

QFCC monthly insights paper

October 2024

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2024 Foodbank Hunger Report

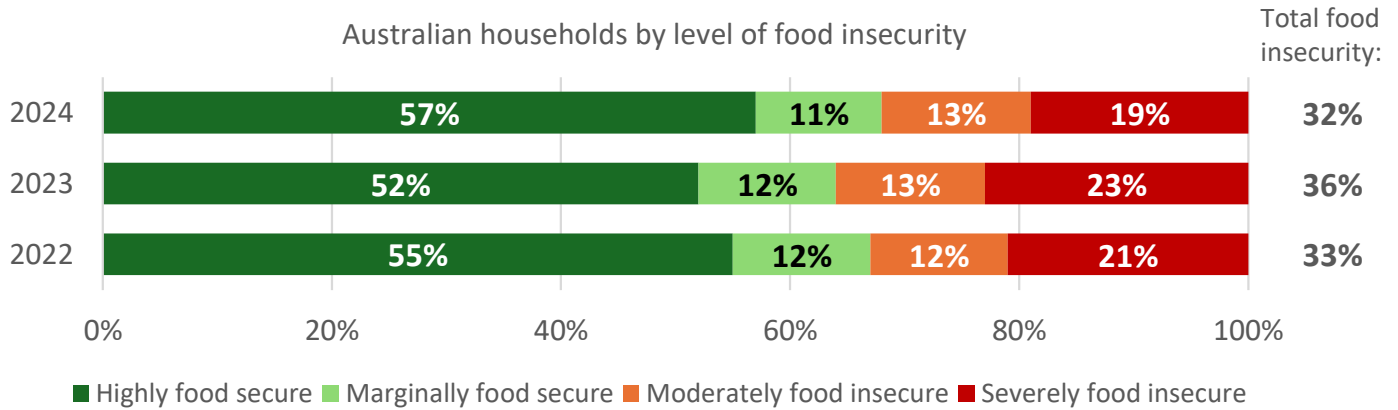
Children's Rights

Health

Cost of living

Food insecurity

The 2024 report found 32 per cent of Australian households were experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity, a reduction from 36 per cent in 2023. This figure represents 3.4 million households, with 2 million households experiencing severe food insecurity.



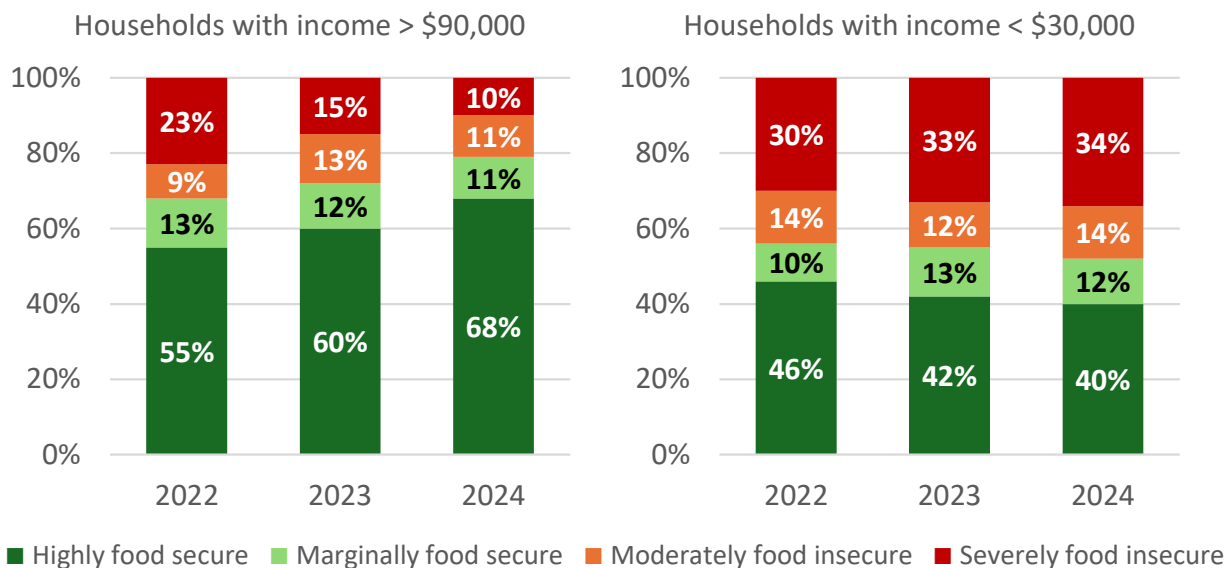
Single parent families experiencing high levels of food insecurity

The 2024 report found that overall families with children had improved rates of food security, with **42 per cent** of families with children experiencing food insecurity, a decrease from **50 per cent** in 2023. Families with children also reported less severe food insecurity, from **32 per cent** in 2022, down to **23 per cent** in 2024.

