Snapshot of NSW child protection services

February 2026

Report on Government Services (ROGS) data

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Introduction

The Productivity Commission's annual Report on Government Services (ROGS) provides crucial insights into child protection service delivery and expenditure in Australia.

The latest report, *ROGS 2026 – Child Protection Services*, indicates some enduring trends in NSW:

- there are high levels of demand and unmet need, with rising rates of reporting combined with a continuing decrease in the proportion of reports being investigated
- expenditure is predominantly directed to the tertiary end of the child protection service continuum, with low proportions of overall expenditure on family support and intensive family support
- continued overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system.

Note

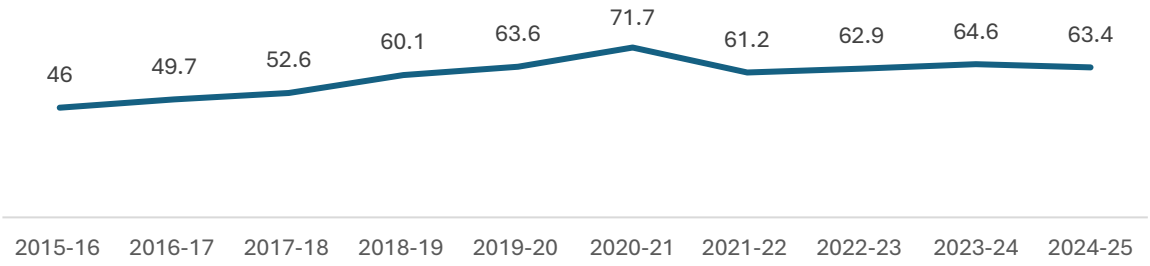
The Productivity Commission urges caution in interpreting the data, due to data quality issues such as inconsistent recording, differences in and changes to jurisdictional policies, and differing classifications and definitions across jurisdictions. Readers should refer to the Productivity Commission's guides and notes on the child protection services data. Data refers to children aged 0-17 years unless otherwise indicated.

Reports and investigations

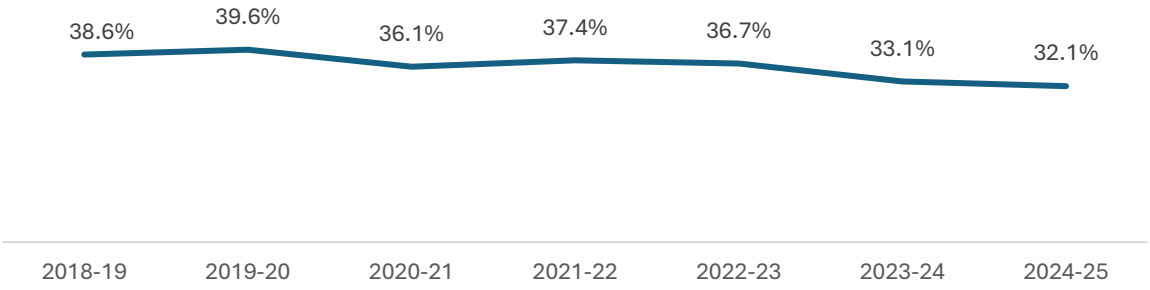
The data highlights rates of reporting increasing steadily over time, with low levels of investigation. In 2024-25 in NSW:

- **114,160 children** were the subject of a report
- **32.1%** of reports were investigated

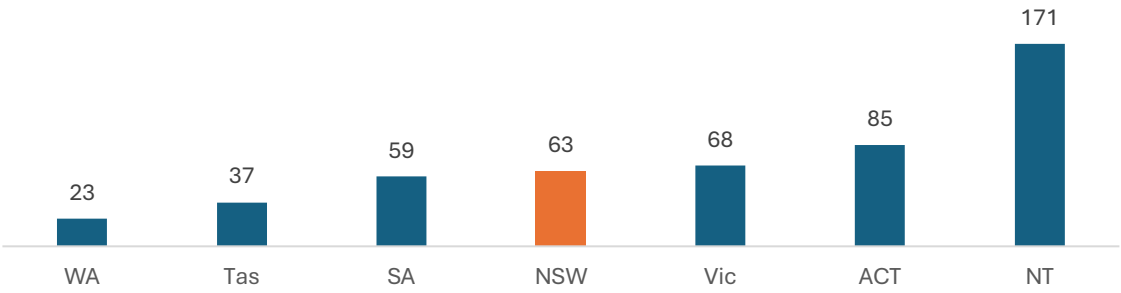
Rate of reports per 1,000 children, NSW, over time[1]



