



Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australia

Profile of Children and Young People in WA 2026





Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

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

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

Some notes about language

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

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

Accessibility

The Commissioner for Children and Young People wants everyone – including children and young people – to be able to read and understand this report. For this reason, it is written at the level that most 12-year-olds would understand.

Acknowledgement

We thank Shijin (Alex) Wang and Shreya Patel for their help preparing this report. They joined us as interns through the McCusker Centre for Citizenship and their input was very valuable.

Sources

All sources are referenced throughout. Data is current as of 13 February 2026.

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Commissioner's Message

As the Commissioner for Children and Young People in Western Australia (WA), my job is to monitor the wellbeing of children and young people in this state from birth to 17 years and speak up for them when needed.

This report gives a snapshot of what life was like in 2025 for WA's children and young people. For selected measures of learning, health and safety, it contains the most recent data alongside data from about 10 years ago to see how much things have changed. This report also points out groups who may be having a harder time such as young people in the justice system, those growing up in poverty, or children living away from their families. Unfortunately, there are still no specific data available to track challenges faced by gender and sexually diverse children and young people. We know they lack access to services and supports, and continue to suffer harassment that severely impacts their social, emotional, physical and cultural wellbeing.

The Profile is written in a way that most people – children, families, and community members – will be able to understand.

It is estimated that the number of children and young people in WA grew by 4,387 in 2025 but the proportion of WA's population who are children and young people dropped to 21.7% (compared with 23% in 2015 and 22% in 2024) because WA's adult population is growing faster.

A recurring feature of many challenges identified in this report is the decline in social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people in WA. This is most obvious in the 2024 Australian Early Development Census results released in 2025 which show that WA slid backwards, particularly in the emotional and social domains. It is also evident in a marked increase in children being prescribed medication for Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder, rising numbers of school suspensions and exclusions, and rising numbers of children and young people in WA who are victims of family and domestic violence.

This report contains preliminary data from the Speaking Out Survey in 2025 where a sample of primary and secondary students in WA are invited to tell us about their health and wellbeing. Later this year, a full report of the 2025 Speaking Out Survey will be released.

I call on the government and service providers to engage in 'upstream' thinking and systemic, holistic actions to make real changes for children, young people and families across Western Australia, especially those facing tough situations.

Dr Jacqueline McGowan-Jones
Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australia





Western Australia's children and young people

About **656,987** children and young people live in Western Australia and make up **21.7%** of the state's population¹

It is projected that about

48,121

Aboriginal children and young people

0 to 17 years will live in WA in 2026²



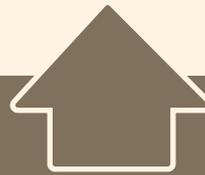
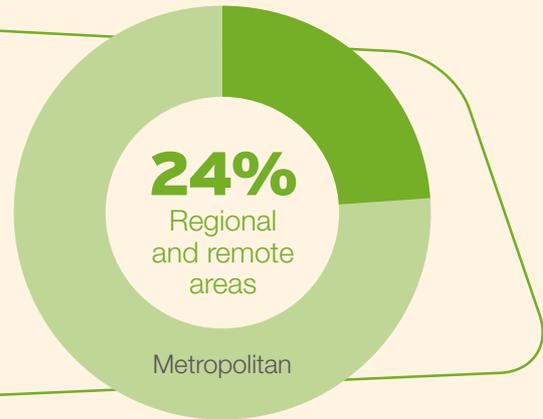
Western Australia's children and young people



Around

157,000

children and young people in WA live in regional and remote areas⁴



In the past 10 years there has been a

24.5%

increase in the number of children and young people aged 10 to 14 living in WA⁵

In 2025 there were

33,217

births registered in WA⁶



Key areas of concern



Poverty line



It was estimated that the child poverty rate **increased to 15.6%** of children and young people in 2025. This means that about **103,900 children and young people** in WA are now living below the poverty line⁷

139



children aged 10 to 13 years were held in detention during 2024-25. None were sentenced⁸

←33%



of children in Perth got their **two-year-old child health check** in 2024

25%



of children aged 5 to 17 in WA were **overweight or obese** in 2022. This has not changed for over a decade and is starting to be seen as 'normal'

Western Australia's 2024 **Australian Early Development Census results** for five-year-olds went **backwards** more quickly than the rest of Australia's. WA's biggest drops were:

↓4.6%

in social competence

↓4.1%

in emotional maturity

On an average night in WA through 2025

4.5

Aboriginal boys aged 10-13 years old were **held in detention without sentence**⁹





Population

More than one in every five people in WA is a child or young person aged from 0-17 years.

The number of children and young people in WA is rising. It grew by 4,387 from 2024 to 2025 and by 72,968 in the 10 years since 2015. Despite this, the proportion of children and young people in Western Australia has dropped by 0.3%. This is because the number of adults in our state is rising at an even faster rate.

Table 1: The share of WA's and Australia's population who were children and young people in 2015, 2024 and 2025¹⁰

	WA			Australia
	2015	2024	2025	2025
Children and young people	584,019	652,600	656,987	5,818,732
Total population (all ages)	2,540,672	2,978,147	3,043,731	27,614,411
Proportion of total population (%)	23.0	21.9	21.6	21.1

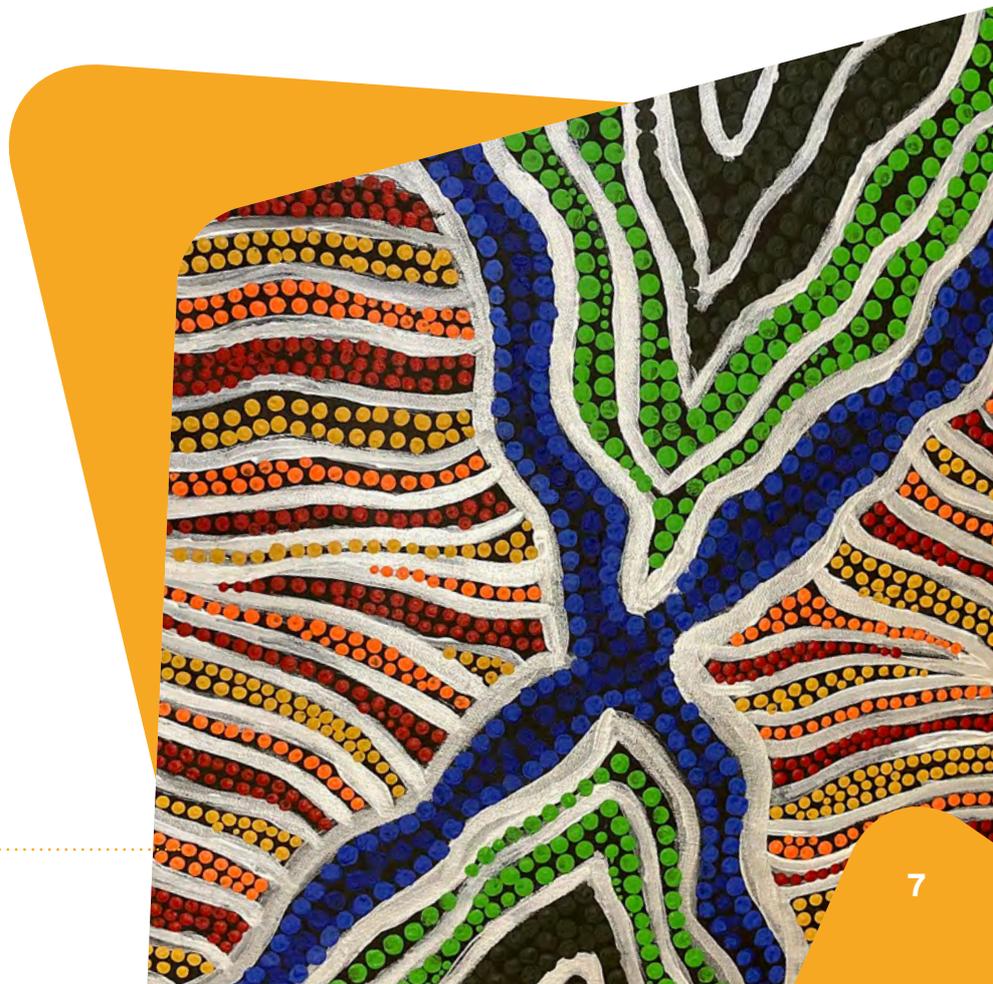
Note: Q2 data for each year is presented above as Q2, 2025 data is the most recent release.

When the number of children and young people are split into age-groups (Table 2), it shows that the 12-17 years group is rising most quickly while the 0-5 years group is shrinking. This pattern likely reflects broader demographic shifts, with falling birth rates contributing to the shrinking 0-5 age group while the 12-17 group continues to grow.

Table 2: WA's population of children and young people in 2015, 2024 and 2025 split into age groups¹¹

	2015		2024		2025		Change from 2015 to 2025	
	Number	% of total 0-17yo	Number	% of total 0-17yo	Number	% of total 0-17yo	Number	% change from 2015
0 to 5 years	206,344	35.3%	204,685	31.4%	204,461	31.2%	-1,883	-0.9%
6 to 11 years	195,094	33.4%	224,864	34.5%	224,864	34.3%	+ 29,770	15.3%
12 to 17 years	182,581	31.3%	223,051	34.2%	226,303	34.5%	+ 43,722	23.9%
0 to 17 years	584,019		652,600		655,628		+ 71,609	12.3%

Note: This data has been taken from population estimates, time point is Q2 for each year.



Distribution of children and young people across Western Australia

Three-quarters (75.7%) of WA's children and young people live in the Perth metropolitan area¹², 15.7% live in regional towns and 8.6% in remote areas (Table 3).

Mandurah is the fastest growing area for children and young people in WA. At the same time, the number of children and young people in the Goldfields and Kimberley is shrinking.

If Mandurah is counted as part of Greater Perth, the percentage of WA's children and young people living in Greater Perth in June 2024 was 80%.

Table 3: Distribution of children and young people across WA places, June 2024¹³

	Children and young people 0 to 17 years		% Change from 2023 to 2024
	Number	%	
Metropolitan	496,375	76.0%	1.7%
Perth – South East	133,982	20.5%	1.9%
Perth – South West	113,835	17.4%	2.2%
Perth – North East	70,238	10.7%	2.3%
Perth – North West	143,278	21.9%	1.1%
Perth – Inner	35,042	5.4%	0.4%
WA regional	102,082	15.6%	0.9%
Mandurah	25,253	3.9%	2.6%
Bunbury *	45,975	7.0%	0.2%
Wheatbelt **	30,854	4.7%	0.6%
WA remote	55,033	8.4%	-0.4%
Esperance	3,801	0.6%	-3.1%
Goldfields	9,673	1.5%	0.0%
Mid West	13,196	2.0%	0.3%
Gascoyne	2,216	0.3%	0.7%
Pilbara	15,519	2.4%	-0.8%
Kimberley	10,628	1.6%	-0.3%
Total WA	653,490	100%	1.4%

Note: *Includes Busselton, Margaret River, Augusta and Manjimup.

**Includes Albany, Wheatbelt North and Wheatbelt South.

Aboriginal children and young people

At the last census in 2021, 7.3% of WA's children and young people were Aboriginal¹⁴.

Within WA's total Aboriginal population, more than one-third (38.3%) are children and young people. In contrast, children and young people make up less than one-quarter (22.1%) of the total non-Aboriginal population.

Tables 4-7 use data from the 2021 Census as more recent data on the following is not available.