However, **single parent households continue to experience worsening food security**. The 2024 report found **69 per cent** of single parent families had experienced food insecurity, in an increasing trend from the previous results of **67 per cent** in 2023 and **65 per cent** in 2022.

Food security worsening for low-income families

Overall food security has improved since 2023, although there is a worsening trend for low-income households earning less than \$30,000 per year.



2024 Foodbank Hunger Report – *continued*

Factors identified to be contributing to food insecurity

The 2024 result shows **cost of living remains the top factor contributing to food insecurity**. Households experiencing severe food insecurity have been most impacted by increased/high living expenses, with **82 per cent** of these households reporting this has resulted in not being able to afford enough food, a significantly higher result than the reported **65 per cent** in 2022 and **80 per cent** in 2023.

Factors	2022	2023	2024
Increased/high living expenses	64 %	79 % ↑	82 % ↑
Reduced/low income or government benefits	42 %	42 %	43 %
Changes in household/living arrangements	24 %	26 %	25 %
Limited access/ability to travel to get food	26 %	16 % ↓	16 %
Natural disaster (s)	19 %	8 % ↓	7 %
Other	5 %	6 %	8 %
None of the above	3 %	3 %	3 %

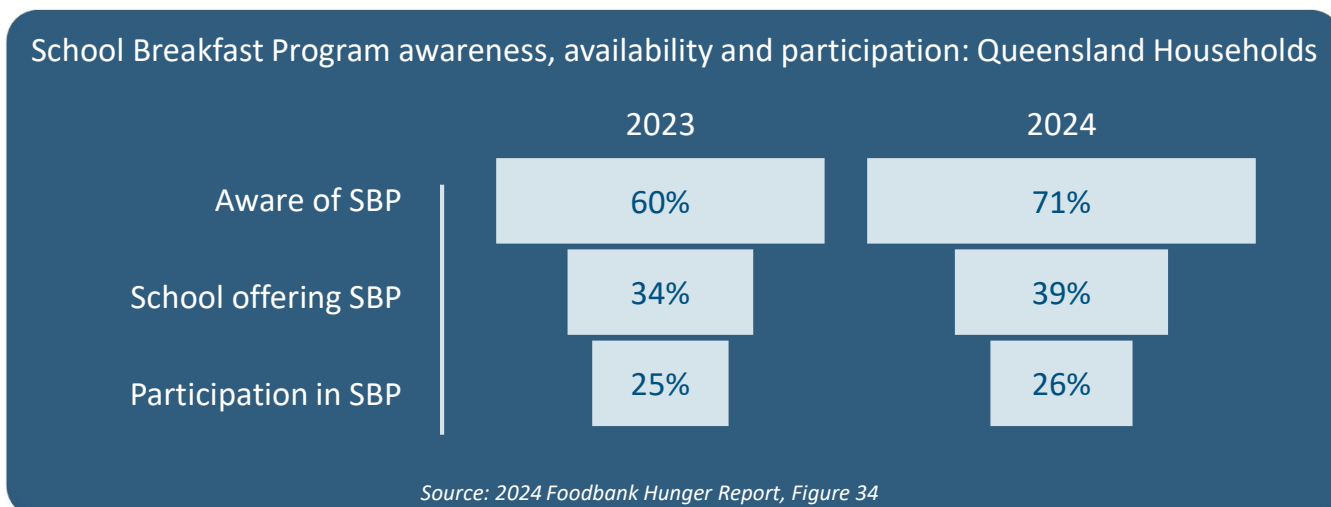
Source – 2024 Foodbank Hunger Report, Figure 12

↑↓ - Indicates significant change from previous results

School Breakfast Programs (SBPs)

School Breakfast Programs are noted to provide numerous benefits to children, particularly those who may be experiencing food insecurity or who are not receiving adequate nutrition.

More than half (**51%**) of food insecure households identified “To help ease the household budget” as a reason for their child’s participation in SBP. **40 per cent** of respondents also identified social benefits for their child’s participation in the program, noting their child can socialise with friends and peers.



Ipsos Public Affairs, [Foodbank Hunger Report 2024](#), Foodbank Australia, 2024. Accessed 15 October 2024.