Proportion of reports investigated, NSW, over time



Rate of reports per 1,000 children, 2024-25, by jurisdiction[2]



[1] Rates of children calculated as the number of children aged 0–17 years in each category (including children whose ages were not stated) divided by the estimated population of children aged 0–17 years at 31 December, multiplied by 1,000.

[2] No data available for Queensland for 2024-25

Costs and expenditure

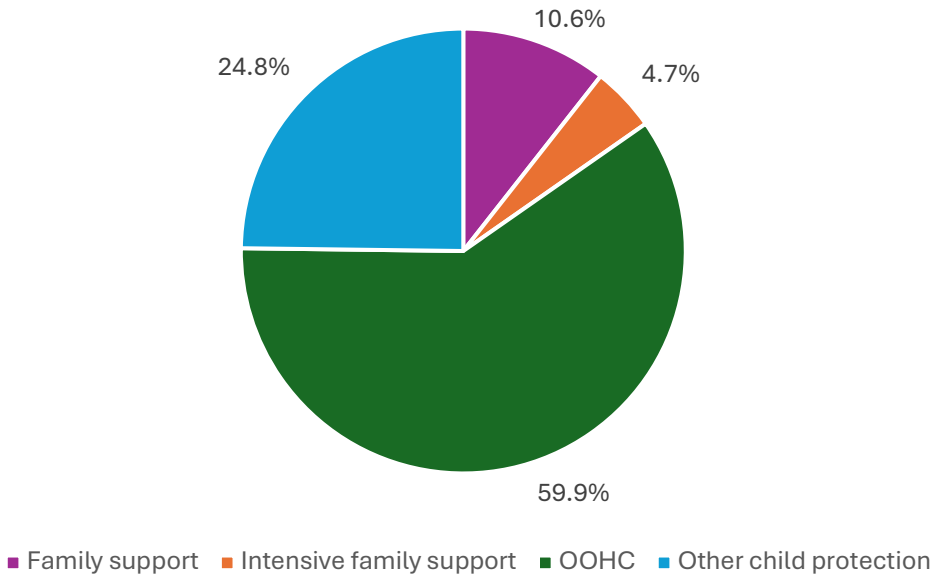
OOHC services continue to account for a high proportion of overall expenditure on child protection in NSW.

Sixty per cent of NSW child protection expenditure in 2024-25 was on out-of-home care services.

Between 2022-23[3] and 2024-25 in NSW there was a:

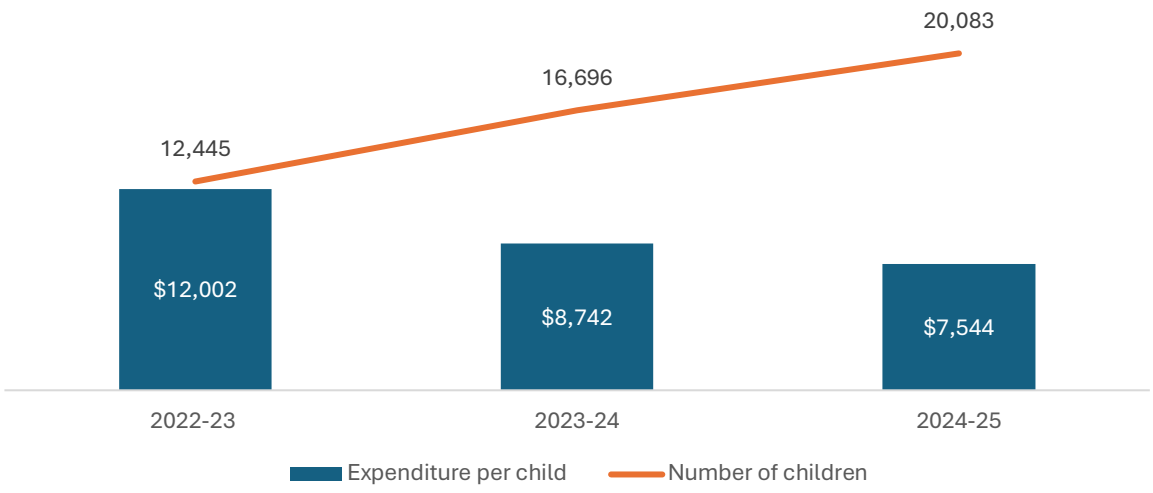
- **61.4% increase** in the number of children receiving Intensive Family Support Services (IFSS)
- **37% decrease** in the cost per child receiving IFSS.

