

QFCC monthly insights paper

November 2024

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Queensland
Family & Child
Commission



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Government

AIHW: Young people under youth justice supervision and interaction with the child protection system – 2024 update

Out-of-home care

Youth Justice

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) has published national data on the cohort of young people under supervision in 2022-23 who had previous contact with the child protection system between 1 July 2013 and 30 June 2023.

Key findings

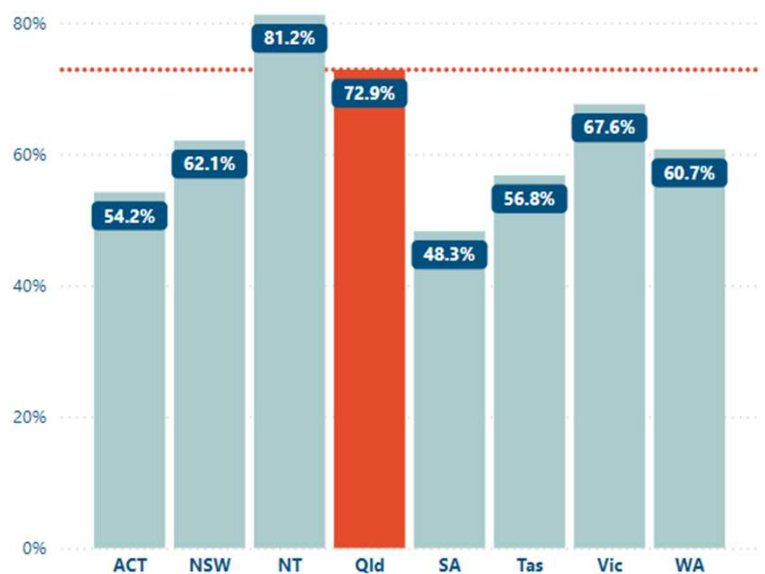
Australia wide, of the 9,068 young people who were under youth justice supervision in 2022-23, 65.4% (n=5,928) had prior interaction with the child protection system between 1 July 2013 and 30 June 2023.

Queensland overview

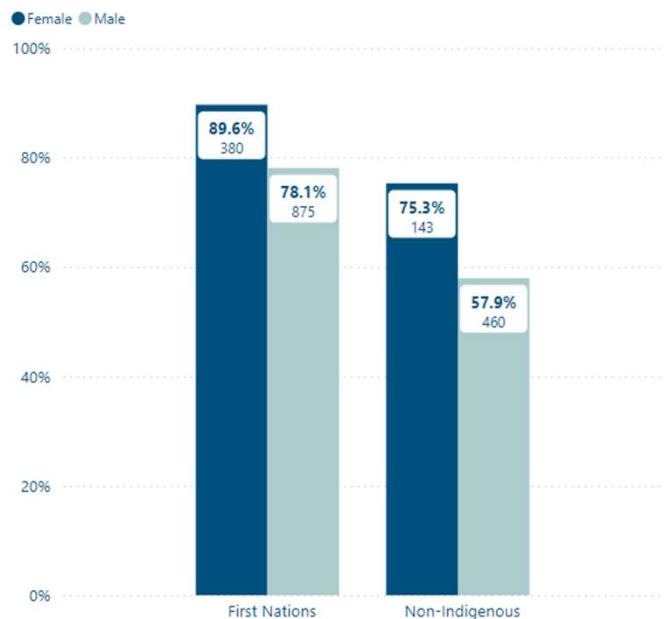
Of all states and territories, Queensland had the highest number (n=1,863), and the second highest proportion (72.9%) in the nation.

Females and First Nations young people were disproportionately represented. In Queensland, 89.6% of First Nations females, 78.1% of First Nations males, 75.3% of non-Indigenous females and 57.9% of non-Indigenous males under youth justice supervision in 2022-23 had previous contact with the child protection system in the 10 years.