Patterns of nicotine pouch use among young Australians

Health

New government restrictions on vaping products have coincided with a huge increase in the volume of illegally imported nicotine pouches intercepted by Australian Border Force. In the 6 months between January and June 2024, 1.3 million nicotine pouches were seized – 950 per cent more than the total amount seized in the whole two years prior.¹

New research published in the November 2024 edition of *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* assessed patterns of nicotine pouch use among young Australians using an anonymous online survey of 1,598 people aged 16 – 39 years.

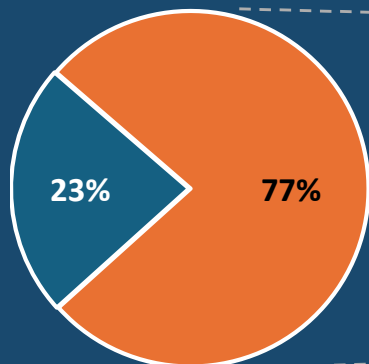


Credit: ABC Illawarra: Tim Fernandez

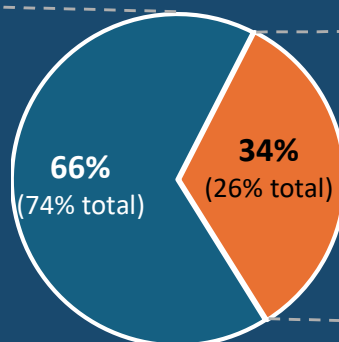
Nicotine pouches are small sachets that are tucked under the lip, allowing nicotine to be absorbed into the bloodstream. Like vapes, they are largely marketed to young people with sweet flavours and bright packaging.

Nicotine pouch awareness, usage and recent use

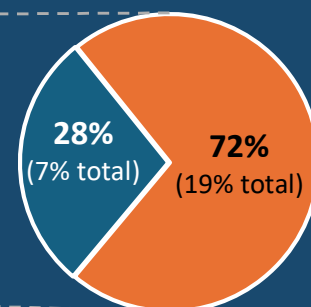
Awareness:



Usage:



Recentness:



□ No awareness of nicotine pouches
 ■ Awareness of nicotine pouches

□ No use of nicotine pouches
 ■ Use of nicotine pouches

■ Use in last 30 days
 □ Not in the last 30 days

Source: *Patterns of nicotine pouch use amongst young Australians*, Table 1.

Reasons for use: respondents who used in last 30 days

They come in flavours I like	34 %
To help me quit smoking	32 %
I think they taste good	29 %
Because they look fun/cool	22 %
Out of curiosity	19 %
They are cheap/inexpensive	19 %
Because they aren't harmful	15 %

Risks posed by nicotine pouches

- The concealability of the product, availability of flavours, and packaging appeals to young people.
- Research on harms associated with pouches is in its infancy, with most studies to date being “conducted by tobacco companies, or researchers funded by tobacco companies or their subsidiaries.”
- Independent testing suggests nicotine pouches contain hazardous materials, including ‘possibly carcinogenic’ substances along with a high level of nicotine.

¹ Perpetch N (14 June 2024), ‘Organised crime links to huge increase in nicotine pouch seizures’, *ABC News*, accessed 17 October 2024.

Jongenelis M I, Brierley M E, Li R (2024) (in press), ‘Patterns of nicotine pouch use among young Australians’, *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, Volume 264 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2024.112428>.

How 'self-placing' in out-of-home care affects children and young people's participation in decision-making

Children's Rights

Child safety

Out-of-home Care

- Researchers from the University of Queensland interviewed 11 young people with a history of being absent from placement, to elucidate how this behaviour impacts their own decision making in choices relating to their care.
- The study acknowledged limitations in the small sample size, as well as only capturing the voices of children and young people from a specialist service that operates only in South-East Queensland. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the in-depth interviews to identify common themes and factors related to the respondent's experience of voice and choice in decisions.
- Every young person interviewed provided a different reason for being absent from the approved care placement, but the results suggest that the 'decision' to remove themselves from the approved care situation was nested within multiple layers of context in which the young person had *no* choice.
- 'Self-placing' implies the young person chose to leave, which is inaccurate. Some young people reported leaving placements to exercise their agency (particularly those who felt they had little voice in the out-of-home care system), however several reported feeling 'forced to leave' by others.
- The study found being absent from placement can often limit a young person's voice in the system. The resulting outcomes were often the reduced or regulated access to living essentials and support resources, and compliance with procedures overriding a young person's assessment of their own needs.
- The study identified the benefits of non-government organisations and trusted adults to act as advocates for young people, to enhance their voices and ensure their right to contribute to decisions about their own care.