Table 4: WA children and young people by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal status, 2021¹⁵

	Aboriginal		Non-Aboriginal		Total
	Number	%	Number	%	
0-17 year olds	45,930	7.3	581,450	92.7	627,380
Total population (all ages)	120,006	4.4	2,629,359	95.6	2,749,365
% 0-17 year olds as a proportion of total population	38.3		22.1		22.8

There is an uneven spread of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children and young people across different parts of WA. Very remote areas have nearly one-fifth (18.4%) of WA's Aboriginal children and young people compared with only 1.1% of non-Aboriginal children and young people (Table 5).

Table 5: Children and young people aged 0 to 17 years by remoteness area and Aboriginal status, number and per cent, WA, 2021¹⁶

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

Note: Totals include Aboriginal status not stated and no usual address and therefore do not sum.

The Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) defines five classes of relative remoteness. In this classification, Mandurah is included in the Major Cities class¹⁷.

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

Cultural background

Most (84.9%) children and young people in WA were born in Australia. The next most common countries of birth are England (1.7%), New Zealand (1.1%), Philippines (1.0%), and India (0.9%)¹⁸.

More than three-quarters (77.4%) of children and young people in WA speak English at home. The other most spoken languages were Indian (3%) and Chinese (2%)¹⁹.

Table 6: Children and young people aged 0 to 17 years by country of birth, number and per cent, WA, 2021²⁰

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

Note: This table was prepared using the ABS Table Builder tool, which reports on unadjusted Census data. Data may therefore differ from other population data (e.g. Table 5).

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



Disability

The most recent available data on disability for children and young people in WA is from 2022²¹. That year, about 70,700 (or 11.6%) of WA's children and young people had a reported disability. The biggest proportion of this was among primary school children aged 6-11 years (Table 7).

Table 7: WA children and young people with disability by age group and disability status, 2022²²

	All with reported disability		Profound or severe core activity limitation	
	Number	Per cent of children and young people in age group	Number	Per cent of children and young people in age group
0 to 5 years	10,400*	5.1%	6,300*	3.1%
6 to 11 years	33,600	16.1%	21,900	10.5%
12 to 17 years	30,300	14.9%	11,600*	5.7%
Total	70,700	11.6%	38,000	6.2%

Note: *Estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution.

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

Persons with profound or severe core activity limitation includes persons with core activity limitation, those with no specific limitation or restriction, and those with long-term health conditions.

The types of disabilities differ across gender and ages. Boys aged 0-14 had the most reported disabilities, mainly with learning, speech or sensory (sight or hearing)²³.

Across Australia, about 40% of children with a disability live with a parent who also has a disability²⁴.

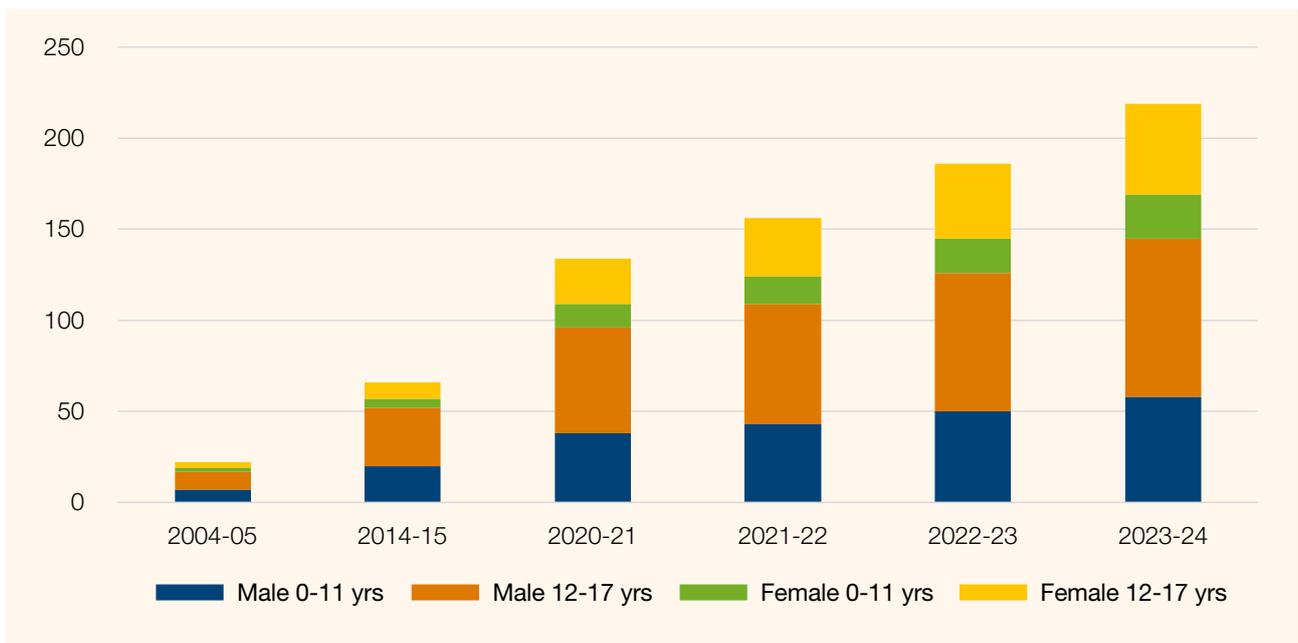
One type of disability that has become more prominent in recent years is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) which can be recorded in disability data as a learning and understanding disability and/or as a psychosocial disability²⁵.

Rates of children and young people across Australia being prescribed medication for ADHD has quickly grown in the past 20 years, especially amongst girls (Figure 1).

In 2004-05, 0.5% of girls across Australia were prescribed medication for ADHD. By 2023-24, this was 15 times higher (7.5%). At the same time, the rate of boys being prescribed medication for ADHD grew 8.5 times from 1.7% in 2004-05 to 14.5% by 2023-24 (Figure 1). Although prescription rates for ADHD are increasing, this does not necessarily mean that everyone who needs support is being identified. There may still be children and young people whose symptoms are overlooked or who remain undiagnosed.

Data on how prescribed medication for ADHD is distributed across different demographic sub-groups is limited as it only presents combined age-groups (adults and children combined). Based on this data, rates of being prescribed medication for ADHD in Australia are higher for people who are financially well-off. Rates are also higher in and around cities compared with remote areas²⁶. This may be due to better access to diagnosis in cities and more easily being able to afford medication.

Figure 1: Rates of medication dispensed to boys and girls aged 0-11 years and 12-17 years for ADHD in Australia, 2004-05, 2014-15, and 2020-24²⁷



Note: This data is not available for WA only.



WA Families

Family composition

During the most recent Census in 2021, 419,708 of WA's families had children.

The mix of family types in WA did not change much between 2011 and 2021 (Table 8).

Around one-quarter (26%) of families in 2021 were single parent. Most (79.9%) single parents in WA are women²⁸.

Table 8: WA families with dependent and non-dependent children* in 2011 and 2021²⁹

	2011		2021	
	Number	% of total in 2011	Number	% of total in 2021
Couples with dependent children	219,046	63%	262,245	62%
Single parents with dependent children	57,745	17%	69,575	17%
Couples with non-dependent children	43,835	13%	51,426	12%
Single parents with non-dependent children	27,321	8%	36,462	9%
Total families with children	347,947		419,708	

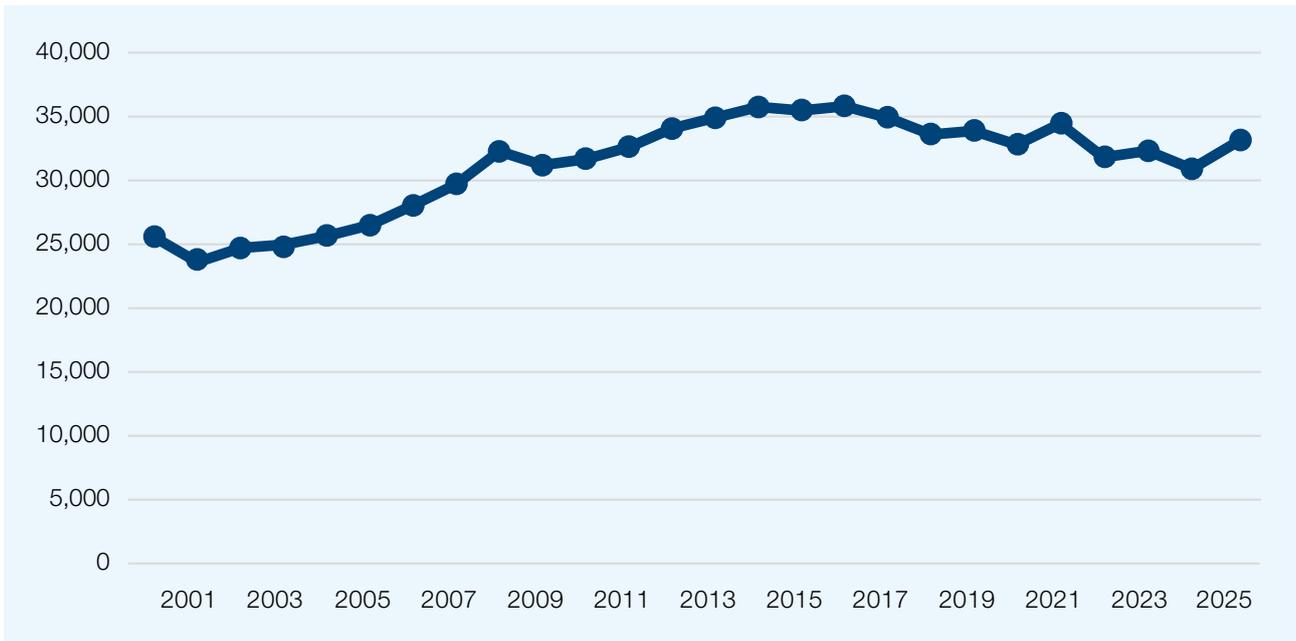
Note: *Dependent children are those under 15 years of age and older children who are students. Non-dependent children are over 15 years of age, are no longer students and have their own income. The ABS publishes data in aggregated bands that prevent 16 and 17-year-olds from being included in the dataset.

Births

The number of births per year in WA increased between 2000 to 2014 but then dropped, despite more people living here. In 2014, 35,595 babies were born in WA but in 2025 only 33,217 were born (Figure 2).

The number of births per woman in WA is dropping. There were 1.9 births per woman in 2014; by 2024 this had dropped to 1.43³⁰.

Figure 2: Births in WA, 2000 to 2025³¹



The median age of parents with newborn babies in WA is rising. In 2024, the median age of mothers having babies was 31.9 years, compared to 30.6 years in 2014. For fathers, the median age was 33.9 in 2024 compared with 32.8 in 2014³².

Whilst the median age for Aboriginal mothers is slightly younger than the WA median age, this is also increasing. In 2024, the median age for Aboriginal mothers having babies in WA was 26.5, compared to 24.7 in 2014³³.

The number of babies born to teen mothers aged 15-19 has nearly halved in the past 10 years, from 1,187 in 2014 to 637 in 2024³⁴. Similarly, the number of Aboriginal teen mothers has reduced by almost one-third, from 414 in 2014 to 285 in 2024³⁵.



Learning and participating

This part of the Profile looks at key learning opportunities and outcomes for children and young people across WA. How well children and young people learn and are listened to has a big impact on their happiness and success, now and in the future.

