



Australian Government  
Productivity Commission

July 2024

# Closing the Gap

## Annual Data Compilation Report



## **The Productivity Commission**

The Productivity Commission is the Australian Government's independent research and advisory body on a range of economic, social and environmental issues affecting the welfare of Australians. Its role, expressed most simply, is to help governments make better policies, in the long-term interest of the Australian community.

The Commission's independence is underpinned by an Act of Parliament. Its processes and outputs are open to public scrutiny and are driven by concern for the wellbeing of the community as a whole.

Further information on the Productivity Commission can be obtained from the Commission's website ([www.pc.gov.au](http://www.pc.gov.au)).

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ISBN 978-1-74037-804-8 (online)

ISBN 978-1-74037-803-1 (print)

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## Acknowledgments

The Productivity Commission acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the first storytellers of this land and Traditional Owners of Country on which we now live and work. We recognise their continuing connection to lands, waters, communities and cultures. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and to Elders past and present.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this report may contain the names of people who have since passed away.

The Productivity Commission thanks the Partnership Working Group along with members of the community, organisations and government agencies who have provided data and other information for use in this report.

## Content Warning

This report contains material that can be confronting and disturbing. Sometimes information (words and data) can cause sadness or distress, or traumatic memories for people. For some people, these responses can be overwhelming. Support is available if you need to talk to someone.

**The following services are available 24 hours a day:**

13YARN: 13 92 76

Beyond Blue: 1300 224 636

1800RESPECT: 1800 737 732

MensLine Australia: 1300 789 978

Lifeline: 13 11 14

Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467



## About the Artwork – ‘Pathways of Progress: A Journey Towards Closing the Gap’

In the timeless expanse of creation, the Productivity Commission embarked on a sacred journey, painting the story of progress across three artworks that echoed with the rhythms of the land and water, resonating with the heartbeat of the people.

Upon the first artwork, hand prints adorned the beginning, symbols of care and connection, intertwined with the essence of Target 1 – Life expectancy. Footprints traced the paths of ancestors, guiding the way forward. Leaves danced in the breeze, whispering tales of ancient ties to country. The boomerang, a symbol of gathering the essence of information.

Throughout the artworks, dots of blue and orange shimmered, reflecting the land and water that sustains us. People symbols strode forward, their presence a testament to collective effort. Each symbol etched with stories of community, bridging the gap between past and present. Within, a sacred ring forms across each artwork, coloured orange and brown, heralding the Annual Data Compilation. Animal tracks of knowledge are placed representing the tracking of information and moving forward, guiding the way. And high above all, unity unfolded.

The top of the artwork portrayed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and government, connecting in partnership, minds united in purpose. As the journey unfolded across the remaining artworks, each milestone is marked with reverence. Through strokes of artistry, the Productivity Commission’s journey becomes a testament to resilience, to unity, to the enduring spirit of the land and its people. And in the end, it is not just a report, but a legacy—a testament to the power of collaboration, of understanding, and of hope. The colours used throughout the artwork were chosen to represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



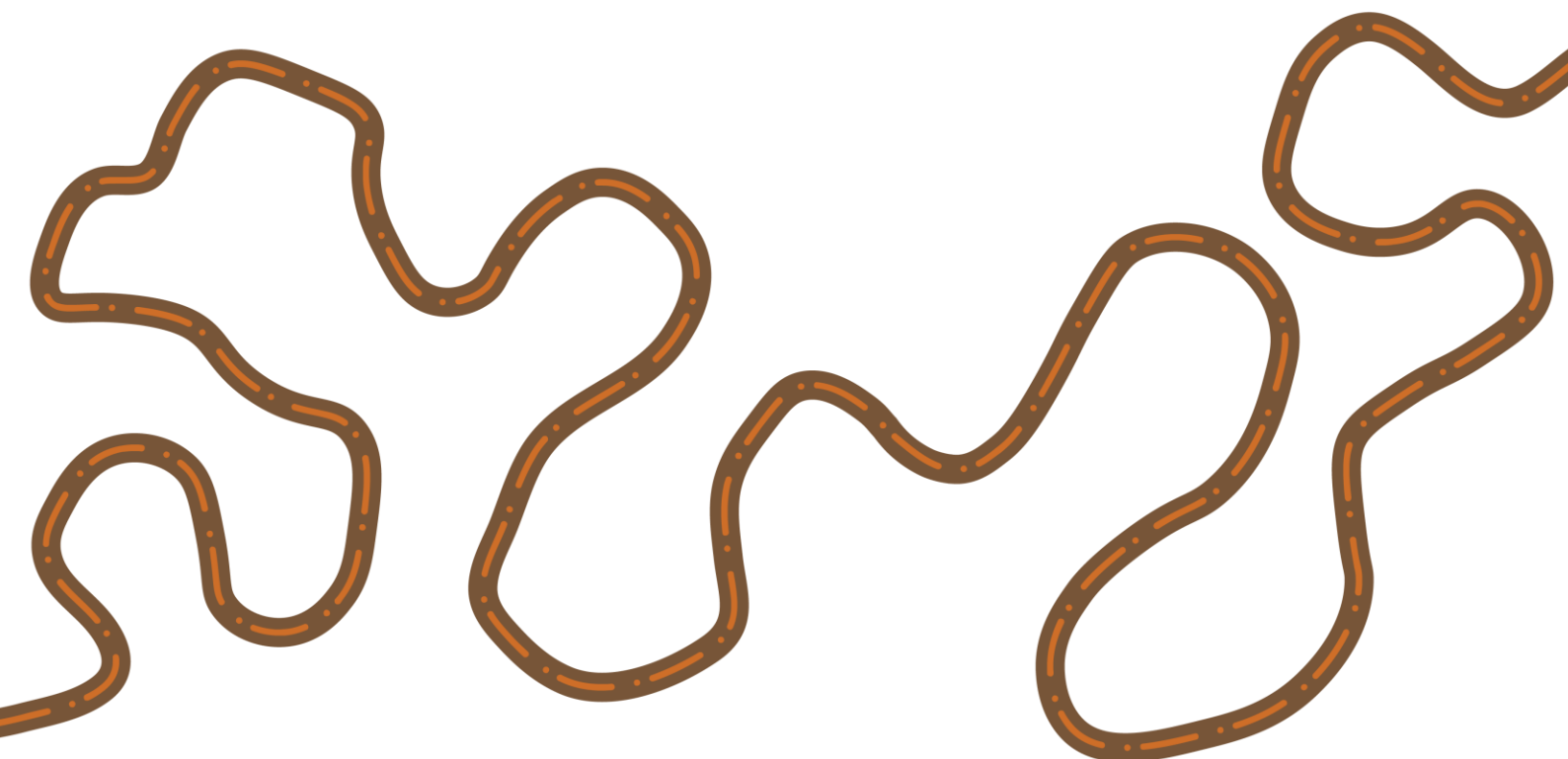
## About the Artist

Lani Balzan is an Aboriginal artist and graphic designer specialising in designing Indigenous canvas art, graphic design, logo design, Reconciliation Action Plan design and document design.

Lani is a proud Aboriginal woman from the Wiradjuri people of the three-river tribe. Her family originates from Mudgee but she grew up all over Australia and lived in many different towns starting her business in the Illawarra NSW and recently relocating to Mid-North Queensland.

In 2016 Lani was announced as the 2016 NAIDOC Poster Competition winner with her artwork "Songlines". This poster was used as the 2016 NAIDOC theme across the country. Lani has been creating art Aboriginal art since 2013 and has continued success across the country.

One of her biggest goals and inspirations with creating Aboriginal art is to develop a better connection to her culture and to continue to work towards reconciliation; bringing people and communities together to learn about the amazing culture we have here in Australia.



## Foreword

By taking an interest in this report, you are contributing to holding all governments accountable for addressing the inequality experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as committed to in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. This Annual Data Compilation Report monitors progress toward socio-economic outcomes outlined in that Agreement.

This report looks different from our previous reports. This year's report acknowledges that national targets should not be viewed in isolation and data alone is insufficient to fully grasp the diverse lived experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. For the first time, the socio-economic outcomes are reported thematically and the findings are contextualised. The report celebrates the enduring strength and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in sustaining the world's oldest living cultures while acknowledging the lasting impacts of colonisation and subsequent government policies.

We have assessed 15 out of the 19 socio-economic targets, which includes new data for nine targets since last year. Some targets are on track to be achieved, such as healthy birthweight, pre-school enrolment, and land and sea subject to Indigenous rights. However, outcomes are worsening in four areas: children removed into out-of-home care by child protection systems, the proportion of children who are developmentally on track, the rate of people taking their own lives and the number of adults imprisoned. And while five outcomes have improved since measured at the commencement of the Agreement, they are not on track to be met. This includes life expectancy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

A word of caution as you read this report: beware the 'tyranny of the aggregate'. Progress toward the targets under the Agreement is reported at a national level, which obscures the different experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in different regions and within specific communities.

Data gaps also mean that the picture of progress is incomplete. For example, we are still waiting on the development of indicators against the four Priority Reform areas, which are the key levers to the success of the outcomes under the Agreement. We know work is progressing on these matters and we hope a more complete picture can be presented to you in the future.

The data in this report should impel governments to act. Earlier this year, the Productivity Commission finalised its three-yearly review of progress against the Agreement, focusing on the transformational changes required by governments to implement the four Priority Reforms. We saw that in the pockets where the Priority Reforms were in action, outcomes were not only achieved, but exceeded. This report also highlights research that shows how outcomes can be improved, for example, the role of culturally safe antenatal health services in ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are born healthy and strong. This shows us that the aspirations of the Agreement are not only achievable, but that equity of outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is within reach if governments breathe life into the Priority Reforms.

Natalie Siegel-Brown  
*Commissioner*

Selwyn Button  
*Commissioner*

July 2024

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# 1. Overview



## 1.1 About this report

This is the fourth Annual Data Compilation Report (ADCR), which reports progress under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (the Agreement). The Agreement's objective is to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and governments to work together to overcome the inequality experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and achieve life outcomes equal to all Australians. Due to the broad and complex nature of this objective, the parties to the Agreement (Australian governments and the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations) established specific outcomes to measure progress against (clause 17). They consist of:

<b>Priority Reforms</b>	<b>Socio-economic outcomes</b>
Four outcomes focusing on changing how governments work to 'accelerate improvements in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people' (clause 25).	17 outcomes focusing on the rights, wellbeing and quality of life of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Implementing the four Priority Reforms is key to improving socio-economic outcomes. The logic of the framework for measuring progress of these 21 outcomes can be found in Attachment 1.

There are 23 targets and 164 indicators across the Priority Reforms and socio-economic outcomes.<sup>1</sup> The targets are specific and measurable goals, while the supporting indicators provide context and information on the drivers of the outcomes. Attachment 2 provides a detailed summary of data collection for the socio-economic targets and supporting indicators.

The Productivity Commission plays an accountability role under the Agreement by tracking outcomes. It publishes this ADCR, along with a Closing the Gap dashboard (the dashboard), with the latest information on targets, disaggregations (data that has been broken down into component parts, such as by gender or remoteness) and supporting indicators in the Agreement. In addition, the Commission has a role in comprehensively reviewing progress against the commitments in the Agreement every three years. Further details on the Agreement's governance framework can be found in Attachment 3.

The ADCR is published annually and provides a snapshot of the dashboard material. Further details on the information presented in the ADCR can be found on the dashboard. This year's report is focused on presenting new data and has three parts.

- This overview presents an assessment of progress for the outcomes, information on the data landscape and a closer look at the diverse experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Section 2 provides an analysis of progress and contextual information for each socio-economic outcome, grouped under themes.
- The appendix contains relevant background information including implementation and accountability frameworks for Closing the Gap and a data collection summary table.

<sup>1</sup> Two socio-economic outcomes have two targets, which are represented by capital letters (A and B). Some indicators also have several measures. The report refers to indicators using letters (i.e. a, b, c, d...). Measures under the indicators are represented numerically (.1, .2, .3 ...). For ease of reading, the report will refer to specific indicators as, for example, Indicator 16e. Measures add on a number, such as Measure 1e.1. This refers to Outcome 1, Indicator e – access/use of health services – rate of GP visits, on the dashboard.



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## 1.2 Progress towards Closing the Gap

This report presents the latest assessment of progress for each target. The socio-economic outcomes are reported thematically rather than in numerical order to provide a more comprehensive picture of progress and to illustrate how interconnected the outcome areas are.

The Commonwealth, states and territories share accountability for the implementation of the Agreement and are jointly accountable for the outcomes and targets. The report focuses on national outcomes, as there are currently no formal 'targets' to assess state and territory progress. A summary table outlining the assessment of progress for states and territories can be found in Attachment 4.

### Mixed progress in the socio-economic outcomes

Overall, data is available to report progress on 15 out of the 19 socio-economic targets. Five targets are on track, five targets show improvement but are not on track, progress for four targets is worsening and one has shown no change from the baseline (table 1.1). Figure 1.1 presents a progress of assessment summary for the socio-economic targets.

The data used to report socio-economic outcomes is fundamental to understanding progress in Closing the Gap. However, data alone is insufficient to understand the diverse experiences and voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia. Data, especially at macro-levels, can reinforce deficit narratives and binary comparison and fails to recognise the contributions and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Prehn 2024). This report considers the historical and ongoing context for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the socio-economic outcomes within the Agreement. It acknowledges the impacts of colonisation, government policies and legislation as well as the ongoing strength and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in sustaining the world's oldest living cultures.



**Table 1.1 – Summary of progress grouped by themes**

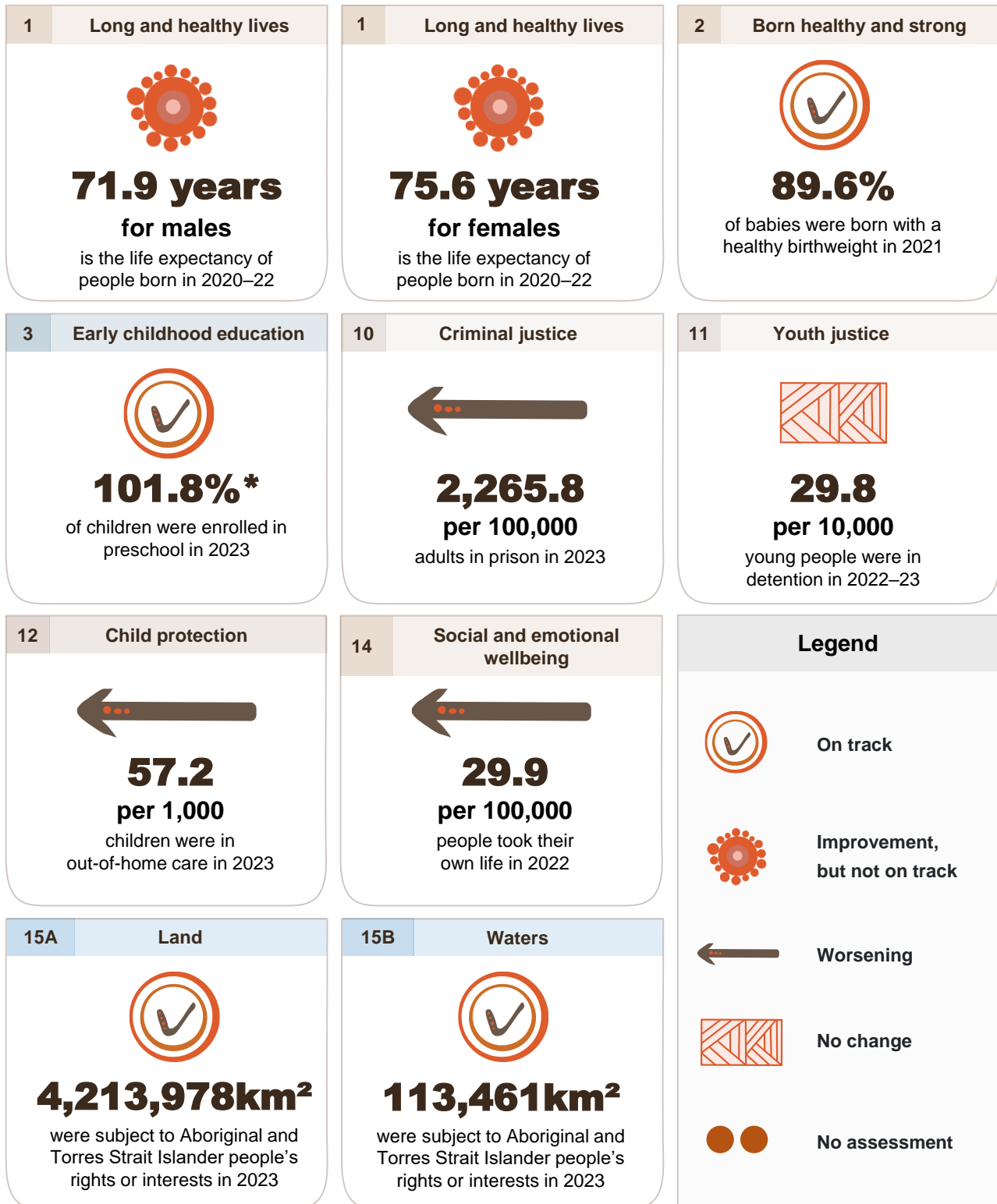
<b>Health, wellbeing and development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The life expectancy gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous people is improving but the target of a zero life expectancy gap is not on track to be met by 2031 (Target 1)*.</li> <li>A higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies are being born at a healthy birthweight and the target is on track to be met by 2031 (Target 2)*. The 2023 ADCR reported this target as improving but not on track.</li> <li>The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children assessed as developmentally on track has declined and the target is not on track to be met by 2031 (Target 4).</li> <li>For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the rate of deaths by suicide is increasing and the target of a significant and sustained reduction is not on track to be met (Target 14)*.</li> </ul>
<b>Families and kin</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care is increasing (not decreasing) and the target is not on track to be met by 2031 (Target 12)*.</li> <li>No data is available to track the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females and children who have experienced family violence (Target 13).</li> </ul>
<b>Language</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is no new data available to report on the progress towards a sustained increase in the number and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages since the baseline was established (Target 16)*.</li> </ul>
<b>Education and training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in Year Before Fulltime Schooling (YBFS) early childhood education is increasing and is on track to be met by 2025 (Target 3)*.</li> <li>The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people attaining Year 12 or equivalent is increasing, but the target is not on track to be met by 2031 (Target 5).</li> <li>The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25–34 years who have completed a tertiary qualification is increasing, but the target is not on track to be met by 2031 (Target 6).</li> <li>The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people fully engaged in employment, education or training has increased but the target is not on track to be met by 2031 (Target 7).</li> </ul>
<b>Employment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There has been an improvement in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25-64 who are employed and the target is on track to be met by 2031 (Target 8).</li> </ul>
<b>Housing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There has been an increase in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing but this target is not on track to be met by 2031 (Target 9A).</li> <li>The required data is not available to report progress on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander household access to essential services (Target 9B).</li> </ul>
<b>Country</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proportion of land mass subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's legal rights or interests is increasing and on track to be met by 2030 (Target 15A)*.</li> <li>The proportion of sea area covered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's rights or interests is also increasing and is on track to be met or potentially exceeded by 2030 (Target 15B)*. The 2023 ADCR reported this target as improving but not on track.</li> </ul>
<b>Justice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults are being incarcerated at an increased rate and the target of a 15% reduction by 2031 is not on track to be met (Target 10)*.</li> <li>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people continue to be overrepresented in the criminal justice system – no progress has been made (Target 11)*. The 2023 ADCR reported this target as on track.</li> </ul>
<b>Digital inclusion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No new data is available (since the baseline was established) to report on the progress towards increased access to information and services enabling participation in informed decision-making by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Target 17).</li> </ul>

Targets with this symbol \* have new data to assess progress since the 2023 ADCR.



**Figure 1.1 Priority Reforms and socio-economic outcomes – progress assessment**

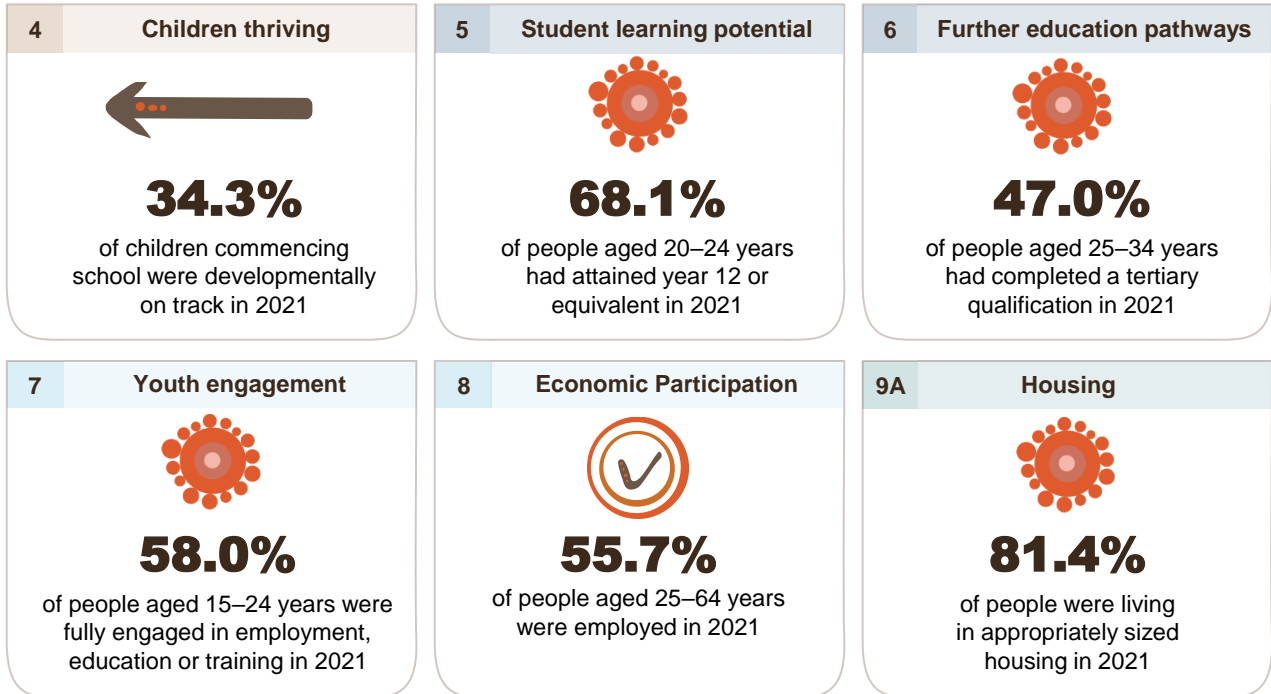
Socio-economic outcomes – Target data updated in the 2024 ADCR



\*Enrolment exceeds 100% because the numerator and denominator come from different sources with different assumptions. Please refer to box 2.13 for more information.



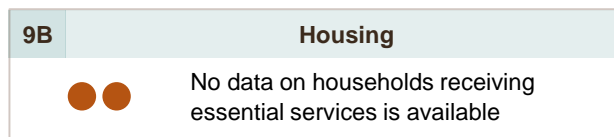
Socio-economic outcomes – Target data from a previous ADCR



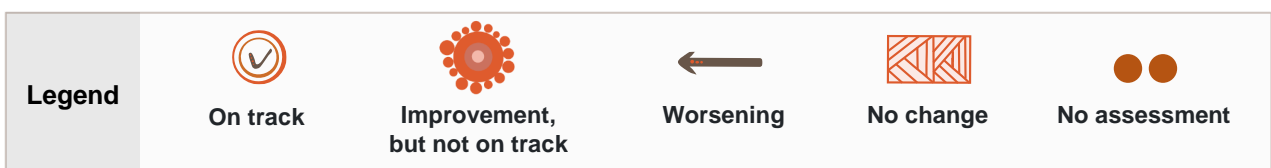
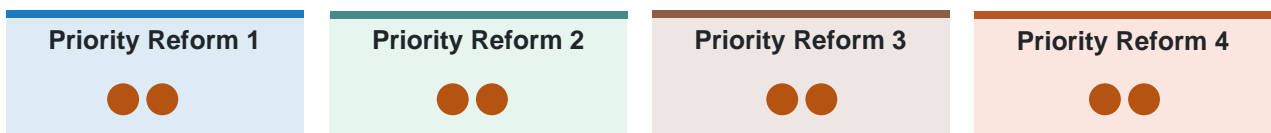
No recent assessment of progress



No data source and no assessment of progress



Priority reforms – No measurement to assess progress



## No data to assess progress on the Priority Reforms

The ADCR (and the dashboard) do not currently report on progress towards achieving the Priority Reforms. The reason for this is that the parties to the Agreement have not yet settled on how progress should be measured or the data that should be drawn upon. The Commission understands that a measurement framework and recommended indicators are under development and that a draft report has been submitted to the National Indigenous Australians Agency, with feedback sought prior to it being finalised. Attachment 5 outlines the process for the development of reporting on the Priority Reform targets. Box 1.1 outlines the findings and recommendations of the Commission's first three-yearly Review of the Agreement and the response by Joint Council to the Review's recommendations.

### Box 1.1 – Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap

On 7 February 2024, the Productivity Commission released the first comprehensive three-yearly Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (the Review).