Percent of children under youth justice supervision with child protection interaction



Queensland: children under youth justice supervision with child protection interaction



Number of children under youth justice supervision with child protection interaction



AIHW: Young people under youth justice supervision and interaction with the child protection system – *continued*

Age at first youth justice supervision

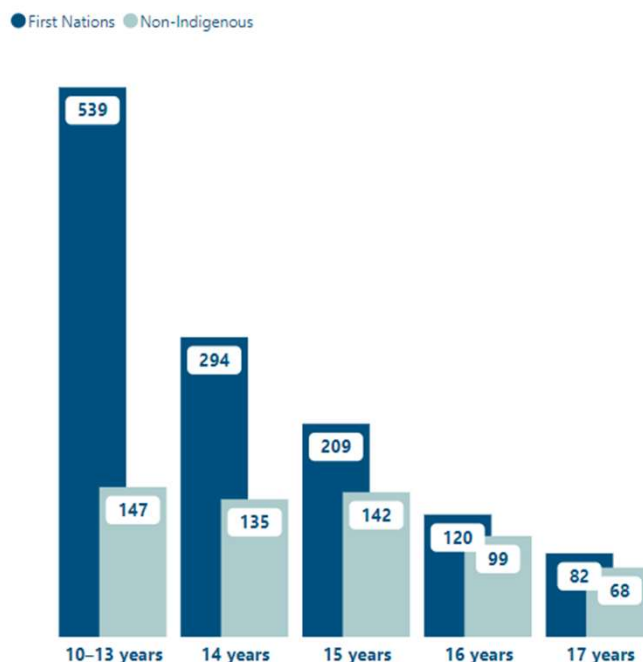
- Nationally, 94% of children aged 10 years at their first youth justice supervision had previous interaction with the child protection system. This proportion gradually decreased with each year of age, falling to 37% of young people 18 and over having a previous experience with child protection.
- 686 Queensland children aged 10-13 under youth justice supervision in 2022-23 had previously had interactions with the child protection system. This is substantially more than any other state or territory in Australia.
- First Nations children are overwhelmingly over-represented in every age group but most notably in younger age groups. Of the 686 children aged 10-13, 539 (78.6%) were First Nations.

Type of child protection involvement

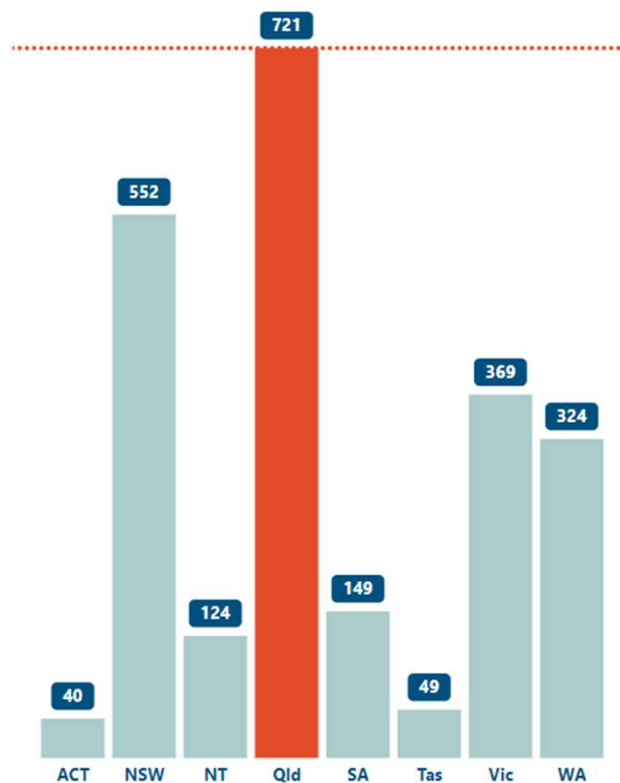
- Queensland has the highest number nationally of children who had experienced out-of-home care with 721 children, representing 28.2% of all children under youth justice supervision in Queensland.
- Nearly half of all young people in Australia under youth justice supervision were the subject of a substantiated abuse notification (45% of those in community-based supervision, and 50% of those children in detention).
- Australia wide, approximately 2 in 3 children who were in detention in 2022-23 and had previously been in out of home care, experienced 3 or more placements.

To read more about this analysis, please see the insights paper on this data published on the QFCC website [found here](#).

