1. PERFORMANCE OF SERVICES

1.1 Introduction

Box 1.1: Highlights

- This chapter presents performance and expense information on key service delivery areas, including trends over time and comparisons with other Australian jurisdictions.
- It complements the economic and financial information provided elsewhere in these budget papers, with attention to outcomes relevant to NSW residents.
- The NSW Government is concurrently developing a Performance and Wellbeing Framework to demonstrate progress on our long-term reform plans to build a better New South Wales.
- The Performance and Wellbeing Consultation Paper released alongside this year's budget papers will seek feedback on the proposed draft framework.
- While the performance of many services has improved over the past year, most are still managing legacy issues arising from COVID-19 pandemic related disruptions.
- Future budget papers will report on a wider range of performance and wellbeing indicators.

Information in this chapter is presented against key service delivery areas of the NSW Government, as established under the Classification of the Functions of Government (COFOG-A) expense by purpose framework used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). COFOG-A standards are in line with international standards set by the International Monetary Fund (IMF GFSM 2014) with minor adjustments for the Australian context.

COFOG-A is the Australian application of an international classification that supports the reporting of government expenses according to the purpose for which the funds are used. COFOG-A groups NSW Government spending into 10 categories: General Public Services; Public Order and Safety; Economic Affairs; Environmental Protection; Housing and Community Amenities; Health; Recreation, Culture and Religion; Education; Social Protection; and Transport.

1.2 Health

Introduction

The NSW Government delivers the largest public health system in Australia, including a range of health services in public hospitals, emergency services, non-hospital and community-based care, and preventative and population health services.

New South Wales spending on health is focused on delivering positive outcomes to patients and carers, and safe care across all settings. Health service delivery also plays a crucial role in keeping people healthy and well to prevent ill health.

Health in New South Wales

The most recent estimate of life expectancy at birth for a person born in New South Wales is 83.3 years. This is in line with the national average. Life expectancy is higher for females at 85.3 years, compared with males at 81.3 years. Life expectancy was on a long-term and steady upward trend until 2020–2022, when it fell by 0.1 years. Public health orders suppressed morbidity across all causes though 2020–2021. As public health orders were relaxed the number of deaths increased in 2022, with almost half of these being due to COVID-19 (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2023).

Between 2020–2022, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had a life expectancy at birth of 73.8 years for males and 77.9 years for females, which remains significantly lower than the general population (ABS, 2023). There also continues to be a lower life expectancy for people living outside of Greater Sydney with a 2.6-year difference in life expectancy at birth, compared with people living within Greater Sydney (ABS, 2023). Factors influencing this disparity include reduced access to health services, and fewer educational and employment opportunities. Those living outside of metropolitan areas are also more likely to experience higher rates of hospitalisations, obesity, smoking and alcohol consumption (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), 2024).

The number of overweight or obese adults has been trending upwards steadily over the past 20 years, increasing by 11.4 percentage points since 2003. The percentage of people who were overweight or obese was highest for those aged 55-64 (67.8 per cent) compared with young adults aged 16-24 (38.6 per cent). It was also higher in men (64.5 per cent) compared with women (54.4 per cent) (HealthStats NSW, 2024).

The proportion of adults (16 years and over) meeting the physical activity recommendations (at least 150 minutes of moderate, or vigorous activity in a week and at least five sessions in the week) has increased steadily over the past 20 years, from 45.4 per cent in 2003, to 64.5 per cent in 2023 (NSW Health, 2024).

Adequate physical activity in children is defined as one hour or more of vigorous, or moderate, physical activity each day (Department of Health and Aged Care, 2021). The proportion of children meeting this recommendation has been steadily declining, from 32.7 per cent in the combined years 2006–2007, to 20.0 per cent in the combined years 2022–2023. There are, however, differences in activity based on age, sex, socio-economic status, and location.

The COVID-19 pandemic saw a decline in physical activity among children and young people in 2020 and 2021, and rates are yet to return to their pre-pandemic levels (HealthStats NSW, 2024). A downward trend in physical activity by children and young people was, however, evident prior to 2020. This has been accompanied with an increase in sedentary behaviours, such as use of mobile phones, electronic games, and computers, and an increase in car use, rather than active travel.