The Review found that despite some pockets of good practice, progress against the Priority Reforms has for the most part been weak and reflects tweaks to or actions overlaid onto business-as-usual.

The recommendations of the Review were that:

- governments need to share power to make meaningful progress
- Indigenous Data Sovereignty must be recognised and supported
- mainstream systems and culture within governments should be fundamentally rethought, and
- stronger accountability is required to drive behaviour change.

The Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap noted that data still needs to be reported across all of the Priority Reform targets, four of the socio-economic targets, 143 supporting indicators and all 123 data development items. The Review noted the scale of this task and the ambiguity in responsibility for actions, given the multiple working groups and organisations involved. It also noted the lack of conceptual logic for some indicators.

The Review identified how Closing the Gap data measurement and reporting should enable and advance Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDS) and Indigenous Data Governance (IDG). IDS refers to 'the right of Indigenous people to exercise ownership over Indigenous Data. Ownership of data can be expressed through the creation, collection, access, analysis, interpretation, management, dissemination and reuse of Indigenous Data' (Maiam Nayri Wingara 2018, p. 1). IDS is given practical effect through IDG. IDG involves Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people autonomously leading the definition, collection, development, access, usage and control of data. IDG is centred on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data that is locally relevant and reflects community priorities, values, cultures, worldviews and diversity.

The Review identified that existing bodies and mechanisms, including the Commission, do not have the remit or governance structure to fully enable IDG and recommended the establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led Bureau of Indigenous Data (BoID).

On 5 July 2024, Joint Council agreed to all four key recommendations and 15 of the 16 recommended actions outlined in the Review. It has not agreed to the establishment of the BoID.

Source: Joint Council (2024); Maiam Nayri Wingara (2018); PC (2024).



### 1.3 Understanding the data landscape

Progress assessments, along with other Closing the Gap data, should be considered in the context of the data landscape, including how frequently data is reported, the quality of the data and where there are data gaps.

It is not currently possible to assess progress for every target and some targets cannot be assessed every year due to the frequency of data collection and reporting (table 1.2). Since the ADCR was first published, progress has not been assessed for four socio-economic targets and updates to progress for seven targets have occurred only once. Targets such as further education pathways and economic participation can only be updated every five years.

**Table 1.2 – Data collection frequency for SEO targets as at 30 July 2024<sup>a</sup>**

Target number	Last data reported on dashboard	Frequency
Targets 3, 10, 12, 15A, 15B	2023	Annually
Target 11	2022-23	Annually
Target 14	2022	Annually
Target 2	2021	Annually
Target 4	2021	Every three years
Targets 5, 6, 7, 8, 9A	2021	Every five years
Target 1	2020–2022	Every five years
Target 16	2018-19	Periodic
Target 13	2018-19	To be confirmed
Targets 17	2014-15	To be confirmed
Target 9B	Not applicable	Not applicable

a. A detailed summary of Closing the Gap data collection can be found in Attachment 2. If no new data is available for a target, readers are referred to the source of the most recent data, such as the 2022 or 2023 ADCR publications or the dashboard.

This report contains updates on progress for nine socio-economic targets, a new year of data for 13 supporting indicators, 10 supporting indicators reported for the first time and two new measures for an existing supporting indicator (table 1.3).

**Table 1.3 – What new data will you find in this report?**

Updated targets	Supporting indicators with a new year of data	New supporting indicators	New measures for existing supporting indicators
9 targets - 1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 12, 14 and 15A and 15B	13 supporting indicators across outcome areas: 1, 2, 3, 6, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16 and 17	10 new supporting indicators across outcome areas 1, 2, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 17	2 new measures for outcome area 1

Most data used to assess progress against the targets is drawn from government agencies, such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Australian Government agencies are now required to implement the new Framework for Governance of Indigenous Data (released May 2024) to embed relevant elements of IDS in their data lifecycle (box 1.2). This report (and the





dashboard) also draws upon some community-sourced data, such as the count of early years services (Indicator 3b).<sup>2</sup> Attachment 2 provides a detailed summary of data used on the dashboard.

### Box 1.2 – Framework for Governance of Indigenous Data

The Australian Government’s Framework for Governance of Indigenous Data (the Framework) was released on 30 May 2024. The Framework provides guidance for Australian Government agencies to implement and embed elements of IDS. The guidelines within the Framework direct Australian Government agencies to partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, build data-related capabilities, provide knowledge of data assets and build an inclusive system.

The Framework states that ‘Australian Government agencies are required to prepare implementation plans responding to the actions contained within the Framework and a timeframe for implementation’ (p. 9). Implementing the Framework will support efforts toward the commitments outlined in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, in particular Priority Reform Three (*Transforming Government Organisations*) and Priority Reform Four (*Shared Access to Data and Information at a Regional Level*).

Source: Commonwealth of Australia (2024).

The data outlined in this report and on the dashboard is a portion of the indicators outlined in the Agreement. The Commission works with the parties to the Agreement to specify and develop the supporting indicators named in the Agreement, expanding the range of indicators reported each year. Given the Agreement outlines 23 targets and 164 supporting indicators across the Priority Reforms and socio-economic outcomes, the scope of outstanding material to be reported remains extensive. There is also additional work underway within governments and the community to progress the Agreement’s approximately 150 data development items outlined in the Closing the Gap Data Development Plan.<sup>3</sup>

## 1.4 A closer look at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities’ diverse experiences

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing can encompass the cultural, mental, physical, and spiritual dimensions of individuals and community (Dudgeon et al. 2014). Applying this perspective to the Agreement means that the socio-economic outcomes, including their targets and disaggregations, could be viewed as mutually reinforcing. For instance, access to culturally responsive education not only enhances educational attainment but also improves employment opportunities. This interconnection across all outcomes means progress should not be viewed in isolation.

Progress toward the targets under the Agreement is reported at a national level, which means the data may not reflect the different experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. Breaking down the data – or disaggregating it – can provide more insights into the outcomes and experiences in different regions and population groups, highlighting areas of progress and where greater

<sup>2</sup> According to the Closing the Gap Data Development Plan (2022–2032), community-sourced data is driven by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and priorities, supports self-determination for place-based decision-making and ensures Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are data custodians, controlling the narrative and access to data.

<sup>3</sup> The Closing the Gap Data Development Plan (2022–2032) was approved by the Joint Council on Closing the Gap in August 2022. The plan can be found at [www.closingthegap.gov.au/resources](http://www.closingthegap.gov.au/resources).



effort is needed (clause 82 of the Agreement). For example, living with disability or living in a remote area can present unique challenges that can affect outcomes significantly. Understanding the experiences of different population groups can help to target policies and programs and enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities to make more informed decisions about their lives.

Disaggregated data is available for most outcomes, including by age, gender, disability status, remoteness area and socio-economic status of the locality. However, data for key priority groups such as the Stolen Generations and LGBTQIA+ individuals is not currently available.

The intersection of location and demographic factors may create additional advantages or barriers. For example, a young Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person with disability living in a very remote area may face greater challenges compared with others. Individuals with multiple intersecting attributes often experience more complex and compounding disadvantages across the socio-economic outcome areas. While some disaggregated data is available, reporting on target outcomes by intersecting factors is limited.

## **People living in more remote areas typically experience poorer outcomes**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people tend to live more in urban and regional areas than remote areas, but they make up a higher percentage of the population living in remote areas (AIHW 2023).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in more remote areas typically experience poorer outcomes, a trend which is not as prevalent among non-Indigenous people. For example, in 2020–2022, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in remote areas had a life expectancy about 5 years shorter than people in major cities or inner and outer regional areas. There are barriers to better outcomes, such as distance to, or availability of culturally responsive government services and infrastructure for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in remote areas.

Even where there is progress towards a target, there is generally less progress, or in some cases worsening outcomes, in remote areas. For instance, outcomes improved for further education pathways (Target 6) and economic participation (Target 8) in all areas except in very remote areas, where progress stagnated or slightly decreased. Similarly for youth engagement in employment or education (Target 7), outcomes in remote and very remote areas have worsened since the baseline year (2016) but have improved in inner regional and regional areas.

For the two targets with worsening progress where remoteness data is available, childhood development (Target 4) and suicide rates (Target 14), outcomes have worsened across all areas of remoteness since the baseline (2018).

## **Improvement in some outcomes across all socio-economic areas of disadvantage**

Some Closing the Gap data can provide insights into outcomes according to the socio-economic status of the locality in which a person lives. Unlike outcomes in remote areas, there has been progress across all socio-economic areas – from the most disadvantaged through to the least disadvantaged localities – since the baseline years. This includes outcomes in the areas of school completion (Target 5), further education pathways (Target 6), economic participation (Target 8) and appropriately sized housing (Target 9A).

However, outcomes generally remain worse for people living in disadvantaged areas than for individuals in less disadvantaged areas. For example, in 2020–22, an Aboriginal male living in the most disadvantaged areas had a life expectancy about 5 years shorter than an Aboriginal male in the least disadvantaged areas (AIHW 2024d).



## Mixed outcomes for young people

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population has a younger age profile than the non-Indigenous population. Young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (25 years and under) and those aged 25–40 years have consistently faced worse outcomes than people aged 40–50 years in access to appropriate housing (Target 9A) and deaths by suicide (Target 14) since the baseline years (2016 and 2018 respectively). However, young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and those aged 25–40 years are seeing greater improvements across economic participation (Target 8) and imprisonment rates (Target 10) compared with their older counterparts.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, early childhood education and care enrolment rates show promise (Target 3). However, broader wellbeing challenges persist (especially for children in rural areas), with little change in youth detention rates and suicide rates, and an increase in rates of out-of-home care. In particular, some outcomes show the vulnerability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the 10–13 year age group: more than one-third of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in youth detention in 2022-23 were aged 10–13 years when they entered youth detention for the first time (Target 11), while children aged 10–14 years had the highest rates of out-of-home care (Target 12).

## Males and females experience differences in socio-economic outcomes

Outcomes tend to be better for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females than males.<sup>4</sup> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females are more likely than males to attain a year 12 or equivalent qualification and to complete tertiary education, and they have lower rates of adult incarceration (Target 10) and suicide (Target 14). However, a higher rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males than females are employed (Target 8), fully engaged in employment, education and training (Target 7) and live in appropriately sized housing (Target 9). Over time, progress has been more evenly distributed between males and females. Of the 13 outcome areas with data for males and females, males saw greater improvements in six areas, including life expectancy (Target 1) and access to appropriately sized housing (Target 9), while females experienced greater improvement in seven areas.

## The lives of people with disability are seeing some improvement

In 2021, 8.2% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people reported needing core activity assistance, up from 6.7% in 2016 (ABS 2022a). Although there have been some improvements in outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people needing assistance with core activities, progress is less pronounced compared to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people without disability (Targets 4, 6, 8 and 9; noting there is no new data since June 2023).<sup>5</sup> Two exceptions stand out: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability saw greater improvements in completing year 12 or equivalent (Target 5), while young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living with disability experienced worsening outcomes in employment or education (Target 7).

<sup>4</sup> The data records sex but not gender. For accuracy, this report refers to sex when referring to data. However, when discussing the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people outside the context of this data, the report refers to gender.

<sup>5</sup> Census data focuses on people who needed assistance with core activities, that is, had 'severe or profound core activity limitations', excluding individuals with severe physical disability, or psychosocial disability that does not impact core activity. Census data may not be fully comparable with data from other sources. Census data also contrasts with broader definitions of disability for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, where living with an impairment does not necessarily result in disability. Instead, disability is understood as the result of barriers to equal participation in the social and physical environment (FPDN 2019).





# 2. Progress in socio-economic outcomes



## 2.1 Health, wellbeing and development

Health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is holistic, encompassing not just physical health but also social, emotional, cultural, spiritual and ecological wellbeing for individuals and communities (Dudgeon et al. 2014). This perspective reflects a strong sense of cultural identity and deep connections to Country, culture, family, kinship and community that are essential to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing.<sup>6</sup>

Colonisation and government policies have disrupted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of living and suppressed cultural practices and expression, leading to profoundly harmful effects on wellbeing (Dudgeon et al. 2014; Lowitja Institute 2020). The ongoing trauma and marginalisation resulting from colonisation continues to affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing through a range of interrelated stressors. These include the presence and impact of institutional racism and discrimination in mainstream services as well as social and economic inequalities such as access to adequate housing, education and income, and unemployment. The result is higher health risk factors (AIHW 2022c; Gubhaju et al. 2015; Menzies 2019).

Social and emotional wellbeing encompasses many foundational and interconnected dimensions including autonomy, empowerment and recognition; family and community; culture, spirituality and identity; Country; basic needs; work, roles and responsibilities; education; physical health; and mental health (Butler et al. 2019; Dudgeon et al. 2014; Sutherland and Adams 2019). While social and emotional wellbeing and mental health are distinct, a decline in social and emotional wellbeing is associated with an increased risk of self-harm and death by suicide (Dudgeon et al. 2014).

Strengthening and investing in the health of children in the prenatal and early childhood periods can have positive and long-lasting impacts for wellbeing (AIHW 2011). The health and wellbeing of a baby are closely linked to that of their mother and surrounding environment (Comino et al. 2012; Healing Foundation 2020). As such, maintaining cultural practices, ties to community and Country, and ensuring family support can play a crucial role in promoting the wellbeing of mothers, babies and children (AIHW 2024a; Dudgeon et al. 2014; Healing Foundation 2020).

The unique protective factors found in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures such as connection to land, spirituality, ancestry, family and community are sources of strength and resilience (Dudgeon et al. 2014; Sutherland and Adams 2019). Strengthening and restoring protective factors can improve health outcomes and the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Dudgeon et al. 2014; Kelly 2009).

<sup>6</sup> It should also be acknowledged that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people exist in many diverse nations, cultures and language groups, with many perspectives – meaning that not all families and communities will share the exact same concepts of health and wellbeing.



## Box 2.1 – What data will you find in this section?

This section provides a snapshot of the latest data available in 2024 for socio-economic outcomes 1, 2, 4 and 14.

Outcome	Latest data
<b>Outcome 1:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoying long and healthy lives	
• Life expectancy (Target 1)*	2020–22
• Leading causes of death (1b)*	2018–22
• Health risk factors (1d)**	2018-19
• Access/use of health services (1e)*	2022-23
<b>Outcome 2:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being born healthy and strong	
• Healthy birthweight (Target 2)*	2021
• Mothers who smoke during pregnancy (2a)**	2021
• Use of antenatal care (2d)*	2021
<b>Outcome 4:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children thriving in their early years	
• Childhood development (Target 4)	2021
<b>Outcome 14:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoying high levels of social and emotional wellbeing	
• Suicide rates (Target 14)*	2022
• Experience of racism (14g)**	2022

Note: \* Indicates where a new year of data has been published since the 2023 ADCR. \*\* Indicates a new supporting indicator since the 2023 ADCR. Data considerations are provided in boxes 2.2 and 2.3 in this section.



## Outcome 1: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy long and healthy lives

### Life expectancy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is improving but the target to close the gap by 2031 is not on track to be met

The latest target data indicates that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people born in 2020–2022 are expected to live longer than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people born in 2005–2007 (box 2.2 provides data quality considerations).

An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male born in 2020–22 is expected to live to 71.9 years.	An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander female born in 2020–22 is expected to live to 75.6 years.
For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males born fifteen years earlier, the life expectancy was 67.5 years.	For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females born fifteen years earlier, the life expectancy was 73.1 years.

Nationally, the life expectancy gap is assessed as improving, however the target of achieving a zero life expectancy gap by 2031 is not on track to be met. In 2020–2022, non-Indigenous males were expected to live 8.8 years longer than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males while non-Indigenous females were expected to live 8.1 years longer than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females (figure 2.1).

#### Box 2.2 – Data considerations: use caution when comparing life expectancy or mortality over time

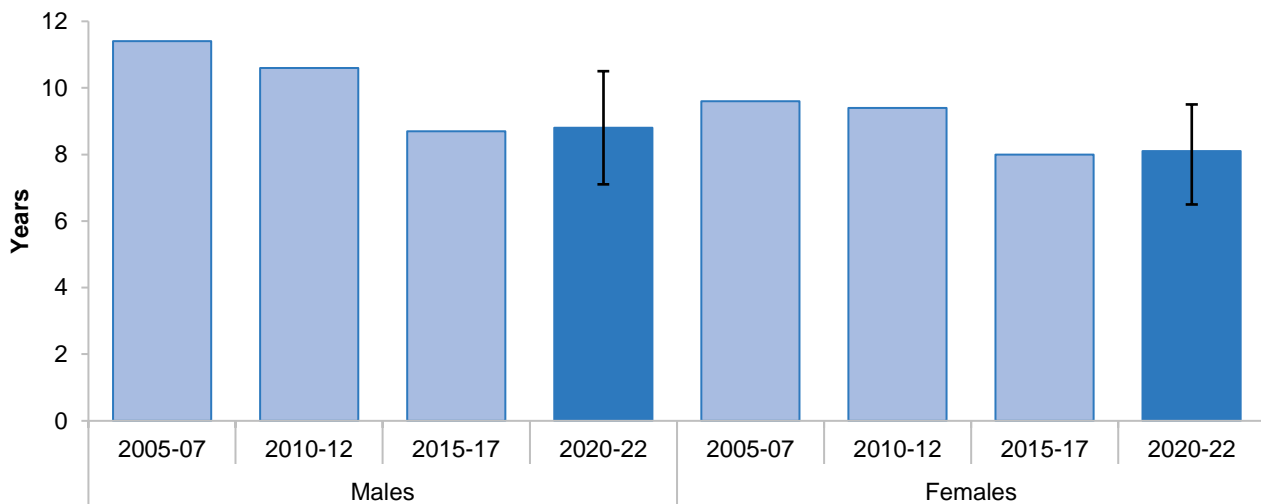
Caution is required when interpreting trends in life expectancy estimates. The ABS does not compare Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life expectancy estimates over time. Significant increases in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population and improvements to identification of Indigenous status in death records have contributed to changes in the life expectancy estimates. It is not possible to determine the extent to which population changes and/or improved health outcomes have contributed to changes in the life expectancy estimates.

Data is only available for New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory, which are the jurisdictions with sufficient Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identification to support analysis.

Source: ABS (2023).





**Figure 2.1 – Life expectancy gap nationally<sup>a,b</sup>****Life expectancy gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous people, by sex**

**a.** Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals. **b.** Confidence intervals are available for estimates in 2020–22 only.

Source: Derived from ABS Life Tables for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians

Life expectancy outcomes in 2020–22 differ depending on the relative socio-economic disadvantage of the locality where a person lives.<sup>7</sup> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males and females living in the most disadvantaged areas (lowest quintile) had lower life expectancy than those living in all other areas. The gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous people was narrowest for people in the middle 20% of relative socio-economic disadvantage.

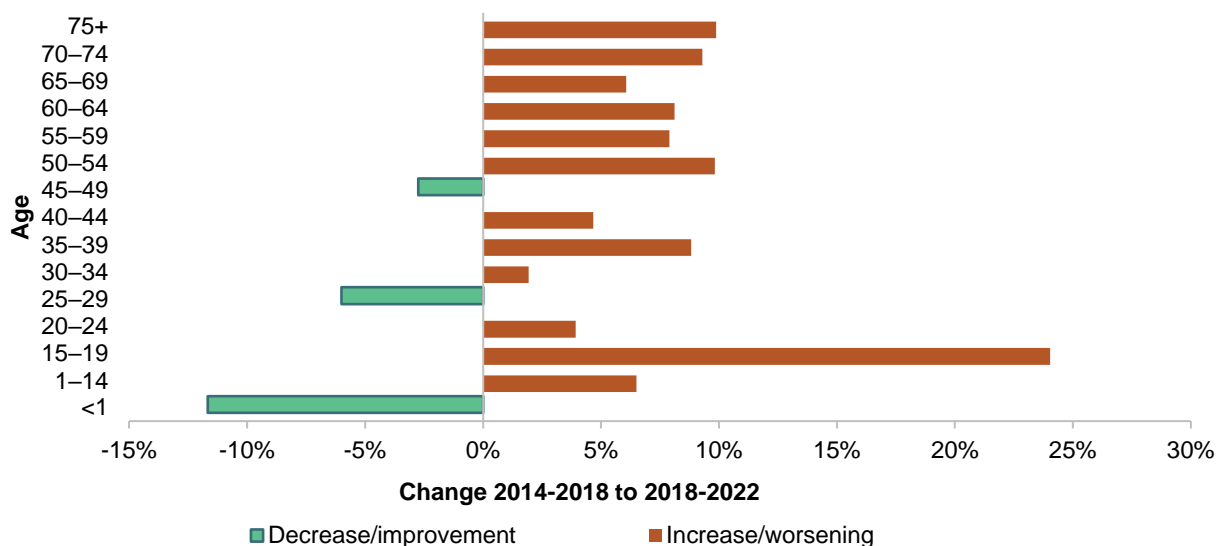
**Mortality rates are increasing for most age cohorts**

New supporting indicator data for mortality rates by leading cause of death – Indicator 1b – provides further insight into trends in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing.<sup>8</sup> A decreasing rate is the objective for this measure, but mortality rates – the number of deaths in a population, scaled to the size of the population – for most cohorts (except <1, 25–29 and 45–49 years) increased from 2014–18 to 2018–2022 (figure 2.2). Trends for this indicator should be interpreted with a degree of caution as outlined in box 2.2.

<sup>7</sup> Socio-economic disadvantage is measured by grouping areas into quintiles, with each quintile representing 20% of the population, ranging from the most disadvantaged in the first quintile to the least disadvantaged in the fifth quintile.

<sup>8</sup> New data (2018–2022) is reported on the dashboard for Indicator 1b which includes three measures for the leading causes of death in different populations: infant mortality (Measure 1b.1), child mortality (Measure 1b.2) and mortality by five-yearly age groups (Measure 1b.3). Data for mortality rates are only available for New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, the Northern Territory and South Australia.

**Figure 2.2 – Percentage change in mortality rates nationally<sup>a</sup>**  
**Change in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mortality rates by age cohort, all causes of death, between 2014–2018 and 2018–2022 (1b)**



a. Mortality rates for infants (children less than 1 year) are deaths per 1,000 live births. Mortality rates for other age cohorts are deaths per 100,000 people.

Source: Derived from ABS (unpublished) Causes of Death Australia

### Some changes in the leading causes of death

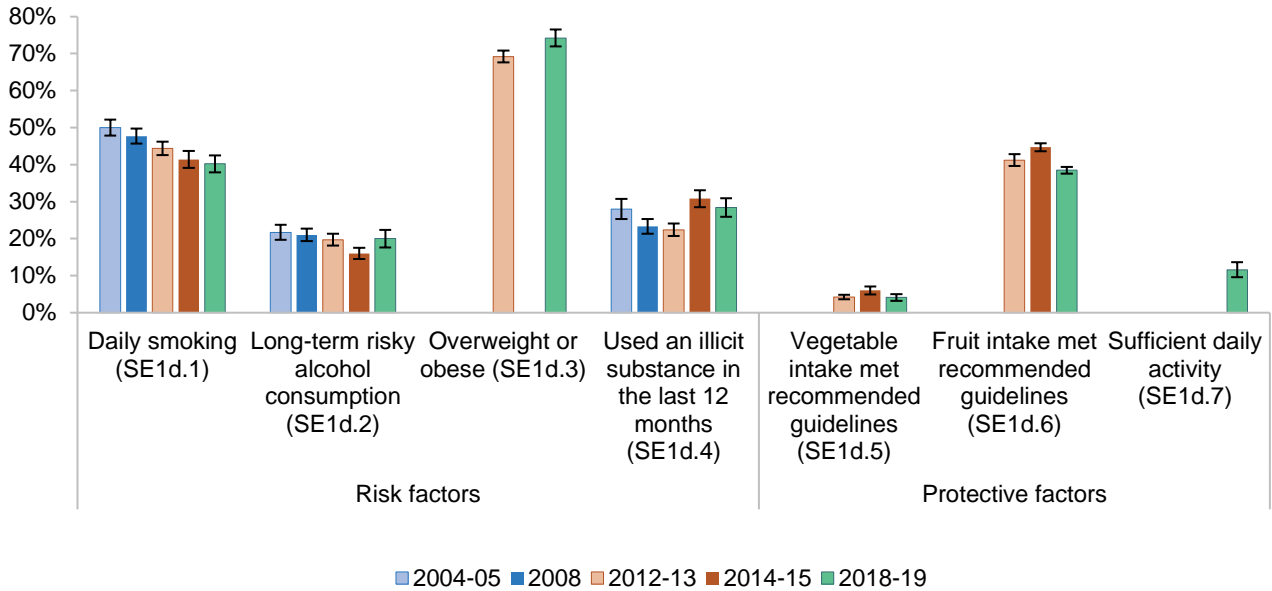
Despite a decline in the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infant mortality associated with certain conditions originating in the perinatal period, it remained the leading cause of death for children aged less than 1 year. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 1–14 years, the leading cause of mortality remained land-transport accidents and increased from 3.6 to 4.0 deaths per 100,000 children in 2018-2022 (Measure 1b.2).