Venables J, Cullin J, Ellem K, & Healy K. (2024) (in press) . Diminishing their voice through choice? How 'self-placing' in out-of-home care affects children and young people's participation in decision-making. *European Journal of Social Work*, 1–14.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2024.2408429>

Impact of trauma and placement in residential or congregate care on the criminalisation of children

Child Safety

Children's Rights

Out-of-home Care

- A study in New South Wales and Victoria, published in the November 2024 edition of *Children and Youth Services Review*, found ongoing systemic factors continue in the association between residential care and criminalisation.
- Researchers conducted in-depth interviews with 28 legal, youth justice and judicial stakeholders in England, Wales, New South Wales and Victoria. Despite significant differences in the operation of the statutory systems, thematic analysis confirmed **similar systemic factors across all jurisdictions**.
- These factors included (but are not limited to):
 - Absence of therapeutic supports, and unstable and unsafe residential care placements.
 - Over-reliance on police to respond to minor incidents.
 - Increasingly punitive responses, lacking trauma-informed approaches.
 - Inappropriate use of custody as an alternative placement.
- The authors theorise that **deeply ingrained ideologies regarding 'care' and 'protection' persist, and function to criminalise trauma**.

C Paterson-Young, T Corrales, I Warren, P McNamara (2024) (in press), 'Impact of trauma and placement in residential or congregate care on the criminalisation of children in England/Wales and Australia', *Children and Youth Services Review*, Volume 166, 2024.

Study into the drug use trajectories of young people in contact with the justice system

Child safety

Youth Justice

Mental Health

- A study in New South Wales, published in the October 2024 edition of *Child Protection and Practice*, used *General Strain Theory* to illustrate how stressors drive substance use behaviours for young people in the youth justice system and reflect a need for integrated system responses that are more equipped to cater to the welfare needs of justice-involved young people.
- General Strain Theory theorises that people engage with criminal activities to resolve or manage stressors that are impacting their daily life.
- The study found three themes emerged from focus group discussions:
 - Substances were used to regain the losses associated with psychological distress – “I don’t have a problem with drugs... I have a problem without them.”
 - Family histories of alcohol and other drug use and living in unsafe and violent homes influenced young people’s drug use – “I was abandoned, looking back I feel sorry for that young girl.”
 - Environmental factors had a cumulative effect on young people’s capacity to succeed and thrive via legal avenues – “If I go to school, I have to be high.”
- The study identified several practice implications, including **advocacy work playing an important role in shifting dialogue away from victim blaming, to ensure the system acknowledges how stress without support impacts a young person’s drug use.**

Deans E, Abdo J, Ravulo J, Conroy E (2024) (in press) *‘I had nothing and drugs don’t leave’: A qualitative study exploring the drug use trajectories of young people in contact with the justice system*, *Child Protection and Practice*, 2024.

Productivity Commission inquiry report into Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)

Child Safety

Children’s Rights

Cost of living

- The Productivity Commission’s inquiry report into the ECEC sector has been published, which makes recommendations to promote accessible, high quality ECEC, reduce barriers to workforce participation, and support children’s learning and development.
- ECEC is a known protective factor, particularly to children experiencing disadvantage and vulnerability, delivering net community benefits. However, this cohort is often missing out on these supports due to lack of services, unaffordability, or lack of inclusion for children with specific needs.
- The Productivity Commission recommends addressing affordability of services as a priority, through reforms to the *Child Care Subsidy* and *Higher Child Care Subsidy* to support higher uptake of ECEC attendance by low and middle class families, who currently face the biggest barriers. One proposed reform is the removal of the ‘activity test’. Modelling shows almost all families benefitting from this change would be low-income households.
- Citing the under-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in ECEC, the Productivity Commission recommends a sustainable funding model for Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, to establish and maintain culturally safe and appropriate ECEC.

Productivity Commission. (2024). *A path to universal early childhood education and care: Inquiry report – volume 1*. Australian Government. Retrieved from <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/childhood/report/childhood-volume1-report.pdf>