Queensland: Number of children aged 10-17 under youth justice supervision with child protection interaction



Number of children under youth justice supervision who had been in out-of-home care



Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2024), *Young people under youth justice supervision and their interaction with the child protection system 2022-23*, AIHW, Australian Government, accessed 28 October 2024. doi:10.25816/g60-xv16

Mental and neurodevelopmental health needs of Aboriginal children with experience of out-of-home care

Health

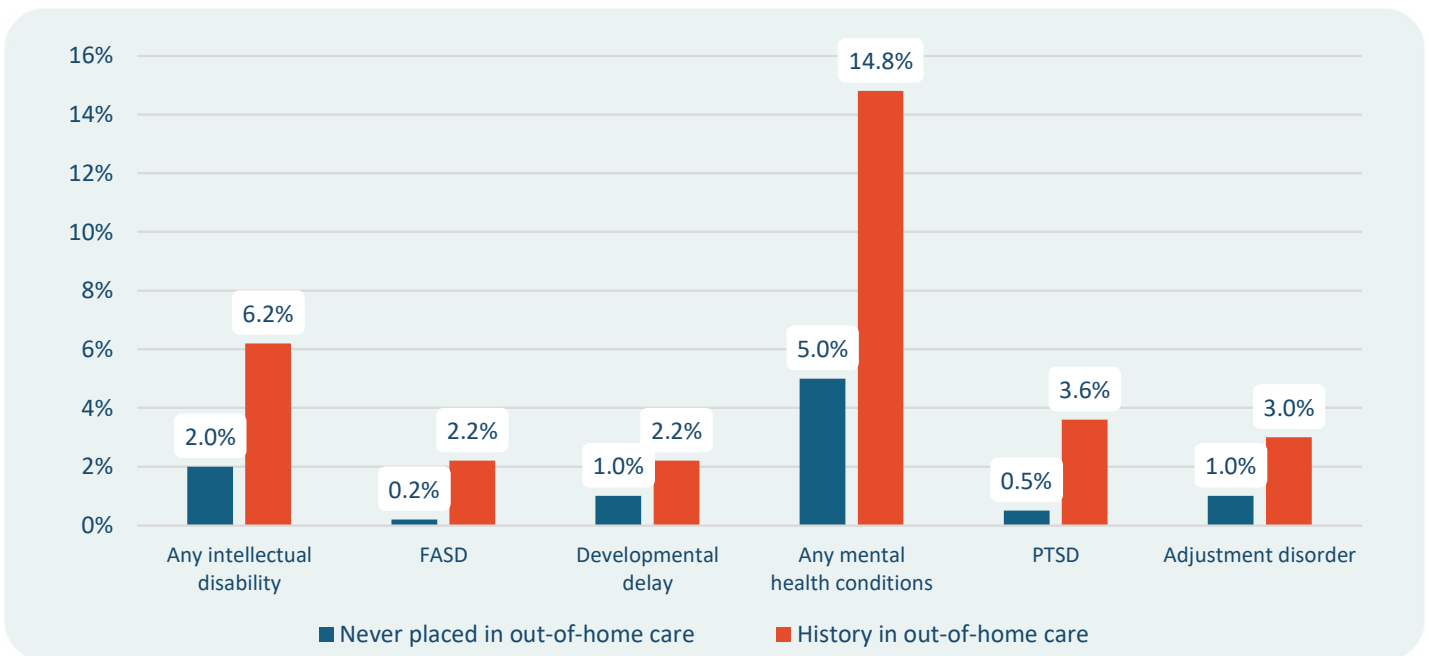
Mental Health

Out-of-home care

Data from hospitalisations, health registries and child protection services for all First Nations children born in Western Australia between 2000 and 2013 has been used to identify trends of mental and neurodevelopmental health conditions. The prevalence of neurodevelopmental and mental health conditions of First Nations children who were placed in out-of-home care between 2000 and 2019 were compared to those who were never placed.

The research was conducted to fill a gap in published data on the intersection of the health needs and children in out-of-home care, particularly for First Nations children.