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15–39 years the leading cause of death in 2018–2022 was self-harm, with rates of death due to self-harm increasing for people aged 15–19 years, 25–29 years and 35–39 years (from 2014-2018). Rates decreased for people aged 20–24 years and 30 to 34 years (from 2014–2018). Ischemic heart disease was the leading cause of death for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 40–74 years (by five-year age groups) in 2018–2022. Rates decreased from 2014–2018 to 2018-2022 for most age cohorts, except for people aged 40–44 years, 50–54 years and 70–74 years. Dementia overtook ischemic heart disease as the leading cause of death for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 75 years or over in 2018–2022.

### Personal protective and risk factors show little improvement

Strengthening protective factors and reducing risk factors – recorded under Indicator 1d – can promote holistic health and wellbeing, ultimately supporting a longer and healthier life. There has been little improvement in personal protective and health risk factors of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over time (figure 2.3). Data for 2018-19 shows that protective health factors including adequate daily fruit intake and vegetable consumption have remained largely unchanged since 2012-13 (box 2.3 provides data considerations). While the rate of daily smoking among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults declined by almost 10 percentage points since 2004-05, it plateaued between 2014-15 and 2018-19 at 40.2%. The proportion of adults reporting long-term risky alcohol consumption and illicit drug use has remained unchanged.

**Figure 2.3 – Personal protective factors and risk factor rates nationally<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>**  
**Rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people reported engaging in risky or protective behaviours**



a. For SE1d.2 – The data for 2008 and 2014-15 is not directly comparable with the data from other periods b. For SE1d.5 – The data for the Australian Capital Territory in 2012-13 is not publishable because the estimate is considered unreliable for general use c. For SE1d.6 –The relative standard error for Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory in 2018–19 is 50% or greater. These estimates are considered unreliable for general use d. For SE1d.7 – Physical activity data is applicable to persons 18 years or over in nonremote areas only. e. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

Source: ABS (unpublished) Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey; ABS (unpublished) National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey

**Box 2.3 – Data considerations: timeliness of risk and protective factors and why health assessment data may not be representative**

Data for personal protective and risk factors is only available for individuals aged 18 and over. The most recent data available for these factors is from 2018-19 and thus does not provide an accurate picture of the current situation.

Data on the rate of health assessments (discussed below) should be used with caution. It may underestimate the number of health assessments due to a lack of awareness of the specific MBS item number for recording Indigenous-specific health checks and the fact that some people may receive a health check outside Medicare.

Source: Schütze (2016).

## The utilisation of health services has declined but is showing slow signs of recovery

Greater utilisation of health services can support improved health outcomes over time (AIHW 2024c).<sup>9</sup> From 2016-17 to 2020-21, there was a decrease in non-referred GP services and services supporting the coordination of care for people with a chronic medical condition, such as kidney disease or cardiovascular disease (chronic care items) (figure 2.4). In 2021-22, with the COVID-19 pandemic still underway, the utilisation rates of these health services had not fully returned to baseline levels.

### Box 2.4 – Supporting improved Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health

Higher utilisation of healthcare services that are culturally safe and community-integrated can support improved wellbeing and higher life expectancy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Access to healthcare is complex, involving both sufficient supply of services and the ability to utilise available services (which may be influenced by affordability, physical accessibility, cultural safety and acceptability of the services and individual need).

Several factors can improve access and utilisation of healthcare services that are culturally safe and geographically accessible, including:

- availability of well-resourced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health organisations (ACCHOs) that deliver care in a holistic way that meets the unique cultural and health needs of the community
- addressing racism and discrimination in mainstream services to build trust and improve service quality
- improving the availability of high quality and culturally safe healthcare services, such as specialist services, for people who live in rural, regional and remote areas.

Source: Alford (2014); Gomersall et al. (2017); Lowitja Institute (2022); NACCHO (nd); Nolan-Isles et al. (2021); Marrie (2017); Watego et al. (2021).

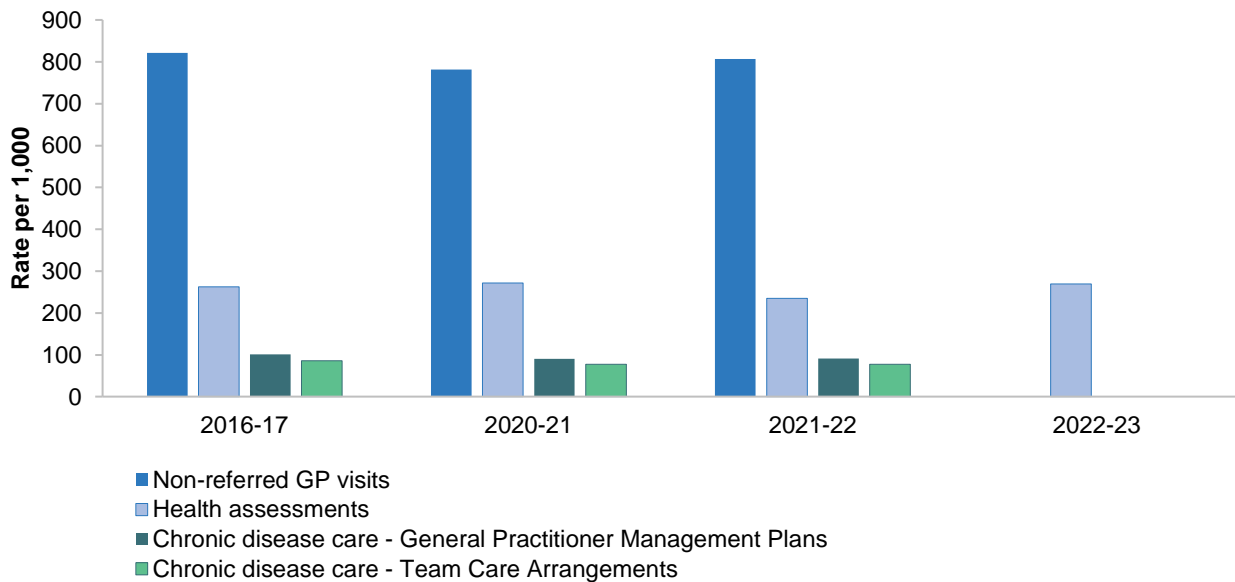
In 2021-22, around four in five (807.0 per 1,000) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people visited the GP. This rate is comparable across most states and territories, except the Northern Territory, which had slightly lower attendance rates at 721.1 per 1,000 people in 2021-22.

Nationally in 2021-22, almost one in 10 (91.0 per 1,000) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people received chronic disease care under General Practitioner Management Plans, while 77.8 per 1,000 received chronic disease care under Team Care Arrangements. This is higher than 2020-21 levels but a decrease since 2016-17 (figure 2.4). The Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania have generally lower rates for utilisation of General Practitioner Management Plans and Team Care Arrangements, while the Northern Territory, Queensland and New South Wales have generally higher rates of utilisation for chronic care items.

<sup>9</sup> New data for the access/utilisation of health services (Indicator 1e) in 2022–2023 is available for GP visits (Measure 1e.1), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific health checks or assessments (Measure 1e.2) and chronic disease care items (Measure 1e.3).



**Figure 2.4 – National rate of GP visits, health assessments and chronic disease care items<sup>a</sup>**  
**Rate of Medicare item utilisation per 1,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (1e)**



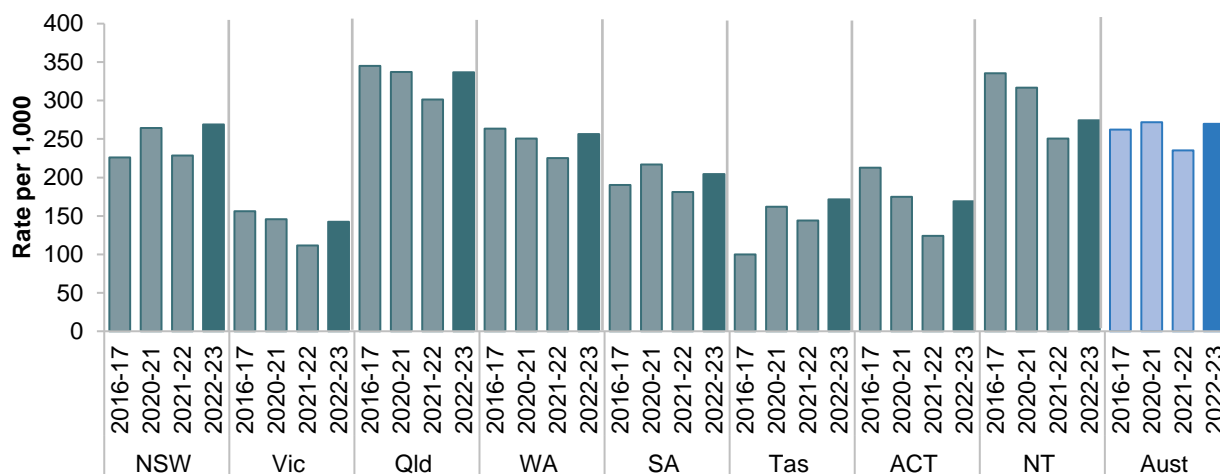
a. The 2022-23 data for non-referred GP visits and the chronic disease care items was not available

Source: Derived from AIHW (unpublished) Medicare Benefits Schedule data (AIHW analyses); ABS Estimates and Projections Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific health assessments, rates in 2022-23 are higher than in 2016-17 (figure 2.5). However, this progress remains modest with just over one in four (269.7 per 1,000) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accessing these checks nationally in 2022-23. Health assessment utilisation rates were higher in New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory when compared to other jurisdictions (box 2.3 outlines data considerations).

**Figure 2.5 – Rate of health assessments, by jurisdiction**

**Rate of Medicare item utilisation per 1,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people comparing recent years to the baseline (2016-17) (1e.2)**



Source: Derived from Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care (unpublished) Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) statistics; ABS Estimates and Projections Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians

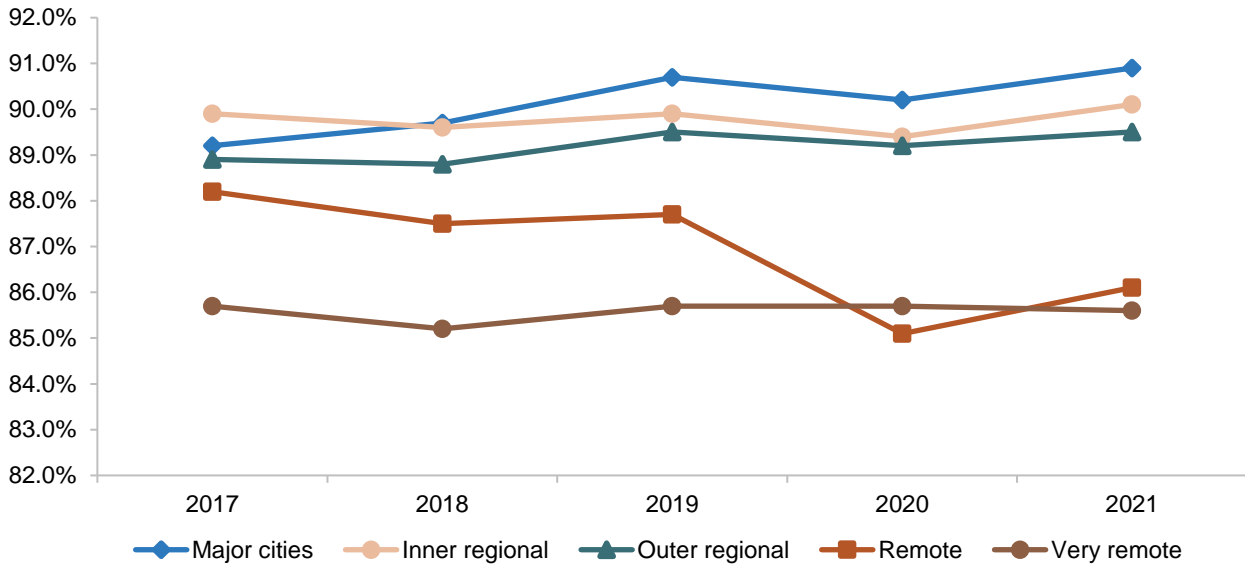
## **Outcome 2: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are born healthy and strong**

### **A higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies are being born at a healthy birthweight and the target is on track to be met by 2031**

Target 2 – that 91% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait babies are born at a healthy birthweight by 2031 – is on track to be met. Of the 18,539 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children born in 2021, 89.6% were of healthy birthweight, up from 88.8% in 2017. Nationally, the increase was driven by improvements in four states – Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania. The proportion of healthy birthweights remained unchanged for South Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales, however, a decline was observed in the Northern Territory. The proportion of healthy birthweights increased in major cities between 2017 and 2021 but remained relatively stable in regional and remote areas (figure 2.6).



**Figure 2.6 – Proportion of babies born at a healthy birthweight by remoteness**  
**Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander live-born singleton babies born at a birthweight between 2,500–4,499g**



Source: AIHW (unpublished) National Perinatal Data Collection

**Rising rates of early prenatal care and falling smoking rates during pregnancy**

New data for smoking during pregnancy shows that in 2021, 41.6% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who gave birth reported smoking at any time during pregnancy and 35.5% smoked after twenty weeks (Measures 2a.1 and 2a.2). The rate of smoking at any time during pregnancy decreased by approximately 3% since the baseline year (2017), with the largest decrease between 2020 and 2021 (43.4% and 41.6%, respectively).

New data for the use of antenatal care shows a notable increase in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women receiving antenatal care during the first trimester of pregnancy, rising to 72% in 2021 from 63.5% in the baseline year (2017) (Measure 2d.2). Over recent years, there has been stability in the proportion of women who gave birth at 32 weeks or more gestation and attended five or more antenatal visits (Measure 2d.1). Some key factors in improving pregnancy outcomes are outlined in box 2.5.

### **Box 2.5 – Early and ongoing culturally responsive antenatal care is key to improving pregnancy outcomes**

Culturally safe and appropriate antenatal health services are crucial to ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are born healthy and strong.

The first antenatal visit is important as it involves assessment of physical, social and emotional health, providing advice and identifying if additional care or support is needed. Providing ongoing access to antenatal care in community-controlled settings throughout pregnancy can address language and cultural barriers, as well as experiences of racism and discrimination.

Enabling Birthing on Country, a culturally significant practice, provides holistic care for healing intergenerational trauma. This practice promotes maternal social and emotional wellbeing, serving as a protective factor against low birthweight.

Racism is a particular issue affecting appropriate antenatal care, as many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers hold fears their baby will be removed from them by child protection. This fear is well-grounded given the high number of reports to child protection involving unborn babies of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander mothers in mainstream services. These reports often stem from racism and systemic biases within the health system and frequently lead to the removal of babies.

Source: DoHAC (2020); Siversten et al.(2020); Kildea et al. (2019); Healing Foundation (2018); Hine et al. (2023); Yoorook Justice Commission (2023).

## **Outcome 4: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children thrive in their early years**

### **A lower proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have been assessed as developmentally on track and the target is not on track to be met by 2031**

Nationally in 2021, 34.3% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children commencing school were assessed as being developmentally on track in all five Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) domains.<sup>10</sup> This was a decrease from 35.2% in the baseline year (2018). The target of 55% is not on track to be met.

The AEDC is a population-based measure for childhood development, conducted every three years by educators (AEDC 2022). It is a developmental measurement tool based on a Western paradigm, and as such it may not fully demonstrate the progress and strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (SNAICC et al. 2023).

The supporting indicator for this target – the AEDC Multiple Strengths Indicator (Indicator 4d) – was last updated in the 2023 ADCR, with data from 2021.

<sup>10</sup> There is no new data since the 2023 ADCR for this target. The dashboard and page 50 of the 2023 ADCR include additional information and figures.





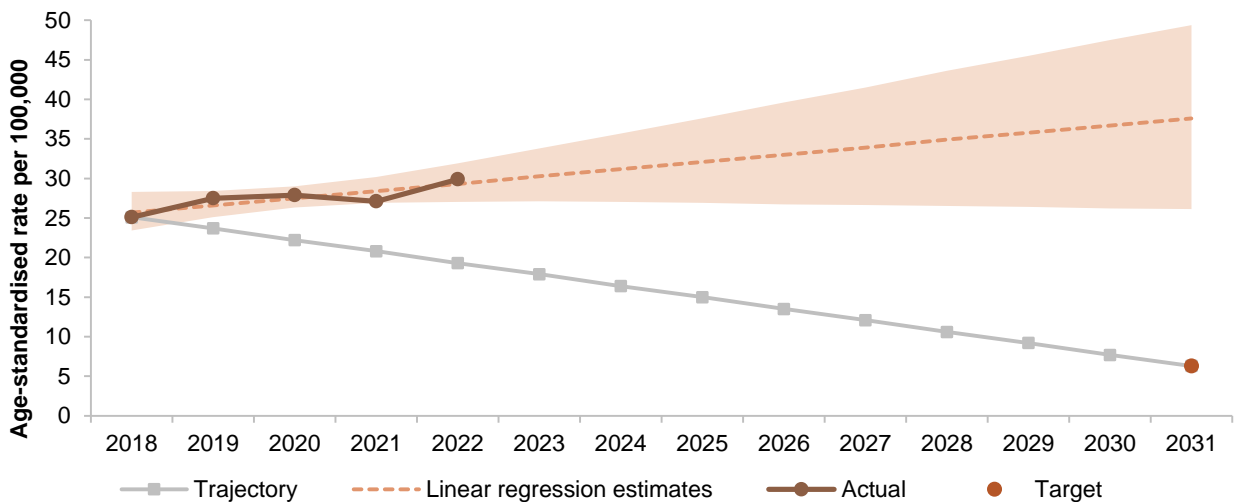
## Outcome 14: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy high levels of social and emotional wellbeing

### The target for a significant and sustained reduction in suicide of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people towards zero is not on track to be met

In 2022, 212 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people died from suicide in New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory, compared with 174 in 2018. The age-adjusted suicide rate rose to 29.9 per 100,000 people from 25.1 in 2018 (figure 2.7). The increase in the suicide rate means the target for a significant and sustained reduction in suicide towards zero is not on track to be met.

**Figure 2.7 – Suicide rate per 100,000 people<sup>a,b</sup>**

#### Age-standardised suicide rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, 2018 to 2022



a. The data presented is for New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory combined only, in line with national reporting guidelines for this target. b. The shaded area represents 95% confidence intervals for the linear regression estimates.

Source: Derived from ABS (unpublished) Causes of Death Australia

In 2022, suicide was the leading cause of death for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15–39 years. Across all age groups, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 35–44 years have the highest rate of death by suicide (figure 2.8).

**Figure 2.8 – Rates of suicide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people**

18–24 years	25–34 years	35–44 years
48.1 per 100,000	48.4 per 100,000	52.3 per 100,000

### Deaths by suicide are higher for males than females

In 2022, death rates by suicide were 3.3 times higher for males than females. For males the suicide rate was 46.3 per 100,000, while it was 14 per 100,000 for females. This is an increase from 2018, when it was 38.6 per 100,000 for males and 11.7 per 100,000 for females.

Death rates by suicide increased with remoteness. In 2022, males in remote and very remote areas had a death rate by suicide of 45.2 per 100,000, compared with 38.1 per 100,000 in major cities. Similarly, females in remote and very remote areas had a death rate by suicide of 16.9 per 100,000, compared with 13.6 per 100,000 in major cities. Limited access to mental health services may be one of the drivers of higher rates in more remote areas (Kelly 2009).

Deaths by suicide among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women differ across age groups, with certain age groups being more affected for each gender.

<p>Death rates by suicide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males are highest for those aged 35-44 years (84.9 per 100,000).</p>	<p>Death rates by suicide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females are highest for those aged 18-24 years (27.2 per 100,000)</p>
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### More people report experiencing racial prejudice

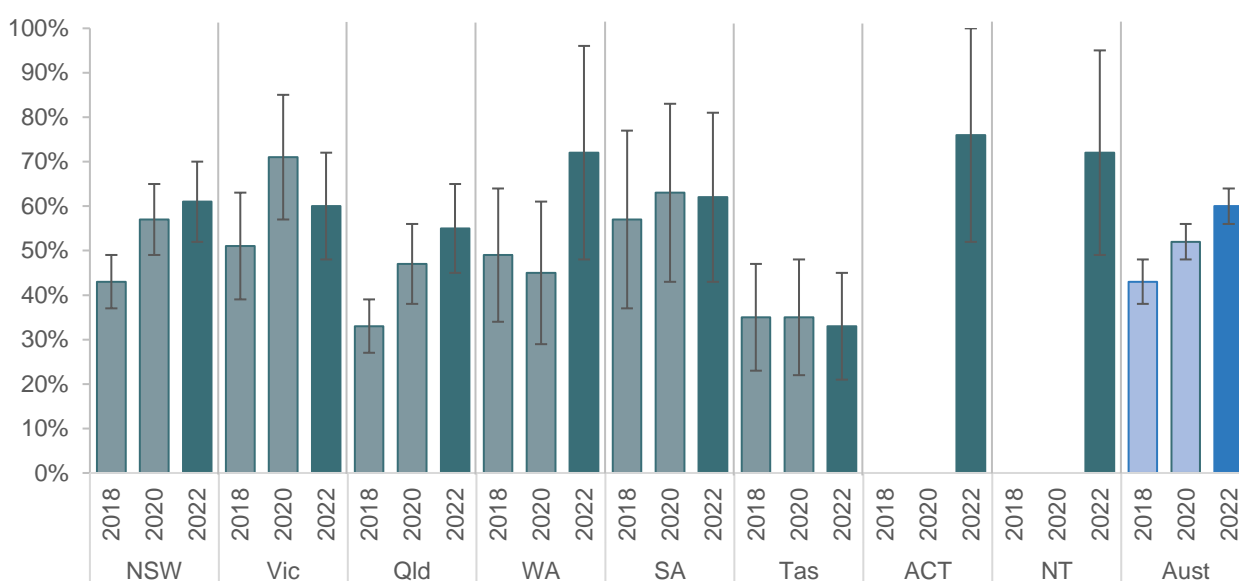
Racism negatively affects the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, increasing risks of anxiety, depression, self-harm, asthma, higher Body Mass Index, smoking and death by suicide (AIHW 2022b; Dudgeon et al. 2014; Kairuz et al. 2021; Kelly 2009; Truong and Moore 2023).

The latest data (2022) shows that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experienced racial prejudice at a significantly higher rate than non-Indigenous people, with this rate (and gap) continuing to grow.

The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 18 years or over who reported experiencing racial prejudice in the past 6 months increased from 43% in 2018 to 60% in 2022. For the general community, the proportion reporting racial prejudice in the past 6 months rose from 20% to 25% over the same period.

**Figure 2.9 – Experiences of racism<sup>a,b,c</sup>**

#### Proportion of people reporting they experienced racial prejudice in the past 6 months, by jurisdiction



a. Data for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT and the NT is not available for 2018 and 2020. b. From 2020, 'social media abuse' was included as a category for the forms of racial prejudice. c. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.


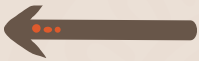
Source: Australian Reconciliation Barometer






There is no new data since the 2023 ADCR for the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who reported experiencing psychological distress (Indicator 14d) and the proportion who reported experiencing one or more barriers to accessing health services (Indicator 14e).<sup>11</sup>

## Summary: Health, wellbeing and development

Progress towards targets is mixed.  
Most targets are not on track to be met.

 <p>Life expectancy is improving but not on track <b>(Target 1)</b>.</p>	 <p>Healthy birthweights are improving and are on track <b>(Target 2)</b>.</p>
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 <p>Childhood development is worsening <b>(Target 4)</b>.</p>	 <p>Significant and sustained reduction in suicide is worsening <b>(Target 14)</b>.</p>
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<b>Legend</b>	 <p>On track</p>	 <p>Improvement, but not on track</p>	 <p>Worsening</p>	 <p>No change</p>	 <p>No assessment</p>
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<sup>11</sup> Figures for Indicator 14d can be found on page 71 of the 2023 ADCR. The dashboard presents data and figures for Indicator 14d and Indicator 14e

## 2.2 Families and kin

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are based on complex kinship systems that influence all aspects of life. Kinship determines an individual's roles and responsibilities, behaviours and obligations to their family, community and Country. Kinship systems are essential for social and emotional wellbeing, particularly for children (Bourke et al. 2018; Miller et al. 2020). Further, nurturing family environments in childhood lay the foundation for competent and healthy adults who contribute to society and enjoy happy, fulfilling lives (Berger and Font 2015; Pezzullo et al. 2010). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are largely raised in loving and secure families (Lohoar et al. 2014; Martin 2017).

The over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Australia's child protection system and the complex factors that contribute to family violence are interconnected and are also linked to the impact of colonisation, dispossession and cultural dislocation (SNAICC 2017). The child protection system today reflects the same grief, trauma and harm associated with government legislation and policies of assimilation and can be detrimental for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child, family and community wellbeing (Menzies 2019). Fear that their children will be removed is a key reason why some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females do not report family violence (AIHW 2024b).

The child protection system is tied closely with entrances into juvenile justice and adult incarceration (ALRC 2017b; Healing Foundation 2013). The history of forced displacement, disenfranchisement and stealing of wages have also entrenched disadvantage in housing, employment and health outcomes, contributing to the vulnerability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children today (SNAICC et al. 2023).

Cultural healing and the restoration of self-determination can assist both individuals and communities to strengthen protective factors and connect to culture, kin and Country (Salmon et al. 2019). This connection, in turn, can build resilience and mitigate further harm (Clark 2000; Walker and Shepherd 2008).

