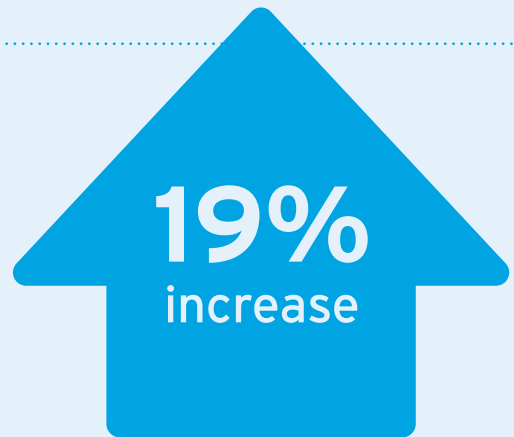


Approximately

# 652,890

children and young people live in WA and make up **22 per cent** of the state's population

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2024, *Quarterly Population Estimates, by State/Territory, Sex and Age*



## Poverty line



It was estimated that the child poverty rate increased to **15.2 per cent** of children and young people in 2024, equating to approximately **99,300 children and young people** living below the poverty line in WA

Duncan A & Twomey C 2024, *Child Poverty in Australia 2024*, Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre

In the last 10 years there has been a **19 per cent** increase in the number of children aged 6 to 11 years living in WA

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2025, *Quarterly Population Estimates, by State/Territory, Sex and Age*



# Aboriginal children and young people

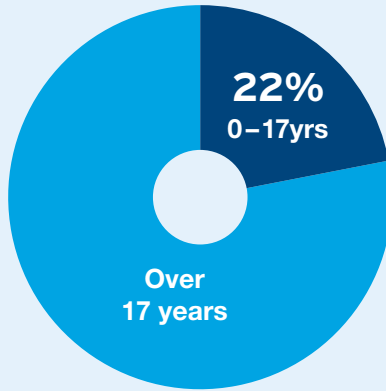
It is projected that approximately

# 47,700

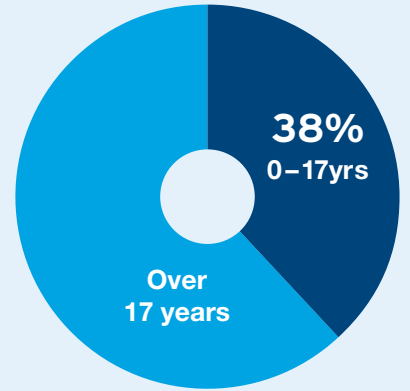
Aboriginal children and young people 0 to 17 years will live in Western Australia in 2025

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2025, [Projected population, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, Australia, state and territories, 2021 to 2031](#)

WA non-Aboriginal population



WA Aboriginal population



Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2023, [Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2021](#). Table 7.5 Estimated resident Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander, non-indigenous and total populations, Western Australia, single year of age (to 65 and over) – 30 June 2021



In 2024

# 30,825

births were registered in WA

Department of Justice (DoJ) 2025, [Statistics – births, deaths and marriages registered](#)

# 132

children and young people aged 10 to 13 years were held in detention during the year 2023-24. Fewer than five were sentenced

Department of Justice (DoJ) 2025, Statistics on Children and Young People in Detention, DoJ, [Unpublished]

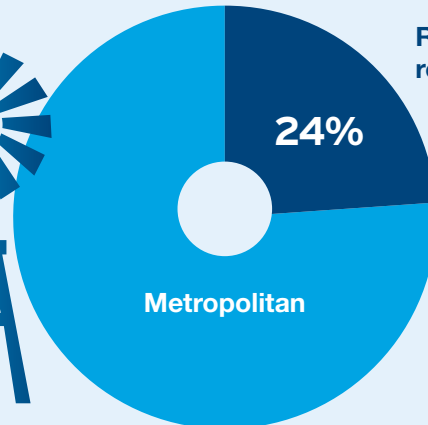
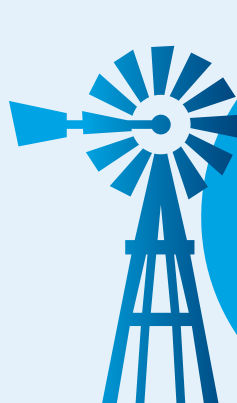


Around

# 156,000

children and young people in WA live in regional and remote areas

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2023, Estimated Resident Population (ERP) by Statistical Area Level 3 and Statistical Area Level 4, Custom report June 2023 and June 2022 [unpublished]





# Population

WA is home to approximately 652,890 children and young people, who represent 22 per cent of WA's total population.

The number of children and young people in WA increased between the first quarter of 2023 and 2024, however the overall proportion of children and young people within the entire WA population decreased during this time, due to the significant increase in the total Western Australian population (Table 1).

**Table 1: Children and young people aged 0 to 17 years, number and per cent, WA and Australia, 2022 to 2024**

	WA			Australia*
	2024	2023	2022	2024
<b>Children and young people</b>	<b>652,890</b>	<b>642,798</b>	<b>632,524</b>	<b>5,789,041</b>
Total population (all ages)	2,951,799	2,862,577	2,777,252	27,115,624
Proportion of total population (%)	22.1	22.5	22.8	21.3

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2024, [ABS Explorer, Quarterly Population Estimates \(ERP\), by State/Territory, Sex and Age](#)

\* Australian estimates include the Jervis Bay Territory, Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands

# Population

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the gender distribution of children and young people in Western Australia is consistent with last year, with 51.4% male and 48.6% female.<sup>4</sup> This distribution is also consistent with most Australian states and territories and the national distribution.<sup>5</sup>

From 2014 to 2024 the number of 0 to 17-year-olds in WA increased by over 66,527 or 13.3 per cent (Table 2). The largest increase occurred in the secondary school years for children aged 12 to 17 (21%) followed by those aged 6 to 11 years (18.5%).

**Table 2: Children and young people aged 0 to 17 years by age group, number and per cent, WA, 2014 and 2024.**

	2024		2014		Change from 2014 to 2024	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
0 to 5 years	205,984	31.5	203,252	35.3	2,732	1.3
6 to 11 years	224,898	34.5	189,712	32.9	35,189	18.5
12 to 17 years	222,008	34.0	183,477	31.8	38,531	21.0
<b>0 to 17 years</b>	<b>652,890</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>576,441</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>66,527</b>	<b>13.3</b>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2024, [Quarterly Population Estimates, by State/Territory, Sex and Age](#)

## Births

After declining since the 1960s, WA's fertility rate increased in the early 2000s to reach 2.095 babies per woman in 2008 (a rate last reached in the late 1970s). Apart from a brief uptick in births per woman in 2021 (1.75), the fertility rate in WA has been steadily declining since this time to its present level of 1.57.<sup>6</sup>

The number of births in WA increased during the 2000s until 2016, when the number of births peaked at 35,652 for that year. From 2016 to 2020 the number of births per year decreased to 32,677. In 2021 there was an increase in births to 34,300 however, this number decreased to 31,709 in 2022. This was followed by an increase in births to 32,282 in 2023 (Figure 1). This was a 1.8% increase from 2022. **However, in 2024 the number of births decreased to 30,825, equating to a 4.5% decrease.**<sup>7</sup>

4 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2024, [Quarterly Population Estimates, by State/Territory, Sex and Age](#).

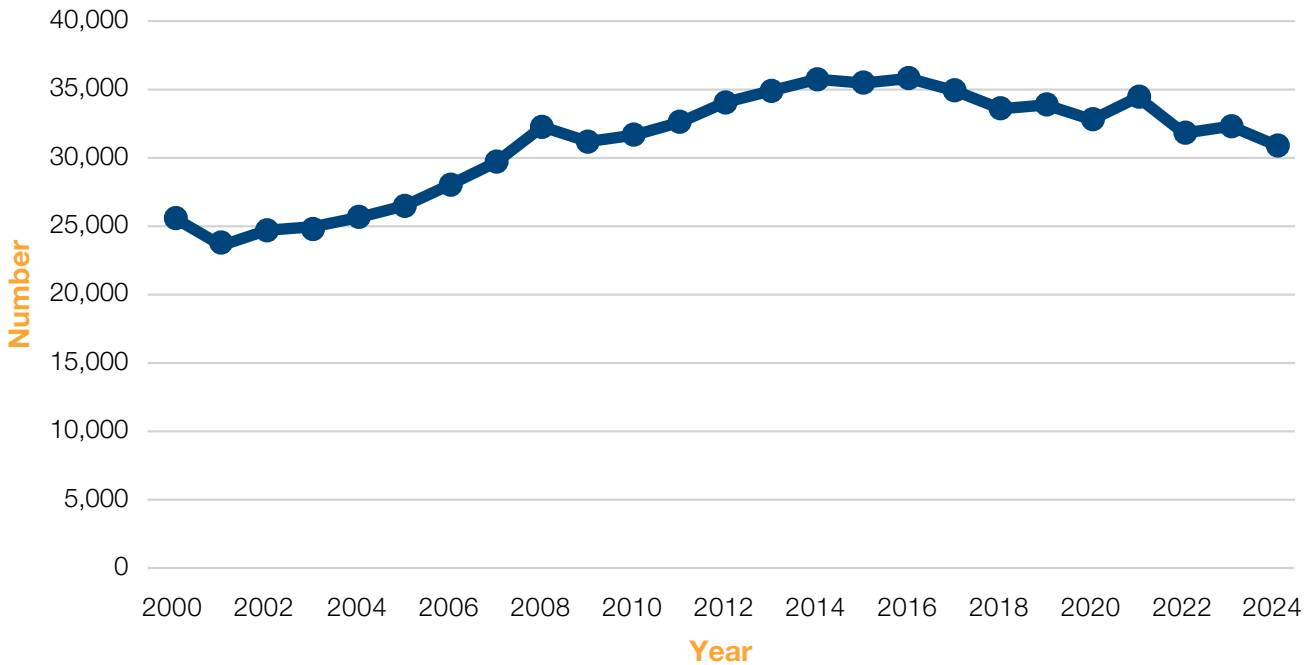
5 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2024, [National, state and territory population, June 2024](#).

6 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2024, [ABS Explorer, Fertility by age, by state](#), ABS.