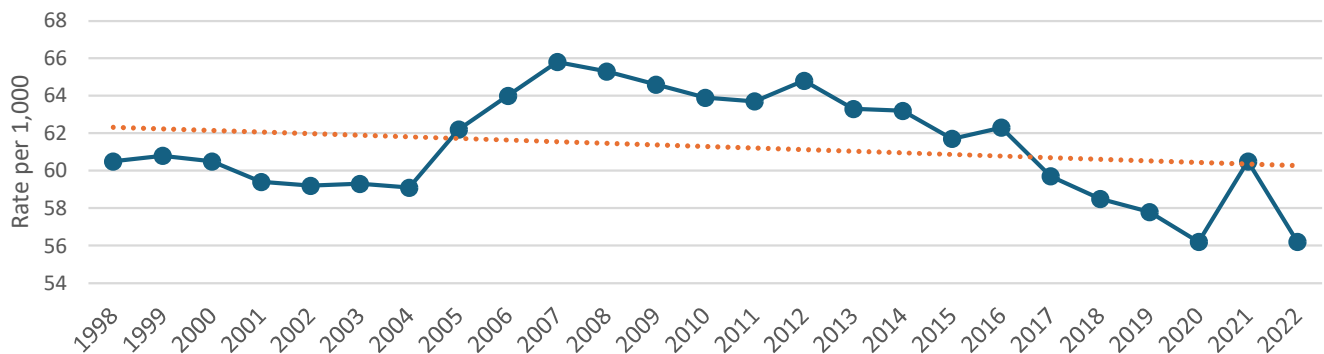
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) – 2022 data released on Australia’s mothers and babies

Health

AIHW has released the latest data (2022) on health, pregnancy and birth experiences, and outcomes for Australian mothers and babies.

The 2022 birthrate shows a return to the 2022 low rate of 56.2 per 1,000 women (*Figure 1*). This is in line with a decreasing trend since 2007 (66 per 1,000 women), and a downwards trend overall.

Figure 1: Birth rate in Australia, 1998 to 2022



Demographics

- The average age women are giving birth continues to increase, from **30.0 years of age in 2010** to **31.2 years in 2022**. Similarly, the average age of first-time mothers has increased from **28.3 years** to **29.8**.
- 20.6% of mothers who gave birth in 2022 lived in Queensland, third nationally behind New South Wales (31.5%) and Victoria (25.4%).
- 8.3% of mothers in 2022 reported smoking at any time during pregnancy, compared to 13% in 2011.

Antenatal care

- More women are accessing antenatal care, with 78% of women accessing antenatal care in the first trimester of their pregnancy (compared to 61% in 2013), with 94% of women having five or more antenatal care visits (compared to 93% in 2018).



First Nations mothers and babies

5.3% (n=15,647) of babies were born to First Nations mothers in 2022.

- **Increase in the proportion of First Nations mothers accessing antenatal care** (51% in 2013, to 71% in 2022).
- **Decrease in smoking** reported by First Nations mothers at any point during pregnancy (49% in 2011 to 40% in 2022).
- 88% of babies born to First Nations mothers were at a **healthy birthweight** (on track to reach the *Closing the Gap* target of 91%).



Mothers aged under 20 and babies

1.6% (n=4,649) of babies were born to mothers under 20 years in 2022.

- **The number of teenage births has more than halved** in a decade; decreasing from a rate of 3.2% (n=11,370) of all births in 2011.
- **Decrease in smoking** at any point during pregnancy reported by mothers under the age of 20 (35.8% in 2011 to 30.6% in 2022).
- 39% of babies **required active resuscitation**, with 23% **requiring admission to SCN/NICU**.

AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) (2024) [Australia's mothers and babies](#), AIHW, Australian Government, accessed 18 October 2024.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) – Child protection data released for 2022-23 Safety of children in care

Children’s Rights

Child Safety

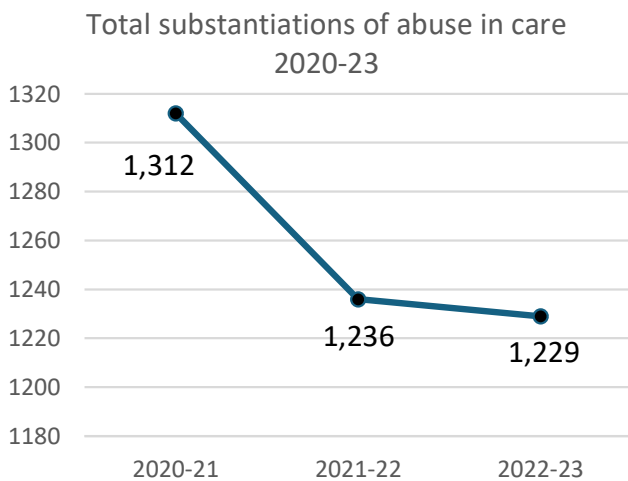
National child protection data for 2022-23 on the safety of children in care was released by AIHW. The data tracks the incidences of physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect of children for whom care has been fully or partially transferred to the state or territory.

Substantiations of abuse in care

This metric has been reported nationally for three years, in response to recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

The data shows a **general downward trend in total substantiations** over three years.