## Box 2.6 – What data will you find in this section?

This section provides a snapshot of the latest data available in 2024 for socio-economic outcomes 12 and 13.

Outcome	Latest data
<b>Outcome 12:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are not overrepresented in the child protection system	
• Child protection (Target 12)*	2023
• Out-of-home care (12b)***	2023
• Application of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (12e)**	2023
• Rates of substantiation by type of abuse (12m)*	2022-23
<b>Outcome 13:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and households are safe	
• Family safety (Target 13)	2018-19
• Hospitalisations for family violence (13h)**	2021-22

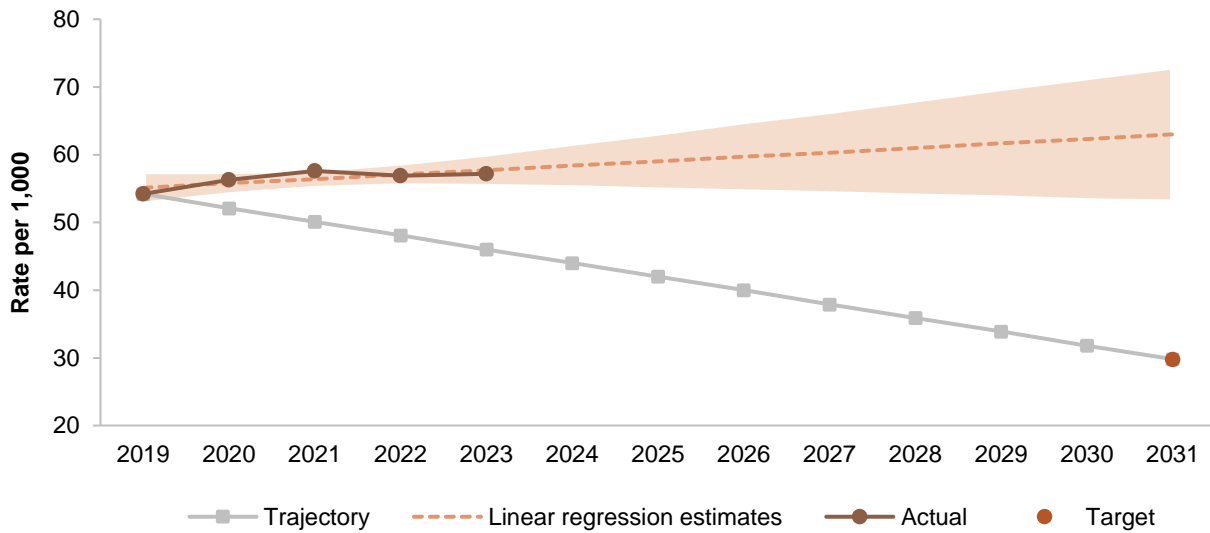
Notes: \* Indicates where a new year of data has been published since the 2023 ADCR. \*\* Indicates a new supporting indicator since the 2023 ADCR. \*\*\* Indicates a new year of data but see dashboard for further details. Data considerations are provided in box 2.8 in this section.

## Outcome 12: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are not overrepresented in the child protection system

### The rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care is increasing and the target is not on track to be met by 2031

The target of reducing the rate of overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45% by 2031 is not on track to be met. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children remain overrepresented in the child protection system. In 2023, 57.2 per 1,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–17 years were placed in out-of-home care (figure 2.10). While this shows an improvement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children since 2021 (57.6 per 1,000 children), the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care has worsened since the baseline year (2019) (54.2 per 1,000 children).

**Figure 2.10 – Children in out-of-home care, nationally<sup>a</sup>**  
**Rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–17 years in out-of-home care per 1,000 children**



a. The shaded area represents 95% confidence intervals for the linear regression estimates.

Source: Derived from state and territory governments (unpublished); ABS Estimates and Projections Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians

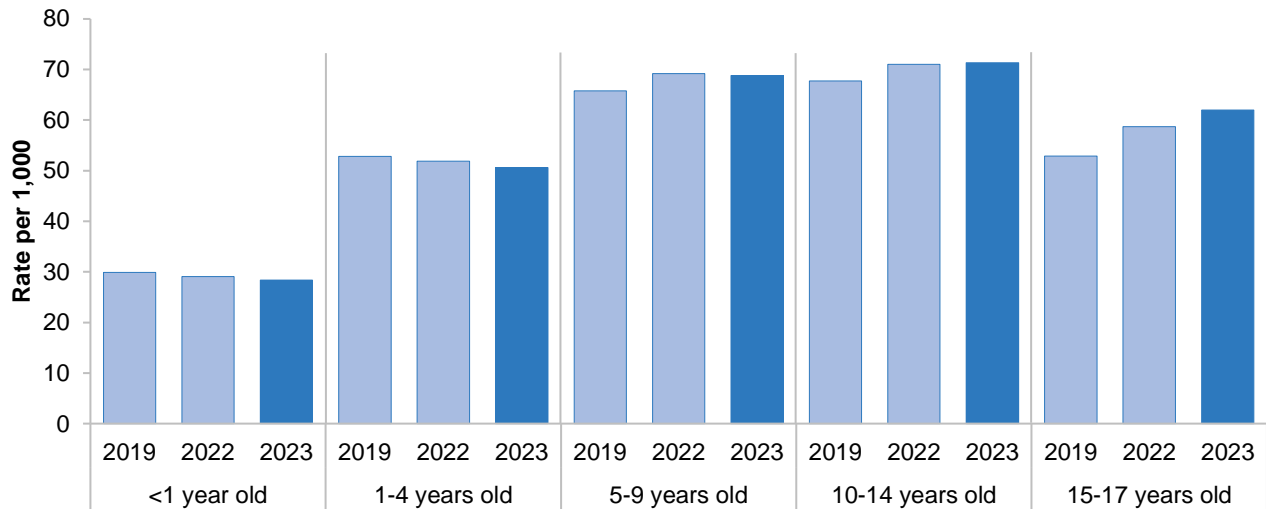
### Increased out-of-home care rates for children aged 5 to 17

The rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–17 years in out-of-home care have increased for both males and females since the baseline year of 2019. By 2023, these rates were 57.7 and 56.0 per 1,000 male and female children respectively.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 5–17 years are experiencing rising rates of out-of-home care, especially children aged 15–17 (figure 2.11). Children aged 5–9 years and 10–14 years have consistently experienced the highest rates since 2019 (the baseline year). Children aged under 5 years are seeing a decline in out-of-home care, with infants under 1 year having the lowest rates.

Just over one in five (21.6%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care had a reported disability in 2023, a slight increase from 2021. The disability status for a large proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care is unknown (30.2%).

**Figure 2.11 – Children in out-of-home care by age group**  
**Rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–17 years in out-of-home care per 1,000 children, comparing recent years to the baseline (2019)**



Source: AIHW (unpublished) Child Protection Australia; ABS Estimates and Projections Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

**Little change in the rates of children placed according to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle**

Data is now available for a supporting indicator on the application of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP), covering placement and connection (Indicator 12e). The ATSICPP consists of guiding principles for decision-making within the child protection system (box 2.7).

In 2023, around three in five (63.2%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care were living with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or non-Indigenous relatives or kin, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers (the placement element, figure 2.12). This was similar to the proportion in 2019 (the baseline year), at 63.1%.

### Box 2.7 – The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle

The ATSICPP, originating from a community-led movement three decades ago, consists of guiding principles for decision-making within the child protection system. The five interconnected elements recognise the importance of safe, family-based care to support the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and prevent actions like those that resulted in the Stolen Generations.

The ATSICPP’s components are:

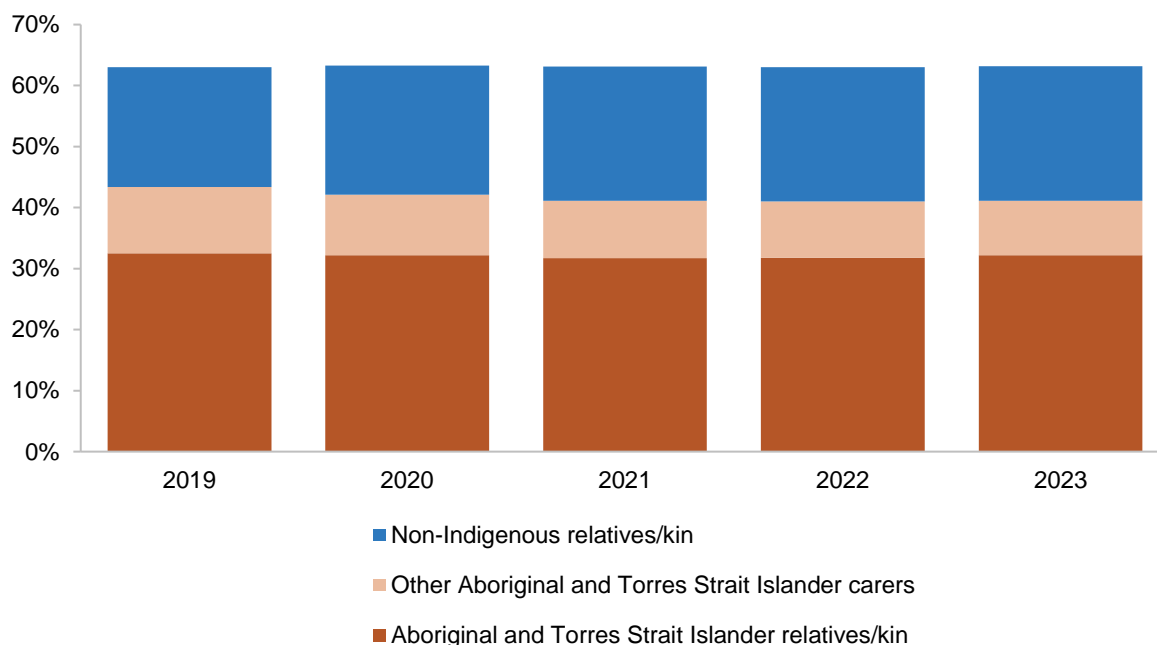
- Prevention of entry into out-of-home care.
- Partnership with community in service design, delivery and individual case decisions.
- Participation of family members in decisions regarding the care and protection of children.
- Placement in out-of-home care in line with a placement hierarchy to ensure cultural connection (i.e. with family and kin first).
- Connection to family, community, culture and Country for children in out-of-home care.

The full implementation of the ATSICPP requires embedding all Priority Reforms in the design, implementation and evaluation of legislation, policy and practice within the child protection system such as joint decision-making with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations.

Source: Department of Social Services (2015); SNAICC (2018); SNAICC et al. (2023).

**Figure 2.12 – Placement of children in out-of-home care according to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle<sup>a</sup>**

**Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–17 years in out-of-home care, who are placed according to the ATSICPP, 2019 to 2023 (12e)**



a. Data is for the placement element of the ATSICPP, children placed to ensure the highest possible level of connection to family, community, culture and Country.

Source: Derived from AIHW (unpublished) Child protection Australia



In 2023, around two in five (41.1%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care were living with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives, kin or carers (figure 2.12). This proportion – which is related to the connection element of the ATSI CPP – has declined since 2019, when it was 43.4%.

### **Mixed outcomes for rates of substantiation of a child protection notification**

The rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children that were the subject of a substantiated child protection notification – Indicator 12m – can provide additional context for this outcome area. In 2022-23, 40.5 per 1,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–17 years were the subject of a substantiated child protection notification. The most common type of abuse leading to a substantiation was emotional abuse (20.8 per 1,000 children) followed by neglect (11.4 per 1,000 children), physical abuse (4.6 per 1,000 children) and sexual abuse (2.8 per 1,000 children).

Nationally, rates have decreased from the previous year (2021-22) for neglect and physical abuse, however they have increased for emotional abuse and sexual abuse. Since the baseline (2018-19), the rate for emotional abuse has increased, however rates for the other types of abuse remained constant or declined over the same period.

## **Outcome 13: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and households are safe**

### **No data is available to track all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females and children**

No new data is available since the baseline year (2018) on the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females or children who have experienced family violence. This is due to concerns with how the data was collected and the potential risk of harm this data collection caused for participants. There is a need for ethical, fit-for-purpose data but no such future data source has been identified (ABS 2022b). While the lack of new data makes assessing progress difficult, evidence from research and multiple inquiries makes it clear that family violence is a complex and significant issue in Australia, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children.

### **Hospitalisations for family violence are declining**

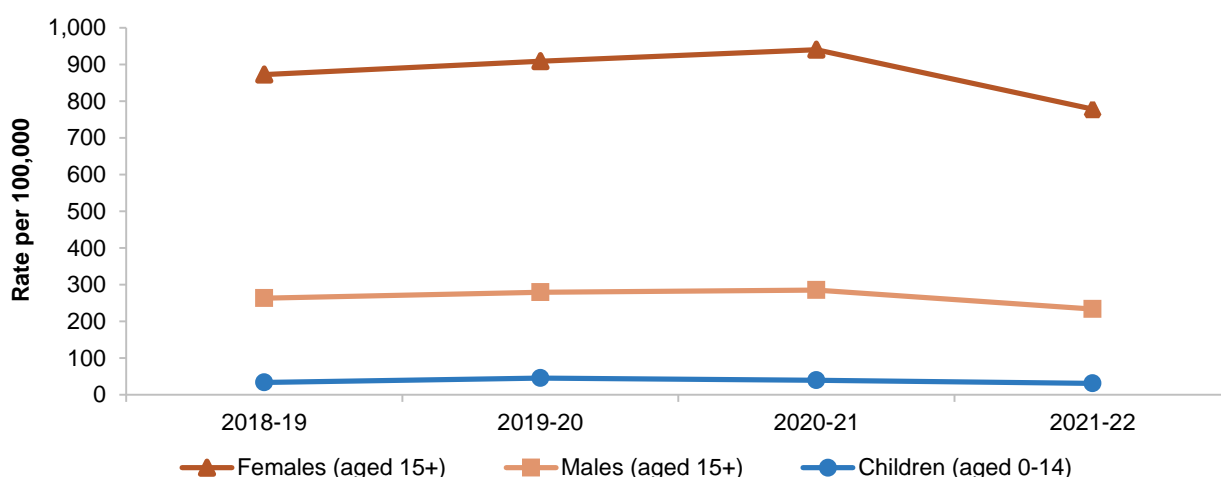
From 2018-19 to 2020-21, there was an increasing trend in the rate of hospitalisations for family violence (Indicator 13h). However, new data on hospitalisations for family violence shows a decrease in 2021-22, with rates falling below 2018-19 levels (figure 2.13). Nationally in 2021-22, hospitalisation rates for family violence among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were 778.0 per 100,000 females aged 15 years or over, 233.5 per 100,000 males aged 15 years or over and 31.4 per 100,000 children under 15 years. Care should be exercised when interpreting family violence data (box 2.8 outlines data considerations).

**Box 2.8 – Data considerations: family violence may be underreported**

Care should be taken in interpreting the data on hospitalisations for family violence. Not all people who sustain injuries or conditions from family violence may seek or receive treatment in a hospital or report that the injuries sustained are a result of family violence. It is estimated that more than 90% of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females goes unreported. Low and decreasing rates for family violence are desirable. However, an increase in the rate may indicate that more people who sustain injuries or conditions from family violence have felt safe to receive medical treatment and to report the perpetrator.

Source: PC (2024)

**Figure 2.13 – National hospitalisation rates for family violence**  
**Rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females, males and children hospitalised for family violence per 100,000 people (13h)**

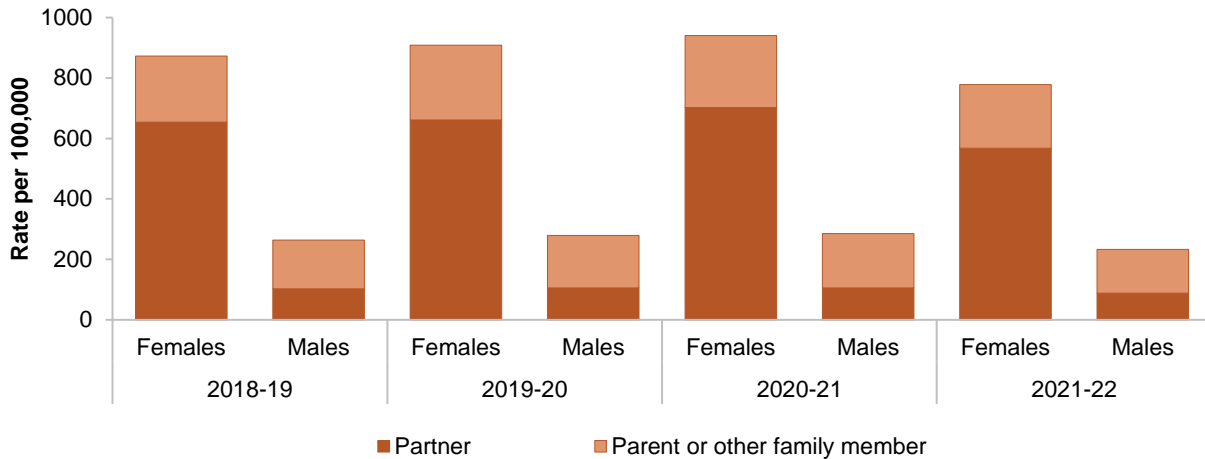


Source: Derived from AIHW (unpublished) National Hospital Morbidity Database; ABS Estimates and Projections Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians

In 2021-22, 73% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females hospitalised for family violence sustained injuries where the perpetrator was an intimate partner (567.7 per 100,000 out of a total of 778.0 per 100,000) and 27% where the perpetrator was a parent or family member (210.3 per 100,000) (figure 2.14). For males hospitalised due to family violence, parents or other family members were more often reported as the perpetrators than intimate partners. In 2021-22, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children hospitalised for family violence was small and not disaggregated by the relationship of the victim to the perpetrator.

**Figure 2.14 – Rate of hospitalisation for family violence related assaults by relationship of the perpetrator to the victim**

**Rate per 100,000, people aged 15 or over, by sex (13h)**



Source: Derived from AIHW (unpublished) National Hospital Morbidity Database; ABS Estimates and Projections Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians

**Box 2.9 – Improving family safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities are strong, resilient and have been active in identifying the drivers of family violence and culturally responsive solutions. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have been particularly active in leading and advocating for strengths-based and community-driven responses to family violence for decades.

In 2020, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women provided their voices, perspectives and priorities to the Australian Human Right’s Commission’s Wiyi Yani U Thangani Report. The report highlighted the need for holistic systems of support and responses to family violence. It notes that to improve family safety, greater investment and change is required to:

- take a holistic approach that addresses the specific needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females and children while also understanding the complexity of family violence and its interconnectedness with other sectors and socio-economic outcome areas
- place a greater emphasis on resourcing prevention and holistic supports, including but not limited to male behavioural and healing programs, holistic wrap around services and supports, increasing the number of safe houses available, and community led alcohol and drug detox and rehabilitation programs
- address shortcomings in existing policies and programs. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females and children have raised concerns with current police response rates to family violence reports and callouts. Addressing institutional racism within police and family courts would reduce barriers to reporting family violence.

Source: AHRC (2020); PC (2024).

## Summary: Families and kin

Targets are not on track to be met by 2031.



Overrepresentation of children in the child protection system is worsening (**Target 12**).



No assessment of progress for family safety (**Target 13**).

### Legend



On track



Improvement,  
but not on track



Worsening



No change



No assessment

## 2.3 Language

There are mutually reinforcing links between culture, people, knowledges and language (First Languages Australia nd; Nakata 2024; O'Brien and Bobongie-Harris 2023). Language plays a central role in cultural identity, facilitating the intergenerational transmission of culture and complex, local and valuable knowledges, and providing a sense of belonging and empowerment (AIATSIS 2023; First Languages Australia nd).

Prior to colonisation, there were over 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and 800 dialects (AIATSIS 2023). Historical government policies such as moving people onto missions and the forced removal of children from families deliberately suppressed the speaking of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and their intergenerational transmission (AIATSIS 2023). Colonisation and its ongoing impacts have led to over half of the previously spoken Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages being lost, with many of the remaining languages now endangered (McKay 2011).

Recently there have been efforts to revitalise and reclaim languages that were taken away from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Sivak et al. 2019). Preservation of language enables connection and is essential to maintaining wellbeing, which encompasses the physical, social, emotional, cultural, spiritual and ecological wellbeing of individuals and communities (Dudgeon et al. 2014; Sivak et al. 2019).

### Box 2.10 – What data will you find in this section?

This section provides a snapshot of the latest data available in 2024 for socio-economic outcome 16.

#### Outcome

#### Latest data

**Outcome 16:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages are strong, supported and flourishing

- |   |         |
|---|---------|
| • Languages (Target 16)                                 | 2018-19 |
| • Accessing Commonwealth-funded language centres (16e)* | 2022-23 |

Note: \* Indicates where a new year of data has been published since the 2023 ADCR.

Collecting data on languages faces challenges such as differing methodologies across National Indigenous Language Surveys (NILS), complexities in defining and measuring language proficiency and vitality, and potential undercounting or lack of data for certain language varieties. The data reported is insufficient to determine whether the target is on track to be met.

## **Outcome 16: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages are strong, supported and flourishing**

### **There is no new data available to report on the progress for a sustained increase in the number and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages**

There is no new data available to report progress for this target since the baseline data (2018-19) was established.<sup>12</sup> State and territory baseline data has been revised since the 2023 ADCR, but this revision has not impacted the national results.

#### **Increased activity at language centres**

Access to Commonwealth-funded language centres to maintain and preserve languages – Indicator 16e – is increasing. There has also been an upward trend in the number of activities accessed at Commonwealth funded Indigenous Language Centres across Australia, with total accesses increasing from 19,723 in 2018-19 to 73,798 in 2022–23.

The increase in activities in Queensland has been particularly significant: an increase from 4,417 accesses in 2018-19 to 42,399 in 2022–23. However, in 2022–23 the reporting included data for online learning for the first time, which may explain the increase. Similarly, there was an increase in New South Wales from 7,689 in 2018-19 to 13,470 in 2022-23.

#### **Box 2.11 – What factors can affect the flourishing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and cultures?**

The literature outlines a range of factors that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages to be strong and flourishing. These include:

- community-controlled language centres, which play a crucial role in maintaining, preserving, and promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and lead the efforts in language revitalisation
- access to education – supporting younger Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with culturally and linguistically appropriate approaches enhances literacy and is shown to improve attendance and involvement in schools
- cultural healing – learning language is a source of strength and acts as a protective factor supporting individuals to survive and thrive.


Source: First Languages Australia (nd); First Nations Media (nd); O'Brien and Bobongie-Harris (2023); Purdie (2009); Sivak et al. (2019).






<sup>12</sup> Page 74 of the 2023 ADCR includes the latest national result or refer to the dashboard for revised outcomes.

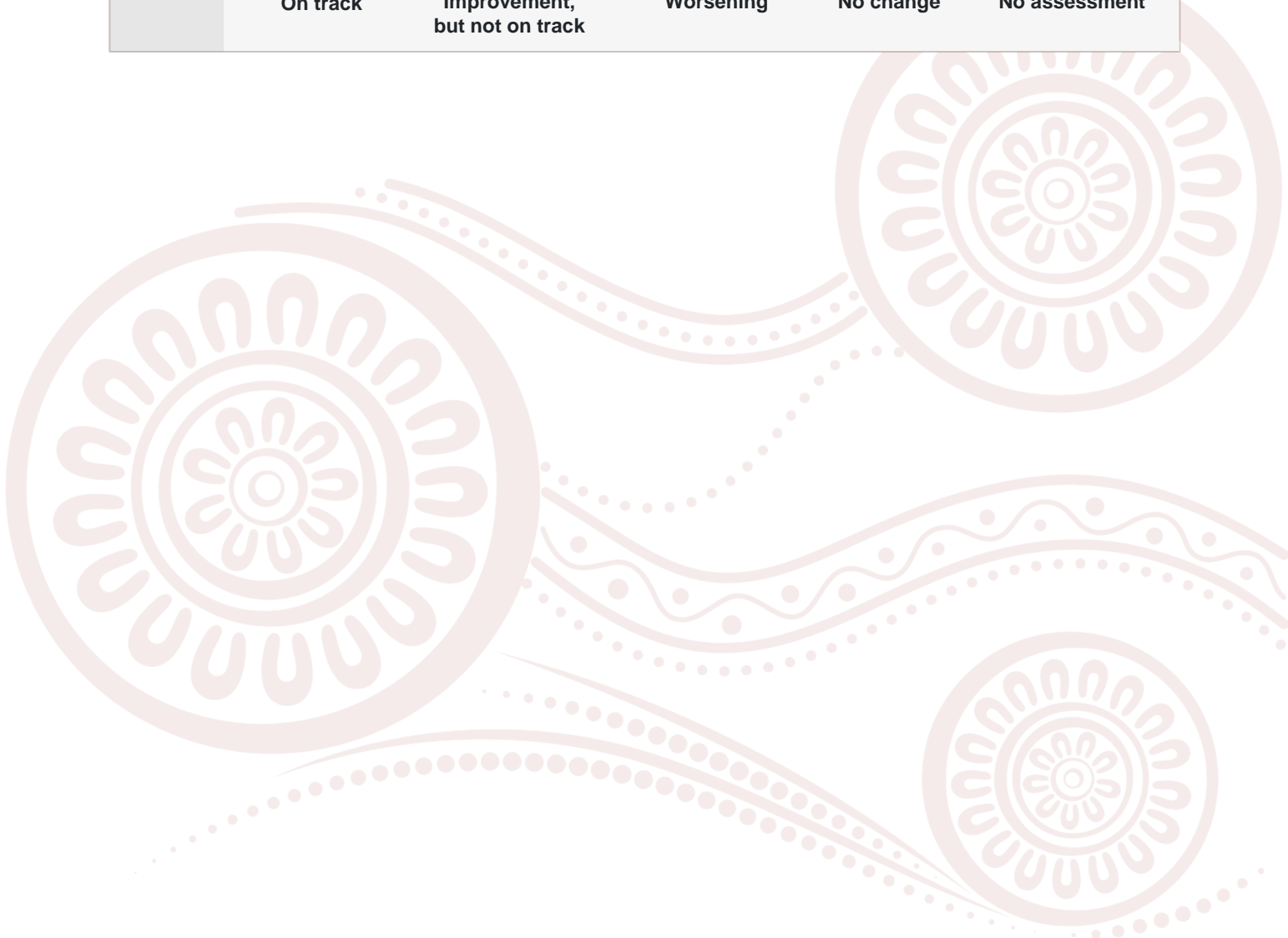


## Summary: Language

There is no new data available to report progress towards the target.