The study found that in Western Australia, First Nations children with an out-of-home care placement were generally three times more likely to have mental and neurodevelopmental health conditions, compared to First Nations children who have not had a placement.



Impact of age at placement

2.1% of children who began their placement **under the age of 1 year** had a diagnosis of PTSD.

4.1% of children who began their placement **over the age of 1 year** had a diagnosis of PTSD.

Limitations

The study identified limitations in that the data does not identify whether the increased prevalence of mental health conditions is a precursor to, or consequence of, maltreatment or placement into out-of-home care. Further research is required to elucidate the connections and trends.

Recommendations

The study’s authors stated that the findings reveal quantitatively, a need for sufficient social, educational, healthcare and financial support for parents, carers and children entering out-of-home care, in a culturally safe and appropriate manner.

Harrap B, Gibberd A, O’Donnell M, Jones J, Chenhall R, McNamara B, Simons K, Eades S, *Mental and neurodevelopmental health needs of Aboriginal children with experience of out-of-home care: Western Australian data-linkage study*, Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, Volume 48, Issue 5, 2024, 100181, ISSN 1326-0200, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.anzjph.2024.100181>.

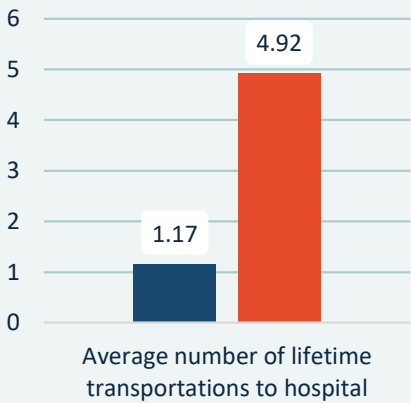
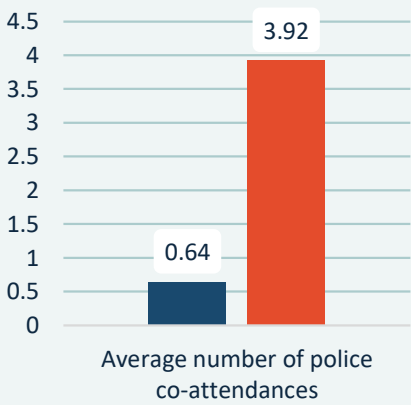
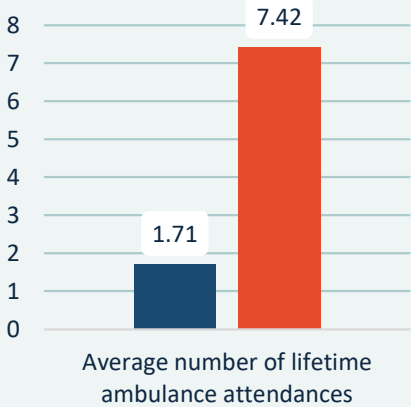
Differences in ambulance attendances between children with and without an identified history of out-of-home-care

Health Mental Health Out-of-home care

Research published in the December 2024 edition of *Child Abuse and Neglect* found that young people in out-of-home care (OOHC) have an increased likelihood of multiple emergency ambulance attendances. The study analysed electronic patient care records of ambulance attendances in Victoria between January 2017 and June 2023, for 27,565 children aged between 0-17 years.