7 WA Department of Justice 2025, [WA Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages](#).

# Population

Figure 1: Total births, number, WA, 2000 to 2024



Source: WA Department of Justice 2025, [WA Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages](#)

The median age of all mothers for births registered in WA in 2023 was **31.8 years** (an increase in the median age of 30.4 recorded in 2013). **The median age of all fathers was 33.8 years (also a slight increase from 32.7 recorded in 2013).**<sup>8</sup>

There **were 3,047 births (9.4% of all births)** registered in WA during 2023 where at least one parent recorded themselves as Aboriginal on their child's birth registration form.<sup>9</sup> This is the highest recorded number of births WA has ever recorded for this demographic.

In general, Aboriginal mothers give birth at a younger age than non-Aboriginal mothers. The median age of Aboriginal women who registered a birth in WA in 2023 was **26.3 years, approximately five and a half years** less than the median age of all mothers (31.8 years) but an increase on the median age of 24.3 years recorded for Aboriginal mothers in 2013.<sup>10</sup>

Correspondingly, the highest proportion of Aboriginal women giving birth is in the age group 20 to 24 years (31.0%) compared with 30 to 34 years for non-Aboriginal women (36.5%) (Figure 2).

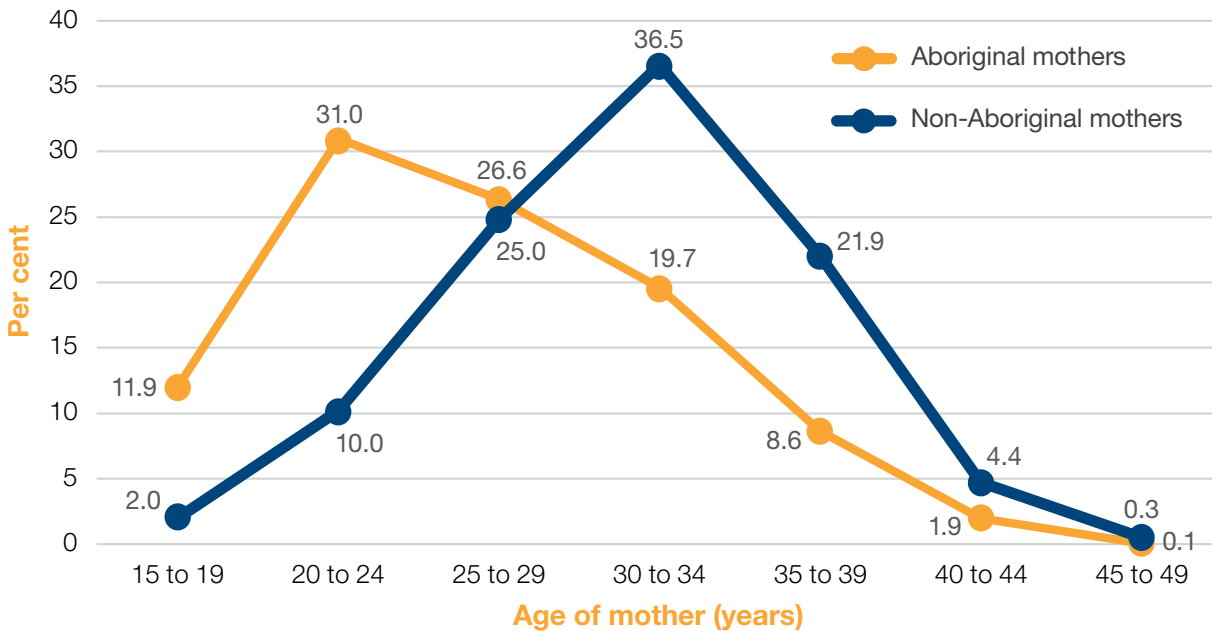
8 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2024, [ABS Explorer, Confinements by nuptiality, by state](#), Confinements, by nuptiality, by state, ABS.

9 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2024, [ABS Explorer, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander births and confinements, summary, by state](#), ABS.

10 Ibid.

# Population

**Figure 2: Proportion of overall births by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal mothers by age group, per cent, WA, 2023**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2024, [ABS Explorer, Births by age by state](#), and [ABS Explorer, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander fertility, by age, by state](#)

Over the past decade, the total number of births in the 15 to 19-year-old cohort has declined by 47.2 per cent, from 1,187 in 2014 to 627 in 2023.<sup>11</sup> The number of births to Aboriginal mothers in this age group has decreased from 414 in 2014 to 273 in 2023 (-34.1%).<sup>12</sup>

## Geographical distribution

As per the 2023 estimates, three quarters (75.7%) of the population of 0 to 17-year olds resided in the metropolitan area,<sup>13</sup> 15.7 per cent resided in regional areas and 8.6 per cent in remote areas of WA (Table 3).

All metropolitan areas recorded an increase in the population of children and young people from 2022 to 2023, with Perth – North East recording a 2.5 per cent increase and Perth – South West a 2.3 per cent increase. However, regional and remote WA generally experienced varied changes in their overall populations of children and young people, with some areas recording relatively significant increases (Mandurah: 2.8%, Gascoyne: 2.0%) and others a decline (Goldfields: 0.8%, Kimberley: 0.8%).

11 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2024, [ABS Explorer, Fertility by age, by state](#), ABS.

12 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2024, [ABS Explorer, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander fertility, by age, by state](#), ABS.

13 The metropolitan area corresponds to the five Perth Statistical Area Level 4s as defined by the ABS. It does not include Mandurah.

# Population

**Table 3: Geographical distribution of children and young people aged 0 to 17 years by age group, number and per cent, WA, June 2023**

	0 to 5 years	6 to 11 years	12 to 17 years	Total 0 to 17 years	Change from 2020 to 2021	Proportion of WA children and young people
	Number	Number	Number	Number	Per cent	Per cent
<b>Metropolitan</b>	<b>156,862</b>	<b>167,624</b>	<b>163,639</b>	<b>488,125</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>75.7</b>
Perth – South East	42,498	45,985	43,058	131,541	2.2	20.4
Perth – South West	35,725	37,993	37,640	111,358	2.3	17.3
Perth – North East	23,174	23,296	22,157	68,627	2.5	10.6
Perth – North West	45,483	48,518	47,680	141,681	1.7	22.0
Perth – Inner	9,982	11,832	13,104	34,918	0.8	5.4
<b>WA regional</b>	<b>29,910</b>	<b>34,737</b>	<b>36,511</b>	<b>101,158</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>15.7</b>
Mandurah	7,444	8,329	8,840	24,613	2.8	3.8
Bunbury*	13,244	15,733	16,884	45,861	0.7	7.1
Wheatbelt**	9,222	10,675	10,787	30,684	0.6	4.8
<b>WA remote</b>	<b>18,311</b>	<b>19,482</b>	<b>17,459</b>	<b>55,252</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>8.6</b>
Esperance	1,230	1,370	1,324	3,924	0.4	0.6
Goldfields	3,260	3,328	3,084	9,672	-0.8	1.5
Mid West	4,006	4,549	4,601	13,156	0.3	2.0
Gascoyne	757	790	654	2,201	2.0	0.3
Pilbara	5,621	5,665	4,355	15,641	0.4	2.4
Kimberley	3,437	3,780	3,441	10,658	-0.8	1.7
<b>Total WA</b>	<b>205,083</b>	<b>221,843</b>	<b>217,609</b>	<b>644,535</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2023, Estimated Resident Population (ERP) by Statistical Area Level 3 and Statistical Area Level 4, Custom report June 2023 [unpublished]

\* Includes Busselton, Margaret River, Augusta and Manjimup

\*\* Includes Albany, Wheatbelt North and Wheatbelt South

Notes:

1. The geographical distribution of WA's Estimated Resident Population is only available one year in arrears. Hence, presented here is the table for 2023
2. Per cent totals may not add up to 100 due to rounding
3. To provide a detailed picture of the geographical distribution of children and young people across WA, Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4) was chosen to represent areas within the metropolitan area and regional WA and Statistical Area Level 3 (SA3) for remote areas. For simplicity, some areas are classified as remote even though the main population centre local government area (LGA) may be classified as regional (e.g. Geraldton and the Mid West). For more information on these areas see: [Australian Statistical Geography Standard \(ASGS\)](#)

# Population

## Aboriginal children and young people

As per the 2021 Census data, Aboriginal children and young people (aged 0 to 17 years) represented 7.3 per cent of the total population of children and young people in WA (Table 4).<sup>14</sup>

**Table 4: Estimated residential population including children and young people aged 0 to 17 years by Aboriginal status, number and per cent, WA, 2021**

	Aboriginal		Non-Aboriginal		Total
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number
0 to 17 years	45,930	7.3	581,450	92.7	627,380
<b>Total population</b>	<b>120,006</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>2,629,359</b>	<b>95.6</b>	<b>2,749,365</b>
Children and young people (0 to 17 years) as a proportion of total respective population (per cent)		38.3		22.1	22.8

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2023, [Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2021](#). Table 7.5 Estimated resident Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander, non-indigenous and total populations, Western Australia, single year of age (to 65 and over) – 30 June 2021

Note: Final estimates of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, non-Indigenous and total populations of Australia on 30 June 2021 are based on results of the 2021 Census of Population and Housing

The proportion of children and young people aged 0 to 17 years in the Aboriginal population is almost double that of the proportion of children and young people in the non-Aboriginal population (38.3% compared to 22.1%). The primary reasons for this are lower life expectancy and higher fertility rates of Aboriginal people compared to non-Aboriginal people.<sup>15</sup>

With respect to geographic distribution in 2021, around 51.0 per cent of Aboriginal children and young people aged 0 to 17 years live in regional and remote areas compared to 19.0 per cent of non-Aboriginal children and young people (Table 5). Around 18.0 per cent of Aboriginal children and young people live in very remote parts of WA, which is down from 23.5 per cent in 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2023, [Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians](#), ABS.

<sup>15</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2012, [4725.0 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wellbeing: A focus on children and youth](#), April 2011, ABS.