There has been a long-term reduction in smoking over the past 20 years, with 11.7 per cent of people aged 16 years and over reporting either daily or occasional smoking in 2023. This is down from 22.5 per cent in 2002 and the decline has been consistent across all age groups. The rate of e-cigarette use among young adults (aged 16-24 years) has, however, increased by more than six-fold in the past four years, from 2.7 per cent in the combined years 2018–2019, to 18.9 per cent in the combined years 2022–23 (HealthStats NSW, 2024).

Experience of moderate to very high psychological distress in adults has been increasing since 2012-13. In 2022, 13.9 per cent of all adults reported experiencing high, or very high, levels of psychological distress. This was lower than the Australian average of 14.6 per cent. Across all jurisdictions, New South Wales had the third lowest rate of psychological distress, behind the Australian Capital Territory (13.8 per cent) and Western Australia (12.4 per cent) (ABS, 2022).

Hospital performance

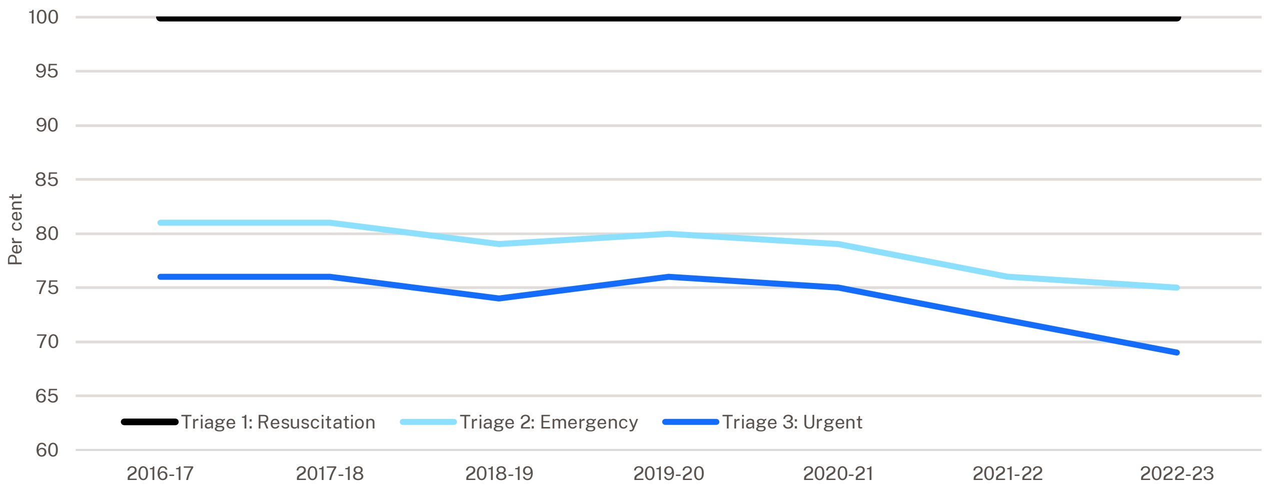
Emergency department treatment commencement time

The most recent data from the NSW Bureau of Health Information reflects a downward trend in emergency department treatment times across triage categories.

This continued decline since the COVID-19 pandemic has been largely driven by an upward trend in overall emergency department presentations across all triage categories. For example, in the March 2024 quarter, there were 810,201 emergency presentations, up 5.2 per cent (40,235) compared with the same quarter in 2023 (769,966). This was the highest of any quarter since 2010 (Bureau of Health Information, 2024). The AIHW data tells a similar story (Chart 1.1).

Compared with other states and territories, New South Wales remains the highest performing jurisdiction across all triage categories (AIHW, 2024; Report on Government Services (RoGS), 2024).

Chart 1.1: Patients commencing treatment on time in emergency departments, NSW



Source: AIHW, 2024
Note: Triage 1 (resuscitation) requires treatment within 2 minutes; Triage 2 (emergency) within 10 minutes; Triage 3 (urgent) within 30 minutes.

Average length of stay

Recent results show a slight reduction in average length of stay following increases during the COVID-19 pandemic. The average length of stay for acute overnight admitted patients was 4.8 days, as measured for January to March 2024 (Bureau of Health Information, 2024).

This is down from 5.0 days (3.6 per cent) from the same quarter the previous year. Average length of stay peaked at 5.3 days in July to September 2022. Prior to the pandemic in January to March 2020, average length of stay for New South Wales was 4.5 days (Bureau of Health Information, 2024).