 There is no new data for number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages since the baseline year (**Target 16**).

<b>Legend</b>					
	On track	Improvement, but not on track	Worsening	No change	No assessment



## 2.4 Education and training

For thousands of years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have sustained and developed intricate systems of learning and education, deeply rooted in cultural wisdom and oral tradition, and refined through experience and observation across generations (Burrige and Chodkiewicz 2012). Government policies of assimilation sought to replace Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges with a Eurocentric model of education and values (Morrison et al. 2019). As a result, the epistemological foundations, or ways of knowing, in the Australian education system value Western knowledges above Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges (Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson 2016).

Culturally responsive schooling supports academic attainment through enacting cultural competency and tailoring education to a student's cultural frame of reference, including knowledges, values and skills (Perso and Hayward 2020). It involves a fundamental shift in the educational system towards understanding the links between education, power and cultural hierarchies (Bishop and Vass 2021).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children engaged in early childhood education and care can experience benefits such as improved school readiness and cognitive development (Biddle and Bath 2013; Sims et al. 2011). Beyond enrolment, ensuring access to holistic, culturally safe and responsive early childhood education is essential for supporting the development and identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, helping them to be strong members of their families and communities (SNAICC 2022, 2024; SNAICC et al. 2023).

Primary and secondary school education that recognises the strengths and potential of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is vital. This includes a focus on high expectations, strong teacher-student relationships where teachers connect with students' life-worlds, socio-political awareness and placing value in diversity as an asset (Morrison et al. 2019).

Engagement in education and training is intertwined with many social and economic factors that support young people to thrive. In particular, higher education can play a crucial role for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, supporting improved health and wellbeing, increased access to housing as well as future employment and earning opportunities (AIHW 2022a; Department of Education 2012; Venn and Biddle 2018).



### Box 2.12 – What data will you find in this section?

This section provides a snapshot of the latest data available for socio-economic outcomes 3, 5, 6 and 7.

Outcome	Latest data
<p><b>Outcome 3:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early childhood education (Target 3)*</li> <li>• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood education and care service providers (3b)*</li> </ul>	<p>2023</p> <p>2023</p>
<p><b>Outcome 5:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieve their full learning potential</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attainment of Year 12 or equivalent qualification (Target 5)</li> <li>• NAPLAN levels (5c)**</li> </ul>	<p>2021</p> <p>2023</p>
<p><b>Outcome 6:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students reach their full potential through further education pathways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completion of a tertiary qualification (Target 6)</li> <li>• Higher education commencement, attrition, and completion rates (6a)*</li> <li>• Cert III and above VET commencements, attrition and completion rates (6c)*</li> </ul>	<p>2021</p> <p>2022</p> <p>2022</p>
<p><b>Outcome 7:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth are engaged in employment or education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth fully engaged in employment, education or training (Target 7)</li> <li>• Young people who are not fully engaged in employment, education or training, by need for assistance (7a)</li> </ul>	<p>2021</p> <p>2021</p>

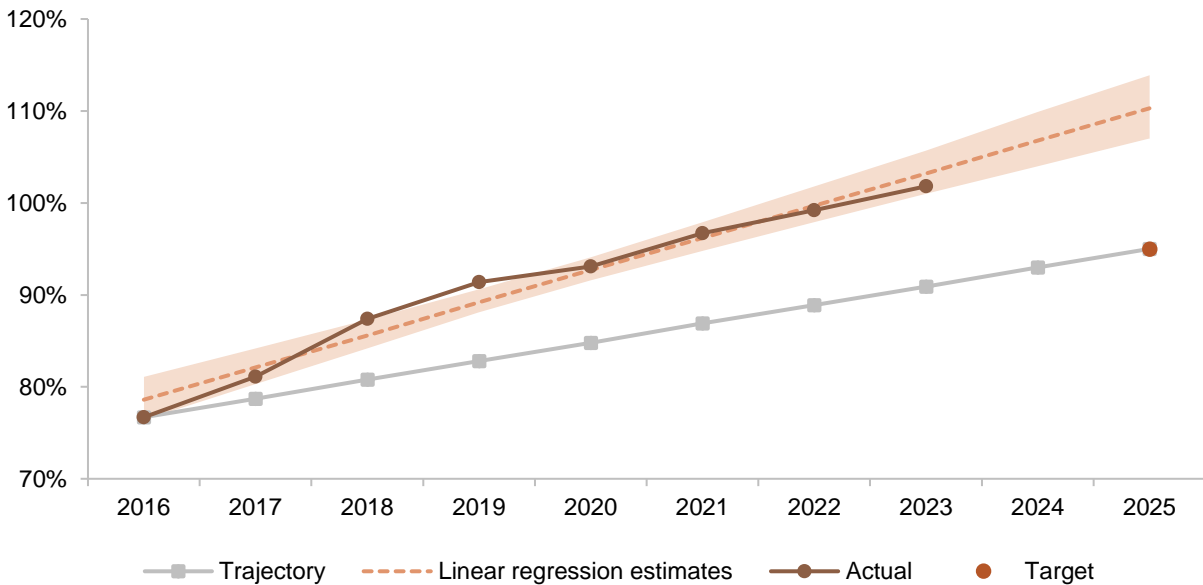
Notes: \* Indicates where a new year of data has been published since the 2023 ADCR. \*\* Indicates a new supporting indicator since the 2023 ADCR. Data considerations are provided in boxes 2.13 and 2.15 in this section.

### Outcome 3: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years

**The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in Year Before Fulltime Schooling early childhood education is increasing and the target is on track to be met by 2025**

The latest available data (2023) shows that the number and proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in the Year Before Full-time Schooling (YBFS) for early childhood education is increasing and is on track to meet the target of 95% by 2025 (figure 2.15). In 2023, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in YBFS early childhood education was 101.8% (box 2.13 outlines data considerations). This is an increase from 99.2% in 2022, and a significant increase from the baseline (2016), when 76.7% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were enrolled in a preschool program.

**Figure 2.15 – Year Before Full Time Schooling early childhood education<sup>a</sup>**  
**Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in YBFS early childhood education**



a. The shaded area represents 95% confidence intervals for the linear regression estimates.

Source: Derived from ABS (unpublished) Preschool Education Australia.

**Box 2.13 – Data considerations: why enrolment rates may exceed 100%**

Enrolment rates exceed 100% for the national figure and some jurisdictions because the numerator and denominator come from different data sources and are based on different assumptions. The numerator is administrative data for pre-school enrolment reported annually. The denominator, the potential population of children aged in the state-specific YBFS cohort, is based on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population projections. These projections are the best available data, however they underestimate the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the years after the 2016 Census. Over time, identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has been increasing and this is not accounted for in current population projections.

The population data will be revised in future dashboard updates, once the 2021 Census-based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population estimates and projections are available.

Since 2016, the enrolment rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in a YBFS preschool program increased in all socio-economic areas other than the least disadvantaged where it remained stable. There were also increases in the rate of enrolment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in major cities and inner and outer regional areas, while rates stagnated for remote areas.

**More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-focused integrated early years services**

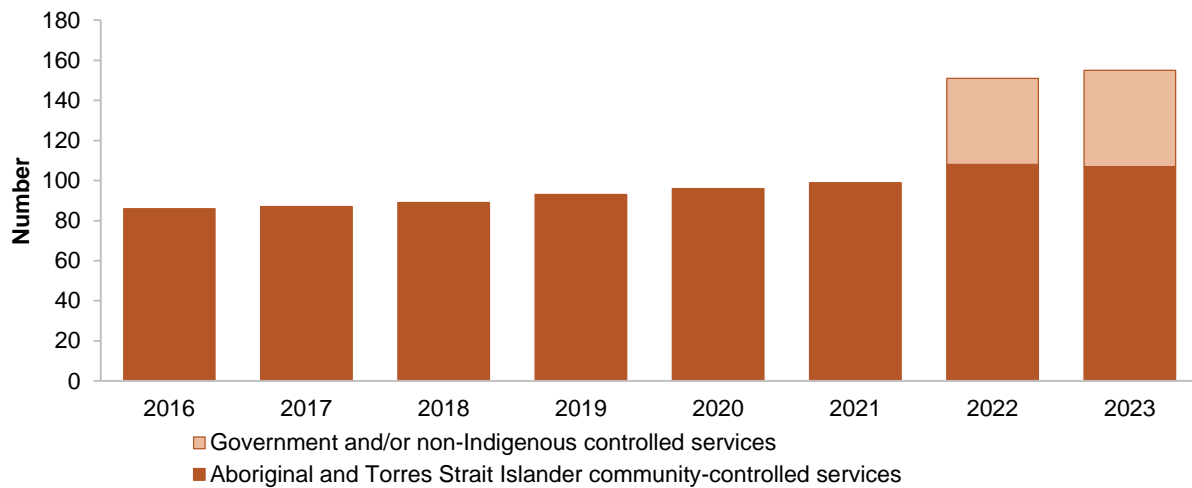
New data in 2024 shows there was an increase in the overall number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-focused integrated early years services – Indicator 3b – from 151 services in 2022 to 155 in 2023 (figure 2.16).<sup>13</sup> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-focused integrated early years services can be provided by both community-controlled and government and/or non-Indigenous controlled services.

The overall increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-focused services was predominantly due to a rise in government and/or non-Indigenous controlled services. There was one fewer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled provider in 2023, disrupting the upwards trend since 2016.

<sup>13</sup> As part of the July 2024 dashboard update, the data for 2022 was revised from 175 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-focused integrated early years services to 151 services.

**Figure 2.16 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood education and care service providers<sup>a</sup>**

**National number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-focused integrated early years services from 2016 to 2023 (3b)**



a. The data for government and/or non-Indigenous controlled services is not available prior to 2022

Source: SNAICC (unpublished) Register of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-focused integrated early years services

### Box 2.14 – Embedding culture and community in early childhood education

Outcome 3 recognises the strengths of promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander connection to family, culture and identity in early childhood education. Opportunities to increase access, availability and affordability of high quality, culturally responsive education include:

- embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and identity into all education services through connecting with community, Elders and nature, sharing knowledges, incorporating traditional child-rearing methods and preserving language skills
- prioritising investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations and support for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce to use their knowledges and expertise to deliver nurturing and culturally safe environments and education services.

Source: PC (2022b); SNAICC (2023); SNAICC et al. (2023); SNAICC and Mason-White (2012); VACCA (2023); VAEAI (2020).



## Outcome 5: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieve their full learning potential

### The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people attaining Year 12 or equivalent is increasing, but the target is not on track to be met by 2031

The latest data (2021) indicates that the target of 95% Year 12 attainment by 2031 is not on track to be met. At a national level, in 2021, 68.1% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 20–24 years had attained Year 12 or equivalent qualification. There is no new data available to report progress for this target in 2024.<sup>14</sup>

#### New NAPLAN data is available

New NAPLAN data – Indicator 5c – is available (box 2.15 outlines data considerations). It shows that, in 2023, most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students across reading, writing and numeracy were assessed as having developing, strong or exceeding proficiency levels (figure 2.17).

#### Box 2.15 – Data considerations: A new NAPLAN time series has begun

A new NAPLAN time series began in 2023. The results from this new time series cannot be directly compared to results from 2008 to 2022.

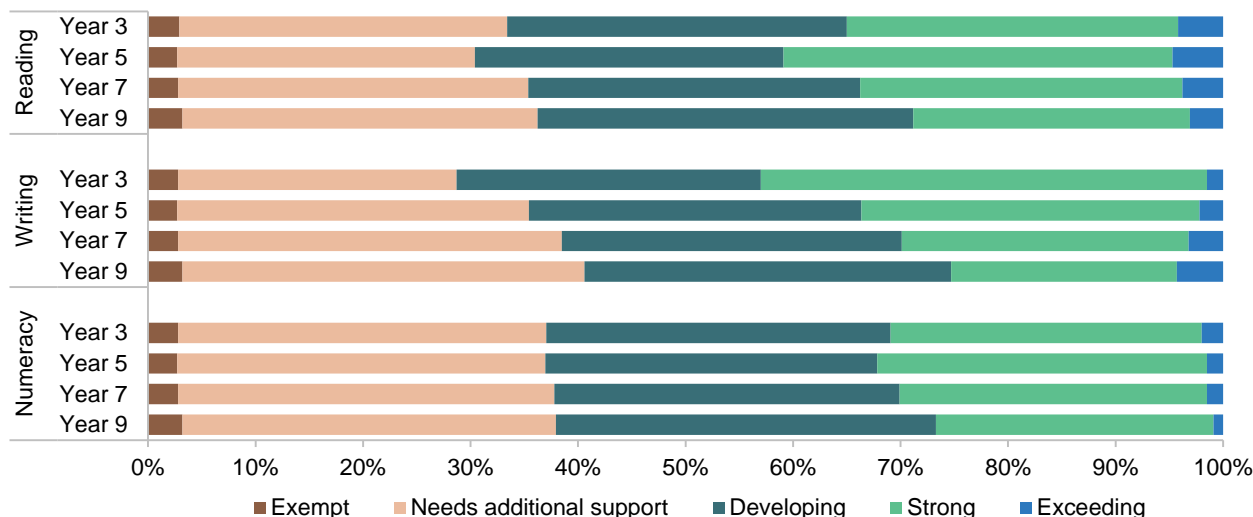
The NAPLAN proficiency levels are expectations of students' knowledge, with each level representing increasingly challenging skills and understandings. The four proficiency levels are exceeding, strong, developing and needs additional support. The needs additional support proficiency level is intended to identify students who are at risk of not progressing satisfactorily at school. Students with results in other levels may also need support in particular areas. Those in the developing level are likely to need more support than those in the exceeding and strong levels.

Students who were exempt from the NAPLAN proficiency ratings were not assessed but are considered as participating in NAPLAN by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). Absent and withdrawn students are considered non-participating. To calculate the proficiency level data in national reports, ACARA replaces the missing values for non-participating students with plausible values (based on the results of similar participating students – a process known as imputation).

The proportion of participating students varies across jurisdictions. Student participation in NAPLAN testing in reading, writing and numeracy for years 3, 5, 7 and 9, by Indigenous status, is presented in table SE5c.4 on the dashboard.

<sup>14</sup> This target was last updated in the 2023 ADCR. The dashboard and page 52 of the 2023 ADCR include additional information and figures.

**Figure 2.17 – National student proficiency in NAPLAN**  
**Reading, writing and numeracy proficiency of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in 2023, for year levels 3, 5, 7 and 9**



Source: ACARA National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy national results

About two-thirds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 had a reading proficiency assessed as ‘developing’, ‘strong’ or ‘exceeding’. This proportion was highest for students in year 5 (69.6%), and lowest for students in year 9 (63.7%). The jurisdictions with the highest proportion of children in the exceeding reading proficiency levels are Victoria, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory. Across all year levels, the Northern Territory had the highest proportion of students requiring additional support for reading.

The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with a writing proficiency assessed as developing, strong or exceeding declined across the schooling years – from 71.3% for students in year 3 to 59.4% in year 9. In year 3 and year 5, jurisdictions with the highest proportion of children in the exceeding proficiency levels are Victoria, New South Wales, Tasmania and Queensland. A higher proportion of students in the Northern Territory and Western Australia are identified as needing additional support in writing across schooling years.

More than three in five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in year levels 3, 5, 7 and 9 had a numeracy proficiency assessed as developing, strong or exceeding. Throughout most of the assessed years, the Australian Capital Territory had the largest proportion of students assessed as exceeding in numeracy.



### **Box 2.16 – Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to reach their potential**

Throughout its review of the National School Reform Agreement (2022), the Productivity Commission heard from organisations, children and young people about the barriers faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. These barriers included that schools are not always culturally safe spaces, that the curriculum does not reflect aspects of learning valued by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and that non-Indigenous teachers and school leaders may have a limited understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and cultures.

A culturally responsive approach to the curriculum and pedagogies enables students to see their identities, cultures and knowledge reflected in what and how they learn. It supports a student's perception of their potential and supports educational outcomes.

Opportunities to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in school engagement, achievement and completion include:

- fostering a school culture and encouraging school leadership that actively acknowledges, supports and involves Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, students and community in school activities, improvements and decisions
- improving representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers, who can play an important role within their schools and broader communities
- implementing school-wide strategies that maintain engagement, such as vocational education and training (VET) options and career education
- shifting away from deficit narratives, which can play into a culture of low expectations and can impact an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student's ability to thrive
- meeting the needs of individual students through targeted skill development and mentoring.

Source: Helme and Lamb (2011); Krakouer (2015); Morrison et al. (2019); PC (2022b).

## **Outcome 6: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students reach their full potential through further education pathways**

### **The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25–34 years who have completed a tertiary qualification is increasing, but the target is not on track to be met by 2031**

Nationally in 2021, 47.0% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25–34 years had completed non-school qualifications of Certificate III or above. The target of 70% by 2031 is not on track to be met. There is no new data to report progress for this target in 2024.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> This target was last updated in the 2023 ADCR. The dashboard and pages 54-55 of the 2023 ADCR include additional information and figures.

### New data on higher education shows recent declines in commencing bachelor students

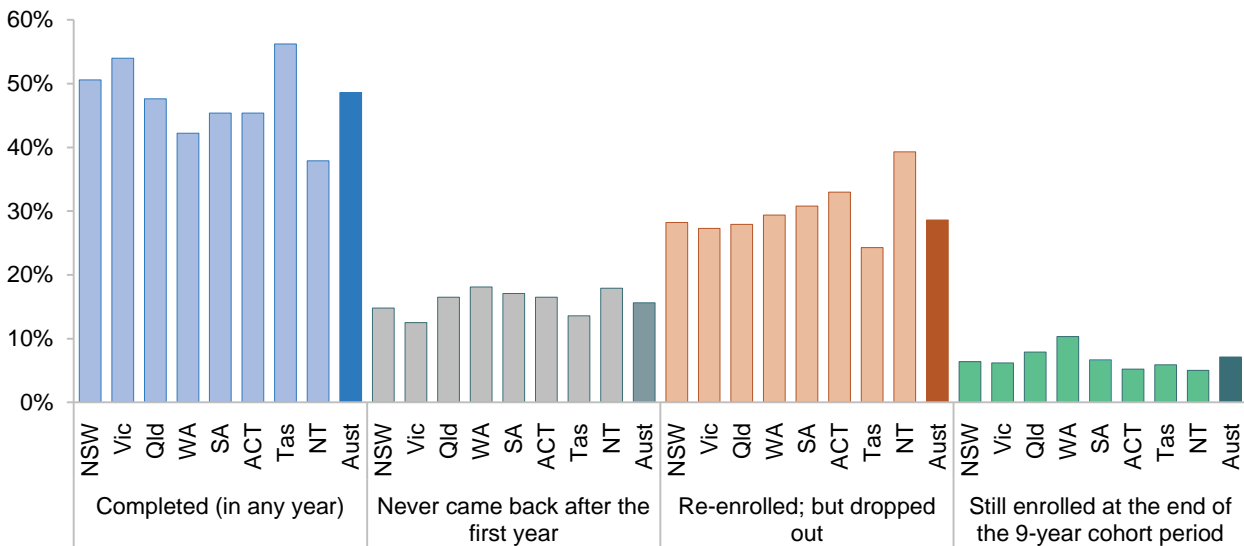
In 2022, 5,016 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people commenced a bachelor’s degree at an Australian university. Though this number is higher than the 4,862 people who commenced in the baseline year (2016), it is lower than the previous three years, ranging from 5,200 people in 2019 to 5,460 people in 2021.

Of the people who commenced a bachelor’s degree in 2021, 23.4% did not return to study the following year, representing an increase in the first-year attrition rate from 22.5% in 2020. This remains below the baseline year (2016) of 24.2%. There were mixed trends across the jurisdictions.

University completion is measured over four years, six years and nine years, as while some students may study continuously full-time and complete a degree within four years, others may study part-time and/or take breaks. Observing students for extended durations increases the likelihood of them completing their education. For example, by 2022, 26.0% of students who commenced in 2019 had completed their degree – this increased to 39.6% and 48.6% for those who commenced in 2017 and 2014 respectively (figure 2.18).

**Figure 2.18 – Higher education completion, by jurisdiction**

**Nine-year completion rates for the students who commenced study in 2014**



Source: Australian Government Department of Education Skills and Employment (unpublished) Higher Education Statistics Collection

### New data shows recent increases in commencements of vocational education and training qualifications

In 2022, 39,495 vocational education and training (VET) qualifications (Certificate level III or above) were commenced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students aged 34 years or under. This is an increase from the previous year (36,976 commencements) but remains below the baseline year (2016) (39,749 commencements).

The expected completion rate in 2024 of qualifications (Certificate level III or above) commenced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students aged 34 years or under in 2020 was 35.4%. This is higher than the completion rate in 2020 of qualifications that were commenced in 2016 (34.1%). Box 2.17 outlines potential barriers to access as well as opportunities to support retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.



### **Box 2.17 – Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to pursue further education**

Structural factors can create barriers to accessing further education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. These include:

- socio-economic challenges, such as higher rates of unemployment, financial distress and competing priorities with family and community
- geographical barriers, with many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities residing in remote and regional areas with limited access to universities, support services and digital infrastructure
- a disconnect from the mainstream curriculum that does not acknowledge or incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identities, languages or histories
- racism and discrimination within educational institutions, which may create hostile learning environments.

Opportunities to support retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in further study include:

- developing culturally appropriate mentoring and tutoring programs to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students navigating academic challenges, building confidence and a sense of belonging with the higher education system
- offering flexible delivery of course content, including online courses, blended learning, or part-time study options. This can give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students more options to balance studies with other responsibilities and cultural commitments
- having an open-door policy for students for whom life circumstances lead them to discontinue their studies before graduating but who later wish to return.

Source: Aird et al. (2010); Dreamson et al. (2016); Guenther and Bat (2013); Hollinsworth et al. (2020); Keating (2023); Slatyer et al. (2016); Taylor et al. (2019).

## **Outcome 7: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth are engaged in employment or education**

### **The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people fully engaged in employment, education or training has increased but the target is not on track to be met by 2031**

The latest data from 2021 indicated that the target of 67% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people engaged in employment, education or training is not on track to be met.<sup>16</sup> Nationally in 2021, 58.0% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 to 24 years were fully engaged in employment, education or training, up from 57.2% in the baseline year (2016). Historically, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous people engaged in employment, education or training declined with age.

<sup>16</sup> The dashboard and pages 56-57 of the 2023 ADCR include more information and figures for this target.

## Summary: Education and training

Most targets are not on track to be met by 2031.



Early childhood education is increasing and on track (**Target 3**).



Student learning potential is improving but not on track (**Target 5**).



Further education pathways are improving but not on track (**Target 6**).



Youth engagement is improving but not on track (**Target 7**).

### Legend



On track



Improvement,  
but not on track



Worsening



No change



No assessment

## 2.5 Employment

Employment plays a pivotal role in enhancing social, economic and health outcomes for individuals, as well as providing benefits to their family and community. Employment can support wellbeing, improve access to health services through increased incomes and break cycles of poverty that may impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (AIHW nd). Employment and financial security are also linked to better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health, including a lower likelihood of mental distress and suicidal behaviour (Dudgeon et al. 2016; Hunter et al. 2022).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people face structural barriers to employment, including institutionalised racism and entrenched inequalities resulting from colonisation (Liddle 2018). People living in remote and regional areas also face geographic constraints which limit access to employment options and infrastructure (Jordan 2018). Other barriers may include a lack of access to high-quality and relevant training, limited access to safe or supportive workplaces, inconsistent mentoring for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander job seekers and few secure, long-term job opportunities (AIHW nd; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs 2021).

Addressing structural barriers to employment, for example by working collaboratively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and building a more inclusive education system, can support workforce participation (Liddle 2018).

### Box 2.18 – What data will you find in this section?

This section provides a snapshot of the latest data available for socio-economic outcome 8, strong economic participation and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. The latest year of data for Target 8 was 2021.