# Population

**Table 5: Children and young people aged 0 to 17 years by remoteness area and Aboriginal status, number and per cent, WA, 2021**

	Non-Aboriginal		Aboriginal		Total*	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Major cities**	438,412	81.2	16,524	49.1	470,238	78.3
Inner regional	46,320	8.6	2,882	8.6	51,931	8.6
Outer regional	33,570	6.2	4,184	12.6	41,144	6.8
Remote	15,666	2.9	3,928	11.2	22,278	3.7
Very remote	5,780	1.1	6,145	18.4	13,694	2.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>539,748</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>33,840</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>600,170</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Data source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2023, [Census of Population and Housing 2021, Census TableBuilder: Dataset – Cultural diversity and remoteness area](#)

\* Totals include Aboriginal status not stated and no usual address and therefore do not sum

\*\* The Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) defines remoteness areas into five classes of relative remoteness across Australia using a combination of population sizes (to define urban centres) and distances from urban centres. In this classification, Mandurah is included in the Major Cities category. Refer to the ABS, [1270.0.55.005 – Australian Statistical Geography Standard \(ASGS\): Volume 5 – Remoteness Structure, July 2016](#) for more information

Note: This data is from the 2021 Census which has not been adjusted for undercounting. Totals in the table are per the ABS and may not sum exactly





# Population

## Cultural background

In 2021, 84.9 per cent of children and young people in WA were born in Australia.

For WA's children and young people, the most common country of birth after Australia is England (1.7%), followed by New Zealand (1.1%), the Philippines (1.0%) and India (0.9%) (Table 6).

**Table 6: Children and young people aged 0 to 17 years by country of birth, number and per cent, WA, 2021**

	Number	Per cent
<b>Australia</b>	<b>509,464</b>	<b>84.9</b>
England	10,056	1.7
New Zealand	6,897	1.1
Philippines	5,745	1.0
India	5,285	0.9
South Africa	4,352	0.7
Malaysia	2,013	0.3
China (excludes SARs and Taiwan)	1,984	0.3
Thailand	1,728	0.3
United States of America	1,613	0.3
Other*	51,040	8.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>600,177</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2022, [Census TableBuilder: Dataset – Cultural Diversity](#)

Note: This table was prepared using the ABS TableBuilder tool, which reports on unadjusted Census data. This is in contrast with the figures provided in Table 1, which are based on ABS population estimates

\* Other includes 25,979 children and young people whose country of birth was not stated

According to Census 2021 data, the majority of WA children and young people speak English at home (77.4%). The most common other languages spoken at home are Indian and Chinese languages (around 3% and 2% respectively).<sup>16</sup>

16 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2022, [Census TableBuilder: 2021 Census – Cultural Diversity](#), ABS.

# Population

## Disability

The ABS estimates that in 2018, 43,600 WA children and young people aged 0 to 17 years had a reported disability (Table 7).<sup>17</sup> This represented 7.5 per cent of the total population of 0 to 17-year-old in WA in 2018.

More than 1 in 10 (11.5%) children aged between 6 and 11 years had a reported disability.

**Table 7: Children and young people aged 0 to 17 years with disability by age group and disability status, number and per cent, WA, 2018**

	All with reported disability		Profound or severe core activity limitation**	
	Number	Per cent of children and young people in age group	Number	Per cent of children and young people in age group
0 to 5 years	9,000	4.4	4,600*	2.2
6 to 11 years	22,400	11.5	14,200	7.3
12 to 17 years	14,500	7.9	5,500	3.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>43,600</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>25,100</b>	<b>4.3</b>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2021, Persons with reported disability by specific age groups, Custom report from the ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, 2018 [unpublished]

\* Estimate has a relative standard error of 25 to 50 per cent and should be used with caution

\*\* 'Profound or severe core activity limitation' indicates the person is unable to do, or always needs help with, a core activity task such as communication, mobility or self-care

Note: Cells in this table have been randomly adjusted to avoid the release of confidential data. Discrepancies may occur between sums of the component items and totals

Across Australia, 69.9 per cent of 0 to 5-year-olds with disability have a sensory and speech disability (including loss of sight or hearing). In the 6 to 11-year-old age group, the most common disability types are intellectual (67.8%) and psychosocial (39.3%).<sup>18</sup>

17 The ABS notes that for the Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, a person has a disability if they report they have a limitation, restriction or impairment, which has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least six months and restricts everyday activities.

18 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2021, Persons with reported disability by specific age groups, Custom report from the ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, 2018, ABS [unpublished].

# Population

## Family composition

The most recent Census data report that there were 419,711 households with one or more children in WA in 2021.

Of these households, 262,249 (62.5%) were couple families with dependent children and 69,574 (16.6%) were single-parent families with dependent children (Table 8).

The majority of single parents in WA are female (79.9%).<sup>19</sup>

**Table 8: Families with children by family composition, number and per cent, WA, 2021**

	Couple families		Single-parent families		Total
	Number	Per cent of total	Number	Per cent of total	Number
With dependent children under 15 years*	221,403	52.8	55,163	13.1	<b>276,566</b>
With dependent children over 15 years and no children under 15 years	40,846	9.7	14,411	3.4	<b>55,257</b>
<b>Total with dependent children**</b>	<b>262,249</b>	<b>62.5</b>	<b>69,574</b>	<b>16.6</b>	<b>331,823</b>
With non-dependent children***	51,426	12.3	36,462	8.7	<b>87,888</b>
<b>Total families with children</b>	<b>313,675</b>	<b>74.7</b>	<b>106,036</b>	<b>25.3</b>	<b>419,711</b>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2022, Census of Population and Housing 2021, compiled using Table Builder – Dataset 2021 Census: Selected Family Characteristics

\* Includes families with children under 15 years and dependent children over 15 years

\*\* Dependent children includes children under 15 years and dependent students aged 15 to 24 years

\*\*\* This can include adult children (over 25 years) living with a parent

19 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2022, ABS Census 2021, [Quick Stats, WA](#), ABS.



# Childcare and education

More than two-thirds of WA students are educated in government schools and almost one-third are educated in Catholic and independent schools.

## Childcare

About two in five (41.8%) WA children aged zero to five years attend government approved childcare services. This includes centre-based care, family day care and out-of-hours school care (as appropriate) (Table 9).

**Table 9: Number of children aged 0 to 5 years attending approved childcare services, WA, number and per cent, 2023.**

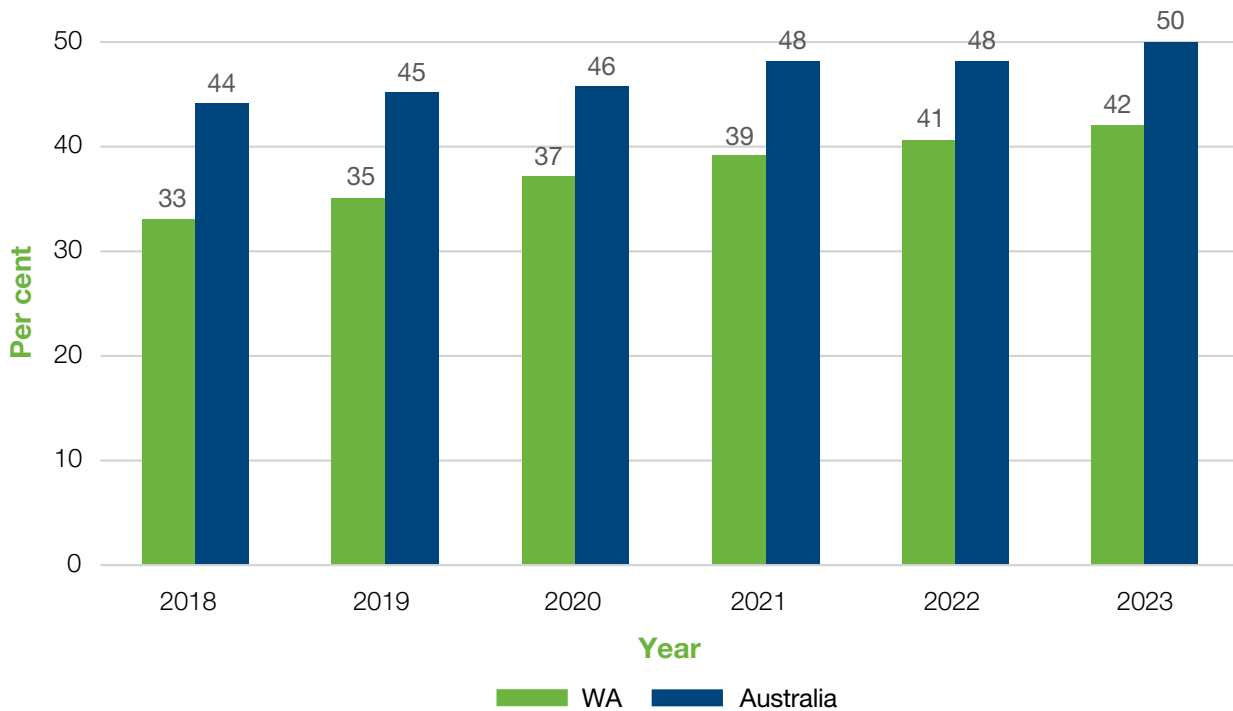
	Number	Per cent of all children
0 years old	3,228	10.1
1 years old	15,272	45.7
2 years old	18,948	56.0
3 years old	20,069	58.5
4 years old	15,964	45.4
5 years old	11,876	33.1
<b>Total 0 to 5 years</b>	<b>85,357</b>	<b>41.8</b>

Source: Productivity commission 2024, [Report on Government Services 2024: Early Childhood Education and Care](#), Table 3A.8. Australian Government

## Childcare and education

The proportion of children in the age group of zero to five years has been increasing marginally, indicating a slight upward trend in the enrolment rate but is still much lower in comparison to the national rate (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Proportion of children aged 0 to 5 years attending approved childcare services, WA and Australia, per cent, 2018 to 2023.**



Source: Productivity commission 2024, [Report on Government Services 2024: Early Childhood Education and Care](#), Table 3A.8. Australian Government

The data suggests that the percentage of children in formal care decreases as they grow older and start attending school (Table 10).