1.3 Education

Introduction

The NSW Government provides and funds education and training services, including early childhood education, government and non-government schools; with the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) as the regulator; and vocational education and training (VET), including the NSW public provider TAFE NSW.

Education is fundamental for building a skilled and productive workforce, driving economic growth and providing opportunities for people. Education reduces inequalities by helping students to reach their full potential, regardless of background, fostering social cohesion and inclusivity.

Schools

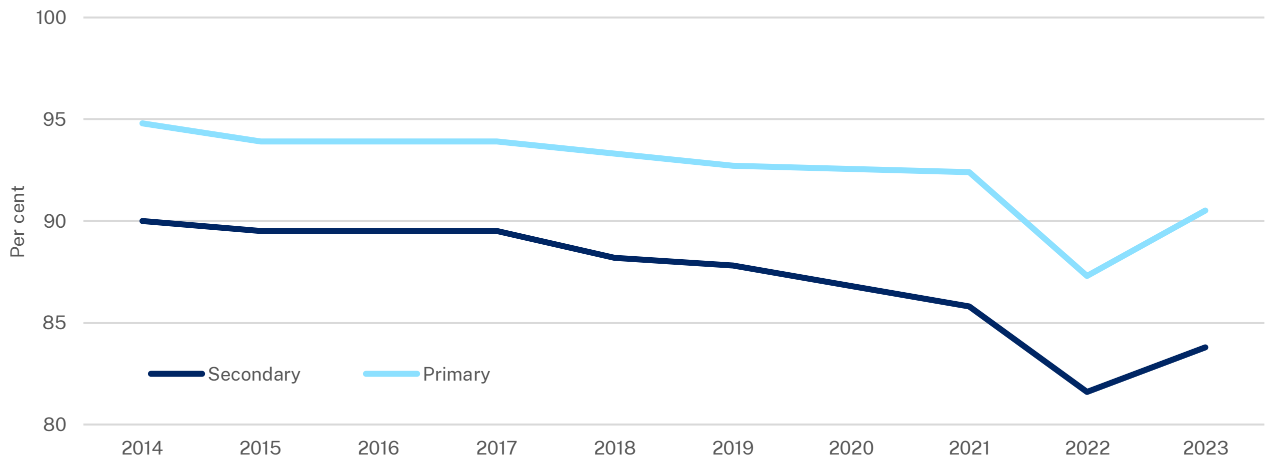
The NSW Government supports both government and non-government schooling in primary and secondary education.

Public school attendance

Regular school attendance has a significant influence on educational outcomes, positive peer relationships and the social skills essential for life. Between 2014 and 2022 Semester 1 attendance rates at public schools trended down, declining from 90.0, to 81.6 per cent for secondary schools and from 94.8, to 87.3 per cent for primary schools (Chart 1.2).

In 2023, NSW public school attendance rates for Semester 1 increased and are similar or slightly higher than the national public primary and secondary school average. In NSW primary schools, the attendance rate increased to 90.5 per cent, above the national average of 89.6 per cent and the highest among the states and territories. In NSW secondary schools, the attendance rate has increased to 83.8 per cent for Years 7 to 12. The attendance rates for Year 7 to 10 in NSW secondary schools are the third highest among the states and territories.

Chart 1.2: Attendance rates at NSW Government schools



Source: Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2023
Note: Due to changes in calculation methods, 2018 data is not directly comparable to previous years. 2020 data is indicative due to varied attendance recording practices during the COVID-19 pandemic.