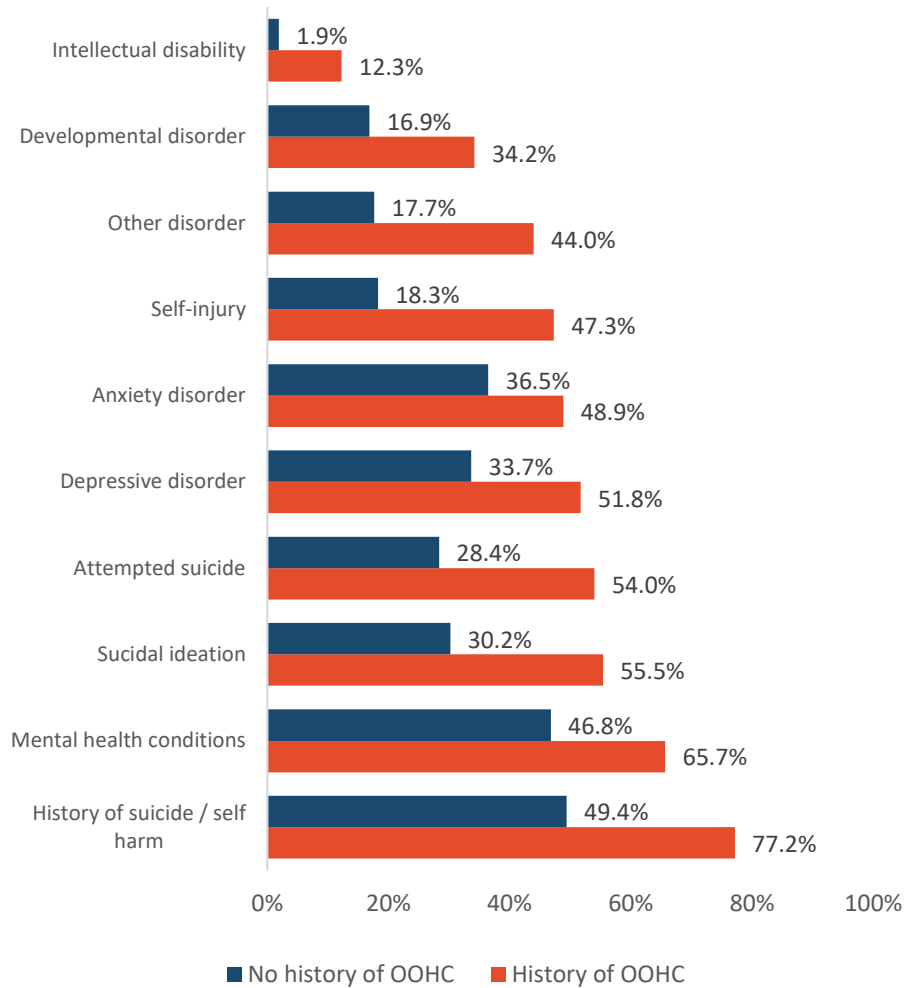
The research found that children with a history in out-of-home care had significantly higher proportions of utilising ambulance services and had increased harms and complexity in attendances.

■ No history of OOHC ■ History of OOHC



Findings from the study revealed increased complexity and comorbidities for young people with a history of out-of-home care, with significantly higher rates of substance-related harms, violence, self-harm, suicide ideation and attempts, a developmental or intellectual disability and mental health conditions.

Factors in ambulance presentations for children with and without history of out-of-home care



Baldwin R, Baidawi S, et al. (2024). *Differences in ambulance attendances between children with and without an identified history of out-of-home-care*, *Child Abuse & Neglect*, Volume 158, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2024.107086>.

Opening the black box of child support – how the child support system perpetuates violence and coercive control

DFV

Researchers from Swinburne University of Technology have released a report examining the child support system in Australia, and how the system is often weaponised against women, particularly those fleeing violent and abusive relationships.

The study surveyed 675 single mothers who have engaged with the child support system. It found that partner-perpetrated violence does not stop at the point of separation, and the child support system often forces women into situations where financial security is sacrificed to ensure physical safety.

Violence impacting parent's decision making

78% of respondents were experiencing a form of violence at separation.

64% of mothers applied for child support when they first separated.

For a single parent to receive more than the base-rate of the Family Tax Benefit (FTBA), the single parent must either seek child support or be approved for a MAT* exemption. Failure to do this results in approximately 70% of family assistance payments being removed.

48% of women experiencing violence did not apply for a MAT exemption or child support to reduce the risk of conflict with their ex-partner.

25% did not apply for exemptions to reduce their risk of violence.

Manipulation of support assessments

Child support payments are calculated on each parent's share of overnight care and taxable incomes. This system relies on accurate information being provided by both parties.

60% of respondents were subject to financial abuse at the time of separation.

Of these women, the majority reported their ex-partners were reducing their child support payments by legally minimising their taxable income (57%), submitting inaccurate assessments (55%), or having their own business (52%).