## Outcome 8: Strong economic participation and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities

### There has been improvement in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed and the target is on track to be met by 2031

There is no new data available for Target 8 in the 2024 ADCR. The last time it was updated was in 2023, using 2021 data.<sup>17</sup> In 2021, nationally, 55.7% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25–64 years were employed, an increase from 51.0% in the baseline year (2016). That update indicated that nationally, based on progress from the baseline, the target of 62% by 2031 was on track to be met.

<sup>17</sup> The dashboard and pages 58-59 of the 2023 ADCR include more information and figures for this target.

## Summary: Employment

There is clear progress on employment.

The target is on track to be met.



There has been an improvement in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25-64 who are employed and the target is on track to be met by 2031 (**Target 8**).

### Legend



On track



Improvement,  
but not on track



Worsening



No change



No assessment

## 2.6 Housing

Housing is a basic human need and is central for overall health and wellbeing (AIHW 2019). Living in poor quality housing is a risk factor for physical and mental health and may impact a person's ability to fully participate in society (PC 2022a). The long-term focus of Australian governments' efforts to address the housing needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is generally centred on addressing overcrowding (PC 2022a).

Overcrowded housing can impact health, education and social outcomes, and can reduce a person's sense of safety and security. On average, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander household sizes tend to be larger compared to other households. This is influenced by factors including the preference of some Aboriginal Strait Islander people to live with more people in a household – enabling a greater connection to family and culture – and the limited supply of affordable housing (Brackertz and Wilkinson 2017; SCRGSP 2020). The definition of the overcrowding measure in Australia is based on the Canadian National Occupancy Standard, which does not reflect the culture and preferences of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (SCRGSP 2020).

Meeting the diverse needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people requires culturally appropriate housing designs and appropriate facilities. Increasing the availability and accessibility of social housing and addressing housing affordability may contribute to reducing overcrowding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

### Box 2.19 – What data will you find in this section?

This section provides a snapshot of the latest data available in 2024 for socio-economic outcome 9.

Outcome	Latest data
<b>Outcome 9:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People living in appropriately sized dwellings (Target 9A)</li> <li>• Social housing use (9g)**</li> </ul>	<p>2021</p> <p>2023</p>

Note: \*\*Indicates a new supporting indicator since the 2023 ADCR.



## **Outcome 9: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people secure appropriate, affordable housing aligned with their priorities and need**

### **The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing is not on track to meet the target by 2031**

The latest data published for Target 9A is from 2021 and indicates that the target of 88% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing is not on track to be met. The latest update for Outcome 9 was published in 2023.<sup>18</sup> Data on 'community infrastructure', measuring access to and quality of essential services – Target 9B – has not yet been collected to establish a baseline.

Similarly, no new data is available for the contextual indicator – Indicator 9e – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have secure appropriate, affordable housing that is aligned with their priorities and needs and is of an acceptable standard. The latest data published on the dashboard for this indicator is from 2021 and was published in 2023.

### **New data on the use of social housing is available**

New data on social housing – Indicator 9g – shows that in 2021, 18.5% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households<sup>19</sup> resided in a social housing dwelling, down from 22.5% in 2016 (figure 2.19).<sup>20</sup> Most households residing in social housing rented through a state or territory housing authority, compared to a community housing provider.

The proportion of households residing in a social housing dwelling increased with increasing remoteness, from 14.8% and 13.4% for households in major cities and inner regional areas, respectively, up to 68.7% of households in very remote areas.

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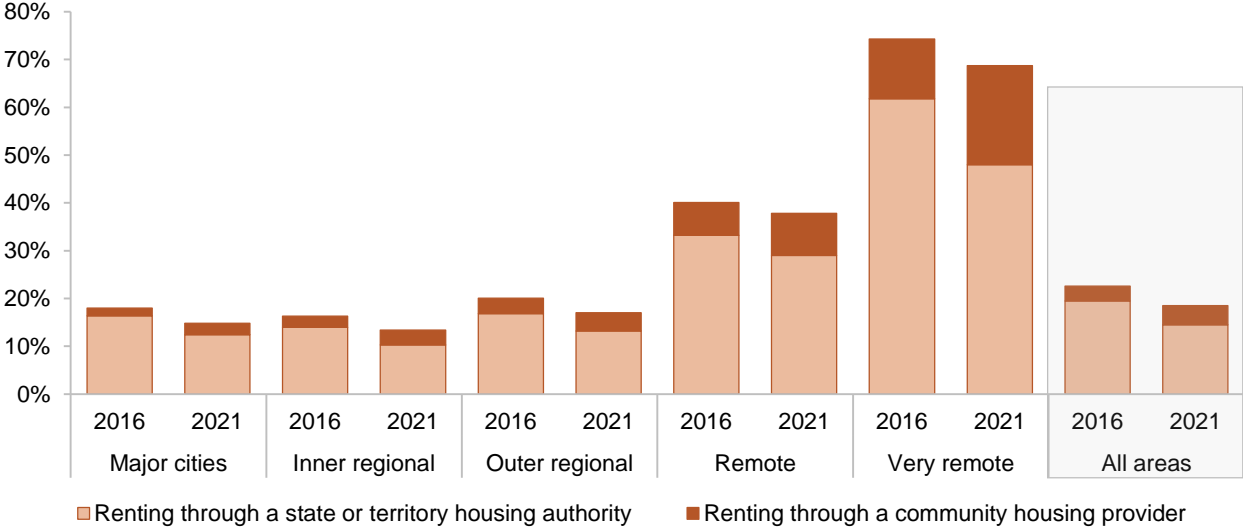
18 The dashboard and page 60 of the 2023 ADCR include more information and figures for this target.

19 For the purposes of this section, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander household is a household that has at least one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person who is a usual resident.

20 A declining proportion is generally considered undesirable as it may indicate a lower availability of social housing. However, access to social housing should be considered in the context of population need and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may, in some cases, choose not to access social housing.



**Figure 2.19 – Social housing dwellings**  
**Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households residing in a social housing dwelling by location (9g.1)**

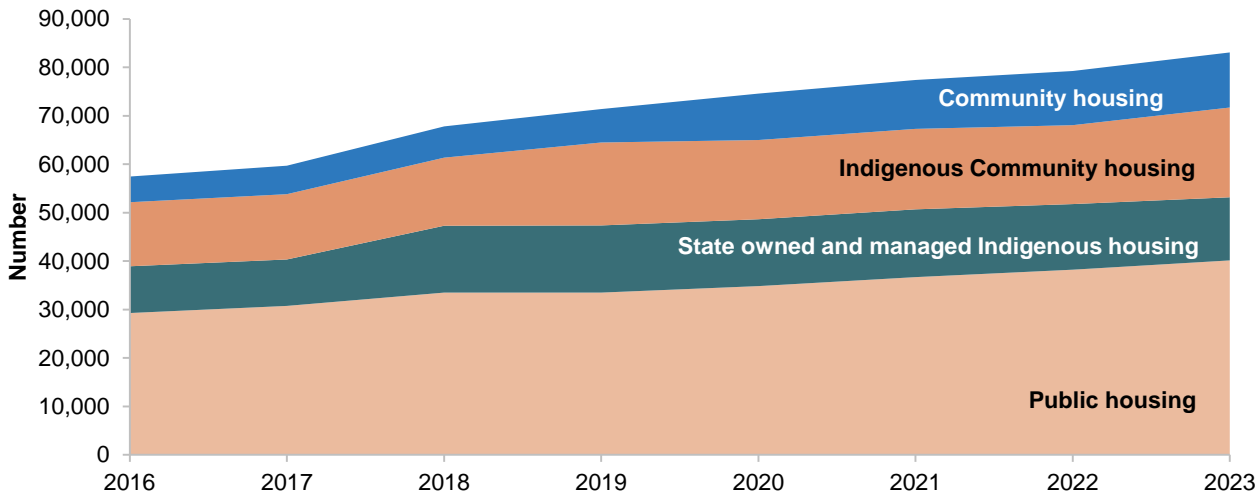


a. The shaded box denotes the national data for all remoteness areas combined.

Source: ABS (unpublished) Census of Population and Housing

Nationally in 2023, 83,040 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households were living in social housing. Approximately one in five of these Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households were living in social housing provided by Indigenous community housing, compared to other social housing programs (figure 2.20). More than half (58.3%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households in very remote areas were living in housing dwellings provided by Indigenous community housing.

**Figure 2.20 – Households renting through a social housing program**  
**Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households in social housing nationally, by housing supplier (9g.2)**



Source: AIHW (unpublished) National Housing Assistance Data Repository

## Summary: Housing

Progress towards targets is mixed.

Progress is improving but not on track or has no available data.



There has been an increase in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing but this target is not on track to be met (**Target 9A**).



It is not possible to report progress on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander household access to essential services (**Target 9B**) as the required data is not available.

### Legend



On track



Improvement,  
but not on track



Worsening



No change



No assessment





## 2.7 Country

The relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and ancestral lands and waters forms the bedrock of cultures, livelihoods, and social fabric (Hartwig et al. 2021; Lowitja Institute 2020). This connection to Country is profound, transcending mere land ownership and serving as a vital source of resilience and wellbeing (Dudgeon et al. 2020; Zubrick et al. 2014).

Colonisation and subsequent government policies of dispossession and alienation from traditional lands has prevented Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities from practicing culture on Country (Butler et al. 2019). In response to colonisation and historical dispossession, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have campaigned tirelessly for greater land rights (Hartwig et al. 2020). Native title and land claims have emerged as a result of this campaign and reflect a step towards greater recognition and protection of the traditional system of law, ownership and customs over lands and waters of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (ANTAR 2022; Central Land Council nd).

Native title provides Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with access to land for cultural activities, including ceremonies, camping, hunting and the use of waters (Central Land Council nd). Land claims result in the transfer of the freehold title, which provides Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities with full ownership of the land that can be sold, leased, mortgaged, or otherwise used (NSWALC 2014). Native title and Indigenous estates form the legal rights and interests over land and sea for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Indigenous estates, which include land claims, reflect various levels of ownership depending on the land rights regime in place at the state, territory or national level.

### Box 2.20 – What data will you find in this section?

This section provides a snapshot of the latest data available in 2024 for socio-economic outcome 15.

Outcome	Latest data
<b>Outcome 15:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people maintain a distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical and economic relationship with their lands and waters	
• Land mass subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's rights or interests (Target 15A)*	2023
• Land and water ownership (15a)*	2023
• Sea mass subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's rights or interests (Target 15B)*	2023

Note: \* Indicates where a new year of data has been published since the 2023 ADCR.



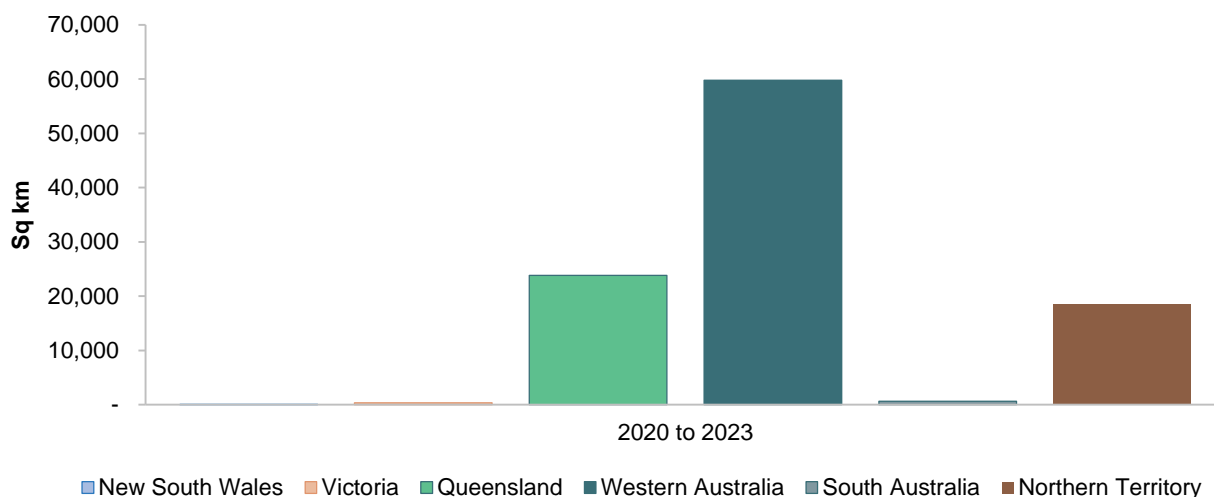
## Outcome 15: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people maintain a distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical and economic relationship with their land and waters

### The target to increase land mass subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s legal rights or interest is on track to be met by 2030

There was a 7.8% increase in the area of land subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s legal rights or interests between the baseline year of 2020 and 2023. This means that the target, which requires a 15% increase by 2030, is on track to be met. Nationally, the progress towards the target has been driven by improvements in Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory (figure 2.21). While the trends for the remaining jurisdictions – South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory – are less positive. South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales have shown moderate improvements while Tasmania and the Australian Capital have not reported any improvement.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s land ownership – Indicator 15a – has marginally increased. From 2020 to 2023, there was an increase of 0.1% in the overall land mass owned or controlled by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people, from a baseline of 16.1%. For the 2023 data, no disaggregation is available to understand what types of land titles make up this figure.

**Figure 2.21 – Change in land rights or interests by jurisdiction<sup>a</sup>**  
**Average annual change in land area subject to legal rights or interests, 2020 to 2023**



a. The Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania reported no change since the baseline year (2020) and have not been included.

Source: NNTT (unpublished) Native Title Determinations Outcomes Indigenous estate

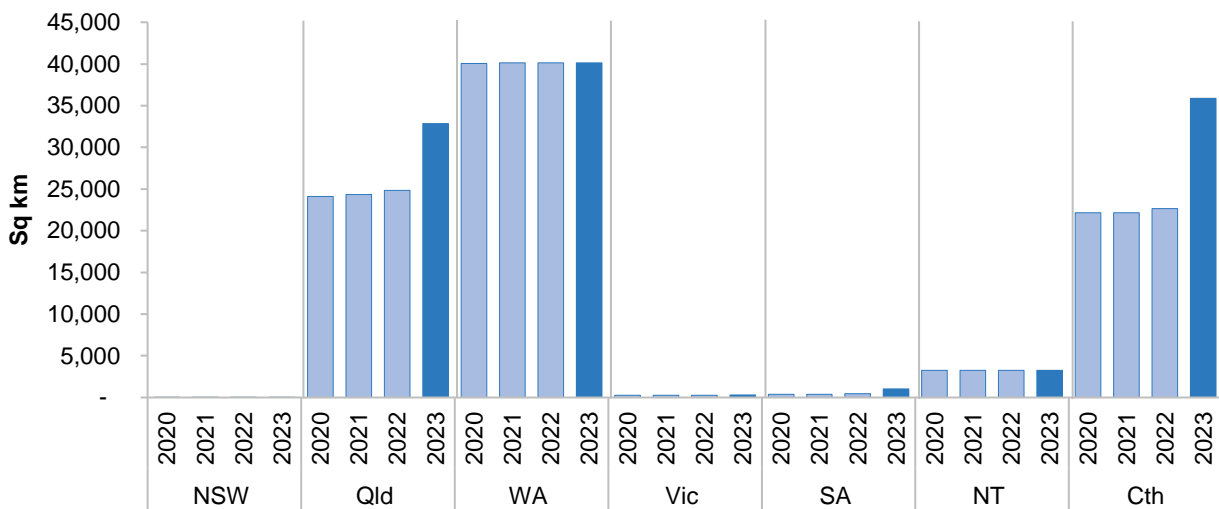
**The target of a 15% increase in sea area covered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s legal rights or interests is on track to be met or potentially exceeded by 2031**

The target of a 15% increase in sea area covered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s legal rights or interests is on track to be met. As at June 2023, 113,461 sq km of sea country was subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s rights or interests, already above the 2030 target of 103,790 sq km of sea country. While progress from the baseline year (2020) was initially slow, there was a significant increase from 2022 to 2023.

Nationally, the Australian and Queensland Governments have driven the increase in sea area subject to legal rights or interests (figure 2.22). South Australia reported a high percentage increase, but its overall contribution to the national change was relatively modest. Of the remaining jurisdictions, New South Wales and Tasmania reported no improvements, and the Northern Territory reported only a 1 sq km increase since 2020. While Western Australia’s increase from 2020 to 2023 was modest, it has the highest proportion of total sea area subject to legal rights or interests compared to all other jurisdictions.

**Figure 2.22 – Area of sea country subject to legal rights and interests<sup>a,b</sup>**

**Sea area subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal rights and interests by jurisdiction and year, as at 30 June**



**a.** The Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania reported no change since the baseline year (2020) and have not been included. **b.** Commonwealth (Cth) jurisdiction sea area is distinct from the states and territories – its area consists of that from the 3NM Limit out to the Exclusive Economic Zone surrounding the mainland states and territories.

Source: NNTT (unpublished) Native Title Determinations Outcomes Indigenous estate

## Summary: Country

There is clear progress towards targets.  
Targets are on track to be met or potentially exceeded.



The proportion of land mass subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's legal rights or interests is increasing and on track to be met **(Target 15A)**.



The proportion of sea areas covered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's rights or interests is increasing and is on track to be met or potentially exceeded **(Target 15B)**.

### Legend



On track



Improvement,  
but not on track



Worsening



No change



No assessment



## 2.8 Justice

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been governed by their own rich and complex systems of Lore and Law for tens of thousands of years. This was deeply woven into the fabric of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, guiding all aspects of community life including decision-making processes, mechanisms of social control, and the moral and ethical codes of behaviour that dictated daily interactions and responsibilities (Dodson 1995).

Since colonisation, systems of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lore and Law have been largely disregarded. In their place, a foreign legal framework has been forcibly imposed. This imposition not only displaced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governance structures but was also responsible for dispossession and the forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, causing significant harm (Walker et al. 2023).

Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people grow up in loving and supportive homes and continue to show resilience, developing and maintaining strong connections to their family, community and culture (Hall et al. 2020). However, due to a range of factors including systemic bias and racism, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are overrepresented in both the out-of-home care system and the criminal justice system (Barber et al. 2016; McFarlane 2018).

The overrepresentation reflects a system of justice and laws that fail to understand and value culture, Lore and Law. Despite this, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities have maintained active resistance and advocacy, including continuing to practice Lore and Law and ensuring community wellbeing and connections are supported through community-led initiatives (Dudgeon et al. 2014). While the practice of Lore and Law remain protective factors for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, there are many risk factors that can increase the likelihood of contact with, and exposure to, the justice system.

The child protection system is linked with entrances into the juvenile justice system and adult incarceration (ALRC 2017b). Evidence shows that children in residential out-of-home care are often criminalised more frequently for behaviour that, within a family setting, would go unreported (Yoorrook Justice Commission 2023). In addition, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are being criminalised for minor offences, or 'crimes of necessity'.

Risk factors for entering the criminal justice system include intergenerational trauma (AHRC 2020; ALRC 2017b), adverse childhood experiences (ALRC 2017b; Malvaso et al. 2022) and neurodevelopmental impairment (Bower et al. 2018). Further, over-policing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, heightened arrests for low-level offending (ALRC 2017a) as well as increased presence of police, targeted surveillance or racial profiling (Cunneen 2020; O'Brien 2021) and mandatory sentencing laws (ALRC 2017a) all contribute to the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the criminal justice system. Challenges like accessing secure and adequate housing can mean Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on remand cannot always easily access bail, exposing them to longer periods of incarceration and further harm (ALRC 2017b).

Factors that reduce the rate or protect against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adult incarceration include access to culturally safe resources and services (including those for health and wellbeing) as well as



improved outcomes in socio-economic areas like education and employment, amongst others (McCausland and Baldry 2023). For instance, the provision of culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people leads to increased participation and completion rates of youth diversionary programs, which may help address the cycle of incarceration (Cunneen et al. 2021).

There is widespread evidence highlighting the importance of self-determination in reducing harm while incarcerated and also addressing the above social and economic causes (Cunneen 2019). It is well understood that a shift in power and resources would be required for self-determination to be realised (ANTAR 2023; Webb 2012).

### Box 2.21 – What data will you find in this section?

This section provides a snapshot of the latest data available in 2024 for socio-economic outcomes 10 and 11.

Outcome	Latest data
<b>Outcome 10:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system	
• Adult imprisonment rate (Target 10)*	2023
• People charged by police (10a)*	2022–23
• Prisoner health (10g)**	2022
<b>Outcome 11:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system	
• Young people in detention (Target 11)*	2022–23
• Alleged young offenders (10–17 years) involved in police proceedings (11c)*	2022–23
• Young people first coming into youth justice system aged 10–13 (11h)**	2022–23

Note: \* Indicates where a new year of data has been published since the 2023 ADCR. \*\* Indicates a new supporting indicator since the 2023 ADCR. Data considerations are provided in box 2.22 in this section.

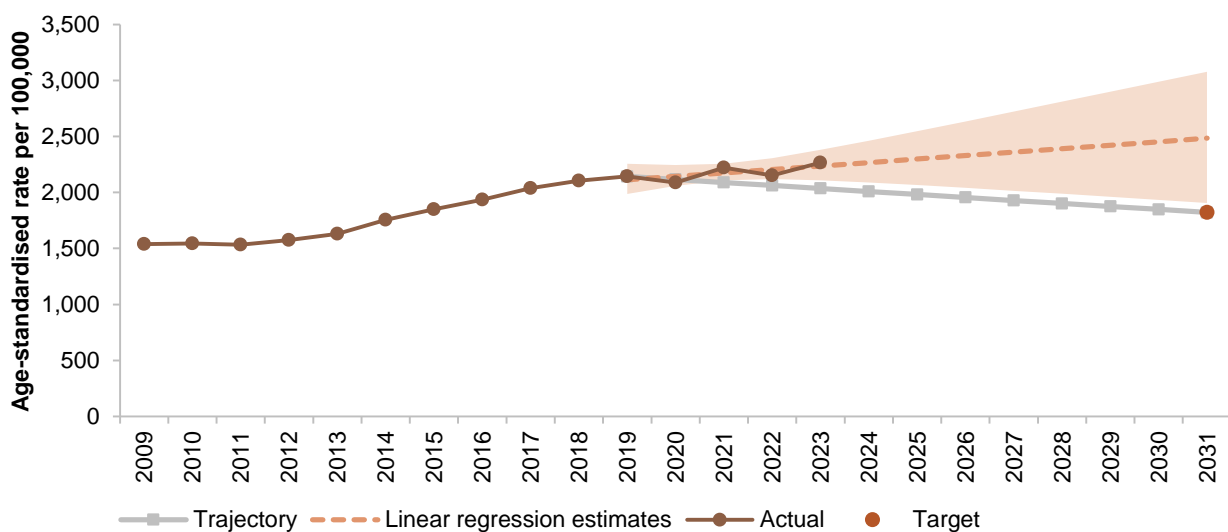
## Outcome 10: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults are being incarcerated at an increased rate and the target is not on track to be met by 2031

Nationally, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults being incarcerated is increasing and the target, which seeks a 15% reduction by 2031, is not on track to be met (figure 2.23). As of 30 June 2023, the age-standardised rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners was 2,265.8 per 100,000 adult population. This is an increase from the previous year (2,151.1 per 100,000 adult population) as well as the baseline year (2,142.9 per 100,000 adult population in 2019). In 2023, the age-standardised rate of imprisonment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults was 15.2 times higher than for non-Indigenous adults, compared to 12.5 times higher in 2019.

**Figure 2.23 – National age-standardised imprisonment rates<sup>a,b</sup>**

**Age-standardised imprisonment rate per 100,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 18 years or over**



**a.** In Queensland, prior to 2018, ‘adult’ referred to people aged 17 years or over. From February 2018 onwards, people aged 17 years were being transitioned from adult correctional facilities into the Queensland juvenile justice system over a two-year period. In 2019, there were no 17-year-olds in Queensland adult correctional facilities. **b.** The shaded area represents 95% confidence intervals for the linear regression estimates.

Source: Derived from ABS Prisoners in Australia

Only Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory have seen a reduction in the rate of imprisonment between 2019 and 2023 (figure 2.24). There has been no significant change in New South Wales, Western Australia and South Australia, while trends have worsened in the remaining jurisdictions.



**Figure 2.24 – Imprisonment rates by jurisdiction**  
**Age-standardised imprisonment rate per 100,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 18 years or over**



Source: ABS Prisoners in Australia

**Male imprisonment, particularly among 40 to 49 year olds, is driving most of the national increase**

While imprisonment rates have increased for both males and females, male imprisonment rates have consistently been higher than female rates across all years and, in 2023, were 9.7 times higher.

There has been an improvement in imprisonment rates for young men and women across most states and territories except Queensland, Tasmania, and the Northern Territory. By contrast, older adults aged 40–49 years are the main contributors to the increase in imprisonment rates from 2019 to 2023.