Early development

Every three years across Australia, children's development is measured when they start school at about five years of age. The measures cover five domains – physical, social, language, emotional and cognitive (school-based). Results for each child are collected and reported as the 'Australian Early Development Census' (AEDC).

Results from the 2024 AEDC collection were released in March 2025. For WA and the rest of Australia, the proportion of children on track on all five domains fell in 2024 (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Proportion of children in WA and Australia on track on all five AEDC developmental domains 2009 to 2024³⁶

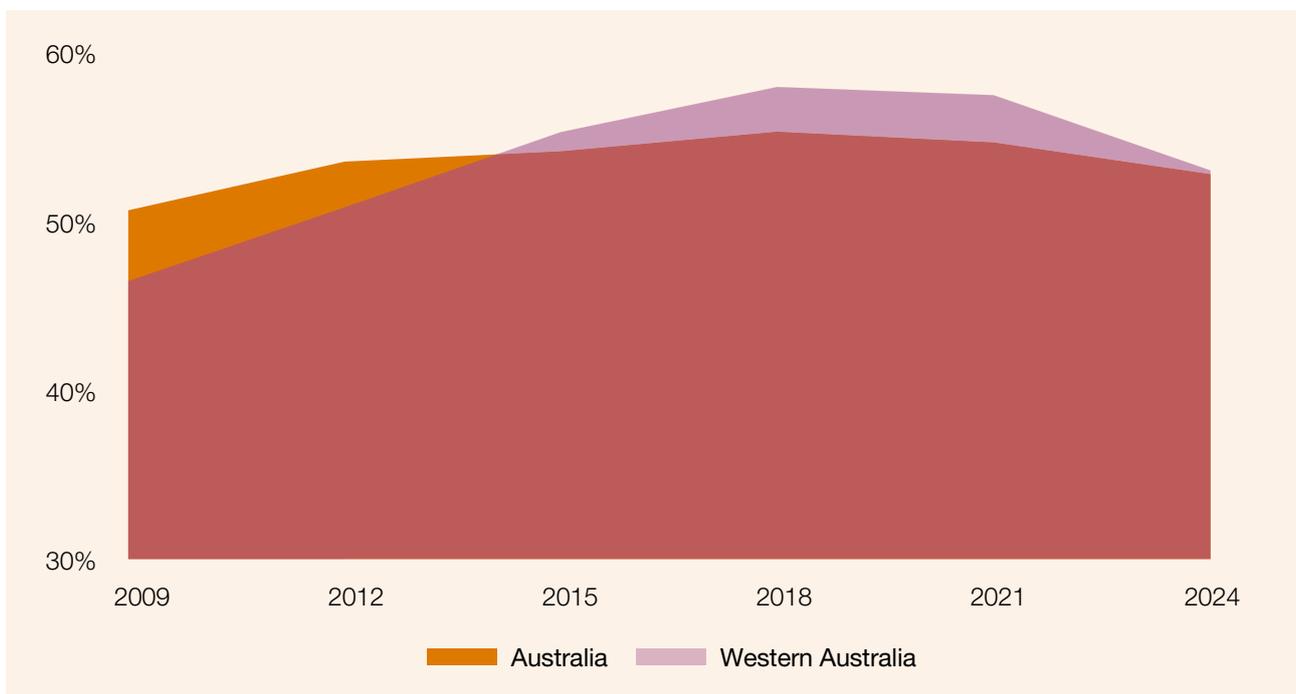


Figure 3 shows that when the AEDC was first collected in 2009, WA's result was worse than Australia as a whole, with only 46.5% of WA children on track on all five domains, compared with 50.7% for Australia.

Western Australia's AEDC results steadily improved after 2009 and by 2018, 58% of WA children were on track on all five domains compared with only 55.4% for all of Australia.

AEDC results for WA and Australia flat-lined in 2021 but went backwards in 2024. Part of this drop might be linked to the COVID epidemic, but it is unclear why WA's results have dropped quicker than the rest of Australia's. This is addressed later in the report as an **Area of Concern**.

Childcare

The number of children attending childcare services in WA has increased compared to 10 years ago. In 2024, almost 42% of WA children aged 0-5 years went to childcare compared with only 31% in 2015 (Table 9).

The rate of participation peaks when children are three years old (58.8%) then starts to taper from the age of four when most WA children start Kindergarten at school.

Table 9: Children aged 0 to 5 years attending approved childcare services in WA, 2015, 2023 and 2024³⁷

	2015		2023		2024	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
0 years old	2,624	7.6	3,228	10.1	2,938	9.2
1 years old	10,998	31.9	15,272	45.7	14,210	43.0
2 years old	15,224	44.5	18,948	56.0	19,779	57.2
3 years old	15,950	46.9	20,069	58.5	20,392	58.8
4 years old	11,474	33.7	15,964	45.4	16,840	47.8
5 years old	7,651	22.7	11,876	33.1	12,060	33.5
Total 0 to 5 years	63,921	31.2	85,357	41.8	86,219	41.9

The average number of hours per week that WA children attend approved childcare services has also increased slightly since 2016 (Table 10).

Table 10: Average hours per week that WA children aged 0 to 12 years attend approved childcare services, by service type³⁸, 2016, 2023, 2024

	2016*	2023	2024
Centre-based care	25.0	29.0	29.6
Family day care	25.7	27.1	25.9
Outside School Hours Care	9.3	9.6	9.6

Note: *Counting categories changed from 2018 so 2016 figures in this table are a calculated estimate, based on Report on Government Services Table 3A.18 published 2025.

While more WA children now go to childcare services than before, the proportion who attend in WA is lower than in Australia as a whole (Table 11).

Table 11: Percentage of children aged 0 to 12 years attending approved childcare services in WA and Australia, 2024³⁹

	WA	Australia
	%	%
0 to 5 years	41.9	50.4
6 to 12 years	16.4	21.9

In some parts of WA, especially in small towns and remote areas, there are not enough childcare places⁴⁰, but things are getting better. In 2020, about 62% of WA was described as a ‘childcare desert’, and by 2024 this had dropped to 39%⁴¹.

School

As of February 2026, there were 1,153 schools in WA with 508,990 students from Kindergarten to Year 12⁴².

As at semester 2, 2025, most (65.6%) students go to government schools, while 34.4% attend non-government (Catholic or independent) schools. The share of students at public schools is slowly dropping – it was 66.1% in 2015⁴³, 65.8% in 2024⁴⁴ and 65.5% in 2025 (Table 12).

Table 12: Students in government and non-government schools by year level, number and per cent, WA, Semester 2, 2025⁴⁵

	Government		Non-government		Total
	Number	%	Number	%	
Kindergarten	23,911	64.5	13,144	34.5	37,055
Pre-primary	25,368	72.3	9,697	27.7	35,065
Years 1 to 6	159,246	71.6	63,064	28.4	222,310
Years 7 to 12	121,467	58.1	87,670	41.9	209,137
Total	329,992	65.5	173,575	34.5	503,567

In 2025, 7,526 children and young people in WA were home-schooled⁴⁶. While this is only 1.6% of all compulsory-aged students, home-schooling has nearly tripled since 2015 (Figure 4). It would be good to know why this increase is happening.

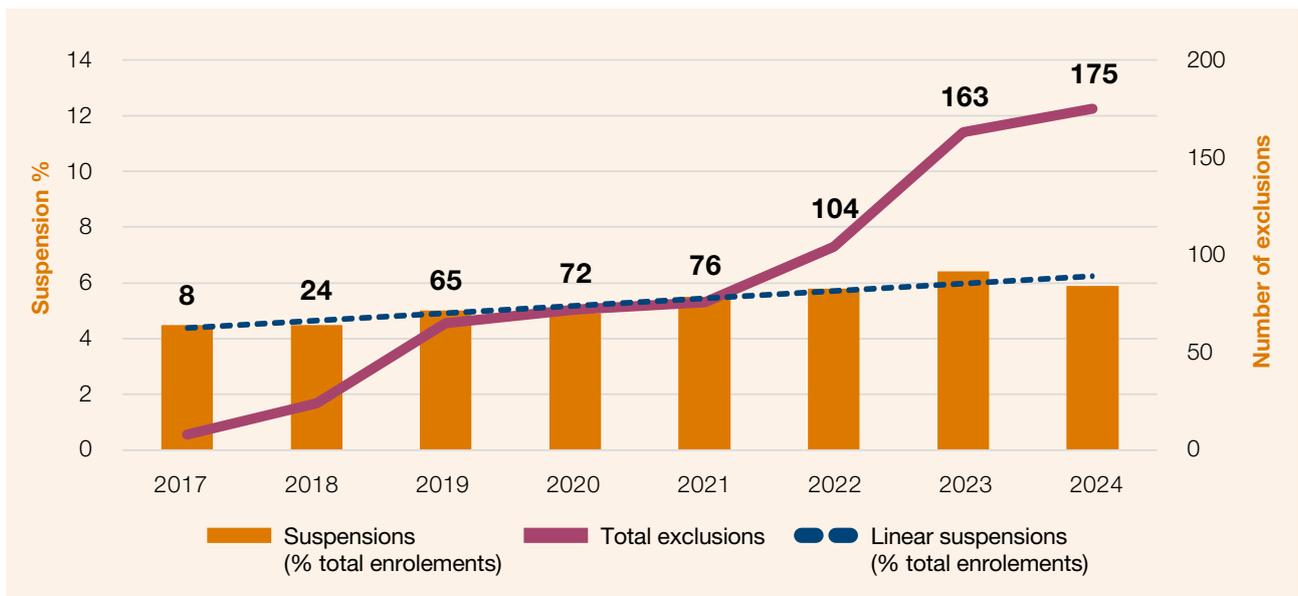
Figure 4: Number of WA children and young people being home-schooled, 2015 to 2025⁴⁷



Schools sometimes suspend or exclude students who break certain rules. Suspension means the student is not allowed to go to the school for a short time; exclusion means the student is not allowed back at all and has to join a different school or program.

In 2024, 175 students were excluded from a public school, compared with 8 students in 2017. School suspensions have also risen from 4.5% of public-school students in 2017 to 6% in 2024 (Figure 5). In 2025 there were 185 exclusions from public schools in WA. This is the only data available for 2025 currently.

Figure 5: Suspensions and exclusions in WA public schools, 2017 to 2024⁴⁸



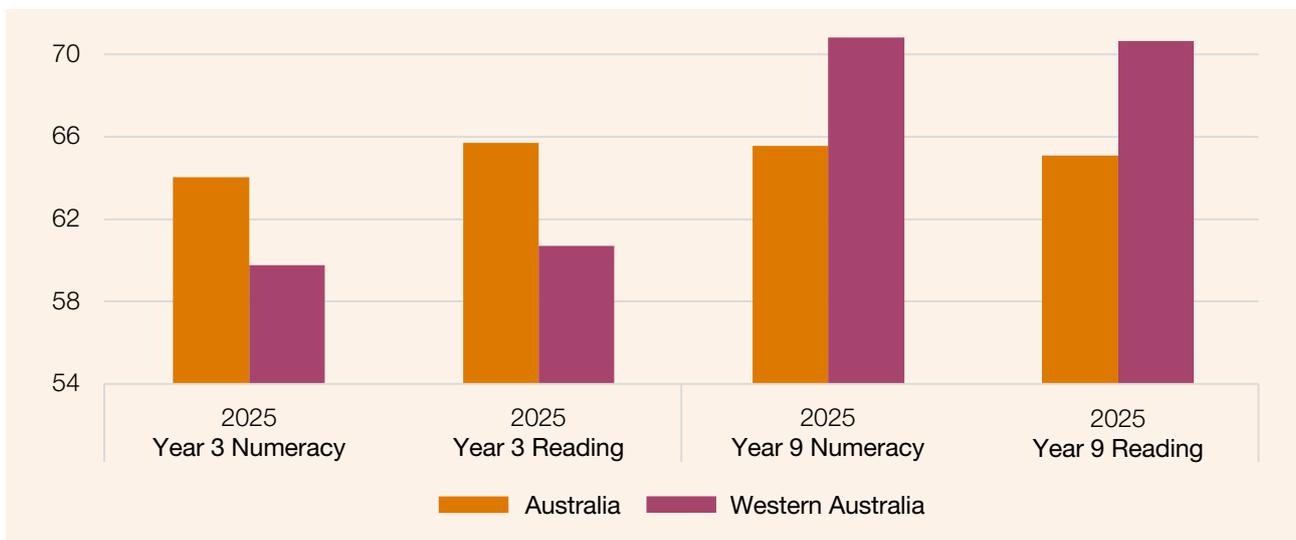
Note: This information is for public schools only. Information is not available on suspensions and exclusions from Catholic or independent schools in WA.