Proportion of child & family expenditure in NSW, by service type, 2024-25



[3] Data for 2022-23 has been revised, and is likely to be an undercount due to the implementation of a new data collection system

Number of children receiving Intensive Family Support Services and real recurrent expenditure per child, NSW, over time



Out-of-Home Care

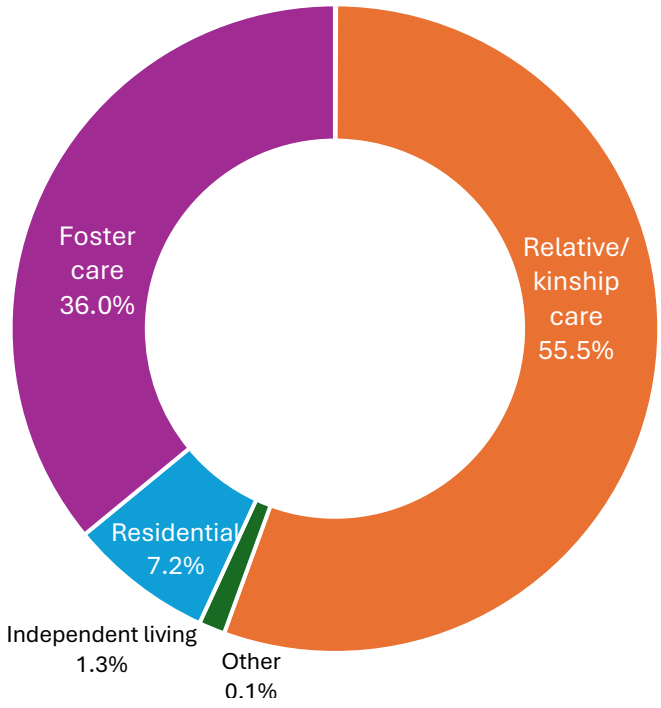
There were **13,579 children in OOHC** in NSW as at 20 June 2025, more than half of whom were in relative or kinship care.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander represented **45% of children in care**, despite comprising 7.8%[4] of children aged 0-17 years in NSW.

The proportion of Indigenous children was increasing annually since 2021-22 but decreased in the last reporting year.

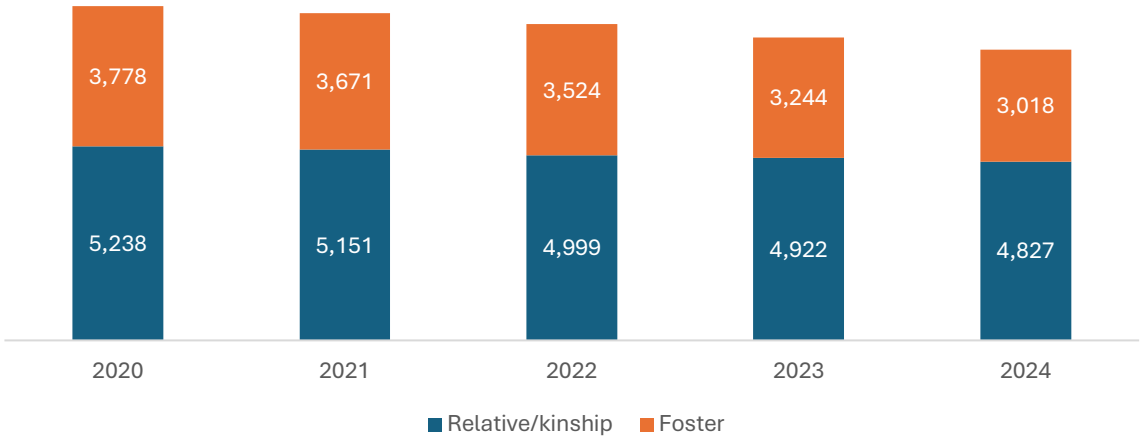
The number of children entering OOHC has decreased steadily over time, although there was an increase in the last reporting year.

