



CHILDREN AND YOUTH NEWS

WELCOME

Welcome to the first edition of *Children and Youth News*, the newsletter of the ABS National Children and Youth Statistics Unit (NCYSU). *Children and Youth News* will be published around three to four times a year, highlighting developments in children and youth related statistics and featuring articles analysing data on topical children and youth issues. In addition, other information of likely interest to researchers and policy makers will be presented. Interested readers are also invited to visit the [Children and Youth Statistics Theme Page](#) on the ABS web site for links to relevant ABS datasets and other web sites.



The NCYSU team — David Povah, Shalini Bellas and Carrington Shepherd.

NATIONAL CHILDREN AND YOUTH STATISTICS UNIT UPDATE

In July 2003, the ABS created a National Children and Youth Statistics Unit (NCYSU) in response to the need for a statistical evidence base to support community and government policy related to children and youth. Discussions with agencies responsible for the development of policy relevant to children and youth, identified areas where data are required to support their work and underlined the need for ABS to be able to respond to these data needs in a timely way.

The role of the NCYSU includes:

- maintaining a dialogue with key stakeholders regarding emerging issues, data gaps and needs;
- developing statistical information related to children and youth (analyses and other products);
- providing statistical leadership and coordination in the area of children and youth statistics;
- the development of standard concepts and definitions;
- advancing children and youth issues within the ABS (relating to standards, survey content and design);
- facilitating client requests relating to data on aspects of the population related to children and youth, and children and youth within families; and
- keeping abreast of emerging issues in relation to children and youth, and actively facilitating statistical responses where appropriate.

The NCYSU is guided by an Advisory Group comprising senior representatives from the ABS and other organisations and government agencies. The NCYSU is part of the ABS Health and Community Statistics Branch and is located in the Western Australian office of the ABS.

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LATEST FINDINGS

2001 Census of Population and Housing

The 2001 Census continues to be a rich source of information relating to Australia's children and youth. Data from the 2001 Census shows that there were 6.5 million children and youth (persons aged 0 – 24 years) in Australia on census night (representing 34% of the total Australian population). The following short article highlights how census data can be used to analyse issues affecting children and youth.

Young people using computers

Computers and the Internet are now an important part of life for young people. They are important for engaging in activities such as recreation, work, study, communication and making financial transactions. The increasing prevalence of computers and the Internet means that young people who do not have access to them can be disadvantaged by having educational outcomes adversely affected, employment opportunities restricted and other aspects of their wellbeing affected. However, there are also concerns associated with computer and Internet use, including the risk of security and privacy breaches, issues associated with Internet content and practices, and health-related issues. In the 2001 Census personal computers used at home included those used for business or private purposes, portable computers (eg laptops), personal organisers (which can be plugged into larger computers), and dedicated word processors. The Census excluded dedicated gaming machines.

In 2001, around 1.5 million young people aged 15 – 24 years (59% of them) had the use of a computer at home in the week preceding the Census. This was the highest proportion of persons in all age groups using home computers. This may be attributable

to the greater exposure of young people to this technology and greater opportunities for acquiring computer skills. A similar proportion of young males and females had used a computer at home (58% and 59% respectively).

Among the youth population, 15 – 17 year olds were the most likely to have used a computer (72%) compared with 60% of 18 – 19 year olds and 50% of 20 – 24 year olds. Participation in education, living arrangements (in particular whether a young person is living in the family home) and financial means, are some of the factors affecting computer ownership access and use. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of young people aged 15 – 24 years who had used a computer at home had also used their home computer to access the Internet.

2002 Child Care Survey

The June 2002 Child Care Survey collected information on both formal and informal child care. Formal care refers to regulated child care away from the child's home, including: preschool or kindergarten; long day care; family day care; before and after school care; and other arrangements such as crèches in shopping centres. Informal care refers to non-regulated child care either in the child's home or elsewhere including: care given by family members (such as grandparents), friends or neighbours, and paid baby-sitters. In the 1980s, the need for work-related child care increased considerably, commensurate with the increasing labour force participation of women. Along with increased use of child care for work-related reasons, the 1990s saw increases in the use of child care for parents' personal reasons.