2025 data was provided directly by the Department of Education WA.

Literacy and numeracy

Literacy and numeracy is tested every year through the National Assessment of Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) program. There are lots of ways to look at WA's NAPLAN results. To keep it simple, we have focused on the proportion of students in Year 3 and Year 9 whose NAPLAN Reading and Numeracy results were considered by the Australian Curriculum and Standards Authority (ACARA) to be 'strong' or better in 2025. We compare these results for WA and Australia (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Proportion of Year 3 and Year 9 students who are 'strong' or better at NAPLAN Reading and Numeracy, WA and Australia, 2025⁴⁹



Between 60% and 70% of all WA Year 3 and Year 9 students were 'strong' or better at NAPLAN Reading and Numeracy in 2025, with similar results in 2023 and 2024⁵⁰.

At Year 3, WA students were doing 4-5 percentage points worse than students in all of Australia, but at Year 9, WA students were doing 4-5 percentage points better.

Aboriginal students were half as likely to perform strongly at NAPLAN Reading and Numeracy compared with their non-Aboriginal peers (Table 13).

Table 13 also shows that boys performed slightly better than girls at NAPLAN Numeracy, while girls performed slightly better than boys at NAPLAN Reading.

Table 13: Key sub-groups of WA Year 3 and Year 9 students who are 'strong' or better at NAPLAN Reading and Numeracy, 2025⁵¹

	Year 3		Year 9	
	Reading (%)	Numeracy (%)	Reading (%)	Numeracy (%)
Aboriginal	25.5	21.3	28.7	26.8
Non-Aboriginal	63.8	63.2	74.1	74.4
Boys	56.3	62.3	66.3	72.7
Girls	65.4	57.1	75.2	68.9



Healthy and connected

This part of the Profile looks at how well children and young people are in body and mind. It starts even before birth and includes health checks, daily habits and feeling like they belong and are supported in their community.

Pre-birth

Women should get a health check within the first 10 weeks of pregnancy⁵², and avoid smoking or drinking alcohol during pregnancy as it can cause serious harm to their baby's development.

About 61% of WA women get a health-check in the first 14 weeks of their pregnancy. In WA, this rate has hardly changed in 10 years but for the rest of Australia, it has improved from 60.6% in 2013 to 79.2% in 2023. The rate for Aboriginal women across Australia has also improved from 50.7% in 2013 to 69.3% in 2023 (Table 14).

It is unclear why WA women getting a health check in the first 14 weeks of pregnancy has not improved in WA since 2013.

Table 14: Percentage of WA, Australian and Aboriginal women who get a health-check in first 14 weeks of pregnancy, 2013, 2022 and 2023⁵³

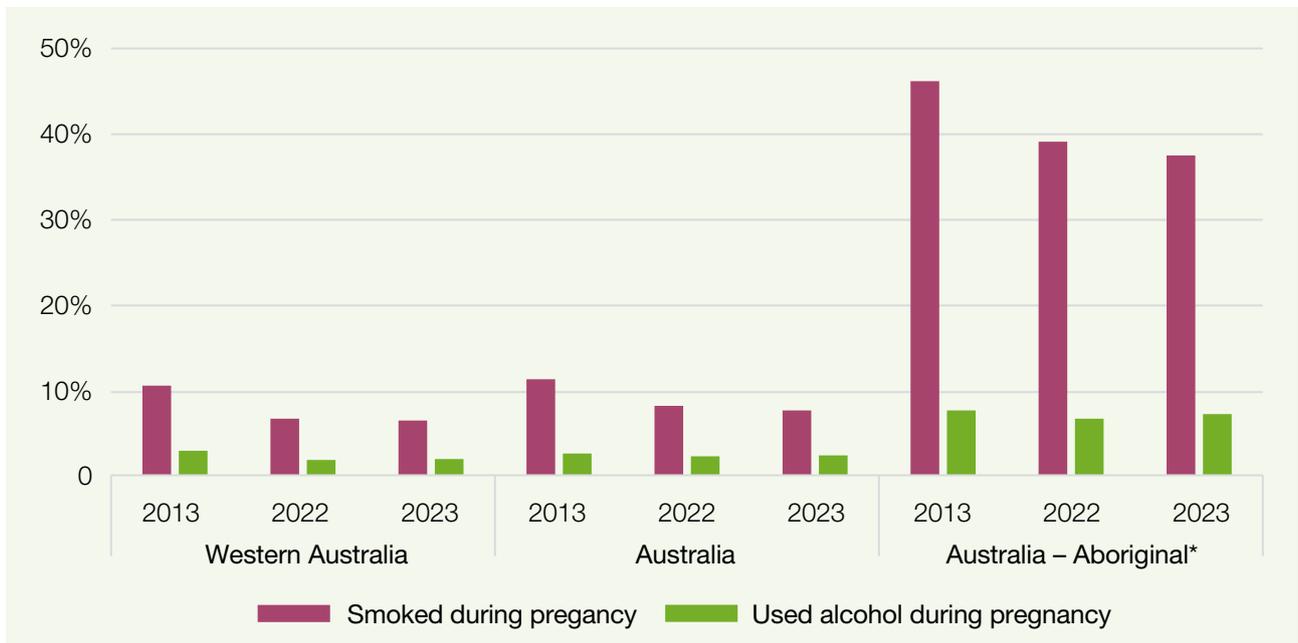
Western Australia – all			Australia – all			Australia – Aboriginal [*]		
%			%			%		
2013	2022	2023	2013	2022	2023	2013	2022	2023
61.8	60.6	61.3	60.6	78	79.2	50.7	68.7	69.3

Note: ^{*}Aboriginal data on this metric is not available by states and territories.

Self-reports of smoking and drinking alcohol during pregnancy are dropping for all three groups (Figure 7) but both are still much higher among Aboriginal women (47.1% for smoking and 7.7% for drinking alcohol) compared with Australia as a whole (7.8% for smoking and 2.4% for drinking alcohol).

In WA in 2023, 6.6% of pregnant women said they smoked and 1.9% said they used alcohol. It is good that these figures are lower than the rest of Australia, but there is no safe level of alcohol use or smoking during pregnancy.

Figure 7: Percentage of women who said they smoked or used alcohol while pregnant, 2013, 2022, and 2023⁵⁴

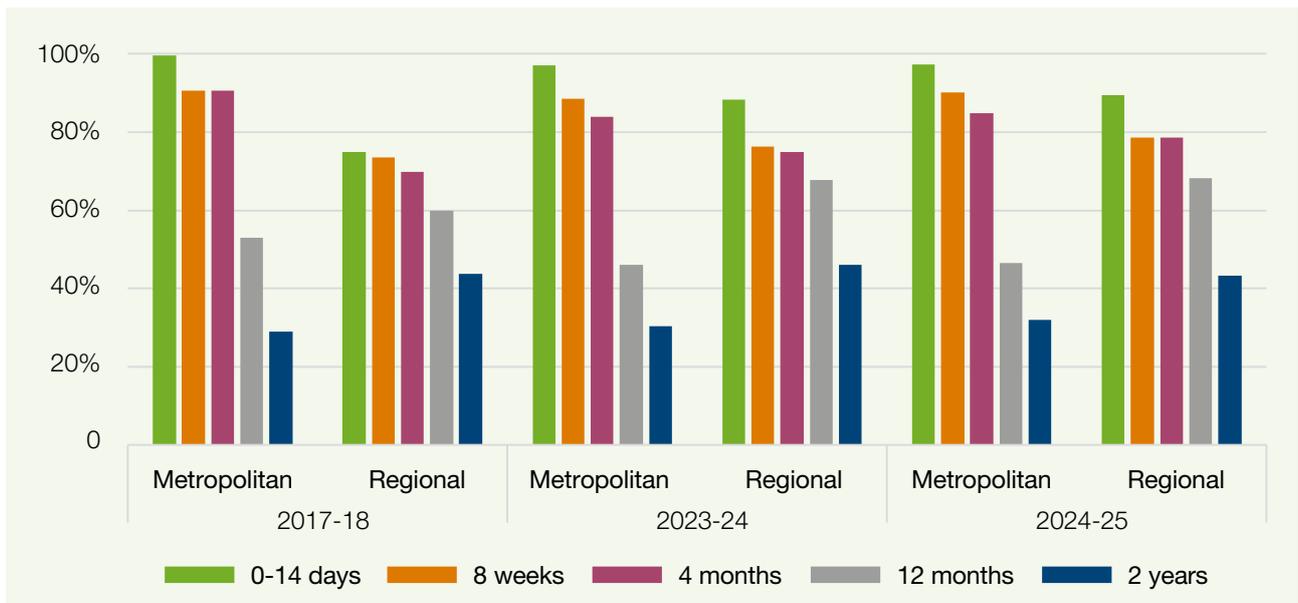


Note: ^{*}Aboriginal data on this metric is not available by states and territories.

Child health checks

All babies and young children in WA should get a health check at 14 days, 8 weeks, 4 months, 12 months, 2 years and 5 years of age so any issues can be identified, and children and their parents can get the support they need straight away.

Figure 8: Percentage of WA children who received health checks at set ages, by region, 2017-18, 2023-24 and 2024-25⁵⁵



Around 90%–97% of all babies in WA get a health check by 14 days but this rate progressively drops for the remaining four universal check points at 8 weeks, 4 months, 12 months and 2 years. In 2024-25, less than one-third of metropolitan children and less than a half of children in regional areas got their 2-year-old health check (Figure 9 and 10). These figures have not substantially changed over time.

During most health checks, parents fill-out a survey (Ages and Stages Questionnaire – the ASQ⁵⁶) on their child’s language, behaviour and physical abilities.

In 2024, of the one-third of metropolitan children who got their two-year-old health check, ASQ results showed that only 66.8% of them were on track (Table 15). For the one-half of regional children who got their two-year-old check, 72.7% were on track (Table 15).

Table 15: Proportion of 2-year-olds ‘on track’ according to the ASQ, 2020 and 2024⁵⁵

	2020		2024	
	Metropolitan	Regional	Metropolitan	Regional
Aboriginal	56.8	65.2	52.2	50.8
Non-Aboriginal	66.2	74.1	67.2	74.7
Boys	57.9	66.8	60.9	69.0
Girls	75.0	81	74.0	76.5
All	66.0	73.4	66.8	72.7

The rate of boys being on track on the ASQ at two years of age is lower than girls, and the rate of Aboriginal children being on track on the ASQ is lower than non-Aboriginal children.