Proportion of children in OOHC in NSW by care type, 30 June 2025

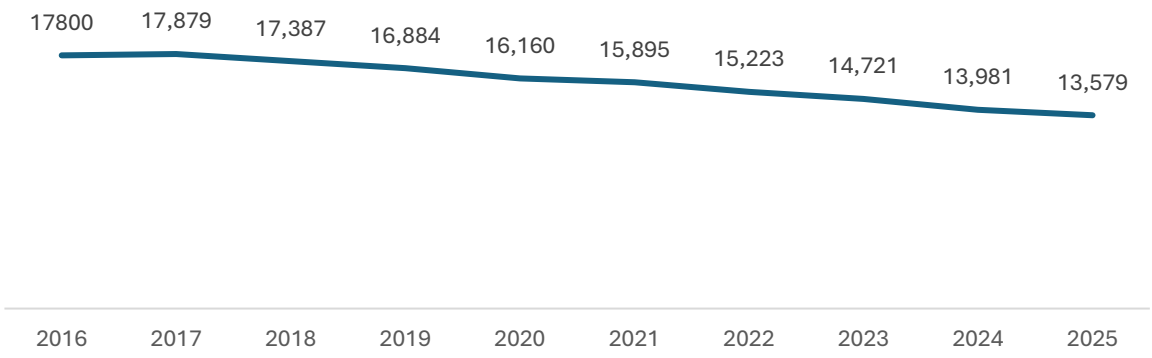


[4] https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/community-inclusion/improving-aboriginal-outcomes/what-were-doing/out-of-home-care.html

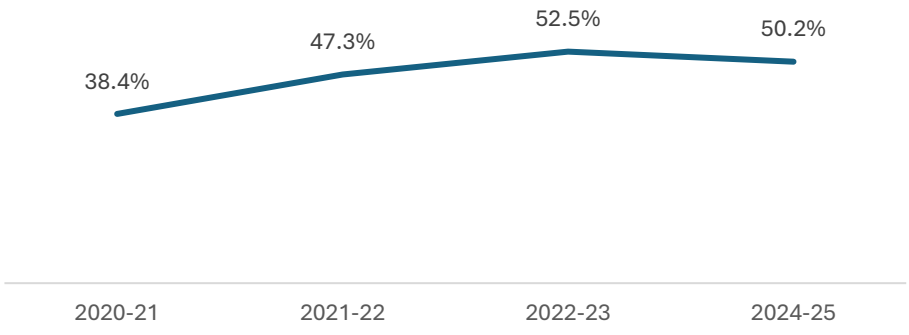
Number of carer households with children placed as at June each year, NSW, by care type



Number of children in OOHC, NSW, at 30 June each year



Indigenous children admitted to OOHC as proportion of all children admitted, NSW, over time