20% of women who reported their ex-partners income as inaccurate ended up having to pay them child support as a result.

Only **one quarter** of women experiencing financial abuse received more than **\$8 per week** in child support payments.

Collection methods causing harm

Child support payments can be made directly from an ex-partner to the parent (Private Collect) or can be made through Services Australia (Agency Collect).

47% of women who opted for Private Collect identified that their 'choice' was to bow to pressure from their ex-partner to not pay child support.

The MAT is used by Services Australia to reduce a parent's FTBA by 50 cents for every \$1 of child support above an annual threshold. The test does not consider if child support payments have been underpaid or received at all.

43% of women had incurred a FTBA debt due to the MAT; the average debt being **\$3,452**. Half of these debts were made due to retrospective changes to their child support assessment.

On average, the same women were owed **\$12,172** in unpaid child support. The report highlights the vulnerability of the single-parent family, and that *when received*, child support reduces the likelihood of Australian single-mother-family poverty by 21%.

*Maintenance Action Test (MAT): Upon separation, the Government requirement that a resident parent seeks child support payments from the non-resident parent to qualify for above-base rate Family Tax Benefit Part A entitlement. Exemptions may be sought for circumstances such as family violence.

K. Cook, A. Byrt, R. Edwards and A. Coen (2024), *Opening the black box of child support: Shining a light on how financial abuse is perpetrated*, Swinburne University of Technology. <https://doi.org/10.25916/sut.26983363>

Pathways to Prevention – The impact of child and family support services on serious youth offending

Youth Justice

Education

Analysis released by the Australian Institute of Criminology has revealed the success of an early intervention program in reducing rates of serious youth crime, not only with participants, but also with the wider community. The report notes that outside of the United States, it is uncommon for early prevention projects to display compelling evidence of a program’s efficacy and long-term impact on youth crime, offending rates, and community safety. This report presents persuasive evidence reflecting how the Pathways to Prevention Project’s family support services and preschool programs improved the lives of the families serviced and impacted youth offending rates.

The Pathways to Prevention project was a joint initiative between Griffith University, Education Queensland and Mission Australia, operating in a disadvantaged area of Brisbane between 2002 and 2011. At the time the project was being developed, the delivery region had a youth crime rate more than eight times the Brisbane average. The project was delivered direct to families, in seven local primary schools, and through Mission Australia’s service delivery.

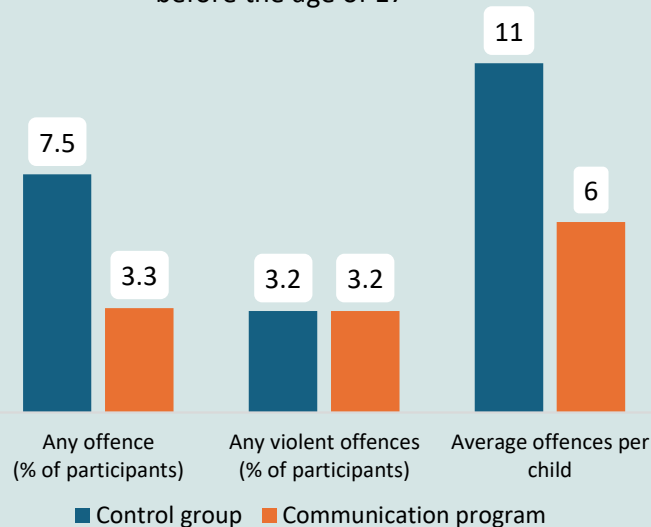
The project included various programs engaging children and families, including facilitated playgroups to intensive family support, and was particularly accessible for families with a high level of need. During the program’s nine years, 1,077 unique families engaged with it, with a total of 1,467 children participating.

Two preschools in the region delivered an enhanced curriculum. The results showed that the children who participated in the program were **50% less likely** than their peers to be involved in serious youth crime. Further, if the program was combined with support programs being offered to parents and families, findings reflected a **100% decrease in serious youth crime** participation.