In 2002, 49% (1,510,500) of children aged less than 12 years used some type of child care. This proportion of children aged under 12 years using child care, was relatively stable throughout the 1990s. This was mainly a result of children requiring child care because of their parents' work-related activities. *(Cont.)*

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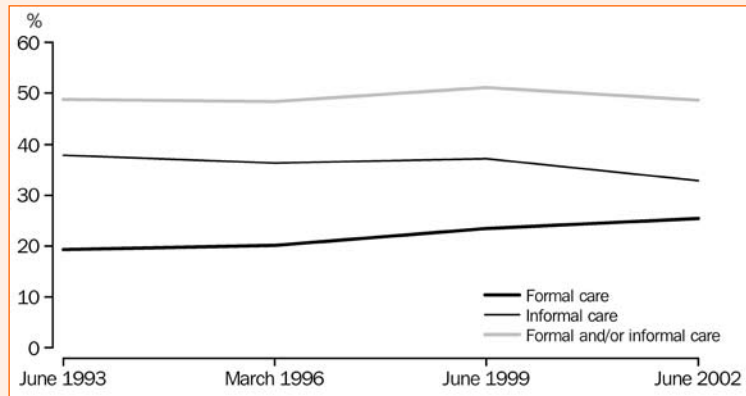
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2002 Child Care Survey (Continued)

Proportion of Children Aged Under 12 Years Using Child Care



Informal child care is used more than formal child care. However, the proportions of children using formal child care have risen slightly over the last ten years (19% in 1993 compared with 25% in 2002), while the proportions using informal child care have declined slightly (38% in 1993 compared with 33% in 2002). In 2002 the main type of formal care used was long day care and the majority of informal care was provided by grandparents.

Further information is available in [Child Care, Australia, June 2002](#) (cat. no. 4402.0).

RECENT RELEASES

General Social Survey, Australia 2002

(cat. no. 4159.0) Release date: December 2003

Education and Work, Australia

(cat. no. 6227.0) Release date: December 2003

Suicides: Recent Trends, Australia

(cat. no. 3309.0.55.001) Release date: December 2003

Participation in Sport and Physical Activities, Australia

(cat. no. 4177.0) Release date: December 2003

Australian Census Analytic Program: Counting the Homeless

(cat. no. 2050.0) Release date: November 2003

Labour Force, Teenage Employment and Unemployment, Australia

(cat. no. 6202.0.40.001) Release date: October 2003

To find out more about these and other ABS publications, see

[ABS Catalogue](#).

UPCOMING RELEASES

Census of Population and Housing: Australia's Youth, 2001

(cat. no. 2059.0) — to be released in January 2004

Children's Participation in Culture and Leisure Activities, Australia

(cat. no. 4901.0) — to be released in January 2004

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SPECIAL FEATURE

Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY)

The Alliance is a national collaborative whose purpose is to facilitate the generation and translation of knowledge to enhance the wellbeing and life chances of children and young people. The NCYSU will be working closely with the Alliance to ensure that data, which will allow the community to measure the progress of children, will be widely available.

The Alliance has two primary objectives:

1. To promote collaborative research and agenda setting for children and young people in Australia.
2. To promote the application of research to policy and practice for children and young people.

The Alliance's current programs and initiatives centre around: developing an Alliance Research Agenda, in order to identify key policy, practice and research questions and reach agreement on future research priorities; developing a National Clearing House to make links between research and its practical application; implementing a Communication Strategy to ensure research on child and adolescent health and wellbeing is used to full effect; and creating a National Data Network, which will link and share data from a wide variety of sources.

For more information about The Alliance visit: www.aracy.org.au

NON-ABS RESEARCH

Growing Up in Australia Study

Growing Up in Australia is a longitudinal study of Australian children funded by the Australian Government as part of its Stronger Families and Communities Strategy. The study aims to examine the impact of Australia's unique social and cultural environment on the next generation and will further understanding of early childhood development, inform social policy debate, and be used to identify opportunities for early intervention and prevention strategies in policy areas concerning children.

Further information on the Growing Up in Australia study, can be found at <http://www.aifs.gov.au/growingup/> or email growingup@aifs.gov.au



CHILDREN AND YOUTH THEME PAGE

A Children and Youth Statistics Theme Page has been added to the ABS web site and contains relevant information from the ABS and other organisations. This page highlights the type and range of data available for analysis of children and youth issues and will be updated to highlight new data releases as they become available.

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CONTACT US

For information about the full range of ABS data: National Information and Referral Service

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