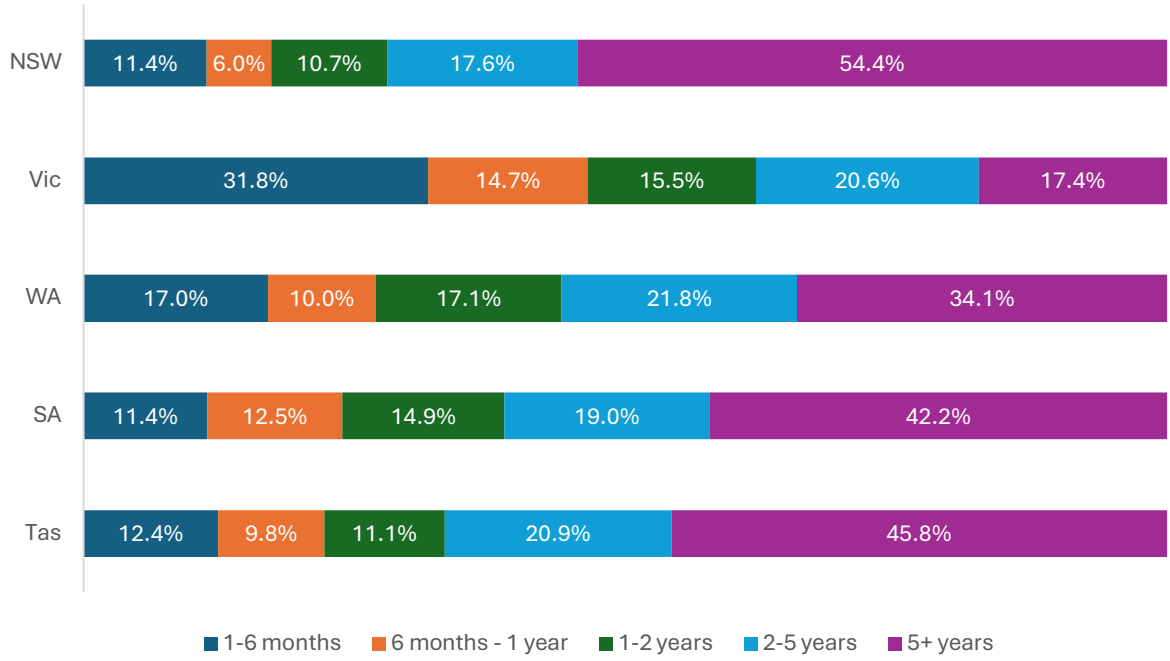


Placement stability and exits to permanency

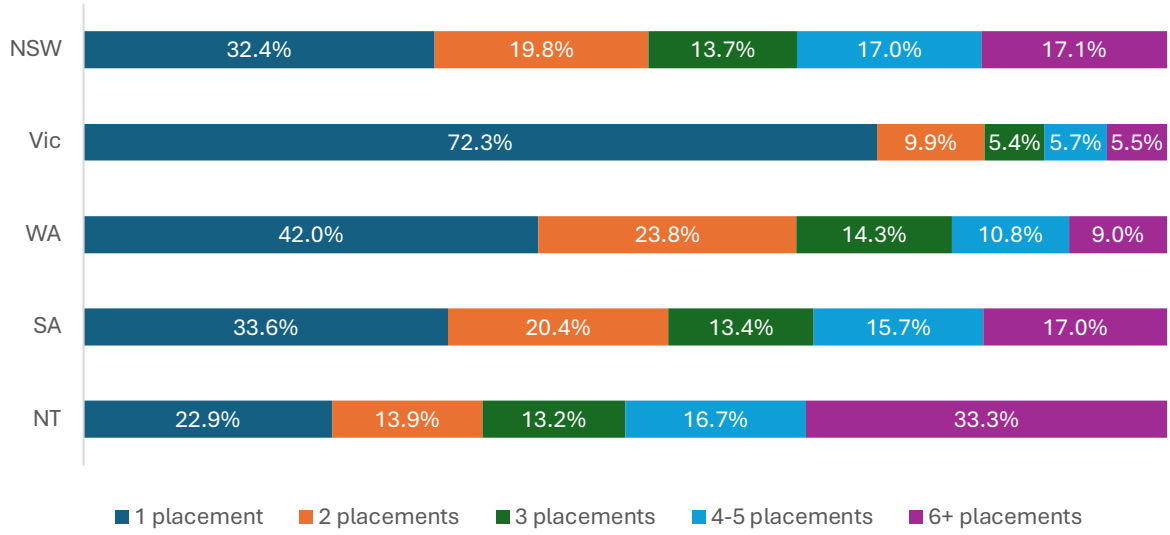
Most children in NSW and across Australia are spending many years in OOHC and experiencing more than one placement.

- More than half (54%) of children who exited OOHC in NSW in 2024-25 had spent more than five years in care.
- Almost half had experienced three or more placements.
- Numbers of children exiting to permanency remain low in NSW, although the proportion who do not return to care within 12 months is relatively high.