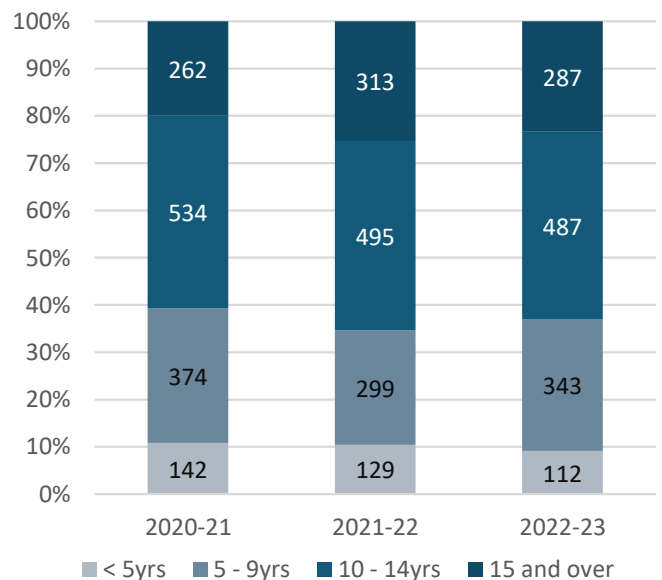
Cross-jurisdictional comparisons are unable to be analysed due to differing methodologies, definitions, counting and procedural incongruities.



Vulnerable age groups

The proportion of children subject of a substantiation by age group has remained similar, with children approximately 10-14 years consistently representing approximately 40 per cent of the total.

Substantiations of abuse in care by age group 2020-23



Types of substantiated abuse in care

29.0% Physical abuse (n=356)

28.9% Emotional abuse (n=355)

17.7% Neglect (n=218)

11.2% Sexual abuse (n=138)

Limitations on reporting

The national data set has limitations. State and territory governments have agreed to implement data reforms to improve national reporting including:

- developing nationally agreed definitions and key terms;
- prioritising enhancements to data; and
- adopting a nationally consistent definition for child sexual exploitation.

AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) (2024) *Child protection Australia 2022–23*, AIHW, Australian Government, accessed 18 October 2024.

Meta Teen Accounts – Instagram to implement new safety measures for children and young people

Children's Rights

Social Media

Meta, the parent company of Instagram, has announced the implementation of 'Teen Accounts' for children. Changes will be 'opt-out', and for users under 16 years, the features may only be de-activated by a 'supervisor account', in principle the account of their parent or guardian.

These changes are expected to be implemented in Australia by the end of 2024. The changes will automatically apply to any new accounts.

Primary features of Teen Accounts

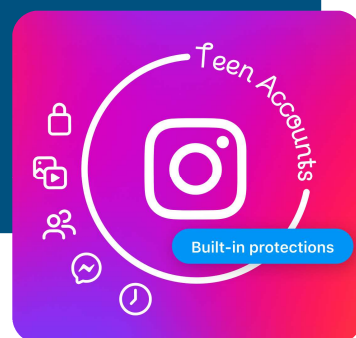
- **Private accounts:** young people's accounts will automatically be set to 'private', meaning users must accept new followers, and content can only be viewed by followers.
- **Messaging restrictions:** young people will only be able to be messaged by accounts they are following or are already connected with.
- **Sensitive content restrictions:** limits content visible to teens, such as videos containing violence or promoting cosmetic procedures.
- **Limited interactions:** accounts will only be able to be tagged and mentioned by approved followers, with Instagram's anti-bullying feature 'Hidden Words' enabled.
- **Time limit reminders:** teens will be notified to leave the app after 60 minutes of use.
- **Sleep mode enabled:** between 10pm and 7am, notifications are muted and direct messages will receive an auto-reply.

Supervisor accounts

These accounts are created by a user over the age of 18, and must be accepted by the 'supervisor' and 'supervisee' accounts. Either account has the option to remove the supervisor status at any point.

The supervisor account will have the option to enable additional monitoring features, such as seeing which accounts the teen has been messaging, and what topics the account has engaged with on the platform.

The information currently available suggests teens will be able to create their own 'supervisor' accounts by creating an account with a false date-of-birth and disabling the Teen Account safety controls.



Children's use of social media – eSafety response

The Teen Account changes were announced following the eSafety Commission serving notices to social media companies earlier in 2024, seeking information and clarity on how many children are using their platforms, and what efforts are being made by platforms to keep young users safe.

The UK e-safety regulator, Ofcom, has released a report showing that **51 per cent of children aged 3-12 years have accessed social media at least once** despite the minimum age of use being 13. This report has been cited to query the veracity and reliability of Meta's new safety measures.