**Table 10: Number of children aged 0 to 12 years attending approved childcare services, WA and Australia, number and per cent, 2023**

	WA		Australia
	Number	Per cent of all children	Per cent of all children
0 to 5 years	85,357	41.8	49.9
6 to 12 years	41,119	16.0	22.2

Source: Productivity Commission 2024, [Report on Government Services 2024: Early Childhood Education and Care](#), Australian Government

## Childcare and education

Consistent with the 2022 report by the Mitchell Institute and the 2023 Work and Play report by the Front Project, the most recent 2024 report by the Mitchell Institute examining Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) further emphasises that childcare access is not equal in Australia. WA faces a severe shortage of childcare services, otherwise known as ‘childcare deserts’.<sup>20</sup> This is particularly the case in regional and remote areas, with the least accessible area being Roebuck, with 0.039 places per child in 2024. In contrast, Subiaco and Shenton Park hold the highest position for accessibility, with 0.671 places per child.<sup>21</sup> In 2022, when parents were asked about their use of ECEC services, nearly 40 per cent of regional or remote parents who do not utilise paid ECEC services identified that unavailability is an influencing factor, while only 20 per cent of metropolitan parents report the same.<sup>22</sup>

WA still struggles with having some of the worst accessibility to ECEC in Australia, coming in with the second highest percent of ECEC deserts after Tasmania. However, WA is improving accessibility, decreasing the percentage of the state that is a childcare desert from 62 in 2020 to 39 in 2024.<sup>23</sup>

Table 11 shows the average hours of attendance per week of children aged 0 to 12 years at Australian Government approved childcare services by service type from 2020 to 2023. The service types are centre-based care, family day care, and Outside School Hours Care (OSHC). The average hours of attendance have increased for all service types over the four years, except for OSHC, which decreased. The highest increase was observed for centre-based care, followed by family day care. This suggests that more children are attending government approved childcare services for longer hours, especially in centre-based care and family day care settings.

**Table 11: Average hours of attendance per week of children aged 0 to 12 years at Australian Government CCS approved childcare services, by service type**

	2023	2022	2021	2020
Centre-based care	29.0	27.6	26.9	26.1
Family day care	27.1	25.8	24.5	23.6
OSHC	9.6	9.8	9.8	9.6

Source: Productivity Commission 2024, [Report on Government Services 2024: Early Childhood Education and Care](#), Australian Government

20 Victoria University 2022 [Landmark report: A third of Australians living in childcare deserts](#), Mitchell Institute.

21 Hurley P, Tham M and Nguyen H 2024 [Mapping the deserts: Childcare accessibility in Australia](#), Mitchell Institute, Victoria University.

22 The Front Project 2023 Work and play: Understanding families experiences and perceptions of Early Childhood Education and Care, [www.thefrontproject.org.au](http://www.thefrontproject.org.au).

23 Victoria University 2024 [Mapping the deserts: Childcare accessibility in Australia](#), Mitchell Institute.

# Childcare and education

## Education

There are 495,806 children and young people in WA enrolled in formal education. About two-thirds (65.8%) of the students attend government schools and one third (34.2%) attend Catholic and Independent schools (Table 12).

Approximately 7,325 children and young people in WA are home-schooled, which is almost a 50 per cent increase since 2019 (Table 13).

**Table 12: Students in government and non-government schools by year level, number and per cent, WA, Semester 1, 2024**

	Government		Non-government		Total
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	
Kindergarten	23,436	65.0	12,607	35.0	36,043
Pre-primary	25,646	72.8	9,586	27.2	35,232
Years 1 to 6	159,085	72.0	62,009	28.0	221,094
Years 7 to 12	118,319	58.2	85,118	41.8	203,437
<b>Total</b>	<b>326,486</b>	<b>65.8</b>	<b>169,320</b>	<b>34.2</b>	<b>495,806</b>

Source: Department of Education 2024, [Summary statistics of Schools and Full-time students](#)

**Table 13: Children and young people registered to receive home education, WA, number and per cent, March 2015 to 2024**

	Number	Percentage change
<b>2015</b>	2,826	-
<b>2016</b>	3,303	16.9
<b>2017</b>	3,464	4.9
<b>2018</b>	3,563	2.9
<b>2019</b>	3,720	4.4
<b>2020</b>	4,116	10.6
<b>2021</b>	4,562	10.8
<b>2022</b>	6,151	34.8
<b>2023</b>	6,466	4.9
<b>2024</b>	<b>7,325</b>	<b>12.3</b>

Source: WA Department of Education 2024, [Annual Report 2023–24](#), WA Government and prior years' reports

## Childcare and education

In 2024, there were 831 government schools and 316 non-government schools operating in WA, compared to 830 government schools and 314 non-government in 2023.<sup>24</sup>

80.7 per cent (400,119) of all students were enrolled in the metropolitan area and the remaining 19.3 per cent (95,687) were enrolled in regional and remote education regions, with a high proportion (9.1%) attending schools in the Southwest education region (Table 14).

**Table 14: Number of schools and primary and secondary students by education region, number and per cent, WA, Semester 2, 2024**

Education region	Schools	Primary*	Secondary	Total students	Proportion of all students	Change 2023 to 2024
	Number	Number	Number	Number	Per cent	Per cent
North metropolitan	362	111,979	83,838	195,817	39.5	1.7
South metropolitan	383	122,076	82,226	204,302	41.2	2.5
<b>Total metropolitan</b>	<b>745</b>	<b>234,055</b>	<b>166,064</b>	<b>400,119</b>	<b>80.7</b>	<b>2.3</b>
Goldfields	48	6,529	3,859	10,388	2.1	1.1
Kimberley	44	4,686	2,454	7,140	1.4	1.3
Midwest	59	7,451	4,846	12,297	2.5	1.9
Pilbara	35	7,195	3,588	10,783	2.2	0.4
South West	140	25,980	19,074	45,054	9.1	1.0
Wheatbelt	76	6,473	3,552	10,025	2.0	0.1
<b>Total regional/ remote</b>	<b>402</b>	<b>58,314</b>	<b>37,373</b>	<b>95,687</b>	<b>19.3</b>	<b>1.0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,147</b>	<b>292,369</b>	<b>203,437</b>	<b>495,806</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2.0</b>

Source: WA Department of Education 2024, [Students by Education Region and Education Level 2024 Semester 2](#), [Students by Education Region and Education Level 2023 Semester 2](#)

\* Primary includes pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, pre-primary students and primary students

Between Semester 2, 2023 and Semester 2, 2024, the number of school students enrolled in WA rose from 485,952<sup>25</sup> to 495,806, an increase of 2.0 per cent (Table 13).

<sup>24</sup> WA Department of Education 2024, [Summary Statistics of Schools and Full-Time Students](#), Summary Statistics of Schools and Full-Time Students, WA Government.

<sup>25</sup> WA Department of Education 2024, [Students by Education Region and Education Level 2023 Semester 2](#).



## Childcare and education

Student numbers increased by 2.3 per cent in the metropolitan area while regional and remote education regions recorded a combined increase of 1.0 per cent. The South metropolitan region recorded the highest increase in student numbers of 2.5 per cent followed by Midwest at 1.9 per cent while student numbers in the Wheatbelt remained the same.

There were 35,639 Aboriginal students enrolled in Semester 2 2024, representing 7.2 per cent of all students. There are significant differences across the regions, with Aboriginal students representing 65.5 per cent of students in the Kimberley region and 3.7 per cent of students in the North metropolitan education region (Table 15).

**Table 15: Students by education region and Aboriginal status, number and per cent, WA, Semester 2 2024**

Education region	Aboriginal		Non-Aboriginal		Total
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	
North metropolitan	7,323	3.7	188,494	96.2	195,817
South metropolitan	10,461	5.1	193,841	94.9	204,302
<b>Total metropolitan</b>	<b>17,784</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>382,335</b>	<b>65.6</b>	<b>400,119</b>
Goldfields	2,260	21.8	8,128	78.2	10,388
Kimberley	4,675	65.5	2,465	34.5	7,140
Mid West	3,095	25.2	9,202	74.8	12,297
Pilbara	3,194	29.6	7,589	70.4	10,783
South West	2,957	6.6	42,097	93.4	45,054
Wheatbelt	1,674	16.7	8,351	83.3	10,025
<b>Total regional/remote</b>	<b>17,855</b>	<b>18.7</b>	<b>77,832</b>	<b>81.3</b>	<b>95,687</b>
<b>All regions</b>	<b>35,639</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>460,167</b>	<b>92.8</b>	<b>495,806</b>

Source: WA Department of Education 2024, [Aboriginal students by Education Region and Education level](#)

\* Primary includes pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, pre-primary students and primary students

Since 2017, there has been a 22.4 per cent increase in Aboriginal students across WA (2017: 29,112) compared to a 10.4 per cent increase in non-Aboriginal students (2017: 449,289).<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Data calculated by the Commissioner for Children and Young People from WA Department of Education statistical reports. Source: Department of Education 2024, [Aboriginal students by education region and level](#).