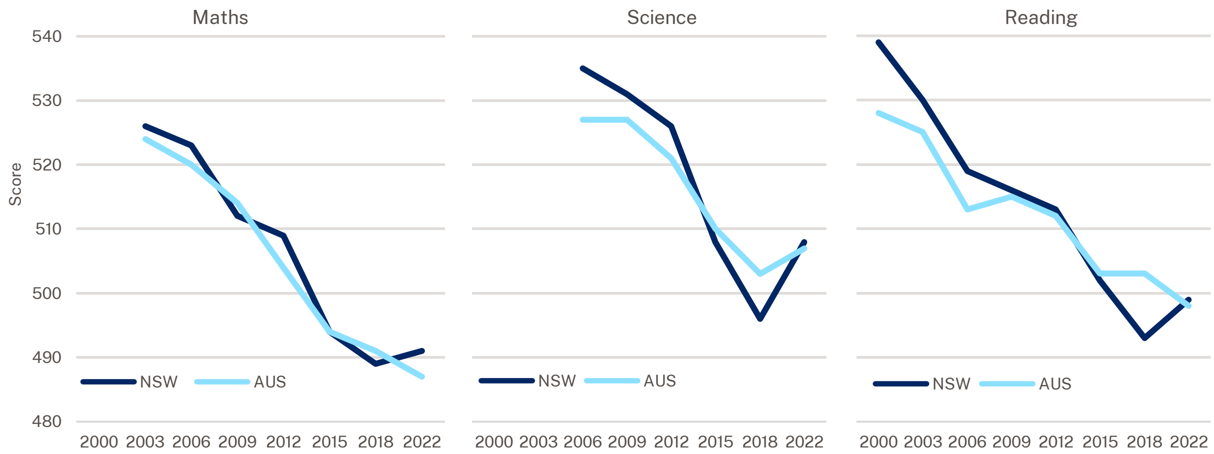
Schools' performance

NAPLAN measures student performance in aspects of literacy and numeracy and tests whether national minimum standards are being met. From 2023, the Australian Curriculum Assessment Reporting Authority (ACARA) has realigned NAPLAN practices by introducing earlier NAPLAN testing and new proficiency scales.

The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) is an international assessment administered by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) every three years that measures the application of knowledge to real-world situations through scientific, reading, and mathematical literacy among 15-year-old students.

PISA scores for New South Wales and Australia have trended down since 2000 in all three subject areas. In 2022, the average results showed a modest improvement from 2018.

Chart 1.3: Average PISA Score



Source: Australian Council for Educational Research, 2022

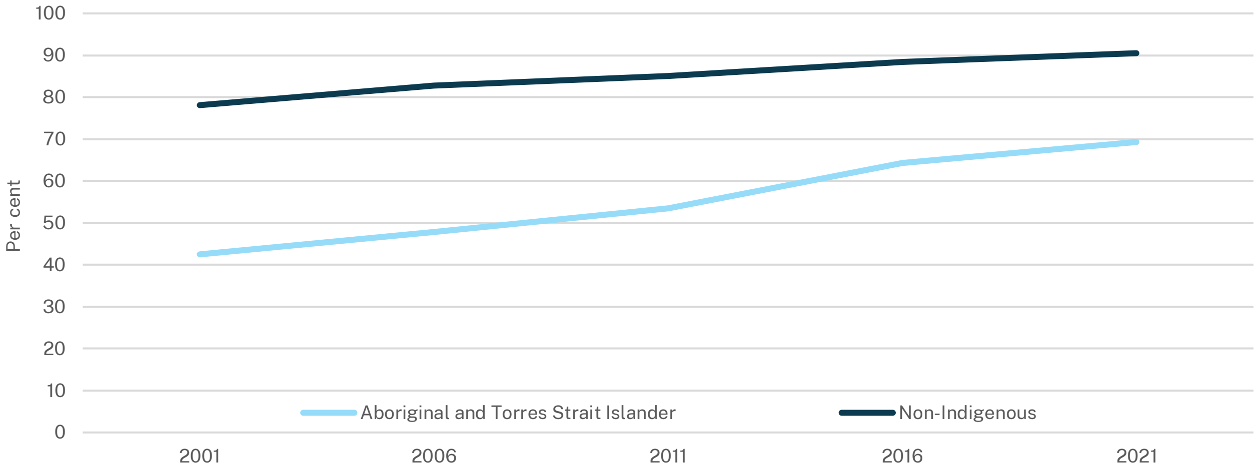
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student education and training outcomes

Young people (0–18 year olds) represent 42.0 per cent of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. This is significantly greater than the proportion (22.2 per cent) of young people within the non-Indigenous population (ABS, 2021).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, changes to schooling including online learning have impacted educational outcomes. Between 2020 and 2022, the proportion of NSW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students attaining a Higher School Certificate declined from 46.0 per cent, to 38.0 per cent (NSW Department of Education, 2023).