Children who are not ‘on track’ on the ASQ are assessed as needing to be monitored or to be referred for specialist assessment and support.

An unstated feature of the ASQ data in Table 15 is that two-thirds of metropolitan children and one-half of regional children are not even being assessed due to the low take-up of child health checks at two years of age. This matter is addressed later in this report as an **Area of Concern**.



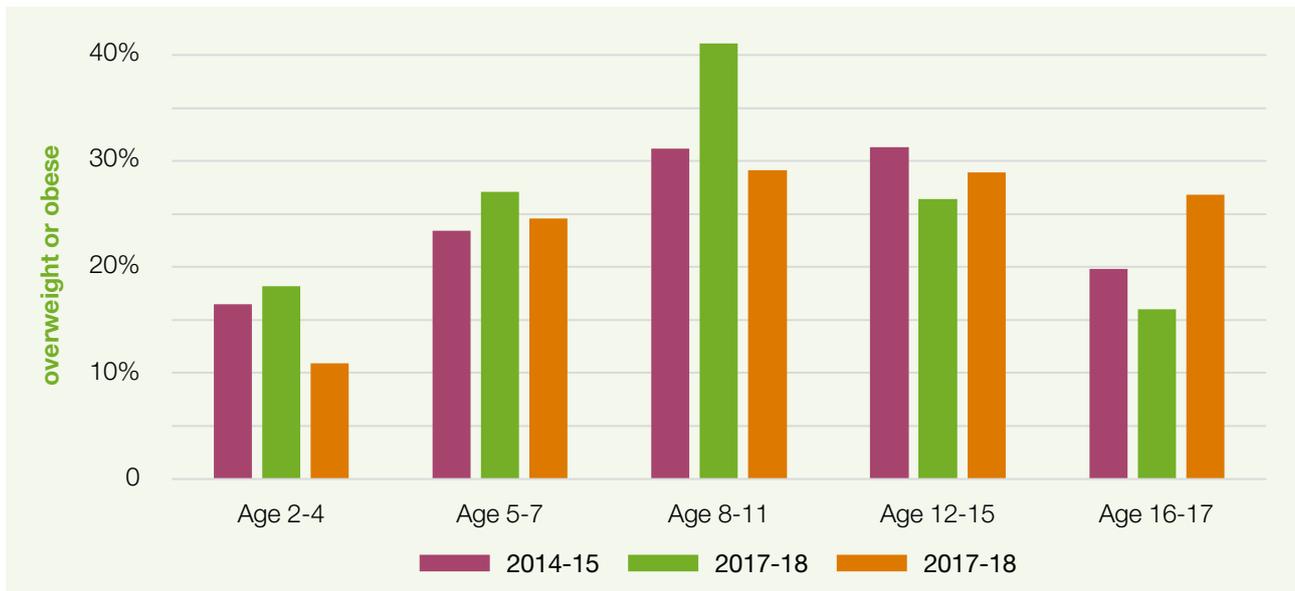
Physical health

Being physically healthy includes being active, having a good diet and being in the healthy weight range. We look at weight range in this report because it is usually a result of good or poor diet and physical activity.

Children who are overweight often turn into overweight adults with a bigger risk of serious health problems like diabetes and a heart disease.

Almost one-quarter (24.6%)⁵⁷ of children in Australia aged 2-17 were overweight or obese in 2022. This high rate of children having an unhealthy weight applies from around five years of age (Figure 9). It was much the same in 2014-15 and is similar across Australia and similar for boys and girls.

Figure 9: Percentage of children and young people in Australia overweight or obese by age groups, 2014-15, 2017-18 and 2022⁵⁸



For more than 10 years, around one-quarter of children and young people in Australia from five years of age onwards have been overweight or obese. This high rate could be related to poor diet and low activity levels and is an **Area of Concern** addressed later in this report.

Mental health

Every year the WA Department of Health asks a mixed sample of nearly 600 WA families about their children’s wellbeing. This includes whether they think their child has trouble with emotions, concentration, behaviour or getting on with people and, if so, whether they need special help for this (Table 16).

Special help includes support for children with special educational needs and/or particular medical conditions and requirements. It can include health care plans, access to various health services, and educational and emotional assistance at schools.

Table 16: Proportion of WA children who need special help with emotions, concentration, behaviour or getting on with people, 2015, 2023, 2024⁵⁹

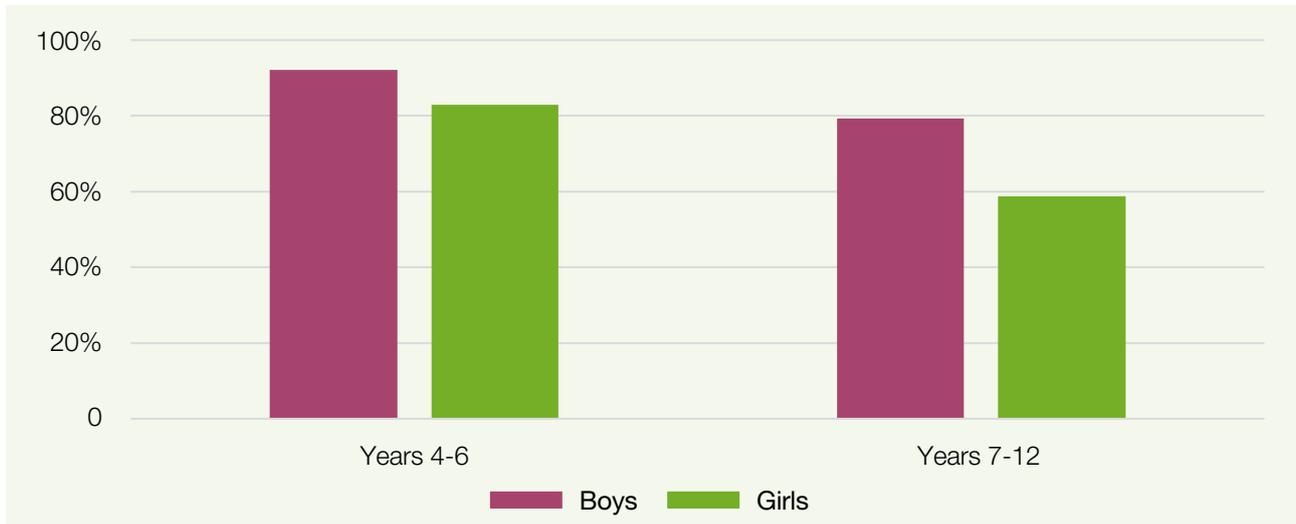
	2015	2023	2024
	%	%	%
1-4 years old	NA	9.4*	6.8*
5-9 years old	7.8*	26.3	28.4
10-15 years old	13.4	22.4	34.5
Boy	9.6	21.3	31.8
Girl	6.3	19.9	18.7
All children 1-15 years	8.2	20.6	25.3

Note: *Prevalence estimate has a Relative Standard Error (RSE) between 25-50% and should be treated with caution.

In 2024, the parents of around 7% of children aged one to four years said their child needed special help with emotions, concentration, behaviour or getting on with people, rising to more than a third (34.5%) for 10-15-year-olds. These rates are higher for boys (31.8% for boys versus 18.7% for girls) and have tripled in 10 years – from 8.2% of all children aged 1-15 years in 2015 to 25.3% in 2024.

When WA children and young people were asked in the 2025 Speaking Out Survey if they felt good about themselves, three-quarters (74.1%) said that they did, but boys and younger students were more likely to view themselves positively than girls and older students (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Percentage students who agree or strongly agree that they feel good about themselves, 2025⁶⁰



The difference between boys and girls was strongest in high school with 79.3% of Year 7-12 boys agreeing or strongly agreeing that they feel good about themselves, compared with only 58.8% of Year 7-12 girls.

These findings where girls and older students are less likely to feel positive about themselves were also found in the 2019 and 2021 Speaking Out Surveys⁶¹.

The contrast between what high school girls and boys say about themselves in the Speaking Out Survey (Figure 10) and what their parents say about them in the Department of Health survey (Table 16) is interesting. It might be that parents and others notice boys having issues because boys are more likely to ‘act out’ and misbehave when they have problems, whereas girls are more likely to keep their problems to themselves⁶².

The increase in mental health issues for children and young people, also seen in results from the 2024 AEDC⁶³, is an **Area of Concern** addressed later in this report.

Overall life satisfaction

Life satisfaction data comes from WA students in Years 4 to 12 that took part in the ‘Speaking out Survey’ in 2025⁶⁴. On a 0 to 10 scale, students ranked where they felt their life was from the worst (0) to the best (10) possible life.

The average life satisfaction ranking for all students was 6.8.

Rankings were higher for younger students. The average life satisfaction rank for Year 4-6 students was 7.4, dropping to 6.6 for Year 7-9 students and 6.3 for Year 10-12 students.

Life satisfaction rankings were also higher for boys, especially among high school students. Among Year 7-12 students, the average ranking on life satisfaction for boys was 6.9 compared with 6.1 for girls.

Similar life satisfaction results were found in the Speaking Out Survey in 2021, including similar patterns across sub-groups with boys and younger students identifying as having higher life satisfaction than girls and older students⁶⁵.



Safe and supported

This part of the Profile looks at whether WA children and young people have a solid family, trusted adults to turn to, basic needs like good food, enough money and a decent house, and live in a safe community.



Supportive relationships

Each year, a survey run by the WA Department of Health with a mixed sample of 600 families includes four questions on ‘family functioning’ – things like how well they sort problems, get on with each other, agree on decisions and plan shared activities. In 2024, more than one in eight (13.5%) WA children lived in a family with poor family functioning (Table 17). These figures fluctuate from one year to the next but are higher than a decade ago.

Table 17: Percentage of WA children living in families with poor family functioning, 2015, 2023, 2024⁶⁶

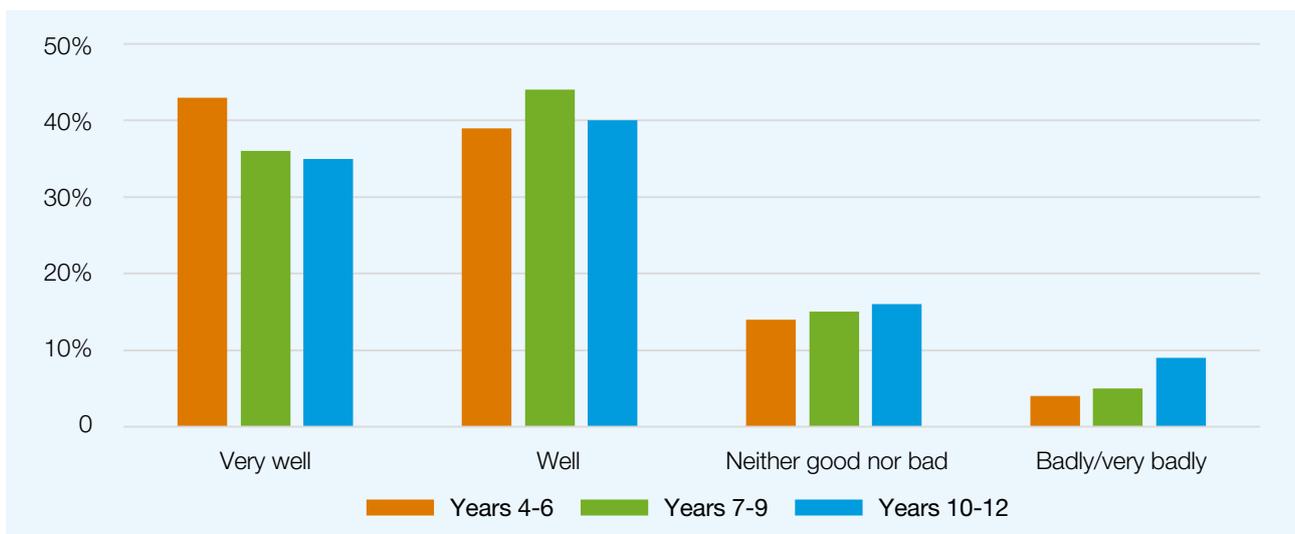
	2015	2023	2024
	%	%	%
1-4 years old	8.4	8.5	9.2
5-9 years old	5.5	12.0	12.4
10-15 years old	11.4	16.7	17.9
All children 1-15 years	8.7	12.7	13.5

Note: Families that score 2.25 or lower across four different combined measures are defined as having ‘Poor family functioning’.