Meta, [Introducing Instagram teen accounts: Built-in protections for teens, peace of mind for parents](#) [media release], Meta, 17 September 2024, accessed 18 October 2024.

Ofcom, [Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report](#), Ofcom, 19 April 2024, accessed 17 October 2024.

Appearance-related cyberbullying and its association with the desire to alter physical appearance in adolescent females

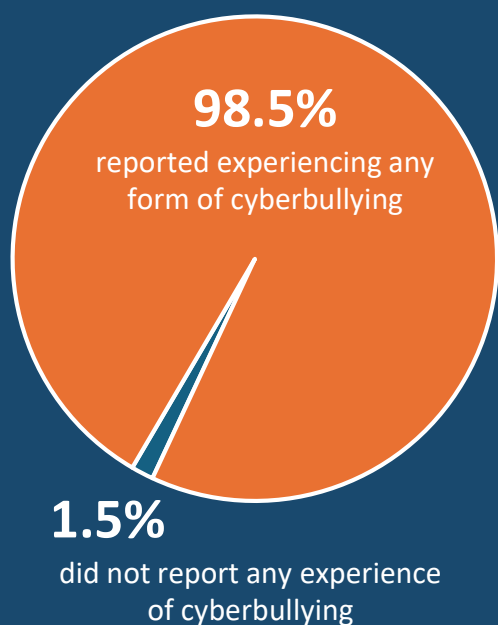
Social Media

Mental Health

Research conducted by the University of the Sunshine Coast found almost all young women have experienced cyberbullying, and appearance based cyberbullying has influenced their desire to undergo cosmetic procedures.

The study was conducted through an online survey of 336 young women in Australia, aged 14 to 19.

Prevalence of cyberbullying among young women aged 14-19



62.2% Of young women reported appearance related cyberbullying (n=209)

Of the respondents who reported appearance related cyberbullying:

96.2% Reported feeling they would like to change their physical appearance through diet or exercise.

95.2% Reported they would like to change how they present themselves (ie. makeup, clothing) as a result of the cyberbullying.

81.3% Reported feeling like they needed cosmetic procedures as a result of the appearance related cyberbullying.

Source: *Appearance-related cyberbullying and its association with the desire to alter physical appearance among adolescent females*, Table 1

“This is important because eating disorders have the highest mortality rate of all psychiatric disorders among adolescent girls, and body dissatisfaction is the leading risk factor for eating disorders”

Taliah Prince – lead author and USC Neuroscience Researcher

Impact of findings

- In line with previous research, the report found that body shape and size is the primary focus of appearance related cyberbullying.
- Due to the established link between dieting behaviours and eating disorders in adolescents, the study highlights the potential risks posed by appearance related and general cyberbullying.
- The findings identified a need for targeted interventions, such as age-appropriate social media policies, health promotion programs, and strategies to address cyberbullying.

Prince T, Mulgrew KE, Driver C, *et al.* (2024), 'Appearance-related cyberbullying and its association with the desire to alter physical appearance among adolescent females', *Journal of Eating Disorders* 12(125). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40337-024-01083-z>

University of the Sunshine Coast, [Research reveals cyberbullying is pushing teenage girls towards cosmetic procedures](#) [media release], University of the Sunshine Coast, 6 September 2024, accessed 18 October 2024.

Domestic and Family Violence – Death Review and Advisory Board 2023-24 Annual Report

DFV

Child Safety

The Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board (the Board) has released the Annual Report for 2023-24, the seventh since the Board’s inception.

Key statistics

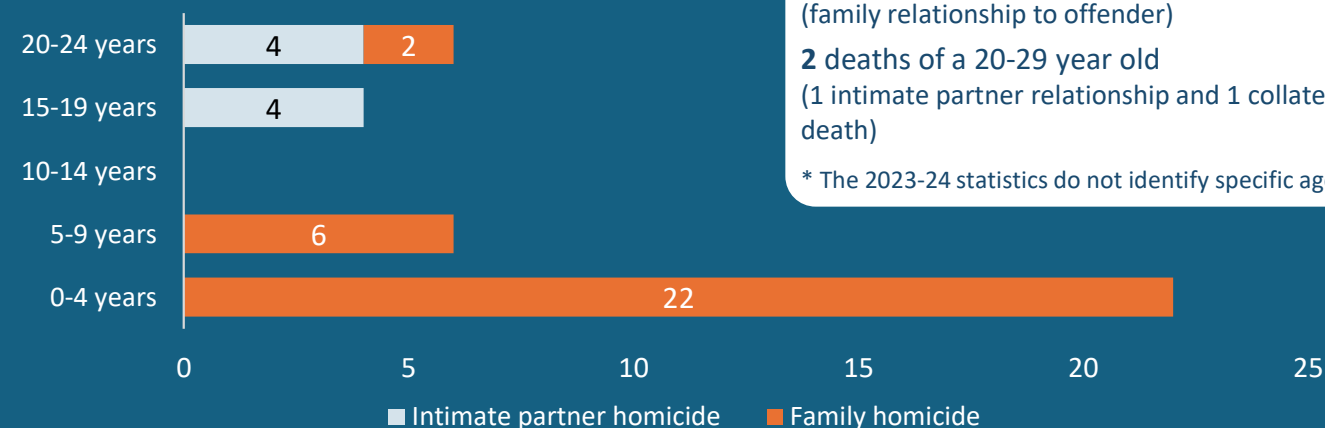
From 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2024, there have been **183 domestic and family violence related deaths in Queensland:**