A key feature of the study was the implementation of the program was focussed on being remedial and universal. The Communication Program delivered in the two preschools in combination with the additional service delivery, resulted in an overall improvement in the performance of all students, not only the children who were struggling.

Evidence suggests that the Pathways to Prevention project may have also had an impact on youth offending at a community level, showing that in 2008-2016, the rates of youth offences were consistently 20% lower than other comparably disadvantaged communities in Queensland (those in the lowest SEIFA decile in 2001).

Comparison of offending by young people before the age of 17



Allan J, Homel R, Vasco D, Freiberg K. (In press) (2024). *The Impact of a Preschool Communication Program and Comprehensive Family Support on Serious Youth Offending: New Findings from the Pathways to Prevention Project*. Australian Institute of Criminology, Australian Government. Accessed 19 November 2024.

Our Watch report – Survey results on the impact of pornography on young people

Child Safety

Education

Children's Rights

Research published by Our Watch has found that young people are first viewing pornography at younger ages (average 13.6 years old), and that early exposure can lead to a negative impact on young people's attitudes towards gender roles, sex, identities and relationships.

Our Watch, a non-government organisation for the prevention of violence against women and children, is advocating for better education of young people and professionals to mitigate the harms and negative influences caused by pornography, particularly the representation of disrespect and violence that is affecting some young people's views of themselves and others.

832 young Australians aged 16 to 20 years completed Our Watch's survey

84% agree that porn pushes stereotypes.

79% agree that porn impacts the way women are viewed.

73% agree that porn is degrading to women, with **68%** agreeing it is harmful.

72% agree that porn often shows aggression and violence towards women.

60% agree that porn is degrading to people of certain races.

Despite agreement with the above, **31%** of young people said they were watching porn as a form of sex education.

Related research from the eSafety Commission in 2023 found that 42% of young people's current education about sexuality and relationships does not meet their needs, and 50% said they may not seek support around seeing adult content due to their age, based on fears it may get them in trouble.

76% of young people stated they think online pornography had a negative or very negative impact on young people's ideas about intimate relationships, and expectations about sex.¹



Almost 3 in 4 (72%) young people do "not at all feel comfortable discussing porn" with a parent or guardian.

Recommendations

Noting that young people will continue to access and be exposed to pornography and other forms of adult content, the report makes several recommendations for governments to assist young people to engage with content critically and mitigate the harms caused.

- Promoting education: through integration of the topic of pornography into respectful relationships education and building young people's awareness of the negative impacts.
- Work in partnerships with experts and young people to co-design processes and practical resources for young people.
- Provide resources and training for professionals who work with young people to assist them with education and preventing negative impacts on young people.

Our Watch, (2020). *Pornography, young people and preventing violence against women: Background paper*. Our Watch. Accessed 19 November 2024.

¹ eSafety Commissioner, (2023). *Accidental, unsolicited and in your face: Young people's encounters with online pornography: A matter of platform responsibility, education and choice*. Australian Government. Accessed 19 November 2024.

COPMM – 2022 Annual Report and review of 2022 Perinatal Deaths Report

Health

The Tasmanian Council of Obstetric and Paediatric Mortality and Morbidity (Tasmanian Council) has released its latest Annual Report reviewing deaths in 2022. The report made recommendations to reduce the likelihood of child deaths, several of which mirror issues and findings in Queensland.

Unsatisfactory restraint of children in vehicles

The Tasmanian Council's review of paediatric deaths observed unsatisfactory restraint of children as passengers in motor vehicles and recommended increasing the developmental stage at which children transition to booster seats, adult seatbelts, and the front seat of a vehicle.

The QFCC has found similar results in analysis of child car restraints use in passenger deaths, with letters to key national and state-based agencies containing similar recommendations.

Childhood suicides and mental health

To reduce childhood suicides, the Tasmanian Council highlighted the need for improved age-appropriate mental health services and facilities for children and young people, and the need for postvention support for young people who have access to social media where a suicide has featured in discussions on that platform. The Tasmanian Council also echoed previous coronial recommendations that the media, in publishing articles and editorials on suicide, ensure complete compliance with [Mindfame Guidelines](#).