When WA children and young people were asked in the 2025 Speaking Out Survey about how well their family gets along, an average of 79.2% said ‘well’ or ‘very well’ but these views were less positive among older students (77.6% in Years 10-12 versus 82.4% in Years 4-6) (Figure 11).

The views of boys and girls on how well their families get along were similar in Years 4-6 but in Years 7-12, a lower proportion of girls said their family gets along (72.9% for girls compared with 83.9% for boys).

Figure 11: Views of WA Year 4-12 students on how well their family gets along, 2025⁶⁷



Safe at home

Home is not a safe place for all children. More than 7 in every 1,000 WA children and young people are the subject of substantiated abuse or neglect each year. This means 4,649 children in 2023-24⁶⁸.

The most common type of child abuse or neglect in WA in 2023-4 was emotional (61.4%) which includes experiencing family and domestic violence (FDV). The next most common is neglect (22.8%), followed by physical (10.2%) and sexual (5.5%)⁶⁹.

More than one in every 10 (13%) children below 15 years of age witness FDV against a parent⁷⁰. This is recognised as a form of child abuse in WA⁷¹. Children who witness threats, bullying or direct violence against a parent experience deep trauma that stays with them for the rest of their lives; they are victims of FDV. In 2023, 10.7% direct victims of FDV in WA were children and young people⁷². Boys are almost twice as likely as girls to be direct victims⁷³.

The rate of children being placed in out-of-home care in WA and Australia has risen in the past 10 years. Nearly all of this increase is Aboriginal children (Table 18).

Table 18: Rate per 1,000 of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children in out-of-home care in WA and Australia, 2015, 2023 and 2024⁷⁴

	2015		2023		2024	
	WA per 1,000	Australia per 1,000	WA per 1,000	Australia per 1,000	WA per 1,000	Australia per 1,000
Aboriginal	55.3	52.5	64.4	57.0	58.3	50.3
Non-Aboriginal	3.4	5.5	3.0	4.7	3.1	4.6

As of 30 June 2025, 5,276⁷⁵ WA children and young people were in out-of-home care. Of these, 3,168 were Aboriginal children (60.5%) even though only 7.3% of WA's children and young people are Aboriginal, demonstrating a significant over-representation of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care. Across Australia, Aboriginal children and young people make up the majority of out-of-home care placements.

Material basics

This section looks at families with children having enough money for 'the basics' like good food, a decent house, money to put fuel in their car and medicines.

From a list of 26 items that most people think everyone should have, single parents and their children are much more likely to be missing out on two or more (Table 19). Around one-quarter (26%) of WA's families in 2021 were single parents⁷⁶.

While access to material basics improved for all family types between 2014 and 2022, single parent families are nearly five times as likely to be missing out on two or more basic items compared with couple families (Table 19).

Table 19: Percentage of family types missing out on two or more important material basics in Australia, 2014, 2018, 2022⁷⁷

	Missing out on two or more basic items		
	2014	2018	2022
	%	%	%
Couple with dependent children	10.9	8.3	6.0
Single parent with dependent children	30.0	29.3	28.5
All people	11.8	10.7	8.2

The Speaking Out Survey asks WA school students if their family can afford certain household staples including having enough food. In 2025, 92.7% of all Year 4-12 students said they always or often have enough food, slightly higher than 90.6% in 2021, but this was the case for only 86.5% of Aboriginal students. Some students said they only sometimes have enough food, 6.3% of all Year 4-12 students and 12% of Aboriginal students⁷⁸.

Another important material basic is safe and stable housing. Single parent families are more likely than couple families to need help to find somewhere to live, while Aboriginal people (and their children) are much more likely to need help finding somewhere to live (Table 20).

Table 20: Families seeking help from specialist homelessness services in WA and Australia, 2024-25⁷⁹

	WA	Australia
	%	%
Aboriginal	50	29
Single parent with children	34	34
Couple with children	10	10
Couple without children	4.8	4.5

Family and domestic violence is the top reason (46% of requests) people – mainly women with children – in WA needed help from homelessness services in 2024-25⁸⁰.

Not having enough time, money and help are problems that pile up on each other, leading to pressures that make it hard for families to be at their best for their children. As shown in Table 19 and Table 20, single parent families are most likely to face these mounting pressures⁸¹.

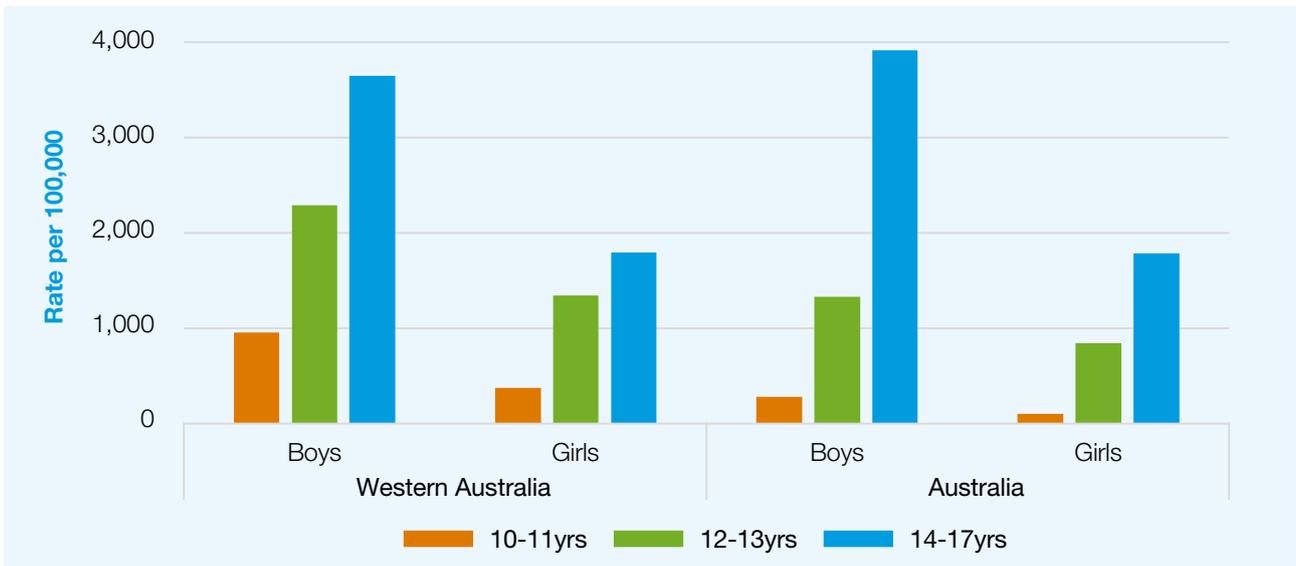
Contact with youth justice system

There were 5,956 children aged 10-17 years who came into contact with the justice system in WA in 2023-24. This was a 5% drop from the year before and the lowest since 2007-08⁸².

Children aged 10-17 years made up 15% of all WA offenders in 2023-24⁸³. Around 2% of young people over 10 years of age were considered ‘youth offenders’ in 2023-24⁸⁴.

Boys are twice as likely as girls to offend, and children who offend in WA tend to be younger than the Australian average (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Split of ages of boys and girls who offended in WA and Australia, 2023-24⁸⁵



The total number of children held in detention in 2024-25 was 139 aged 10-13 years and 694 aged 14-17 years (Table 21). None of the children in the younger age group were sentenced, and only 101 of the children aged 14-17 were sentenced.

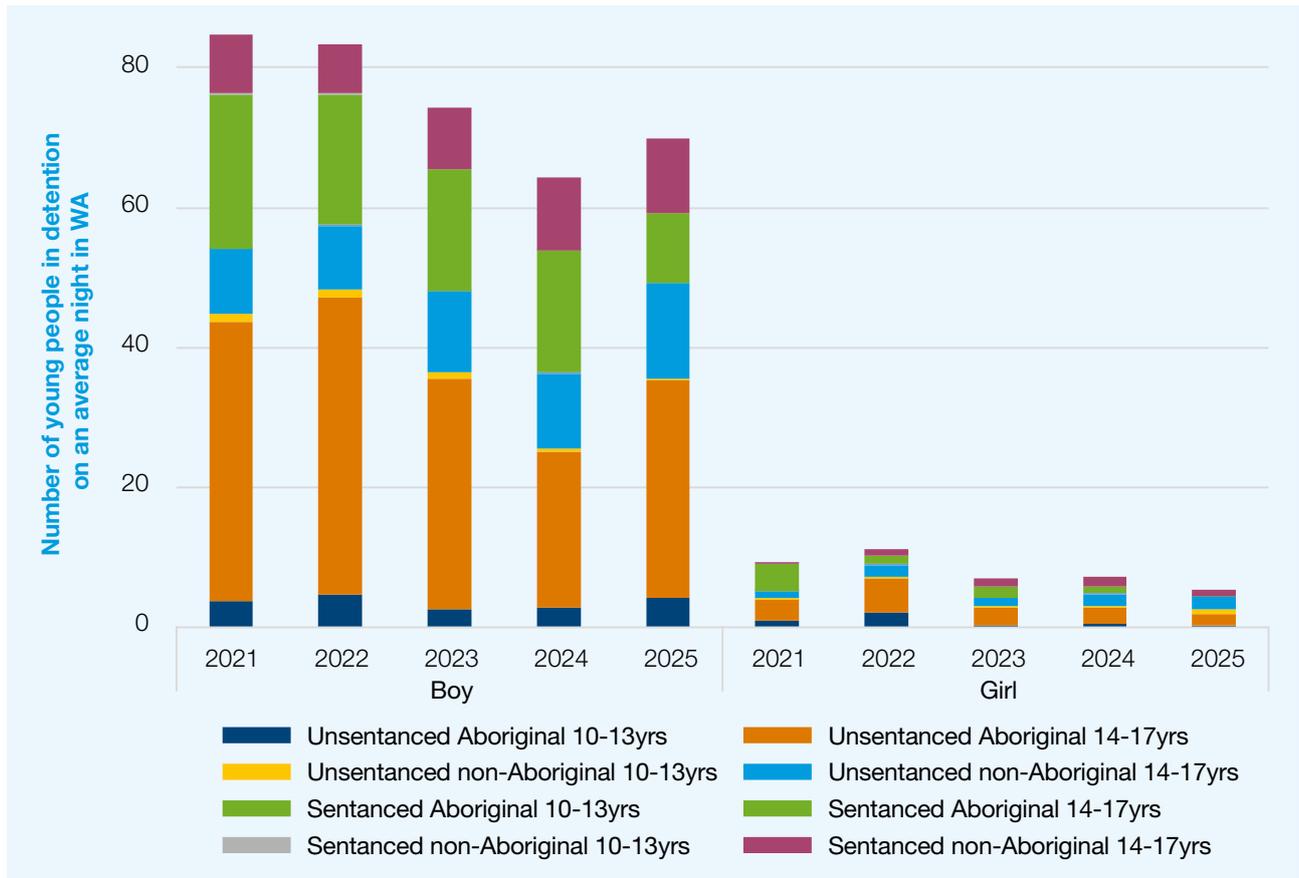
Table 21: Number of distinct children and young people in detention (and sentenced) by Aboriginality, 2024-25⁸⁶

	Aboriginal (sentenced)	Non-Aboriginal (sentenced)	Total* (sentenced*)
10-13 years old	112 (0)	27 (0)	139 (0)
14-17 years old	443 (61)	251 (40)	694 (101)

*The sum of the column values may exceed the total. A young person may have more than one stay in detention in the financial year with more than one distinct Aboriginality type recorded. A young person may also be counted across both age groups if they were in detention while aged 13 and 14 in the period.