## Childcare and education



In 2023, 21,565 students were suspended, a significant increase from 2017 in which only 14,075 students were suspended (Table 16). This equates to 6.4 per cent of total enrolled students in WA. Along with suspensions, 163 students were excluded in 2023, compared to only eight in 2017.<sup>27</sup>

**Table 16: Children and Young People who were suspended and excluded throughout the year, number and per cent, WA, 2017–2023**

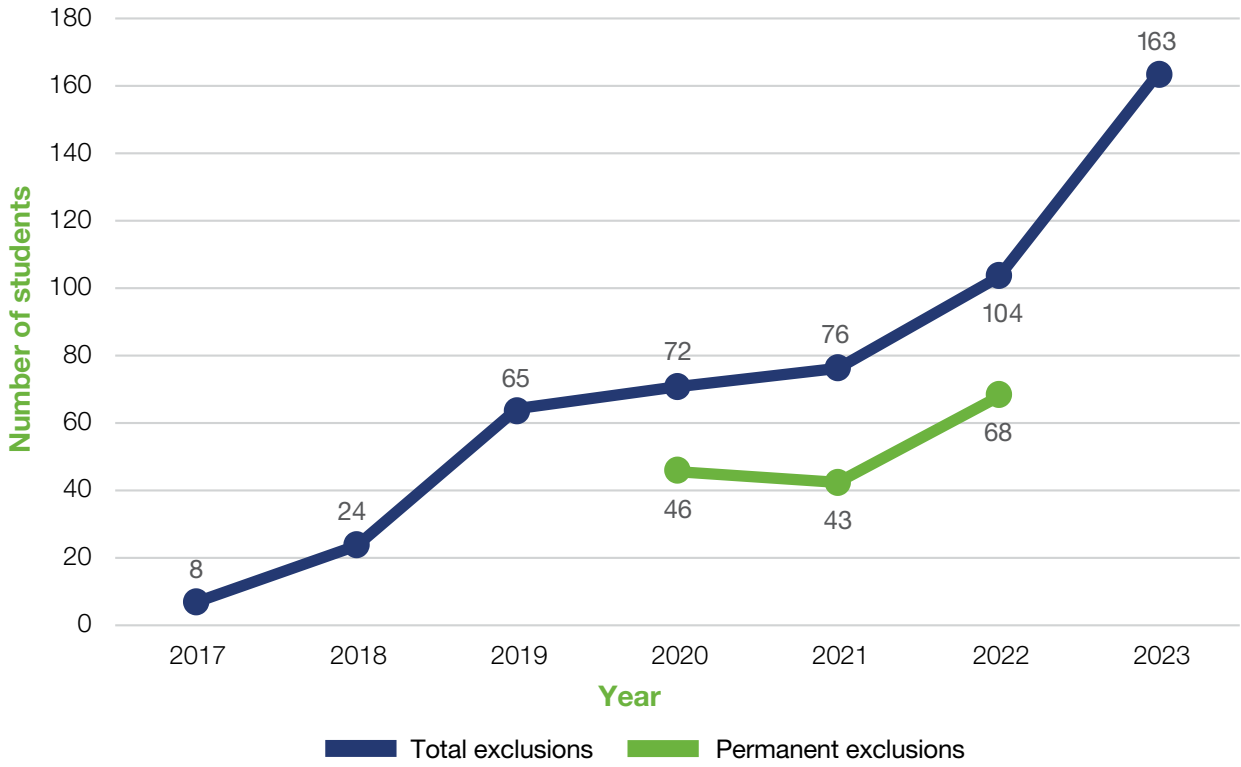
Year	Suspensions (number)	Suspensions (% total enrolment)	Total exclusions	Permanent exclusions
2017	14,075	4.5	8	0
2018	14,243	4.5	24	-
2019	16,149	5	65	-
2020	15,943	4.9	72	46
2021	18,068	5.5	76	43
2022	19,289	5.8	104	68
2023	21,565	6.4	163	114

Source: WA Department of Education 2024, [Annual Report 2023–24](#), WA Government and prior years' reports

<sup>27</sup> WA Department of Education 2024, [Annual Report 2023–24](#), WA Government and prior years' reports.

# Childcare and education

Figure 4: Exclusions in Schools, WA, number, 2017–2023



Source: WA Department of Education 2024, [Annual Report 2023–24](#), WA Government and prior years' reports

\* No data was available for permanent exclusions in 2023





# Vulnerability

---

**More than 99,300 children and young people in WA are estimated to be living below the poverty line.**

## Child poverty

The Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre identified that in 2022, nearly 1 in 9 (11.8 per cent) of children in WA were living in poverty (table 17).<sup>28</sup> This equated to approximately 71,000 children and young people across WA aged 0–17. However, rising interest rates and essential living costs, and a tightening housing market are expected to cause at least another 21,000 children to fall into poverty, and estimates are expected to continue to rise.<sup>29</sup>

Census 2021 demonstrated that, while 80 per cent of all Australian single parent families are female, more than 95 per cent of the poorest single parent families who rely on income support payments are headed by women.

Child poverty rates in WA consistently fell during the COVID epidemic, from 14.5 per cent in 2020 to 11.8 per cent in 2022. Whilst child poverty rates in Australia as a whole rose from 12.5 per cent in 2021 to 14.5 per cent in 2022, even after a fall in child poverty between 2020–21 (Table 16). However, **child poverty rates in WA are anticipated to rise once more, with an estimated 15.2% of children living in poverty in 2024.**

---

<sup>28</sup> Duncan A & Twomey C 2024, **Child Poverty in Australia 2024**, Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre, p. 9.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

# Vulnerability

**Table 17: Share of children in poverty by state or territory, per cent, Australia, 2020–22**

	2022	2021	2020
<b>NSW</b>	16.3	13.0	14.4
<b>VIC</b>	14.5	12.6	14.0
<b>QLD</b>	15.6	12.8	15.7
<b>SA</b>	11.9	13.3	14.4
<b>WA</b>	<b>11.8</b>	<b>12.4</b>	<b>14.5</b>
<b>Australia</b>	<b>14.5</b>	<b>12.5</b>	<b>14.1</b>

Source: Duncan A & Twomey C 2024, **Child Poverty in Australia 2024**, Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre

\*ACT, Tas and NT were not included within the most recent report

Note: Calculated based on 50 per cent of the Australian median disposable income (after housing costs) using the Melbourne Institute Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey

There is significant variation in poverty rates across WA. Analysis by NATSEM, the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling, estimated that in 2020–21, 36.1 per cent of children below the age of 15 in Mandurah were living in poverty<sup>30</sup> compared to 1.2 per cent of children below the age of 15 in the WA town of Newman.<sup>31</sup> It is important to note that in the 2015–16 report, East Pilbara had a high child and young people poverty rate of 69.7 per cent, but was not included within the data collection of the newer report.<sup>32</sup>

30 This report defines poverty as any family earning below 50 per cent of the median equivalised household disposable income, adjusted for housing costs. In 2021, this was AUD\$504 per week.

31 Miranti R et al. 2024, **Child Social Exclusion Index, Nurturing Inclusion: Paving the Way to Improved Child Wellbeing**, Table Appendix 3 – The Child Social Exclusion Index and Child Poverty Data, The Canberra School of Politics, Economics and Society (SchoPES), Faculty of Business, Government and Law (BGL), University of Canberra. Report commissioned by UnitingCare Australia.

32 Miranti R et al. 2018, **Child Social Exclusion, Poverty And Disadvantage In Australia**, Table Appendix 2 – Child Social Exclusion and Child Poverty, Table A6. Child Social Exclusion and Child Poverty, National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling, Institute for Governance and Policy Analysis (IGPA), University of Canberra.

# Vulnerability

**Table 18: Proportion of Population in weekly equivalised household income quintiles by Aboriginal status, per cent in WA for 2016 and 2021 comparison**

Quintile	Aboriginal		Non-Aboriginal	
	2021 Census	2016 Census	2021 Census	2016 Census
Quintile 5	9.5	9.1	20.4	20.3
Quintile 4	14.3	13.9	20.1	20.7
Quintile 3	17.5	16.7	20.1	19.5
Quintile 2	23.2	23.4	19.9	19.9
Quintile 1	35.4	36.9	19.5	19.5

Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2023 **Income and finance of First Nations people**, Figure 1

Note: the quintiles have been calculated based on the equivalised weekly household income across all Australian households

The AIHW reported that in 2021, 35 per cent of Aboriginal Australians had equivalised weekly household incomes in the lowest 20 per cent of household income distribution, compared to 19.5 per cent of non-Aboriginal Australians (Table 18).<sup>33</sup>

Each Quintile in Table 18 is grouped by population within a specified income, with 5 being the highest income bracket and 1 the lowest. While Aboriginal Australians had the highest proportion of their population in the bottom 20 per cent (Quintile 1) non-Aboriginal Australians had the largest proportion of their population in the top 20 per cent (Quintile 5).

It should be noted that researchers from the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) reported that issues have been identified in the estimation of Indigenous poverty using the national definitions of poverty. In particular, the location of the ‘poverty line’, which is the income threshold below which poverty is defined and used to identify poverty in the Indigenous population. These issues include incomes that are supplemented by non-cash incomes (e.g. gains or revenues), family size and resource sharing as well as remoteness of living. Despite this, poverty estimates are an important function in understanding the prevalence of Indigenous households that are living in poverty especially when comparing these rates with non-Indigenous poverty rates.<sup>34</sup>

Children in single-parent families have a significantly higher risk of poverty than children living in couple families (33.3% compared to 16.3%), with one in three single parent families living below the poverty line, and more than 10 per cent living in extreme poverty.<sup>35</sup>

33 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2023 **Income and finance of First Nations people**, Figure 1.

34 Markham F and Biddle N 2018, **Income, Poverty and Inequality: 2016 Census Paper No. 2**, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian National University, p. 16.

35 Duncan A & Twomey C 2024, **Child Poverty in Australia 2024**, Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre, p. 9.

# Vulnerability

## Housing and homelessness

On 30 June 2023, 12,278 children and young people were on the public housing wait list, a seven per cent increase from 2022 (11,461), and the highest number since 2016.

In 2023–24, 7,005 children and young people aged 0 to 17 years presented at WA specialist homelessness services alone or with their families (6,832 in 2022–23). The majority (4,324) were under 10 years of age.<sup>36</sup>

The single most common reason for children and young people to need housing and homelessness assistance is family and domestic violence.<sup>37</sup>

**Table 19: Children and young people aged 0 to 17 years on public housing wait list by number of applications and applicants, number and per cent, WA, 2016 to 2024**

	Total applicants (all ages)	Applicants (0 to 17 years)	Proportion of all applicants	Applications (0 to 17 years)
	Number	Number	Per cent	Number
30 June 2016	36,167	11,963	33.1	6,058
30 June 2017	29,544	9,070	30.7	4,532
30 June 2018	23,637	6,892	29.2	3,311
30 June 2019	23,254	6,824	29.3	3,325
30 June 2020	24,364	7,469	30.7	3,669
30 June 2021	29,720	9,934	33.4	4,975
30 June 2022	33,563	11,461	34.1	5,752
30 June 2023	33,986	11,744	34.5	5,960
<b>30 June 2024</b>	<b>35,903</b>	<b>12,278</b>	<b>34.2</b>	<b>6,363</b>

Source: Department of Communities (Housing), Public Housing Wait List as at 30 June 2024 custom report and previous years reports [unpublished]

Note: Children and young people under 18 are considered applicants when their parent(s) or guardians are applying for housing to accommodate them. In a small number of cases the young person (aged 16 to 17 years) can be applying in their own right

36 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2024, [Specialist Homelessness Services annual report 2023–24](#), Table Clients.1: Clients and support periods, by age and sex, 2023–24, AIHW.