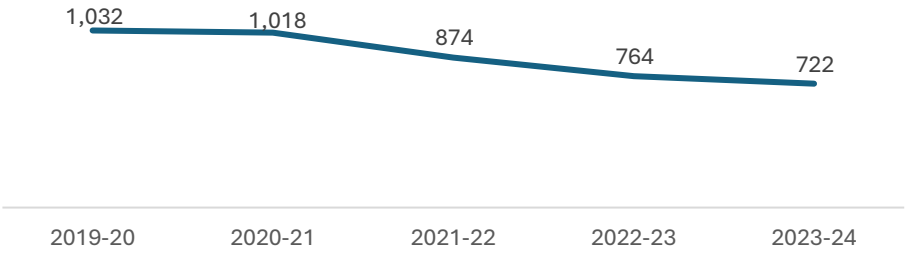
Children who exited care in 2024-25, by length of time in care and jurisdiction



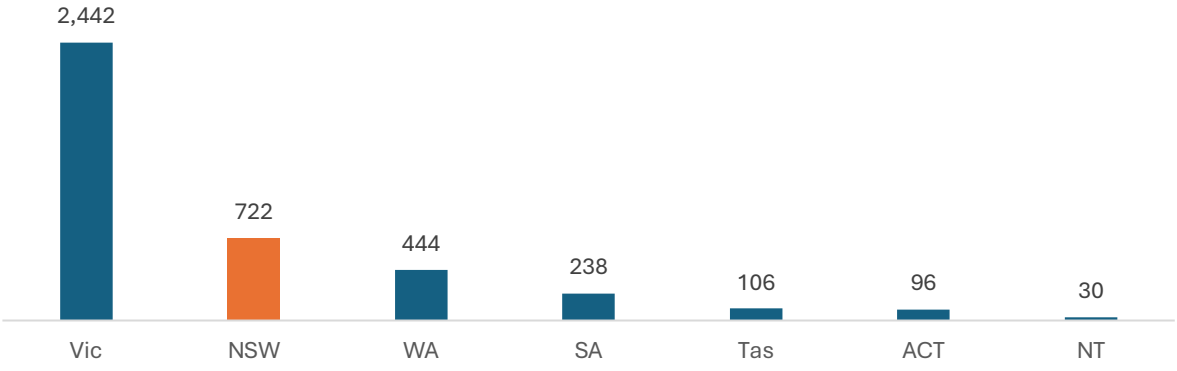
Children on a care and protection order who exited OOHC during 2023-24, by number of placements and jurisdiction

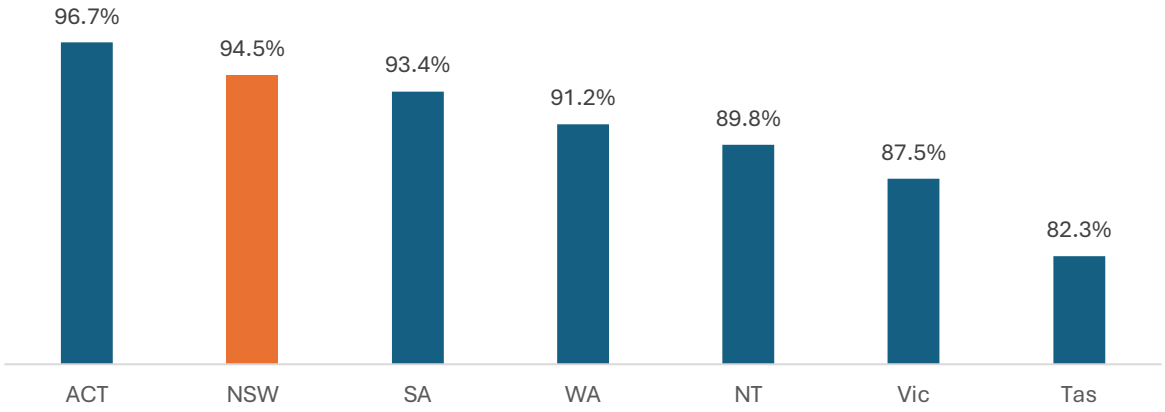


Number of children (0-16 years) who exited to permanency[5], NSW, over time



Number of children (0-16 years) who exited to permanency in 2023-24, by jurisdiction



[5] Reunited with their families, adopted or placed on third party parental responsibility orders

Proportion of children (0–16 years) who exited OOHC to a permanency arrangement in 2023-24 AND did not return to OOHC within 12 months, by jurisdiction