Another way to look at rates of detention is the average number of people detained each night. The average number of boys and girls detained each night in WA is slowly dropping (from 94.2% in 2021 to 75.3% in 2025), however Aboriginal children are detained at much higher rate than their non-Aboriginal peers (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Number of boys and girls in detention (sentenced and unsentenced) on an average night in WA, 2021 to 2025⁸⁷



In 2025, more than twice as many children and young people held in detention were unsentenced compared with those who had been sentenced. Additionally, more than half of all children and young people in detention were Aboriginal (Figure 13).

It is alarming that on an average night in WA through 2025, 4.5 Aboriginal children aged 10-13 years old were held in detention without sentence and that 139 WA children aged 10-13 years experienced detention in 2024-25 (Table 21). The high number of children detained is addressed as an **Area of Concern** later in this report.



Areas of concern

This part of the Profile addresses areas of concern that were identified in previous sections of the report. The recurring theme across most of these concerns is poor mental health.

This section of the report focuses on children and young people in Western Australia who are most at risk of problems now and in the future. Targeted actions are needed to address these areas of concern without delay or excuses. The data in this report shows that many warning signals for children and young people who may engage in antisocial behaviour appear much earlier when children are very young. If these signals are not spotted, or they are ignored, they have the potential to escalate into things like school suspensions, youth crime, and other serious struggles.

Early childhood development

Western Australia’s 2024 ‘Australian Early Development Census’ (AEDC) results went backwards quicker than the rest of Australia’s.

The AEDC looks at how children are tracking on each separate domain (physical, communication, social, thinking skills and emotional maturity).

Compared with Australia as a whole, WA saw twice the decline across every domain between 2021 and 2024. (Table 22).

Table 22: Percentage of five-year-old children on track by developmental domain in WA and Australia, including change from 2021 to 2024⁸⁸

	Western Australia			Australia		
	2021	2024	Change	2021	2024	Change
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Physical health and wellbeing	80.5	79.0	-1.5	78.5	78.2	-0.3
Social competence	79.2	74.6	-4.6	75.9	74.0	-1.9
Emotional maturity	77.9	73.8	-4.1	77.0	74.8	-2.2
Language and cognitive skills	82.3	80.4	-1.9	82.6	81.7	-0.9
Communication skills and general knowledge	79.3	76.8	-2.6	77.1	75.9	-1.2

WA’s biggest drop was for social competence (by 4.6%) and emotional maturity (by 4.1%). These domains are very important at school where children must quickly adjust to being part of a group, get on with other children and adults, and stick to someone else’s routines and activities.

The AEDC results matter because children’s development in the years before they start school has a lasting impact on their whole life⁸⁹. Good and bad experiences children have during the first few years of life affects their health, emotions, learning, and ability to get along with others⁹⁰. The AEDC provides evidence to support policy, planning and action for improving the early learning, health and wellbeing of children and families⁹¹.

Children who are on track in their social, emotional, or physical development when they start school are more likely at Year 6 to be optimistic and have fewer worries compared with peers who were vulnerable or at risk on these domains⁹². “Children who start school with challenges in their social and emotional development are likely to require additional support to engage in both learning and social aspects of school life⁹³.”

Table 23: 2024 AEDC results for Australia by selected subgroups⁹⁴

	On-track all 5 domains	Vulnerable 1 or more	Vulnerable 2 or more
	%	%	%
WA	53.1	24.1	12.6
Australia	52.9	23.5	12.5

Australia	Aboriginal	33.9	42.5	26.5
	Boy	44.6	30.2	17.0
	Girl	61.2	16.9	7.9
	Major cities	54.0	22.5	11.7
	Inner Regional	51.1	24.9	13.5
	Outer Regional	49.2	27.1	15.0
	Remote	49.2	29.3	16.7
	Very remote	33.2	46.1	29.7

Even before they start school, children in certain groups are more likely to be behind their peers (Table 23):

- Boys across Australia are roughly twice as likely as girls to be developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains at five years of age – 30.2% for boys compared with 16.9% for girls.
- Aboriginal children are nearly twice as likely to be developmentally vulnerable at the age of five years – 42.5% for Aboriginal children compared with 23.5% for all children.
- Children living in very remote areas are nearly three times as likely as their city peers to be developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains – 29.7% for children in very remote areas compared with 11.7% for children in cities.

These patterns show that some groups of children face much higher risks of developmental vulnerability than others. This highlights the need for targeted, culturally appropriate, and place-based supports to ensure all children have the same opportunities to grow, learn, and thrive.

Western Australia’s 2024 AEDC results in the social and emotional domains should be seen as an early warning sign of worsening rates of mental health among young people in the future. A two-pronged approach is needed now:

- More must be done to support the social and emotional profile of children who are already in schools. Poor social skills and emotional fragility are debilitating. They need the same level of explicit attention in the curriculum as literacy and numeracy.
- More must be done in early childhood to prevent problems in the first place, and to spot and address issues early. Families with young children need better access to multi-faceted support before their children start school.

Several early childhood programs that started in WA between 2009 and 2018 likely boosted WA’s AEDC results at that time. This includes setting up Child and Parent Centres, KindiLink in public schools and extra support for parent-run playgroups. Except for one more Child and Parent Centre in 2022, these programs have not expanded even though WA is the fastest growing state in Australia⁹⁵.

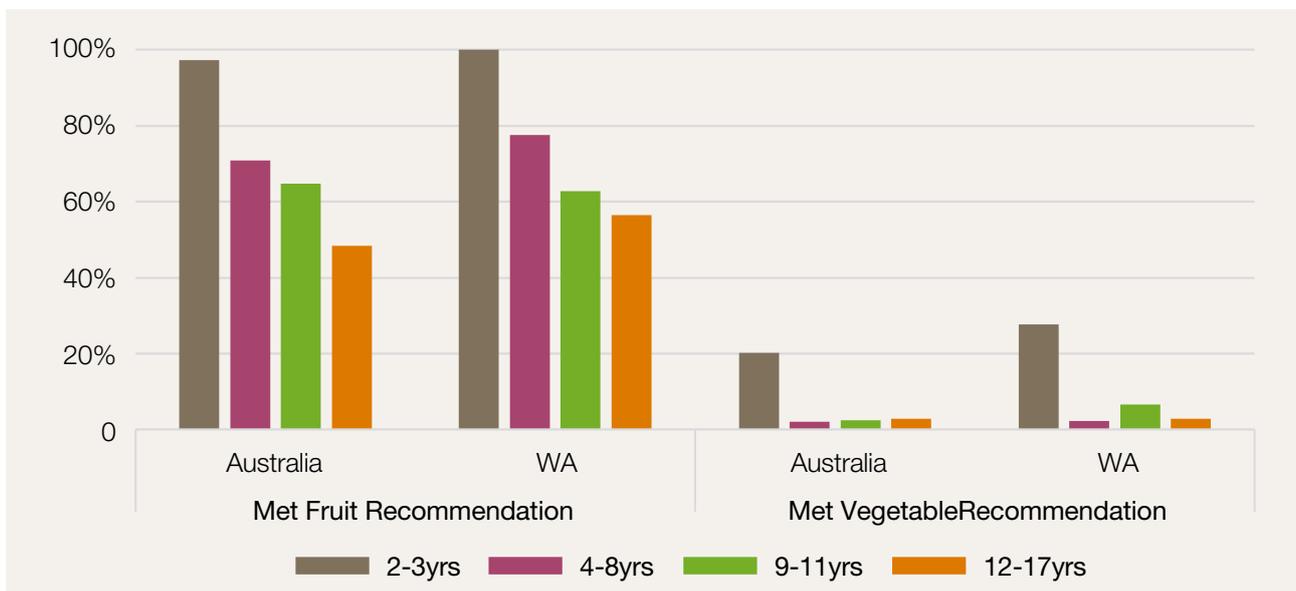
For WA to achieve the sort of AEDC improvements that we saw from 2009 to 2018 (Figure 3), more policies and actions that focus on early childhood and support for families with young children are needed. Things will not get better on their own.

Unhealthy weight

One-quarter of children aged 5 to 17 in WA were overweight or obese in 2022. This has not changed for more than a decade and is starting to be seen as ‘normal’.

Most cases of being overweight or obese are related to poor diet and low levels of physical activity⁹⁶.

Figure 14: Rate of WA children meeting the recommended daily intake of fruit and vegetables, 2022⁹⁷



Nearly all children under three years of age in WA and Australia eat enough fruit but less than 30% eat the recommended daily intake of vegetables (Figure 14). Children’s daily intake of vegetables drops quickly from this low base – less than 4% of WA children and young people meet the recommended daily intake of vegetables after the age of four years. Rates of eating fruit drops less sharply after age three and by 14-17 years, less than half (47.7%) of WA’s young people eat enough fruit.

Adults and children have similar rates of meeting both fruit and vegetable recommendations (4.2% and 4.3%)⁹⁸.

Regarding the recommended amounts of physical activity each day, there are two dimensions – minutes of aerobic activity and a limit on sedentary screen time – with different levels set for different age-groups⁹⁹.

Less than two-thirds (61%) of Australian two to five-year-olds get enough exercise each day, dropping to 11% for 13-14-year-olds. Meanwhile, at least two-thirds (65%) of children across all age-groups exceed the daily limit of sedentary screen time (Table 24).

Table 24: Rate of children in Australia getting recommended amounts of physical activity and screen time, 2011-12 (2022 for 15-17 year olds)¹⁰⁰

	Aerobic activity (% met)	Screen time (% limit met)	Strength (% met)
2-5-year-olds	61	25	
5-12-year-olds	26	35	
13-14-year-olds	11	23	
15-17-year-olds	17		20

The high rate of unhealthy weight among children and young people is a growing concern. It’s important that families and communities understand that excess weight in childhood can affect health, so we need to support healthy habits rather than treating it as simply normal.

While most of the serious health effects of excess weight are not seen until children become adults, the diet and exercise habits established in childhood often carry into adulthood¹⁰¹. This means that the one-quarter of today’s children and young people who are overweight or obese are at risk of serious health conditions in the future.