37 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2024, [Specialist Homelessness Services annual report 2022–23](#), Table CPO.5: Children on a care and protection order, by main reasons (top 10) for seeking assistance, 2022–23.

# Vulnerability

On average, households waited 149 weeks (more than two years) to be housed (116 weeks in 2021–22 and 133 weeks in 2022–23).<sup>38</sup> This represents a further substantial increase in the average time on the waiting list.

The Department of Communities' Housing Authority notes that increased waiting times in 2023–24 were impacted by an increase in the number of applicants and external factors such as labour and material shortages which reduced the turnover of vacant housing.<sup>39</sup>

More than one quarter (28.2%) of WA households live in a rented dwelling.<sup>40</sup> This proportion has not changed materially for 25 years.

According to the Australian Census, in 2021 at least 2,058 WA children and young people were homeless (Table 20).<sup>41</sup> This figure is known to be underestimated due to the often-hidden nature of youth homelessness.<sup>42</sup>

**Table 20: Children and young people aged 0 to 18 years reported as homeless by age group and gender, number, WA, 2021**

	0 to 11 years	12 to 18 years	Total
Male	590	394	984
Female	560	455	1,015
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,150</b>	<b>850</b>	<b>2,058</b>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021, **Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness**, Table 4.6 Homeless Operational Groups and Other Marginal Housing, Western Australia–Sex by age of person–2021

Note: Cells in this table have been randomly adjusted to avoid the release of confidential data. As a result, cells may not add to the totals

38 Department of Communities 2024, **Housing Authority 2023–24 Annual Report**, WA Government, p.8.

39 Department of Communities 2024, **Housing Authority 2023–24 Annual Report**, WA Government, p.8.

40 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2022, **Housing Occupancy and Costs: 2019–20**, Table 12.15 Household Estimates, Selected household characteristics, Western Australia, 1994–95 to 2019–20, ABS.

41 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2023, **Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2021**, Homelessness Operational Groups and other Marginal Housing, Western Australia–Sex by age of person–2021, ABS.

42 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2020, **Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2016**, Youth homelessness, ABS.



# Vulnerability

## Developmental vulnerability

According to the 2021 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC),<sup>43</sup> 6,852 WA children were assessed as vulnerable on one or more developmental domains upon entering primary school.<sup>44</sup> This represents 20.3 per cent of children assessed in 2021, which is a slight increase from the results for 2018 (19.4%). At the time of publishing the most recent AEDC data was not yet available.

The proportion of children developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains is lower in WA (20.3%) than in Australia overall (22.0%) (Table 21).

**Table 21: Children assessed as developmentally vulnerable, number and per cent, WA and Australia, 2009, 2012, 2015, 2018 and 2021**

	WA				Australia	
	One or more domains		Two or more domains		One or more	Two or more
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent
2009	6,445	24.7	3,177	12.2	23.6	11.8
2012	7,048	23.0	3,449	11.2	22.0	10.8
2015	6,895	21.3	3,403	10.5	22.0	11.1
2018	6,369	19.4	3,086	9.4	21.7	11.0
2021	6,852	20.3	3,457	10.2	22.0	11.4

Source: Australian Early Development Census, **2021 AEDC National Report Appendix 2: State and Territory trends, all collections (data tables)**

The proportion of WA children who were developmentally on track across all five domains was 57.5 per cent as per the 2021 AEDC (46.5% in 2009).<sup>45</sup>

Aboriginal children were less likely to be developmentally on track than non-Aboriginal children. Under the Closing the Gap initiative, a national target has been set for 55 per cent of Aboriginal children to be assessed as developmentally on track in all domains by 2031.<sup>46</sup>

43 The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) measures the development of children in Australia in their first year of full-time school. Data is collected using an adapted version of the Early Development Instrument, which consists of approximately 100 questions closely linked to child health, education and social outcomes across five key domains (physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills, and communication skills and general knowledge). Children receive a score between 0 and 10 for each domain and children falling below the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile are categorised as 'developmentally vulnerable'. AEDC scores are calculated for each domain for each individual child where enough valid responses have been recorded.

44 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) 2022, **Australian Early Development Census National Report 2021**, AEDC.

45 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) 2022, **2021 AEDC National Report Appendix 2: State and Territory trends, all collections (data tables)**, AEDC.

46 Productivity Commission 2024, **Closing the Gap Targets**, Outcome 4 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children thrive in their early years, Australian Government [website].

# Vulnerability

In 2021, only 31.3 per cent of Aboriginal children in WA were assessed as being developmentally on track in all five AEDC domains. This represents no change from 2018 (31.4%) but does represent an improvement since 2009 (21.1%).

Aboriginal children in very remote areas are much less likely to be developmentally on track than Aboriginal children in other areas (very remote: 18.6% developmentally on track; metropolitan area: 35.1% developmentally on track).

This is consistent with the results across WA, with one-quarter (24.2%) of children living in very remote areas being developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains compared to 9.4 per cent of children who live in the metropolitan area.<sup>47</sup> The proportion of developmentally vulnerable children in very remote areas has increased since 2009 (22.9% to 24.2%), while the proportion of children developmentally vulnerable across all other areas has generally decreased since 2009 (e.g. metropolitan area: 11.4% to 9.4%).<sup>48</sup>



47 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) 2022, **Public table by Remoteness 2009–2021**, AEDC.

48 Ibid.

# Vulnerability

## Children developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains – regional WA (2021)

The Kimberley region has the highest proportion of children who are developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains. Around one in four students in the Kimberley (24.3%) were assessed as being vulnerable on two or more domains in 2021. This is an improvement from prior years' results (2015: 28.5%; 2018: 26.5%).

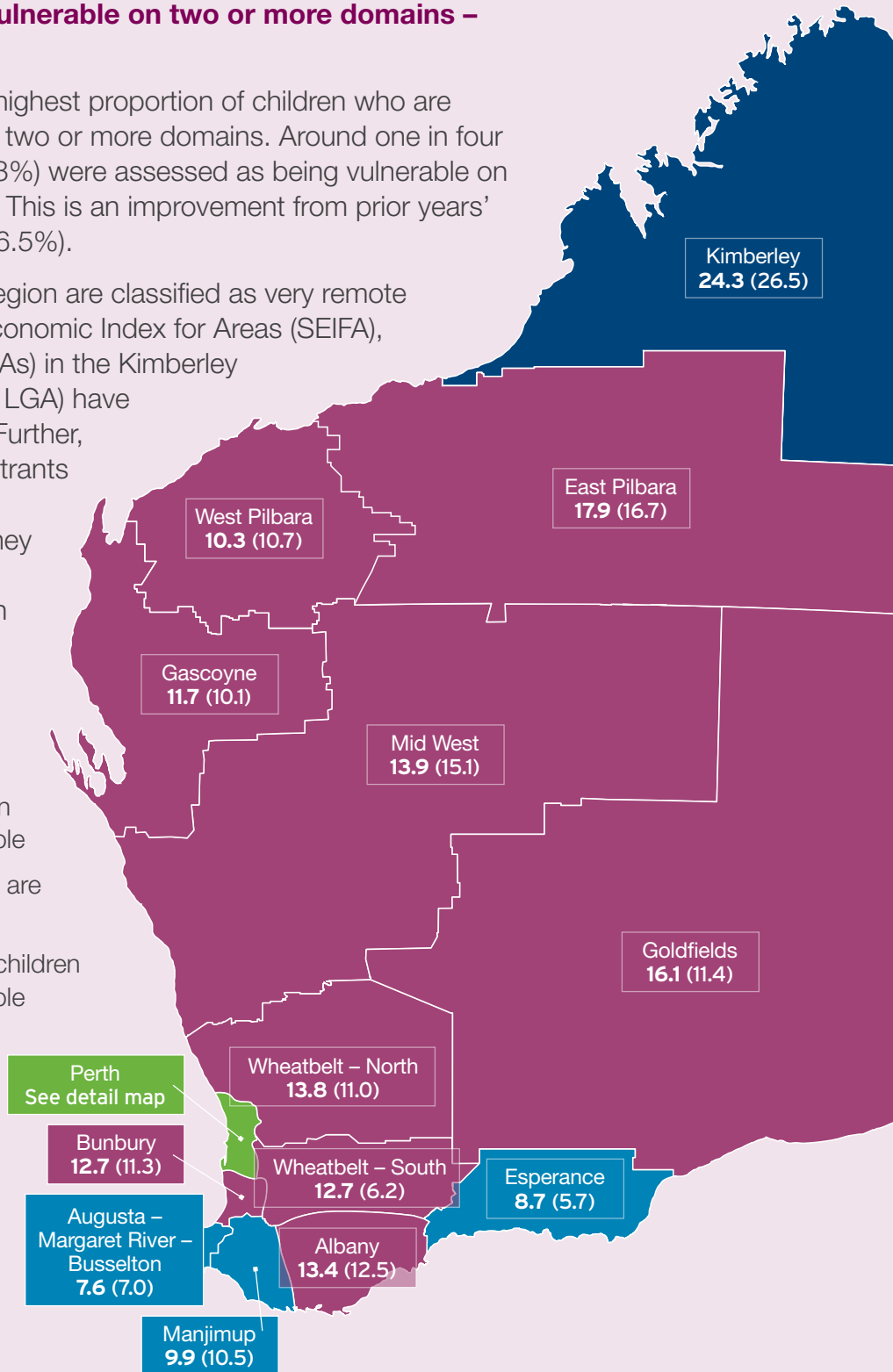
Large parts of the Kimberley region are classified as very remote and according to the Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA), all local government areas (LGAs) in the Kimberley (with the exception of Broome LGA) have high levels of disadvantage.<sup>49</sup> Further, almost two-thirds of school entrants in the Kimberley are Aboriginal (see Education chapter) and they are more likely to experience poverty and disadvantage than non-Aboriginal children.<sup>50</sup>

- Below 10 per cent of children are developmentally vulnerable
- 10 to 20 per cent of children are developmentally vulnerable
- Greater than 20 per cent of children are developmentally vulnerable