Although there was a decline in Higher School Certificate attainment, Year 12 attainment increased at a faster rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people when compared with their non-Indigenous counterparts. The share of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 20–24 years who had completed Year 12 — or a Certificate III or above — increased from 42.5 per cent in 2001, to 69.3 per cent in 2021 (Chart 1.4). The share of non-Indigenous people with completions increased from 78.1 per cent in 2001, to 90.5 per cent in 2021 (ABS, 2021) (Chart 1.4).

Chart 1.4: Share of NSW people 20-24 years who completed Year 12 or equivalent



Source: ABS 2021; Productivity Commission, 2024

1.4 Transport

Introduction

The NSW Government builds and operates a transport network that connects people and businesses. An effective transport network should ensure people have access to employment and education opportunities, essential services, friends and family, and recreational places.

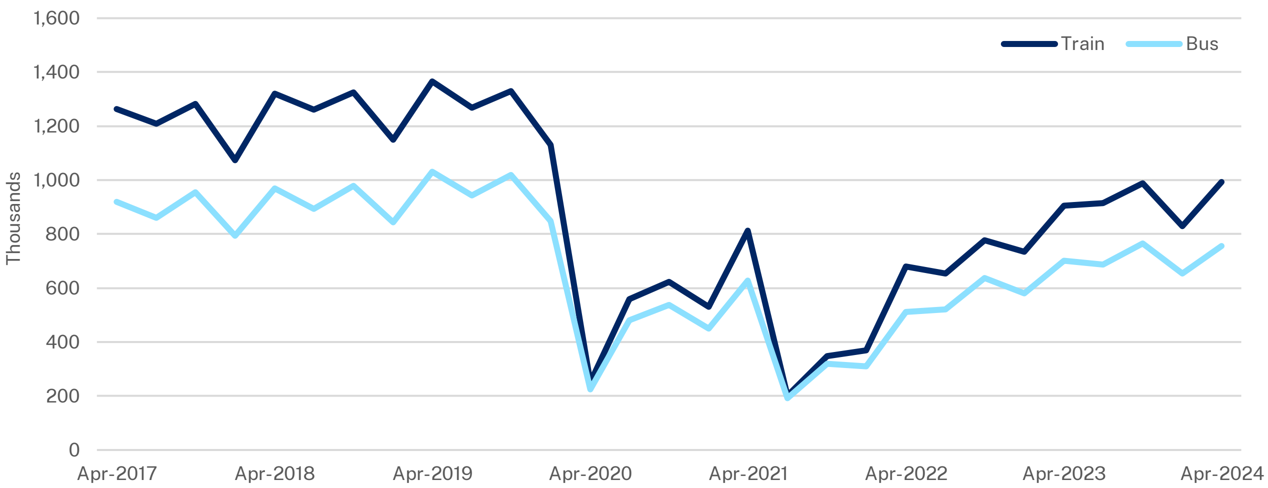
Public transport services include the provision of trains, buses, ferries, light rail, and metro, as well as point to point transport connections and freight. The Government is also responsible for the management of roads, rail, waterways, and active transport assets as these play an important role in ensuring a safe and reliable transport network.

Trips and travel times

The number of average weekday train and bus trips fell significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Between April 2019 and April 2020 train trips fell by 81.7 per cent, and bus trips fell by 78.3 per cent.

Since July 2021, average weekday trips made on trains and buses have generally been increasing but remain below pre-pandemic levels. In April 2024 average weekday trips for trains and buses were 27.3 per cent, and 26.7 per cent below their respective pre-pandemic levels in April 2019. This can be significantly attributed to increased working from home, shift to private vehicle use, and service disruptions (Transport for NSW (TfNSW), 2024) (Chart 1.5).