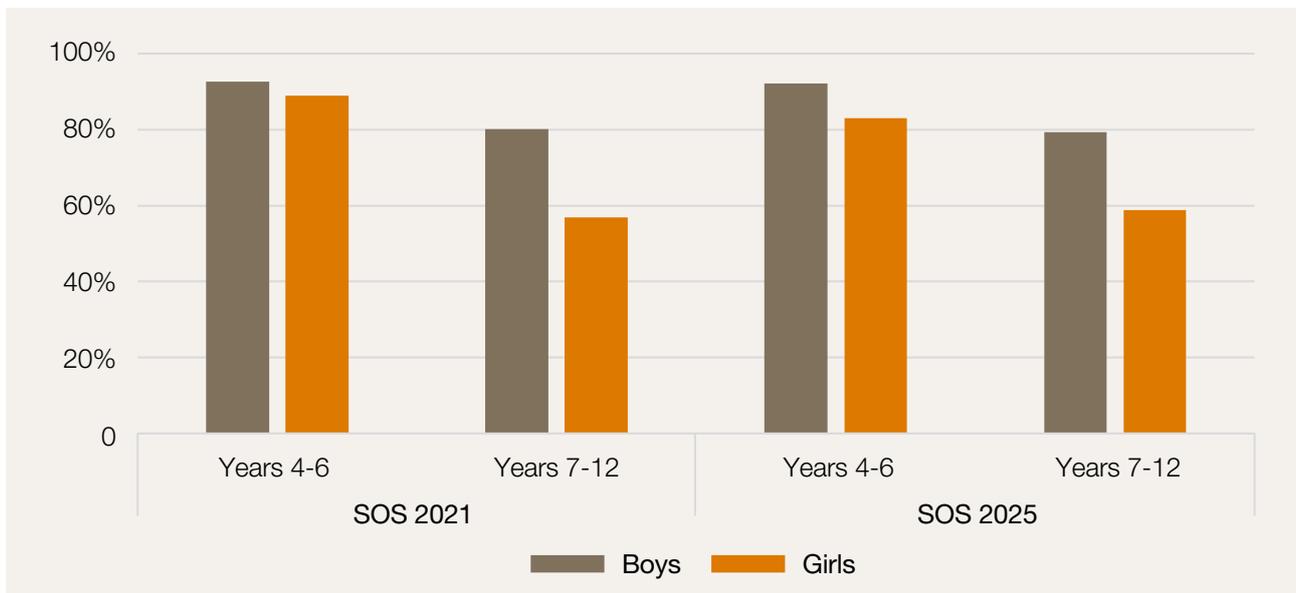
Mental health issues

Concerns about the mental health of children and young people is a recurring theme of data provided in this report.

Mental health among WA's children and young people, particularly for high school girls, was identified as a key issue in the Speaking Out Survey in 2019 and 2021.

Early analysis of the Speaking Out Survey in 2025 has returned similar results. For example, in 2025 less than six in every 10 (58.8%) high school girls say they feel good about themselves (Figure 15). In 2021, the corresponding result was 56.9%.

Figure 15: Percentage of WA children who say they feel good about themselves in 2021 and 2025 Speaking Out Survey (SOS).¹⁰²



Concerns with mental health, which manifest in younger children as social and emotional issues, is a recurring theme of data provided in this Profile Report.

At two years of age, 13.5% of metropolitan and 13.4% of regional WA children were referred in 2024 for support with communication, social or emotional development based on results from an ASQ conducted during their two-year-old health check¹⁰³. This referral rate was higher for boys (16.7% in the metropolitan area; 16.5% regionally), and Aboriginal children (23.6% metropolitan; 26.9% regional).

It is concerning that only 31.9% of metropolitan and 43.3% of Aboriginal children got their two-year-old health check. This means that even though a system is in place to identify and address developmental issues when children are two years old, that system does not benefit approximately two-thirds of eligible children.

The three aspects of development that are the focus of most ASQ referrals are communication, social emotional and personal social. These three aspects resonate with the AEDC domains of social competence and emotional maturity, which dropped the most in WA's 2024 AEDC results¹⁰⁴.

It is easier, more effective and less costly to address developmental issues that are found early. Some WA children assessed in 2024 as vulnerable on the social or emotional domains in the AEDC may have been on track if their needs had been identified and addressed via the ASQ when they were two years of age.

There is a close resemblance between ASQ referral rates at age two and AEDC results at age five. Both are cause for concern.

While data about children and young people with ADHD for WA (only) is not available, it likely mirrors the rapid rise seen in Australia as a whole from 2014 to 2024 – by 15 times for girls and 8.5 times for boys¹⁰⁵.

It appears that a growing number of children and young people who have ADHD are being diagnosed and receiving the treatment they need. Unfortunately, certain sub-groups are under-represented among those diagnosed, i.e. children and young people who are Aboriginal, from socio-economically disadvantaged families, and/or living in remote areas¹⁰⁶.

Children and young people with undiagnosed ADHD tend to be impulsive, have short attention spans, and may struggle to control their emotions leading to temper outbursts¹⁰⁷. They often have trouble making friends, may have low self-esteem¹⁰⁸, and face extra challenges with learning and relationships¹⁰⁹. These behaviours may lead to school suspensions and expulsions, which have increased in WA public schools in recent years (Figure 5).

The Speaking Out Survey conducted by the Commissioner for Children and Young People in 2019, 2021 and 2025 has consistently shown that while the mental health of most WA children and young people is in a good place, a sizeable proportion of older students, particularly girls, are struggling¹¹⁰.

Safe and secure

The impact of family and domestic violence on children and young people is under recognised.

The impact of family and domestic violence (FDV) on children and young people remains significantly under-recognised in Western Australia. FDV is the leading reason families seek specialist homelessness services in WA, and most cases of child abuse and neglect in the state involve children being exposed to FDV.

Children who witness FDV are victims in their own right, not passive observers, and more than 10% of children and young people – particularly boys – are direct victims of FDV.

In 2024-25, WA Police recorded more than 42,000 offences involving assault or threatening behaviour in domestic and family settings, an 18% increase from the previous year¹¹¹. Together, these figures highlight the substantial and growing impact of FDV on children and young people in WA.

However, services specifically developed for children and young people experiencing FDV are extremely limited.

Youth detention rates

Jailing is failing, especially for children as young as 10 years old.

On an average night in 2025, 4.3 Aboriginal boys aged 10-13 years were held in detention without sentence (Table 21). The rate of return to youth detention was 58.3%, exceeding the target of 50%¹¹².

The current minimum age of criminal responsibility in WA fails to align with international standards and does not prioritise the best interests of the child.

Detention should only be used as an option of absolute last resort and emphasis must be placed on community-based programs that deter young people from the criminal justice system.

Jailing is failing. Especially when we are talking about children, some of them as young as 10!

Addressing youth detention after children have already offended is unlikely to create lasting change. More effective outcomes require earlier, sustained, and family-centred support. This includes:

- ensuring intensive wrap-around family support services are available and accessible
- ensuring more women receive their first maternal health check in the first trimester
- expanding access to early childhood programs (such as Child and Parent Centres, KindiLink, Inklings and playgroups), alongside increased uptake of childcare
- improving participation in child health checks
- providing timely follow-up for concerning Ages and Stages Questionnaire results

- increasing access to specialist allied health services so developmental needs can be addressed early
- offering comprehensive, continuous support for families experiencing challenges
- understanding why many families are choosing to home-school and responding to the issues identified
- continuing efforts to improve housing stability
- providing targeted support for single-parent families
- expanding programs for teenagers, particularly in areas with rapid growth (such as Mandurah) and regions with the highest levels of need (including the Kimberley, Pilbara and Goldfields)

These upstream actions are essential to reducing the number of children entering or returning to youth detention and to improving long-term outcomes for young people across WA.

The information in this report shows that more WA children and young people are struggling with their feelings, behaviour, and mental health. These problems are worse for children dealing with extra hardships through poverty, disability, feeling different from others, or remoteness.

Figure 1: Rates of medication dispensed to boys and girls aged 0-11 years and 12-17 years for ADHD in Australia, 2004-05, 2014-15, and 2020-24

Figure 2: Births in WA, 2000 to 2025

Figure 3: Proportion of children in WA and Australia on track on all five AEDC developmental domains 2009 to 2024

Figure 4: Number of WA children and young people being home-schooled, 2015 to 2025

Figure 5: Suspensions and exclusions in WA public schools, 2017 to 2024

Figure 6: Proportion of Year 3 and Year 9 students who are 'strong' or better at NAPLAN Reading and Numeracy, WA and Australia, 2025

Figure 7: Percentage of women who said they smoked or used alcohol while pregnant, 2013, 2022, and 2023

Figure 8: Percentage of WA children who received health checks at set ages, by region, 2017-18, 2023-24 and 2024-25

Figure 9: Percentage of children and young people overweight or obese by age groups, 2014-15, 2017-18 and 2022

Figure 10: Percentage students who agree or strongly agree that they feel good about themselves, 2025

Figure 11: Views of WA Year 4-12 students on how well their family gets along, 2025

Figure 12: Split of ages of boys and girls who offended in WA and Australia, 2023-24

Figure 13: Number of boys and girls in detention (sentenced and unsentenced) on an average night in WA, 2021 to 2025

Figure 14: Rate of WA children meeting the recommended daily intake of fruit and vegetables, 2022

Figure 15: Percentage of WA children who say they feel good about themselves in 2021 and 2025 Speaking Out Survey

Table 1: The share of WA's and Australia's population who were children and young people in 2015, 2024 and 2025

Table 2: WA's population of children and young people in 2015, 2024 and 2025 split into age groups

Table 3: Distribution of children and young people across WA places, June 2024

Table 4: WA children and young people by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal status, 2021

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

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

Table 7: WA children and young people with disability by age group and disability status, 2022

Table 8: WA families with dependent and non-dependent children* in 2011 and 2021

Table 9: Children aged 0 to 5 years attending approved childcare services in WA, 2015, 2023 and 2024

Table 10: Average hours per week that WA children aged 0 to 12 years attend approved childcare services, by service type, 2016, 2023, 2024

Table 11: Percentage of children aged 0 to 12 years attending approved childcare services in WA and Australia, 2024

Table 12: Students in government and non-government schools by year level, number and per cent, WA, Semester 2, 2025

Table 13: Key sub-groups of WA Year 3 and Year 9 students who are 'strong' or better at NAPLAN Reading and Numeracy, 2025

Table 14: Percentage of WA, Australian and Aboriginal women who get a health-check in first 14 weeks of pregnancy, 2013, 2022 and 2023

Table 15: Percentage of 2-year-olds 'on track' according to the ASQ, 2020 and 2024

Table 16: Proportion of WA children who need special help with emotions, concentration, behaviour or getting on with people, 2015, 2023, 2024

Table 17: Percentage of WA children living in families with poor family functioning, 2015, 2023, 2024

Table 18: Rate per 1,000 of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children in out-of-home care in WA and Australia, 2015, 2023 and 2024

Table 19: Percentage of family types missing out on two or more important material basics in Australia, 2014, 2018, 2022

Table 20: Families seeking help from specialist homelessness services in WA and Australia, 2024-25

Table 21: Number of distinct children and young people in detention (and sentenced) by Aboriginality, 2024-25

Table 22: Percentage of five-year-old children on track by developmental domain in WA and Australia, including change from 2021 to 2024

Table 23: 2024 AEDC results for Australia by selected subgroups

Table 24: Rate of children in Australia getting recommended amounts of physical activity, 2011-12 (2022 for 15-17 year olds)

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

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Many are students at Fitzroy Valley District High School.

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