( ) Data in brackets is 2018 result

Source: Australian Early Development Census 2022, **Public table by Statistical Area Level (SA3) 2009–2021**

\* Data for Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands is not included due to the relatively small number of children with valid scores



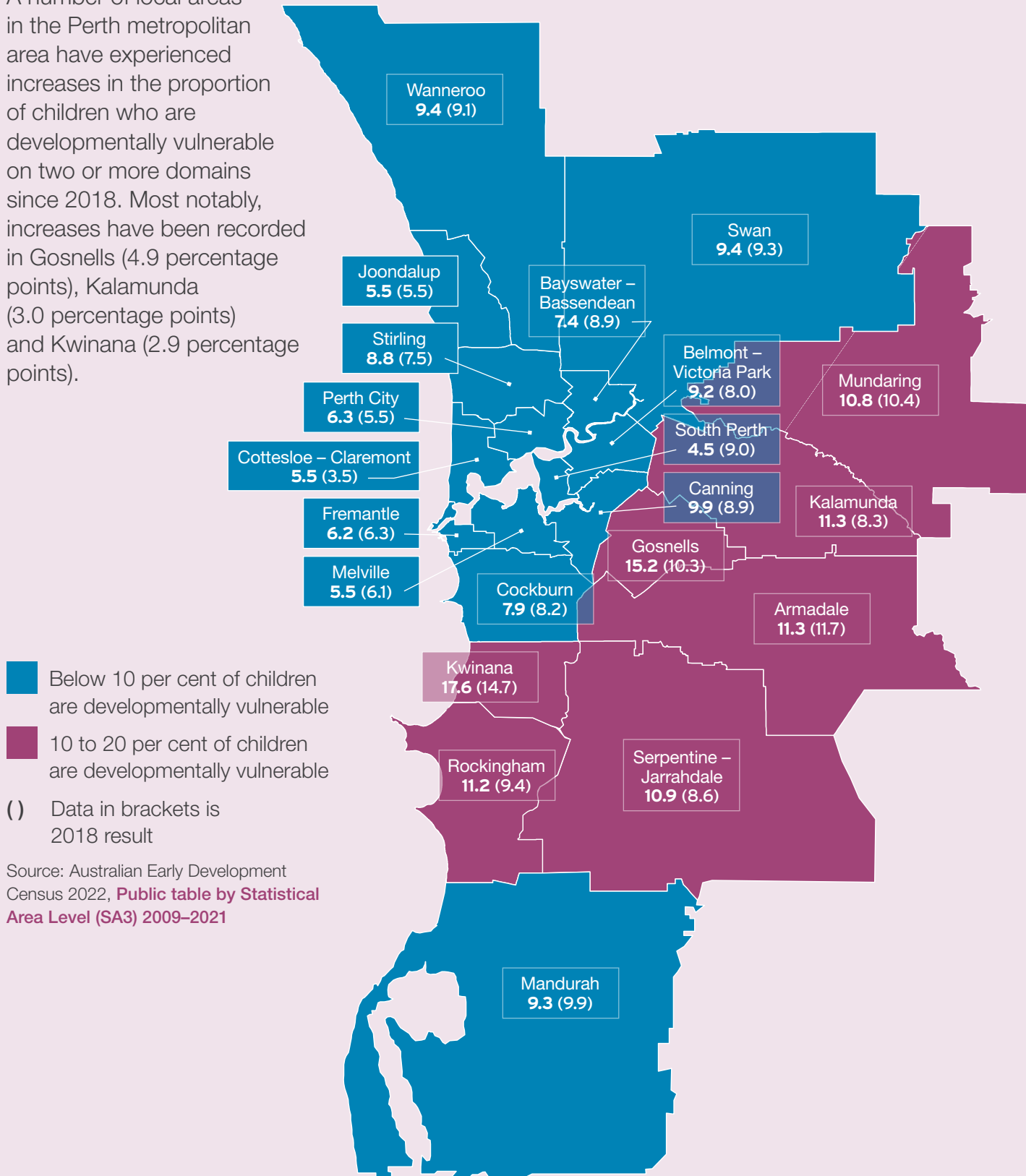
49 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2018, **Socio-Economic Indexes for Australia (SEIFA), 2021**, Table 1 Local Government Area (LGA) SEIFA Summary, 2021, ABS.

50 Markham F and Biddle N 2018, **Income, Poverty and Inequality: 2016 Census Paper No. 2**, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian National University, p. 16.

# Vulnerability

## Children developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains – metropolitan area (2021)

A number of local areas in the Perth metropolitan area have experienced increases in the proportion of children who are developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains since 2018. Most notably, increases have been recorded in Gosnells (4.9 percentage points), Kalamunda (3.0 percentage points) and Kwinana (2.9 percentage points).



Below 10 per cent of children are developmentally vulnerable

10 to 20 per cent of children are developmentally vulnerable

( ) Data in brackets is 2018 result

Source: Australian Early Development Census 2022, [Public table by Statistical Area Level \(SA3\) 2009–2021](#)

# Vulnerability

## Children and young people in child protection system

Aboriginal children and young people continue to be over-represented in the child protection system and it is increasing annually. The Closing the Gap target is to reduce the number of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care by 45 per cent by 2031.<sup>51</sup> The continued growth in WA of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care puts this target at significant risk.

On 30 June 2024, there were 5,326 children and young people in out-of-home care in WA, more than half of whom (59.7%) were Aboriginal. This is a significant increase from 30 June 2014 when 4,237 children and young people were in out-of-home care, 50.6% of whom were Aboriginal.<sup>52</sup>

From 30 June 2023 to 30 June 2024, the total number of children and young people in care increased by 152, or 2.9 per cent (Table 22). Over this period, the number of Aboriginal children and young people in care increased by 3.6 per cent and the number of non-Aboriginal children and young people in care increased by 2 per cent in the same period.

**However, in the 10 years from 30 June 2014 to 30 June 2024, the total increase of children and young people in out-of-home care was 1,089.** Of the 1,089 children and young people, 1,034 were Aboriginal and 55 were non-Aboriginal.

**Table 22: Children and young people in out-of-home care by age group and Aboriginal status, number, WA, 30 June 2023 and 30 June 2024**

	30 June 2024			30 June 2023		
	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal	Total	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal	Total
Less than 1 year	106	65	<b>171</b>	104	55	<b>159</b>
1 to 4 years	628	343	<b>971</b>	569	347	<b>916</b>
5 to 9 years	936	567	<b>1,503</b>	926	558	<b>1,484</b>
10 to 14 years	956	684	<b>1,640</b>	955	672	<b>1,627</b>
15 years and older	552	489	<b>1,041</b>	514	474	<b>988</b>
<b>Total children and young people in care</b>	<b>3,178</b>	<b>2,148</b>	<b>5,326</b>	<b>3,068</b>	<b>2,106</b>	<b>5,174</b>
Per cent of total	59.7%	40.3%	<b>100.0%</b>	59.3%	40.7%	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Department of Communities, Annual Child Protection Activity Performance Reports 2022–23 and 2023–24

51 Productivity Commission 2022, **Closing the Gap Targets**, Socio-economic outcome area 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are not overrepresented in the child protection system, Australian Government [website].

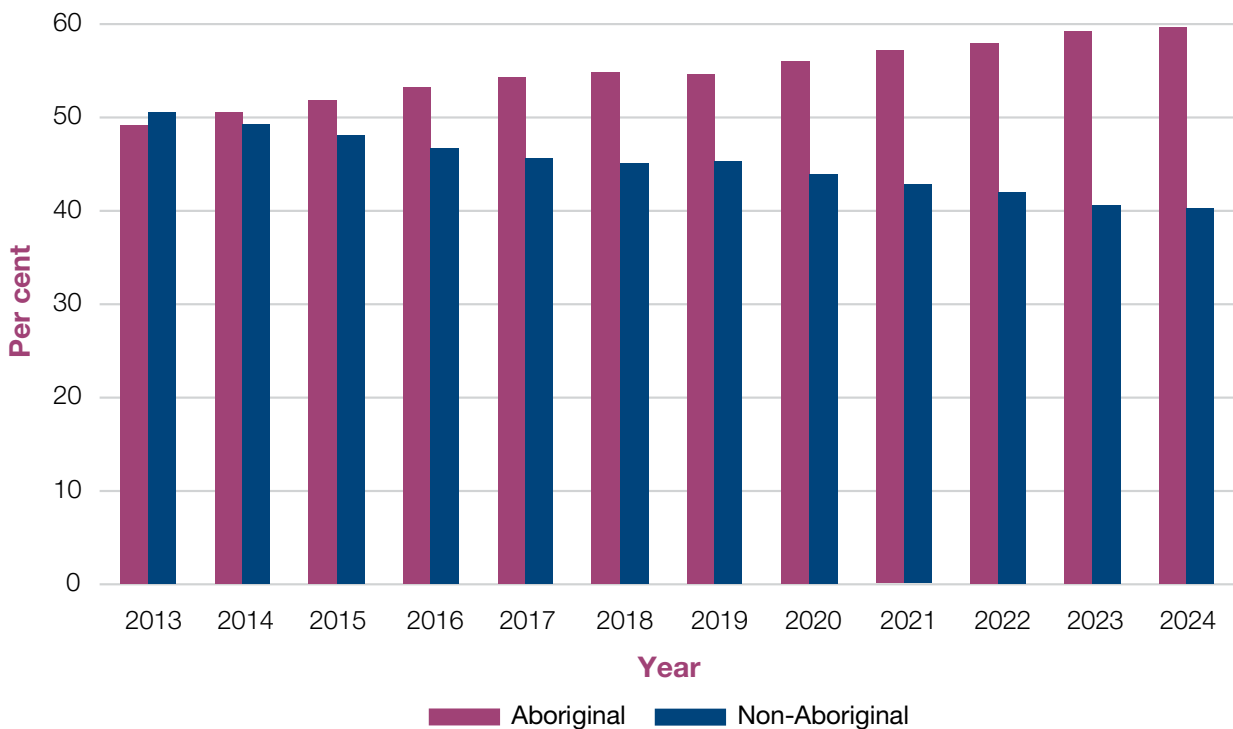
52 Department of Communities 2024, **Child Protection Activity Performance Information 2023–2024** WA Government, p.17.