- **79** occurred in intimate partner relationships.
- **82** were family relationships.
- **22** occurred where there was no intimate partner or family relationship between the offender and the deceased, known as *collateral death*.

Children and young people

The report cites data analysis of Australian filicides¹ that indicates filicide most commonly occurs in a DFV context (78% of cases), and often when the child is very young (46% of cases where the deceased child is under two years old at death). 60% of cases had contact with child protection services. **The Board is considering a review of filicides to examine if DFV was adequately considered in risk assessment procedures.**

Deaths by age group as a result of family and domestic violence from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2023



2023-24 deaths

- **1** death of a child under 18 years (family relationship to offender)
- **2** deaths of a 20-29 year old (1 intimate partner relationship and 1 collateral death)

* The 2023-24 statistics do not identify specific ages.

Monitoring of recommendation implementation

The Board has made **75** recommendations to the Queensland Government since 2016-17. There were no recommendations made in the 2022-23 Annual Report. The 2023-24 Annual Report made an additional **5** recommendations based on the findings of the intimate partner sexual violence case review.

The Board reported the status of the existing recommendations as of June 2024 as:

- In progress: 15
- Implemented: 59
- Noted: 1

¹ ANROWS (Australian National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety). (2024). *Australian Domestic and Family Violence Death Review Network Data Report: Filicides in a domestic and family violence context 2010–2018* (1st ed.; Research report, 06/2024). ANROWS.

Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board, *Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board Annual Report 2023–24*, Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board, Queensland Government, 2024.

School refusal behaviours: the roles of adolescent and parental factors

Education

- A study examining the role of parental emotional dysregulation in influencing adolescent's school refusal behaviours found parental emotional dysregulation may have a compounding effect and intensify the challenges of managing their child's behaviours by diminishing the parent's own capacity to effectively support a distressed child.
- Research was conducted by surveying 106 matched group of parents and children aged 12 to 18 from South Australian schools. 30 adolescents and their parents were allocated to the school-refusal group, and 76 to the non-school refusal behaviours group.
- These findings indicated a **systematic need to provide support to parents in responding to school refusal**, in addition to helping adolescents.
- The study noted there is limited knowledge about "evidence-based and effective interventions for school refusal behaviours in adolescents".

Chen, J., Feleppa, C., Sun, T., Sasagawa, S., Smithson, M., & Leach, L. (2024). 'School Refusal Behaviors: The Roles of Adolescent and Parental Factors', *Journal of Behaviour Modification*, 48(5), 1-20. [s://doi.org/10.1177/01454455241276414](https://doi.org/10.1177/01454455241276414)



Stalking statistics for 2021-22 releases - Australian Bureau of Statistics

DFV

Child safety

- The latest release of data on stalking has found that 1 in 5 women (2 million) and 1 in 15 men (653,400) have experienced stalking since the age of 15. **Higher rates of stalking were found for women aged 18-35, and one-parent families with a child under 15 years.**
 - The rate for women living in a couple with no children was 1.9% (had experienced stalking).
 - The rate for women living as a one-parent family with a child under 15 was 9.2%.
- Prevalence of men stalking women was 19% of the population, with men being stalked by other men and women approximately 3.5%.
- 78% of women who were stalked by a male intimate partner experienced stalking behaviour of maintaining unwanted contact either online or by phone. More than half (53%) of women were followed in person or tracked electronically.
- **Women who experienced financial strain experienced higher rates of stalking.** Women who lived in households that experienced one or more cash flow problems were more than twice as likely to experience stalking (7.9% compared to 2.8% respectively), and similarly for women who lived in households that would be unable to raise \$2,000 within a week (6.3% to 3.1%).

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) (2024). [Stalking](#) [data set], ABS Website, accessed 14 October 2024.



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