**Nationally, between 2019 and 2023**

<p>Imprisonment rates of young males aged 18–24 and 25–29 have decreased by 379.8 and 113.2 per 100,000 respectively.</p>	<p>Imprisonment rates of young females aged 18–24 and 25–29 years have decreased by 24.6 and 50.1 per 100,000, respectively.</p>
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**Nationally, between 2019 and 2023**

<p>Males in the 40–49 age group have the highest rates of imprisonment for all age and sex cohorts, with the imprisonment rates increasing by over 1,000 per 100,000.</p>	<p>Females in the 40–44 age group show the highest rates of imprisonment for their sex, with the imprisonment rate increasing by 137.6 per 100,000.</p>
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### **Box 2.22 – Data considerations: the characteristics of people entering and leaving incarceration presented above is not representative of the entire prison population**

The data presented on the characteristics of people entering and leaving incarceration from 2018 includes 62 out of 70 public and private prisons in all states and territories in Australia, excluding New South Wales. The 2022 data includes 73 public and private prisons, for all states and territories in Australia, excluding Victoria.

Not all people in prison (particularly prison entrants and dischargees) have been involved in the data collection. This might have been due to prison staffing constraints, physical or mental limitations of people, or uncertain release dates. Of those who could be approached, some did not provide consent to participate.

The response rate for the 2022 entrants survey was 18% (23% in 2018). Of the entrants that completed the form, 49.3% were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The response rate for the 2022 NPHDC dischargees survey was 23% (17% in 2018). Of the dischargees that completed the form, 46.4% were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

### **Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people charged by police**

Three jurisdictions report data on the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people charged by police: New South Wales, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory. Between 2018-19 and 2022-23, the latest year of available data, the rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults charged by police – Indicator 10a – have worsened. In New South Wales, 8,644.6 per 100,000 adults were charged in 2022-23, compared with 6,154.7 in 2018-19. In the Australian Capital Territory, 5,620.9 per 100,000 adults were charged in 2022-23 compared with 4,816.2 in 2018-19. In Queensland, rates have improved with 8,494.3 per 100,000 adults charged in 2022-23 compared with 9,547 per 100,000 adults in 2018-19 (Measure 10a.1).

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults proceeded against by police, the proportion proceeded against with court actions ranged from 95.9% to 96.7% in 2022-23 (with 2.7% to 4.1% proceeded against with non-court actions). These proportions are similar to the baseline year (2018-19).

### **The characteristics of people entering and leaving incarceration**

New data – Indicator 10g – sheds some light on the characteristics of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people entering and leaving incarceration (box 2.22 outlines data considerations):

- In 2022, a higher proportion of entrants reported being told that they had a mental health condition at some stage in their life (42.6%) than in 2018 (32.8%) and a lower proportion had at least one parent or carer in prison during their childhood (27.9% in 2022 compared to 31.5% in 2018).
- The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prison entrants that used illicit substances in the previous 12 months increased in 2022 (71%) compared to 2018 (63%) (Measure 10g.2).
- Among people discharged from prison, between 2018 and 2022, the rate of engagement in paid employment within two weeks of release more than doubled (from 16.5% to 38.5%) (Measure 10g.4) and the proportion who had been physically assaulted or attacked while in prison was reduced (from 8.7% to 8.5%) (Measure 10g.5).]

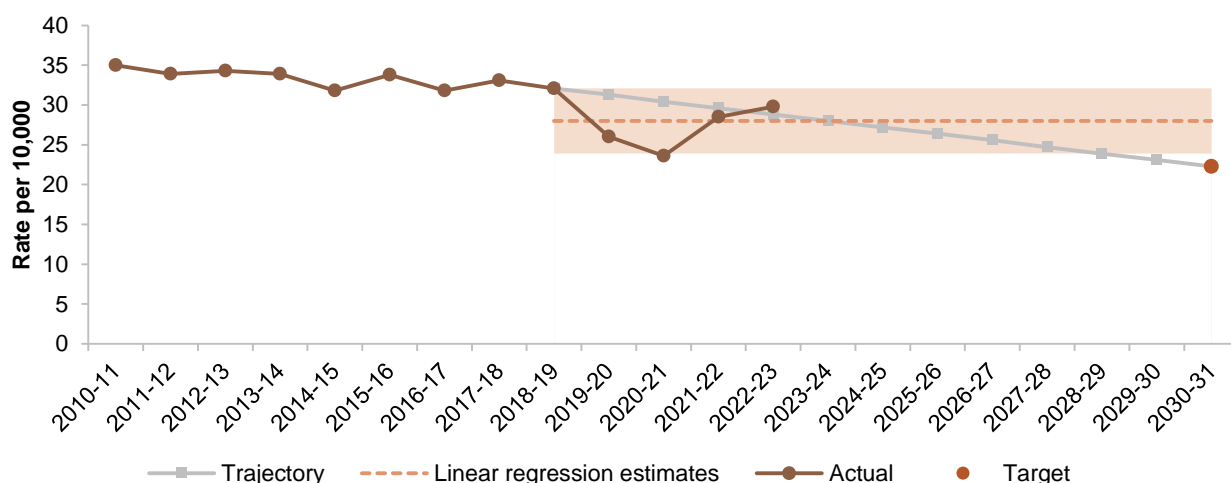
## Outcome 11: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people continue to be overrepresented in the criminal justice system

The target to reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in detention by at least 30% by 2031 is not on track to be met. Nationally, in 2022-23, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people aged 10–17 years in detention on an average day was 29.8 per 10,000 young people (figure 2.25). An initial decline in youth detention followed by recent increases means the trend of the national target shows no change from the baseline (2018-19). The assessment of no change is provided with a low level of confidence, but there is a high level of confidence that the target is not on track.

**Figure 2.25 – National youth detention rate<sup>a</sup>**

**Rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in detention on an average day per 10,000 young people (aged 10–17 years)**



a. The shaded area represents 95% confidence intervals for the linear regression estimates.

Source: AIHW (unpublished) Youth Justice National Minimum Dataset; ABS Estimates and Projections Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians

### The age of criminal responsibility was raised in two jurisdictions

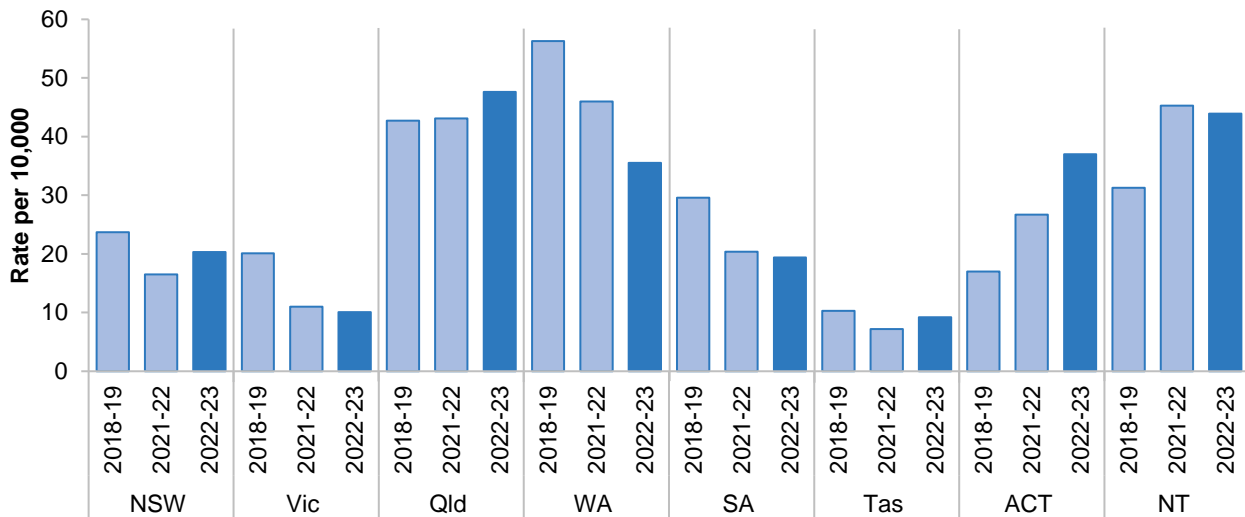
In the second half of 2023, governments in both the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory passed legislation to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 12 years old. The data used in this report is from 2022-23 and precedes these policy changes.

### There are differing trends across jurisdictions

While there has been no change in the trend for the national target, there are differing trends at a jurisdictional level (figure 2.26). In 2022-23, Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory had worsening trends compared to 2018-19, while there were improvements for the remaining states.

**Figure 2.26 – Youth detention rate by jurisdiction**

**Rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in detention on an average day per 10,000 young people (aged 10–17 years)**

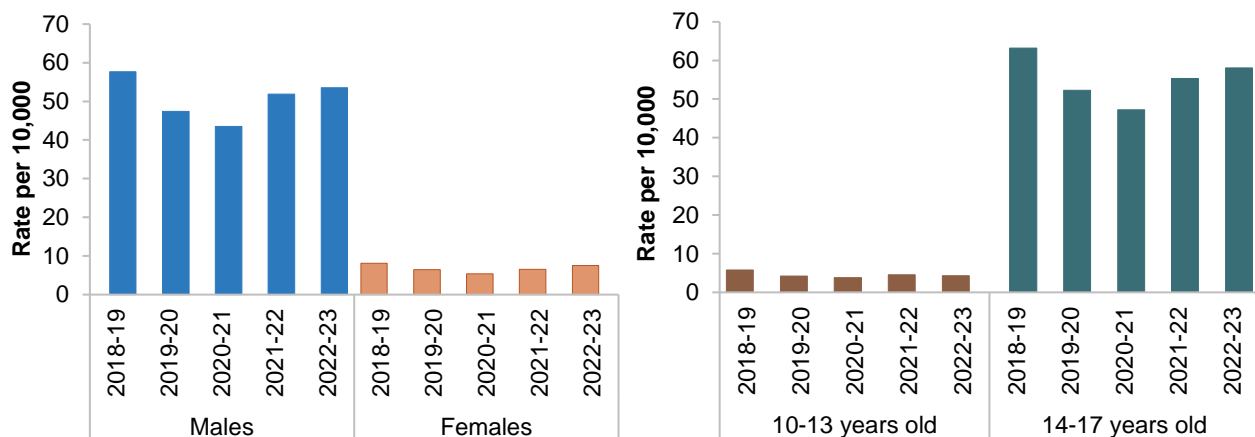


Source: AIHW (unpublished) Youth Justice National Minimum Dataset; ABS Estimates and Projections Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

Nationally, in 2022-23, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young men (aged 10–17 years) were 7 times more likely than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young women to be in detention (figure 2.27). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people aged 14 –17 years were 13 times more likely to be in detention than those aged 10 –13 years.

**Figure 2.27 – Youth detention rate by sex and age**

**Rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in detention on an average day per 10,000 young people (aged 10–17 years)**



Source: AIHW (unpublished) Youth Justice National Minimum Dataset, ABS Estimates and Projections Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians



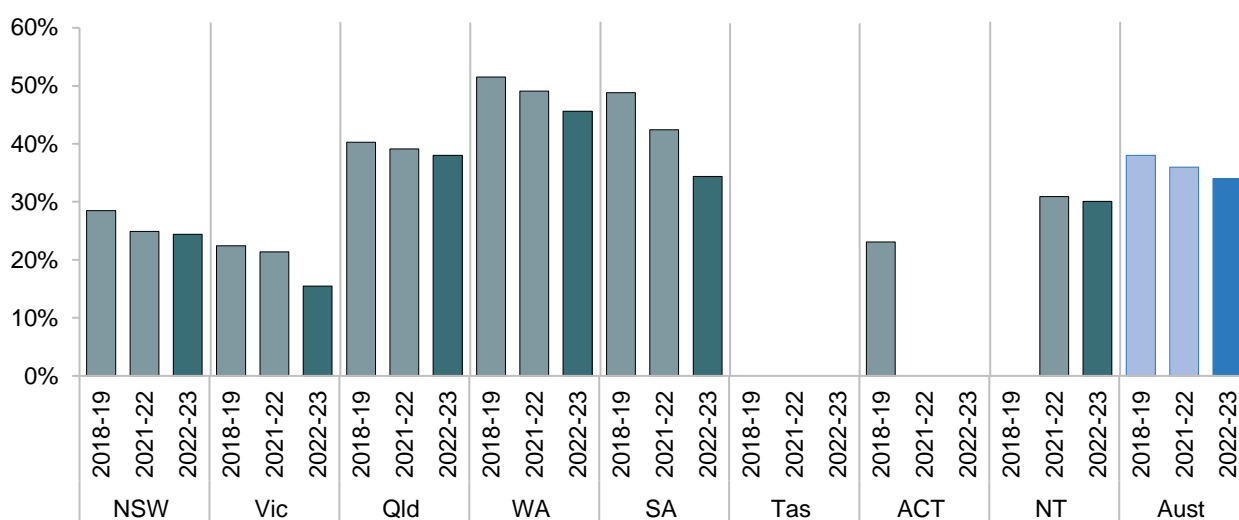
There are two main types of supervision in the youth justice system – community-based supervision and youth detention. New data for two supporting indicators – Indicators 11h and 11c – provides an insight into the experiences of young people at different points of the justice system, including: the age at which they first come into youth justice supervision, and more specifically, youth detention; the proportion of young defendants finalised in criminal courts (for 10–13 year-olds); and the proportion of alleged young offenders involved in police proceedings.

### Young people are entering the youth justice system at older ages

Nationally, the age at entry for youth supervision, including youth detention has increased, highlighted by the decreasing proportion of entries by young people aged 10–13 years. The proportion of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people under youth justice supervision that first entered supervision when aged 10–13 years has decreased each year since the baseline rate of 38% in 2018-19, reaching just over one third (34%) in 2022-23 (figure 2.28). Nationally, of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in youth detention in 2022-23, 37.1% entered youth detention aged 10–13 years, which is a lower rate than the baseline of 39.2% in 2018-19 (figure 2.29).

Age at entry for youth justice supervision has increased in all jurisdictions with available data between 2018-19 and 2022-23 (New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia), as the proportion of young children entering youth justice supervision aged 10–13 years has decreased. For youth detention, the proportion of young people in detention in 2022-23 who were aged 10–13 years when they first entered youth detention increased in Queensland and Tasmania (compared to 2018-19) and in the ACT and the Northern Territory (compared to the previous year) (figure 2.29).

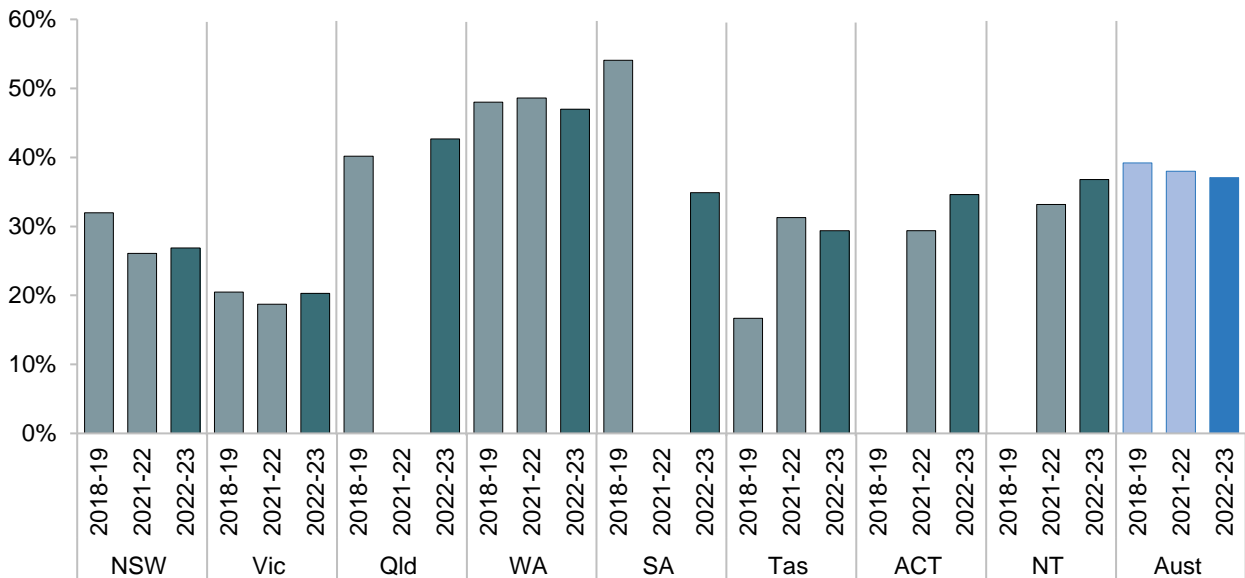
**Figure 2.28 – Young people entering youth justice supervision, by jurisdiction<sup>a</sup>**  
**Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people under youth justice supervision (aged 10–17 years) who were aged 10–13 years at first supervision (11h.2)**



a. Data is not available for some jurisdictions in some years.

Source: Derived from AIHW Youth justice in Australia

**Figure 2.29 - Young people entering youth detention by jurisdiction<sup>a</sup>**  
**Proportion of young people in detention (aged 10–17) who were aged 10–13 years at first entry into youth detention (11h.1)**

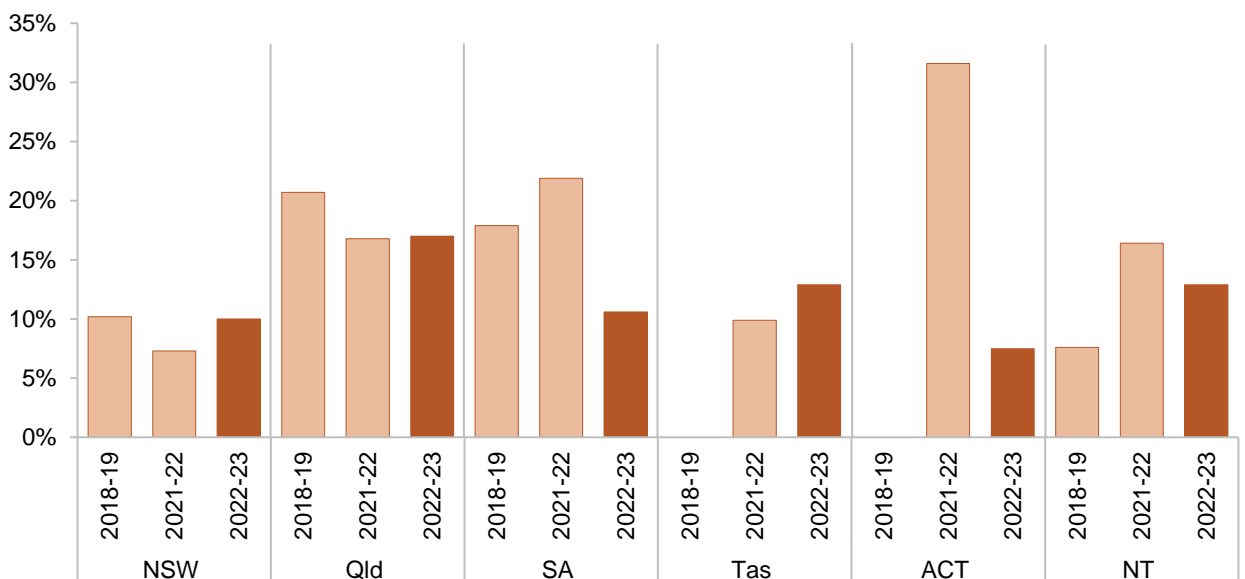


a. Data was not available for some jurisdictions in some years.

Source: Derived from AIHW Youth justice in Australia

In 2022-23, across the six jurisdictions with available data, the proportion of young defendants at criminal court aged 10–13 years ranged between 7.5% in the Australian Capital Territory to 17.0% in Queensland (figure 2.30). Relative to the baseline year (2018-19), there was a decline in all jurisdictions except the Northern Territory.

**Figure 2.30 - Young defendants at criminal courts, by jurisdiction**  
**Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander defendants (aged 10–17 years) at criminal court who were aged 10–13 years (11h.3)**



Source: Derived from ABS (unpublished) Criminal Courts Australia



### New data about young people proceeded against by police in five jurisdictions

New data on alleged young offenders involved in police proceedings is available for five jurisdictions – New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. Between 2018-19 and 2022-23, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people aged 10–17 years proceeded against by police declined in Queensland and South Australia but increased in New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. The increasing rate of young people proceeded against by police in New South Wales was primarily among older individuals as rates among 10– 13 years old declined slightly. However, in the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory, the increase spanned all age groups.


### More young people are being proceeded against by police multiple times in most jurisdictions

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people proceeded against by police, the proportion proceeded against multiple times increased in four of the five states with available data (New South Wales, South Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory).

In 2022-23, across the five jurisdictions with available data, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people proceeded against by police, the proportion proceeded against once ranged from 38.9% to 47.1%. By comparison, between 14.6% to 36.5% were proceeded against twice, and between 20.6% and 42.0% were proceeded against three or more times.

## Summary: Justice






Targets are not on track to be met by 2031.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults are being incarcerated at an increased rate and the target of a 15% reduction by 2031 is not on track to be met (**Target 10**).



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people continue to be overrepresented in the criminal justice system – there has been no progress made (**Target 11**).

<b>Legend</b>	 On track	 Improvement, but not on track	 Worsening	 No change	 No assessment
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## 2.9 Digital inclusion

Access to information and digital inclusion are fundamental to the self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. They can unlock significant economic and social opportunities such as education and economic participation (NACCHO 2021). As technology increasingly facilitates access to health, education, government, and utility services, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities stand to benefit from improved opportunities (NACCHO 2021; Rennie et al. 2019).

Structural barriers such as lack of infrastructure, limited connectivity and socio-economic factors, limit access to digital health, education and employment opportunities (First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group 2023; NACCHO 2021). Affordability, education, unstable housing and economic participation further widen the digital inclusion gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous people (McCallum and Papandrea 2009; NACCHO 2021).

Addressing these challenges by improving digital literacy and ensuring reliable, affordable telecommunications is essential for ensuring full participation in today's digital society. Enhanced access to information and digital literacy enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to make informed decisions and improve overall wellbeing (First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group 2023).

### Box 2.23 – What data will you find in this section?

This section provides a snapshot of the latest data available for socio-economic outcome 17.

Outcome	Latest data
<b>Outcome 17:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to information and services enabling participation in informed decision-making regarding their own lives	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to information (Target 17)</li> <li>• Digital inclusion (17a)**</li> </ul>	2014-15 2023

Note: \*\* Indicates a new supporting indicator since the 2023 ADCR.



## Outcome 17: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to information and services enabling participation in informed decision-making regarding their own lives

**Data is not available to assess whether Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are on track to have equal levels of digital inclusion by 2026**

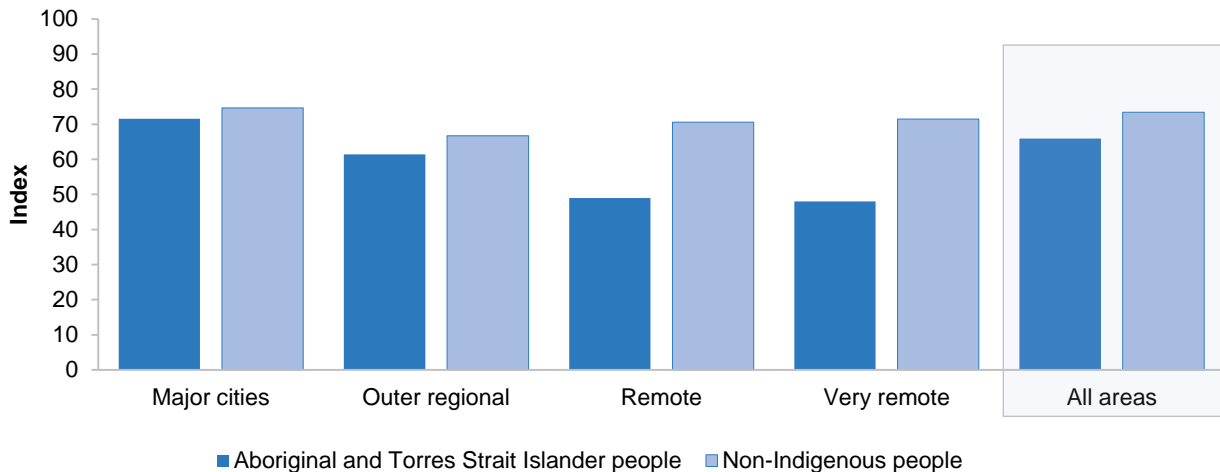
Tracking progress towards digital inclusion equality is not possible due to a lack of data. The target for 2026 was set in 2021 based on data from 2014-15 which showed that 73.5% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia aged 15 years or over accessed the internet in their home. Without recent comparable data for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous people, it is not possible to assess progress towards parity.

**There are digital inclusion gaps between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous people, particularly in remote and very remote areas**

The Australian Digital Inclusion Index (ADII) – Indicator 17a – is a relative measure of digital inclusion based on three dimensions (access, affordability, and digital ability). While the ADII is used to measure digital inclusion across the entire Australian community, the latest survey includes data on a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across the country to map the digital gap. In 2023, the ADII was similar for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous people living in major cities but significant gaps exist in remote and very remote areas (figure 2.31).

**Figure 2.31 – Comparison of Australian Digital Inclusion Index (ADII) by remoteness and Indigenous status<sup>a,b</sup>**

**Total index score in 2023, by Indigenous Status and remoteness (17a)**



**a.** Data has not been published for inner regional areas due to low samples. **b.** Shaded box denotes the national data for all remoteness areas combined.