Infant mortality

As the largest group of child deaths, the Tasmanian Council's work is heavily focused on infant mortality. To reduce sleep-related infant deaths the Tasmanian Council recommended that clear, consistent messaging be used in safe sleeping information for new caregivers. The Tasmanian Council's report noted the risk of accidental suffocation associated with substance use, and highlighted the need for more effective death scene examinations in sudden infant deaths to better identify sleep accidents.

Perinatal death

The Tasmanian Council also made a series of recommendations to prevent perinatal deaths (i.e. in-utero and early in the neonatal period). Advocating for improved prenatal screening for chromosomal and genetic conditions, it recommended that all pregnant women be informed of options for and have access to early screening, with women of advanced maternal age to access funded Trisomy screening. The Tasmanian Council also recommended that all women be assessed for risk of preterm delivery at the time of morphology scanning. These are aligned with findings of the [Queensland Maternity and Perinatal Quality Council's \(QMPQC\)](#)² recent analysis of a perinatal deaths, which considered that high out-of-pocket costs borne by Queensland mothers for foetal anomaly screening may be a factor in the underscreening among socioeconomically vulnerable women. An increase in perinatal deaths associated with infection of the placenta and membranes and preterm rupture of the membrane at previable gestations was determined to be a factor in the recent rise of in early neonatal deaths in Queensland.

The importance of working towards nationally consistent perinatal reporting by all jurisdictions was highlighted by both Tasmanian and Queensland Quality Councils.

Council of Obstetric and Paediatric Mortality and Morbidity (Tas.), Tasmania. Department of Health and Human Services. (2024). [Annual report 2022](#). Accessed November 14, 2024.

² Queensland Maternity and Perinatal Quality Council, Queensland Department of Health (2024). [Review of selected 2022 Perinatal Deaths](#). Accessed 19 November 2024.

The Queensland Trauma Strategy 2024-2029

Mental Health

The Queensland Mental Health Commission has published the 2024-2029 *Queensland Trauma Strategy*, aimed at providing a whole-of-government and community framework to prevent, support and heal from trauma when it occurs, to allow all Queenslanders to ‘live happy and healthy lives.’

Key focus areas:

Prioritise prevention

- Increasing awareness
- Challenging discrimination and stigma,
- Building safe and inclusive environments
- Prevent traumatic experiences related to economic, employment and housing insecurity
- Prevent system related trauma

Early support

- Holistic and social supports
- Early support, including across the life course
- Enhance services and supports

Foster healing

- Prioritise First Nations healing
- Address system-related re-traumatisation
- Strengthen community-led and place-based initiatives
- Trauma-informed justice systems

Enable reform

- Strengthen human rights approaches to trauma
- Build trauma-informed workforces
- Strengthen governance and accountability mechanisms
- Prioritise lived-living experience leadership and expertise
- Fund and resource for sustainable implementation
- Enhance cross-sector partnership and collaboration
- Improve innovation, evaluation and knowledge translation

Queensland Mental Health Commission, (2024). *Queensland Trauma Strategy Report*. Queensland Government. Accessed 18 November 2024.

Climate change related worry in children and young people

Mental Health

An article published by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) summarises existing research on climate change related concerns for young people, noting a small evidence base exists for this topic. The article cites several different terms for climate change related concerns, including ‘eco-anxiety’, ‘climate-anxiety’, and ‘solastalgia’.

Mental health impact of climate change related worry

Evidence and data related to the long-term impact of climate change on young people’s mental health is still emerging, but currently there is limited research indicating that climate change related awareness leads to poor mental health outcomes.

Some research indicates negative emotions may occur, but no significant impact on mental health will occur. Other research suggests that prolonged worry or stress about climate change will result in negative mental health outcomes. One Australian study used longitudinal data to show high persistent worry about climate change indicated higher likelihood of depression symptoms at ages 18-19.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people may need a culturally appropriate support, due to their unique connections to Land and Country.

Sciberras, E., & Fernando, J. W. (2021). Climate change-related worry among Australian adolescents: an eight-year longitudinal study. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 27(1), 8-22. <https://doi.org/10.1111/camh.12521>