# Vulnerability

The proportion of children and young people in out-of-home care in WA who are Aboriginal has increased from 49.4 per cent in 2013 to 59.7 per cent in 2024 (Figure 5).

Despite significant focus on the over-representation of Aboriginal children in care in recent years, the proportion of Aboriginal children and young people in out-of-home care is steadily increasing, while the proportion of non-Aboriginal children and young people is slowly decreasing (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Proportion of Children and young people in out of home care by Aboriginal status, per cent, WA, 30 June 2013 to 30 June 2024**



Source: Department of Communities (and previous Department of Child Protection), Annual Reports from 2016–17 to 2023–24

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) publishes the **Child Protection Australia** report annually. This report provides detailed data from state and territory child protection agencies, including rates of children and young people being placed in out-of-home care.

In June 2023, Aboriginal children and young people in WA were 21.5 times more likely to be in out-of-home care than non-Aboriginal children and young people (64.4 per 1,000 compared to 3.0 per 1,000).<sup>53</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2024, **Child Protection Australia, 2022–23**, Table S5.10: Children in out-of-home care, by Indigenous status and state or territory, 30 June 2023, AIHW.

# Vulnerability

## Children and young people in the youth justice system

On an average day<sup>54</sup> in 2022–23, there were 538 children and young people aged 10 to 17 years under youth justice supervision in WA<sup>55</sup>, with the majority (451.6 or 83.9%) being supervised in the community.

The number of children and young people under supervision in the youth justice system has steadily increased from 2020–21 to 2022–23, mainly due to a large increase of children and young people under community supervision (Table 23). However, the number of children and young people in detention decreased noticeably, from 105 in 2021–22 to 86 in 2022–23.

**Table 23: Children and young people aged 10 to 17 years under youth justice supervision in the community or detention on an average day, number and per cent, WA, 2020–21 to 2022–23**

	2022–23		2021–22		2020–21	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Community	451.6	83.9	385.8	78.6	360	79.5
Detention*	86.4	16.1	105.0	21.4	96	21.2
<b>Total**</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>490</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>453</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), [Youth Justice in Australia 2022–23](#), [Youth Justice in Australia 2021–22](#), [Youth Justice in Australia 2020–21](#), Table S34a: Young people under community-based supervision on an average day, by age, states and territories, and Table S72a: Young people in detention on an average day by age, states and territories

\* Children and young people in detention are either held in Banksia Hill Detention Centre in Canning Vale, which is WA's only youth detention facility, or as of 2022 in Unit 18 of Casuarina Prison (the maximum-security prison for adult males which was gazetted as a juvenile facility)

\*\* The number of young people on an average day may not sum due to rounding, and because some young people may have been moved between community-based supervision and detention on the same day. Caution is to be applied when interpreting trends among small populations such as these

54 The 'average day' measure is calculated by summing the number of days each young person spends under supervision during the financial year and dividing this by the total number of days in the year. It reflects the number under supervision on any given day during the year and indicates the average number of young people supported by the supervision system at any time. This summary measure reflects both the number of young people supervised, and the amount of time they spent under supervision. Source: AIHW 2024, [Youth Justice in Australia 2023–24](#), AIHW.

55 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2024, [Youth Justice in Australia Annual Report 2022–23](#), Table S1a, AIHW.

# Vulnerability

The Department of Justice also reports that in 2023–24 there was a decrease in the number of children and young people in detention (either as a result of being under arrest, on remand or having been sentenced) on an average day, from 94 in 2022–23 to 82 in 2023–24.<sup>56</sup>

More than half (57.3%) of children and young people in detention on an average day in 2023–24 were unsentenced.<sup>57</sup>

In 2022–23, Aboriginal children and young people were around 35 times more likely than non-Aboriginal children to be held in youth detention (2021–22: 45 times) (Table 24). Although we have seen some improvement in decreasing the rate of Aboriginal children and young people in detention, we are still facing the risk of failing to meet the Closing the Gap target, which aims to reduce the rate of Aboriginal children and young people in detention by at least 30 per cent by 2031.

**Table 24: Children and young people aged 10–17 under community-based supervision or detention on an average day of Aboriginal status, number and rate, WA, 2022–23**

	Aboriginal		Non-Aboriginal		Total		Rate Ratio Aboriginal/ Non-Aboriginal
	Number	Rate**	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	
Community	284.5	156.3	167.1	6.2	<b>451.6</b>	<b>15.7</b>	25.2
Detention	63.0	34.6	23.4	0.9	<b>86.4</b>	<b>3.0</b>	34.6
<b>Total*</b>	<b>347.5</b>	<b>189.2</b>	<b>190.5</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>18.6</b>	<b>27.0</b>

Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2023, *Youth Justice in Australia 2022–23*

- Table S132b: Young people under community-based supervision on an average day by age, sex and Indigenous status, Western Australia, 2018–19 to 2022–23
- Table S132c: Young people in detention on an average day<sup>(a)</sup> by age, sex and Indigenous status, Western Australia, 2018–19 to 2022–23
- Table S86a: Young people aged 10–17 in detention on an average day by sex, states and territories, 2013–14 to 2022–23 (rate)
- Table S89: Young people aged 10–17 in detention on an average day by sex and Indigenous status, states and territories, 2018–19 to 2022–23 (rate)
- Table S37a: Young people aged 10–17 under community-based supervision on an average day by sex and Indigenous status, states and territories, 2022–23 (rate)

\* Rates of young people on an average day may not sum up to total due to rounding

\*\* Rates are number of young people per 10,000 relevant population

<sup>56</sup> Department of Justice 2024, *Annual Report 2023–24*, WA Government, p.29. The data from AIHW and the Department of Justice for children and young people in Banksia Hill are marginally different.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.



# Vulnerability

According to latest release by AIHW, 'Youth detention population in Australia 2024', in the June quarter of 2024, there were 81 young people aged 10–17 in detention on an average night. This reflects a decrease from 101 in the June quarter of 2022.

**Table 25: Young people aged 10–17 in detention on an average night, number, WA, from June quarter 2020 to June quarter 2023**

Date	Number in detention
2020	99.7
2021	95.7
2022	101.4
2023	81.4
2024	80.8

Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2024, [Youth detention population in Australia 2024](#), Table S14: Young people aged 10–17 in detention on an average night by sex, states and territories, June quarter 2020 to June quarter 2024



# Vulnerability

Over the past four years, there has been a notable decrease in the proportion of Aboriginal children in detention. In the June quarter of 2022, they accounted for 80.5%, while in the June quarter of 2024, the proportion had reduced to 65.1%. Despite this decline, it's worth noting that the number of Aboriginal children in detention was consistently higher than non-Aboriginal children during this period (Figure 6).<sup>58</sup>

**Figure 6: Proportion of children and young people aged 10 to 17 years in detention on an average night by Aboriginal status, per cent, WA June 2020 to June 2024 (quarterly)**



<sup>58</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2024, **Youth detention population in Australia 2024**, Table S4: First Nations young people aged 10–17 in detention on an average night by sex, states and territories, June quarter 2020 to June quarter 2024.

Table S9: Non-Indigenous young people aged 10–17 in detention on an average night by sex, states and territories, June quarter 2020 to June quarter 2024, AIHW.

# Vulnerability

Of the 81 children and young people held in detention in WA over the June quarter of 2024, seven children were aged between 10 and 13 years.<sup>59</sup> Of these, most were Aboriginal children and young people (Table 26).

**Table 26: Children and young people aged 10 to 17 years held in detention on an average night by age and Aboriginal status, number, WA, June quarter 2024.**

	10 to 13 years	14–17 years	Total
Aboriginal	6.6	46.0	<b>52.5</b>
Non-Aboriginal	1.1	27.2	<b>28.3</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>73.2</b>	<b>80.8</b>

Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2024, **Youth detention population in Australia 2024** Table S2, S3, S7, S8., AIHW

Notes:

1. Total includes young people with unknown sex
2. Trend data may differ from those previously published due to data revisions
3. The number of young people on an average night may not sum to total due to rounding

On an average night during the June quarter of 2024, 39 of the 81 children and young people aged 10–17 in detention were sentenced.<sup>60</sup>

Female children and young people were significantly less likely to be under youth justice supervision than male children and young people. On an average day in 2022–23, 22.7 per cent of children and young people under community supervision and 10.2 per cent of children and young people in detention were female.<sup>61</sup>

There is a clear interaction between the child protection system and the youth justice system. More than half (60.7%) of children and young people in the WA youth justice system during 2022–23 had also had an interaction with the child protection system in the previous ten years.<sup>62</sup>

59 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2024, **Youth Justice in Australia 2022–24**, Table S14: Young people aged 10–17 in detention on an average night by sex, states and territories, June quarter 2020 to June quarter 2024, AIHW. Table S12: Young people aged 10–13 in detention on an average night by sex, states and territories, June quarter 2020 to June quarter 2024.

60 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2024, **Youth detention population in Australia 2024**, Table S50: Young people aged 10–17 in sentenced detention on an average night by sex, states and territories, June quarter 2020 to June quarter 2024.

61 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2024, **Youth Justice in Australia 2022–23**, Table S132b and c: Young people under community-based supervision and detention on an average day by age, sex and Indigenous status, Western Australia, 2018–19 to 2022–23, AIHW.

62 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2024, **Young people under youth justice supervision and their interaction with the child protection system 2022–23** AIHW. Table S2: Young people who had been under youth justice supervision in 2022–23 and who had an interaction with the child protection system in the 10 years from 1 July 2013 – 30 June 2023, by state and territory, by Indigenous status, by sex (number, %).



**Commissioner for Children and Young People**  
Western Australia

Level 1, Albert Facey House, 469 Wellington St, Perth WA 6000

Telephone: (08) 6213 2297

Country freecall: 1800 072 444

Email: [info@ccyp.wa.gov.au](mailto:info@ccyp.wa.gov.au)

[ccyp.wa.gov.au](http://ccyp.wa.gov.au)

### **Connect with the Commissioner**



All photographs featured in this publication are of Western Australian children and young people and have been taken by or for the Commissioner for Children and Young People.