Source: Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision-Making and Society (ARCADMS), Australian Digital Inclusion Index




### Number and location of community broadcast licences with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interest

The latest data for community radio broadcasting licences with an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander interest (Indicator 17g) shows that at 30 June 2023, there were 152 community radio broadcasting licences, 91 of which were long term and 61 were temporary community licences.

## Summary: Digital Inclusion

There is no new data available to report progress towards target.

 There is no new data available to report on the progress for increased access to information and services enabling participation in informed decision-making by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (**Target 17**).

<b>Legend</b>	 On track	 Improvement, but not on track	 Worsening	 No change	 No assessment
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# Appendix



## Attachment 1 – Logic of the framework for measuring progress

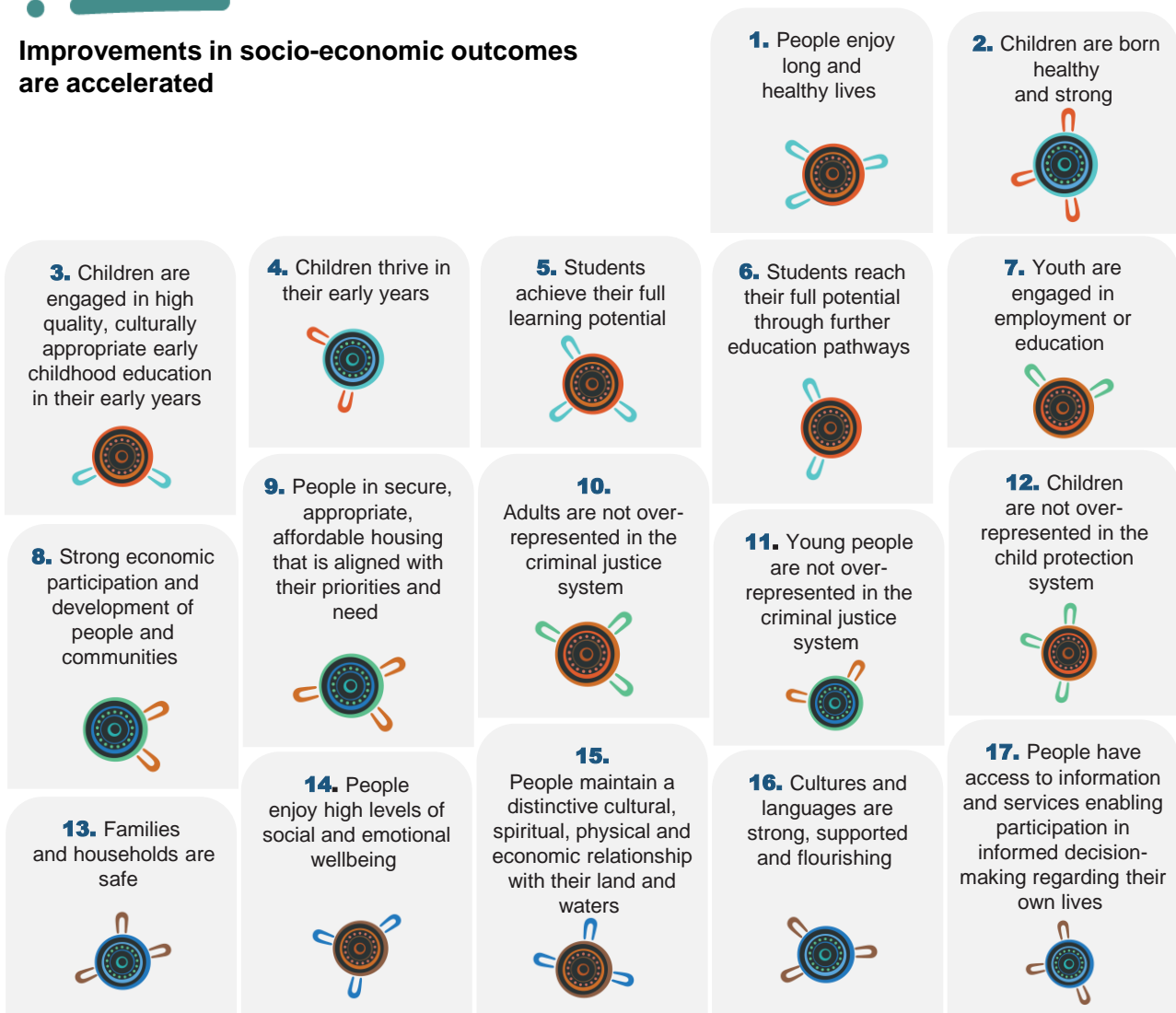
The National Agreement on Closing the Gap aims to implement four Priority Reforms to change the way governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. These reforms are expected to accelerate improvements in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Figure A1 outlines this logic.

Figure A1

### Priority Reforms are fully implemented

<b>Priority Reform 1</b> Formal partnerships and shared decision-making	<b>Priority Reform 2</b> Building the community-controlled sector	<b>Priority Reform 3</b> Transforming government organisations	<b>Priority Reform 4</b> Shared access to data and information at a regional level
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### Improvements in socio-economic outcomes are accelerated



**Objective is achieved**

To overcome the entrenched inequality faced by too many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people so that their life outcomes are equal to all Australians



## Attachment 2 - Closing the Gap Dashboard data collection summary (2024)

**Table A1 – Target indicator data summary**

Outcome	Target Indicator	Data source	Collection name	Data frequency	Latest dashboard update	Years currently reported (from baseline)	Latest data on dashboard	Reference year for next data update
1	Life expectancy	ABS	<a href="#">Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life expectancy</a>	5 yearly	Mar-24	2005–07, 2010–12, 2015–17, 2020–22	2020–22	2025–27
2	The proportion of babies with a healthy birthweight	AIHW	<a href="#">National Perinatal Data Collection</a>	Annual	Mar-24	2017-21	2021	2022
3	The proportion of children in the state-specific YBFS age cohort who are enrolled in a preschool program	ABS	<a href="#">Preschool Education</a>	Annual	Jul-24	2016-23	2023	2024 <sup>##</sup>
4	The proportion of children assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains of the AEDC	Department of Education	<a href="#">Australian Early Development Census</a>	3 yearly	Jun-22	2018, 2021	2021	2024
5	The proportion of people aged 20-24 years who have attained a minimum of Year 12 or equivalent,	ABS	<a href="#">Census of Population and Housing</a>	5 yearly	Jun-23	2016, 2021	2021	2026



Outcome	Target Indicator	Data source	Collection name	Data frequency	Latest dashboard update	Years currently reported (from baseline)	Latest data on dashboard	Reference year for next data update
	or Certificate level III or above qualification							
6	The proportion of people aged 25-34 years who have completed qualifications at Certificate level III or above	ABS	<a href="#">Census of Population and Housing</a>	5 yearly	Mar-23	2016, 2021	2021	2026
7	The proportion of youth aged 15-24 years who are fully engaged in employment, education or training	ABS	<a href="#">Census of Population and Housing</a>	5 yearly	Mar-23	2016, 2021	2021	2026
8	The proportion of people aged 25-64 years who are employed	ABS	<a href="#">Census of Population and Housing</a>	5 yearly	Mar-23	2016, 2021	2021	2026
9A	The proportion of people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing	ABS	<a href="#">Census of Population and Housing</a>	5 yearly	Mar-23	2016, 2021	2021	2026
9B	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households receive equal or better essential services (Community Infrastructure)	Data does not yet exist	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
10	Age-standardised imprisonment rate	ABS	<a href="#">Prisoners in Australia</a>	Annual	Mar-24	2019-23	2023	2024 <sup>##</sup>
11	The rate of young people aged 10–17 years in detention	AIHW	<a href="#">Youth Justice National Minimum Data Set (YJ NMDS)</a>	Annual	Mar-24	2018-19 to 2022-23	2023-23	2023-24 <sup>##</sup>



Outcome	Target Indicator	Data source	Collection name	Data frequency	Latest dashboard update	Years currently reported (from baseline)	Latest data on dashboard	Reference year for next data update
12	The rate of children aged 0-17 years in out-of-home care	State & Territory governments and AIHW	<a href="#">Child Protection National Minimum Data Set (CP NMDS)</a>	Annual	Mar-24	2019-23	2023	2024##
13	Proportion of females aged 15 years and over who experienced domestic physical or threatened physical harm in the last 12 months	ABS	<a href="#">National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS)</a>	To be confirmed#	Jun-21	2018-19	2018-19	To be confirmed#
14	Suicide death rate	ABS	<a href="#">Causes of Death</a>	Annual	Mar-24	2018-21	2021	2022##
15	Area of Australian land mass and sea waters that is subject to people's legal rights or interests	National Native Title Tribunal	<a href="#">Native Title Determinations Outcomes; Indigenous estate</a>	Annual	Mar-24	A: 2020-23 B: 2020-23	2023	2024
16	The number and strength of languages being spoken	AIATSIS	<a href="#">National Indigenous Languages Surveys (NILS)</a>	Periodic	Mar-24	2018-19	2018-19	2024
17	Proportion of people aged 15 years and over who have accessed the internet at home in the last 12 months	ABS	<a href="#">National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS)</a>	To be confirmed#	Jun-21	2014-15	2014-15	To be confirmed#

Notes: # For Target 13 there is no survey currently planned for the future collection of this data. For Target 17 the 2023-24 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS) includes a question on access to the internet (to be released late 2024), however the data will not be directly comparable to the baseline. ## Revised population data to be published by the ABS in 2024 (likely to be incorporated into the dashboard in 2025)



**Table A2 – Supporting indicator data summary**

	Supporting Indicator	Data source	Collection name	Data frequency	Latest data on dashboard	Years currently reported	Latest dashboard update	Reference year for next data
<b>SE01b</b>	Leading causes of death	ABS	Causes of Death	Annual	2018-22	2014–18, 2018–22	Mar-24	2019-2023 <sup>##</sup>
<b>SE01b</b>	SE01b Denominator	ABS	Population estimates and projections	Annual	..	..	..	..
<b>SE01d</b>	Health risk factors	ABS	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS) and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS)	3-6 yearly	2018-19	2004-5, 2008, 2012-13, 2014-15, 2018-19	Jul-24	2022-23
<b>SE01e</b>	Rates of accessing/utilisation of health services	MBS Analytics Section, Department of Health / AIHW	MBS	Annual	2021-22	2016-17 to 2021-22	Mar-24	2022-23 <sup>##</sup>
<b>SE01e</b>	SE01e Denominator	ABS	Population estimates and projections	Annual	..	..	..	..
<b>SE02a</b>	Smoking during pregnancy	AIHW	National Perinatal Data Collection (NPDC)	Annual	2021	2017-21	Jul-24	2022
<b>SE02d</b>	Use of antenatal care	AIHW	National Perinatal Data Collection (NPDC)	Annual	2021	2017-21	Mar-24	2022
<b>CtG3</b>	CtG3 Denominator (for remoteness and SEIFA disaggregations)	ABS	Population estimates and projections	Annual	..	..	..	..
<b>CtG03</b>	CtG3 Disability disaggregations	States and territories	Activity collection	Annual	2023	2016-23	Jul-24	2024





	Supporting Indicator	Data source	Collection name	Data frequency	Latest data on dashboard	Years currently reported	Latest dashboard update	Reference year for next data
<b>SE03b</b>	Early childhood education and care service providers	SNAICC	Register of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-focused integrated early years services	Annual	2023	2016-23	Jul-24	2024
<b>SE04d</b>	AEDC Multiple Strengths Indicator	Department of Education	AEDC	3 yearly	2021	2018, 2021	Jun-23	2024
<b>CtG05</b>	CtG5 SEIFA and remoteness disaggregations	ABS	Census	5 yearly	..	..	..	2026
<b>SE05c</b>	NAPLAN achievement	ACARA	National Assessment Program – Literacy and numeracy	Annual	2023	2023	Jul-24	2024
<b>CtG06</b>	CtG6 SEIFA and remoteness disaggregations	ABS	Census	5 yearly	..	..	..	2026
<b>SE06a</b>	Higher education commencement, attrition, and completion rates	Department of Education	Higher Education Statistics Collection	Annual	M1: 2022 M2: 2021 M3: 2022	M1: 2008-22 M2: 2016-21 M3: 2016-22	Mar-24	M1: 2023 M2: 2022 M3: 2023
<b>SE06c</b>	VET commencements, attrition and completion rates	NCVER	Total VET students and courses	Annual	M1: 2022 M2: 2020	M1: 2016-22 M2: 2016-20	Mar-24	M1: 2023 M2: 2021
<b>CtG07</b>	CtG7 SEIFA and remoteness disaggregations	ABS	Census	5 yearly	..	..	Jun-23	2026



	Supporting Indicator	Data source	Collection name	Data frequency	Latest data on dashboard	Years currently reported	Latest dashboard update	Reference year for next data
<b>SE07a</b>	Proportion of youth Not Engaged in Employment, Education or Training (NEET)	ABS	Census	5 yearly	M1: 2021 M2: 2021 M3: 2021 M4: 2021	M1: 2016, 2021 M2: 2021 M3: 2016, 2021 M4: 2016, 2021	Mar-23	2026
<b>CtG08</b>	CtG8 SEIFA and remoteness disaggregations	ABS	Census	5 yearly	..	..	Jun-23	2026
<b>SE08d</b>	Proportion of people aged 25-64 years who are employed, by occupation.	ABS	Census	5 yearly	2021	2016, 2021	Mar-23	2026
<b>CtG09</b>	CtG9 SEIFA and remoteness disaggregations	ABS	Census	5 yearly	..	..	Jun-23	2026
<b>SE9e</b>	Structural problems including functional health hardware	ABS	NATSIHS	Periodic and 3-6 yearly	Jun-22	2018-19	Jun-22	2022-23
<b>SE9g</b>	Social Housing	ABS	Census	5-yearly	2021	2016, 2021	Jun-22	2026
		AIHW	National Housing Assistance Data Repository	Annual	2023	2016-23	Jul-24	2024
<b>CtG10</b>	CtG10 Denominator (collected for age by sex disaggregations only)	ABS	Population estimates and projections	Annual	..	..	..	..
<b>SE10a</b>	People charged by police	ABS	Recorded Crime – Offenders	Annual	2022-23	2018-19 to 2022-23	Jul-24	2023-24 <sup>##</sup>



	Supporting Indicator	Data source	Collection name	Data frequency	Latest data on dashboard	Years currently reported	Latest dashboard update	Reference year for next data
<b>SE10g</b>	Prisoner health	AIHW	The Health of People in Australia's prisons	Periodic (2-3 yearly)	2022	2018, 2022	Jul-24	Est 2025 (tbc)
<b>CtG11</b>	CtG11 Denominator	ABS	Population estimates and projections	Annual	..	..	..	..
<b>SE11c</b>	Proportion of alleged young offenders (10-17 years) involved in police proceedings	ABS	Recorded crime – offenders	Annual	2022-23	2018-19 to 2022-23	Jul-24	2023-24
<b>SE11h</b>	Proportion of young people (10-13) first coming into youth justice system	AIHW	Youth justice in Australia	Annual	2022-23	2018-19 to 2022-23	Jul-24	2023-24
<b>CtG12</b>	CtG12 Denominator	ABS	Population estimates and projections	Annual	..	..	..	..
<b>SE12b</b>	Proportion of children in out-of-home care (0 to 17 years) that are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	AIHW	Child protection National Minimum Data Set (CP NMDS)	Annual	2023	2019-23	Mar-24	2024
<b>SE12e</b>	Application of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP)	Jurisdictions	State and territory governments	Annual	2023	2019-23	Jul-24	2024
<b>SE12m</b>	Rates of substantiation of a notification by type of abuse	Jurisdictions AIHW	State and territory governments; & CP NMDS	Annual Annual	2022-23	2018-19 to 2022-23	Jul-24	2023-24
<b>SE12m</b>	SE12m Denominator	ABS	Population estimates and projections	Annual	..	..	..	..



	Supporting Indicator	Data source	Collection name	Data frequency	Latest data on dashboard	Years currently reported	Latest dashboard update	Reference year for next data
SE13c	Rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children entering out-of-home care and receiving protection orders, where family violence is indicated	tbc	tbc	tbc	N/A	N/A	Jun-22	tbc
SE13d	Women reporting family violence is common in their communities	tbc	The National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS)	Periodic	N/A	N/A	Jun-23	tbc
SE13h	Rates of hospitalisation for family violence	AIHW	National Morbidity Database	Annual	2021-22	2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22	Jul-24	2022-23
SE13h	SE13h Denominator	ABS	Population estimates and projections	Annual	..	..	..	..
SE14d	Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people reporting experiencing psychological distress	ABS	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS)	3-6 yearly	2018-19	2018-19	Jun-23	2022-23
SE14e	Barriers accessing health services	ABS	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS)	Periodic	2018-19	2018-19	Jun-22	2022-23
SE14g	Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing racial prejudice	Reconciliation Australia	Australian Reconciliation Barometer	Bi-annual	2022	2018, 2020, 2022	Jul-24	2024
SE15a	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's owned land and water titles	Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (ILSC)	ILSC Indigenous held land dataset	Annual	2023	2020-23	Mar-24	2024



	Supporting Indicator	Data source	Collection name	Data frequency	Latest data on dashboard	Years currently reported	Latest dashboard update	Reference year for next data
SE16c	Number and age profile of the speakers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages	M1: NILS	M1: NILS 3	M1: Periodic	M1: 2018-19	M1: 2018-19	Jun-23	M1: 2019-21
		M2: ABS	M2: Census of Population and Housing	M2: Five-yearly	M2: 2021	M2: 2016, 2021		M2: 2026
SE16e	Accessing Commonwealth funded Indigenous language centres	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts	SmartyGrants grants management system	Annual	M1: 2022-23 M2: 2023	M1: 2018-19 to 2022-23 M2: 2019-23	Mar-24	M1: 2023-24 M2: 2024
SE17a	Digital Inclusion	The ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision-Making and Society (ADM+S)	Australian Digital Inclusion Index	Biannual	2023	2015 to 2023	Jul-24	2024
SE17e	Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people using internet to access government services for private purposes	ABS	<u>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS)</u>	Periodic	2014-15	2014-15	Jun-22	tbc
SE17g	Number and location of community broadcast licenses with an Indigenous interest	Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA)	<u>Community Radio Broadcasting Licences</u>	Periodic	2023	2015-23	Mar-24	2024

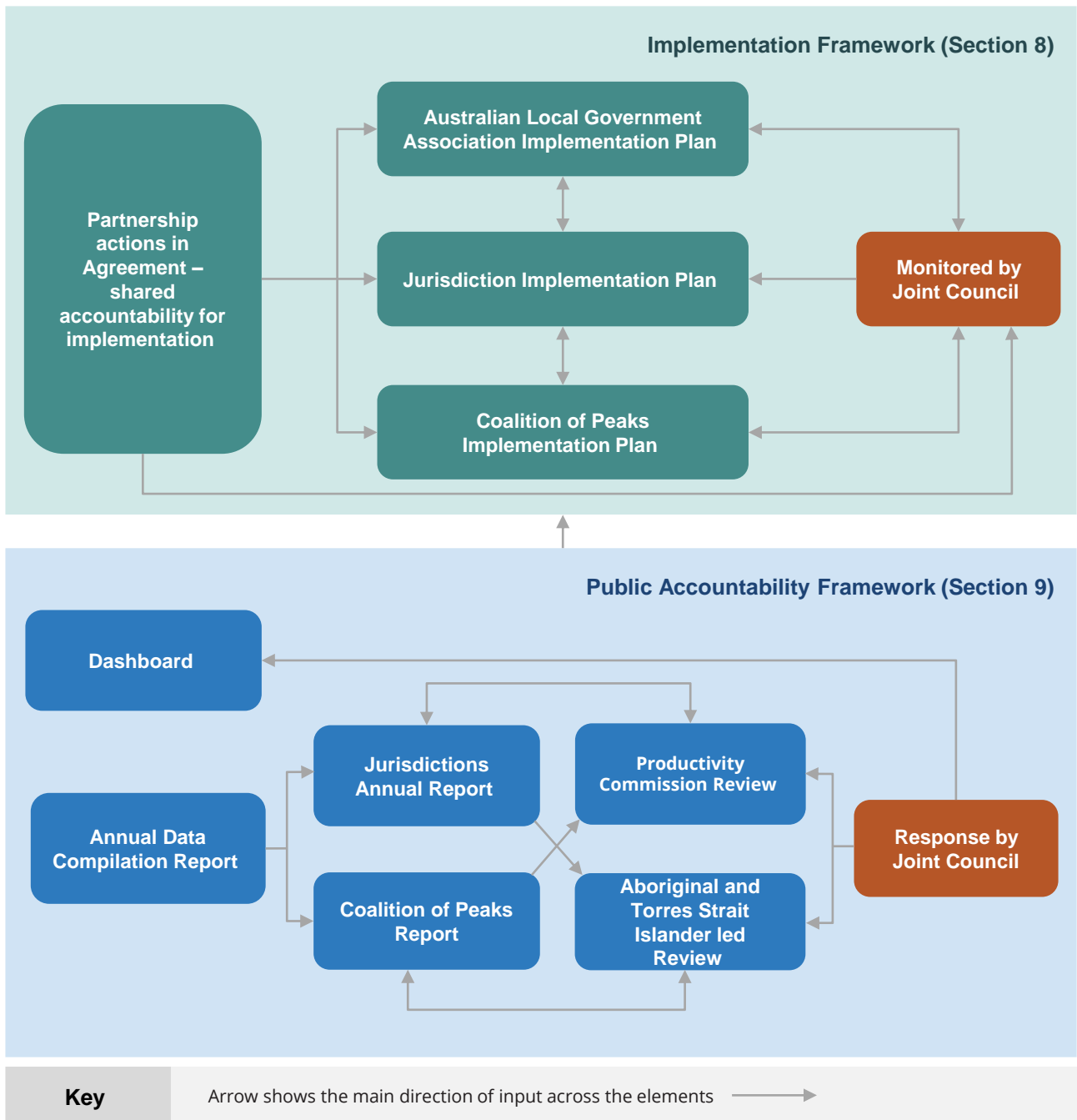
Note: ## Revised population data to be published by the ABS in 2024 (likely to be incorporated into the dashboard in 2025)



### Attachment 3 – Closing the Gap governance frameworks

The public implementation and accountability frameworks under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap comprise a number of elements (figure A2). Together these elements commit the Parties – the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments, the Australian Local Government Association and the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations – to implement and be accountable for the agreed actions and progress under the Agreement.

**Figure A2 – Public Implementation and Accountability Frameworks**



## Attachment 4 – State and territory assessment of progress

There are no state and territory targets. The state and territory assessments in table A3 reflect progress from the baseline year (improving, worsening or no change). The assessments for Australia reflect progress from the baseline towards the national target.

**Table A3 - Assessment of progress for states and territories across the national targets**

Target	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
SEO 1 - males	→	..	→	→	..	..	..	→	•
SEO 1 - females	→	..	→	→	..	..	..	←	•
SEO 2	■	→	→	→	■	→	■	←	✓
SEO 3	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	←	✓
SEO 4	←	→	→	←	→	→	→	←	←
SEO 5	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	•
SEO 6	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	•
SEO 7	→	→	→	→	←	→	→	←	•
SEO 8	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	←	✓
SEO 9A	→	→	→	→	→	←	←	→	•
SEO 9B	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
SEO 10	■	→	←	■	■	←	→	←	←
SEO 11	→	→	←	→	→	→	←	←	■
SEO 12	→	←	←	→	←	■	→	→	←
SEO 13	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
SEO 14	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	←
SEO 15A	→	→	→	→	→	■	■	→	✓
SEO 15B <sup>a</sup>	■	→	→	→	→	■	..	→	✓
SEO 16	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
SEO 17	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..

<sup>a</sup> The Australian Government also contributes to meeting Target 15B and have shown improvement since the baseline.

Legend	✓	•	→	■	←	..
	Good improvement and on track (Aust only)	Improvement but not on track (Aust only)	Improvement	No change	Worsening	No assessment



## Attachment 5 - Current progress of the development of measurement for the Priority Reform targets

The Priority Reforms are the foundation of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, however, there is not yet a framework in place or agreement on the data to be collected that could inform an assessment of progress towards them. Since the 2023 ADCR, work on developing these measures has commenced; however, they remain under development. Figure A3 provides an overview of progress towards developing measurements for each of the priority reforms.

**Figure A3 – Current progress of the development of measurement of the Priority Reforms**

	Priority Reform 1	Priority Reform 2	Priority Reform 3	Priority Reform 4
<b>Phases for developing measurement</b>	Partnership arrangements in place between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and governments enshrining joint decision-making	Increase the amount of government funding going through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations	Decrease the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who experience racism	Increase the number of regional data projects to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to make decisions
<b>Phase One:</b> Develop and agree on an approach for developing measurement	✓ Complete	✓ Complete	✓ Complete	✓ Complete
<b>Phase Two:</b> Develop and agree on the measurement concepts and computation	⋯ In progress	⋯ In progress	⋯ In progress	⋯ In progress
<b>Phase Three:</b> Develop data for reporting on the measures	✗ Not started	✗ Not started	✗ Not started	✗ Not started
<b>Phase Four:</b> Collect the data for reporting	✗ Not started	✗ Not started	✗ Not started	✗ Not started
<b>Phase Five:</b> Report data and build the time series	✗ Not started	✗ Not started	✗ Not started	✗ Not started





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