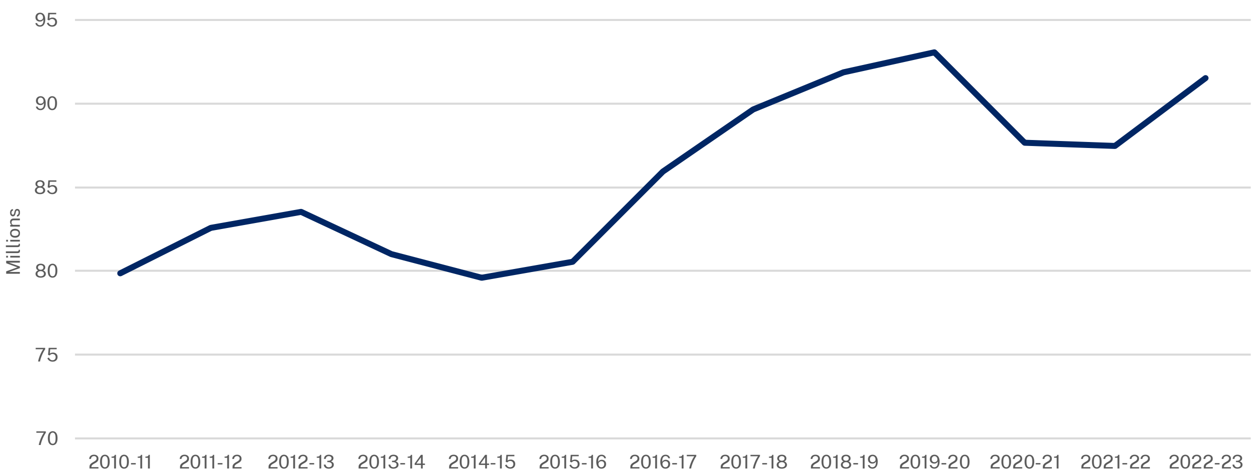
Chart 1.5: Average daily weekday public transport trips by mode, NSW



Source: TfNSW, 2024

The COVID-19 pandemic also influenced travel patterns in private transport. Kilometres travelled for vehicle drivers in Greater Sydney (including the Central Coast) on an average weekday were down by 5.8 per cent in 2020-21 (88 million kilometres), compared with 2019-20 (93 million kilometres). Vehicle kilometres increased by 4.7 per cent in 2022-23 (92 million kilometres), compared with 2021-22 (87 million kilometres) (Chart 1.6).

Chart 1.6: Vehicle driver kilometres, Greater Sydney



Source: TfNSW, 2023

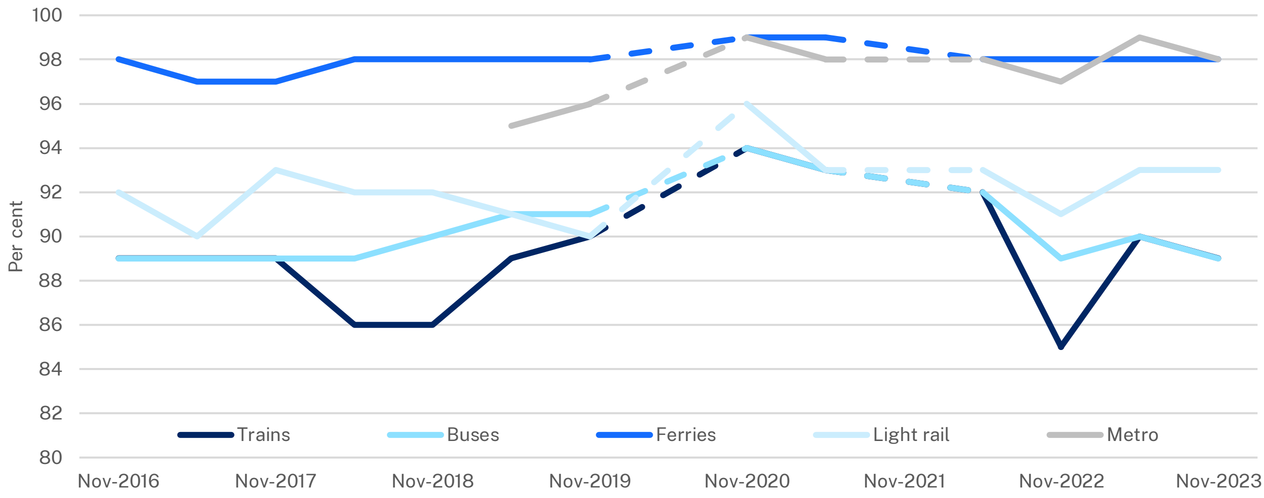
Public transport performance

Customer satisfaction – public transport

Customer satisfaction with public transport services has trended down since November 2020, with satisfaction declining the most for train and bus services. For both bus and train services overall, customer satisfaction declined from 94 per cent, to 89 per cent, over the period from November 2020 to November 2023 (Chart 1.7).

There was a modest improvement in customer satisfaction for light rail services, from 91 per cent in November 2022, to 93 per cent in November 2023. Customer satisfaction with ferry and metro services has remained stable at 98 per cent since May 2022. Bus passenger satisfaction improved during COVID but is now somewhat below the pre-COVID period. Passengers were most satisfied with safety and security but least satisfied with information on service delays.

Chart 1.7: Customer satisfaction by public transport mode, NSW



Source: TfNSW, 2024
Note: The dashed lines represent missing data, as surveys were not conducted due to COVID-19.

Reported customer satisfaction for people with disability measures service accessibility. Customer satisfaction with trains is measured for Sydney Trains and NSW TrainLink. NSW TrainLink offers services to regional and interstate destinations. Customer satisfaction by people with disability for NSW TrainLink was 86 per cent in May 2018 but declined to 78 per cent in May 2023. Satisfaction with Sydney Trains for people with disability has improved, rising from 79 per cent to 88 per cent.

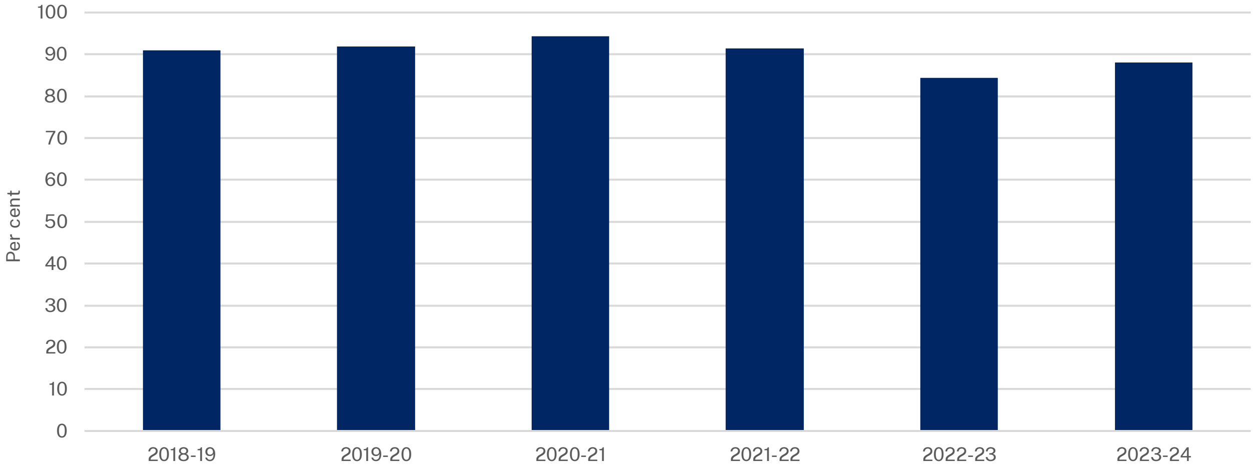
Access for all passengers is enabled by infrastructure such as wheelchair accessible paths, ramps and lifts at public transport hubs. These features support greater connectivity across the transport network. In March 2024, 87.6 per cent of Sydney train stations were independently accessible. Accessibility was, however, lower for regional train stations at 76.6 per cent, and even lower for intercity train stations (for example Blue Mountains and Central Coast) at 48.8 per cent.

Punctuality performance for trains

Punctual trains enhance customer experience by providing passengers with reliable services that get them to their destination on time. Between 2018-19 and 2021-22, punctuality performance remained above 90 per cent (Chart 1.8). For Sydney Trains a service is considered punctual if it arrived within five minutes of its scheduled time, and for NSW TrainLink (Intercity) services, within six minutes. Intercity services include those outer Sydney metropolitan area services to the Blue Mountains, Central Cost, Hunter, Illawarra, South Cost and Southern Highlands.

Punctuality performance fell to 84.4 per cent in 2022-23 largely due to protected industrial action and severe weather events. In 2023-24, punctuality performance improved to 88.1 per cent as the system recovered, and a range of improvement initiatives were implemented. Rail maintenance programs reduced the backlog and investments were made in track, signalling, and electrical systems. Rail operations improvements were also initiated to enhance incident response and service recovery.

Chart 1.8: Sydney Trains and NSW TrainLink (Intercity) punctuality performance



Source: TfNSW, 2024
Note: Data for 2023-24 is up to 17 May 2024.

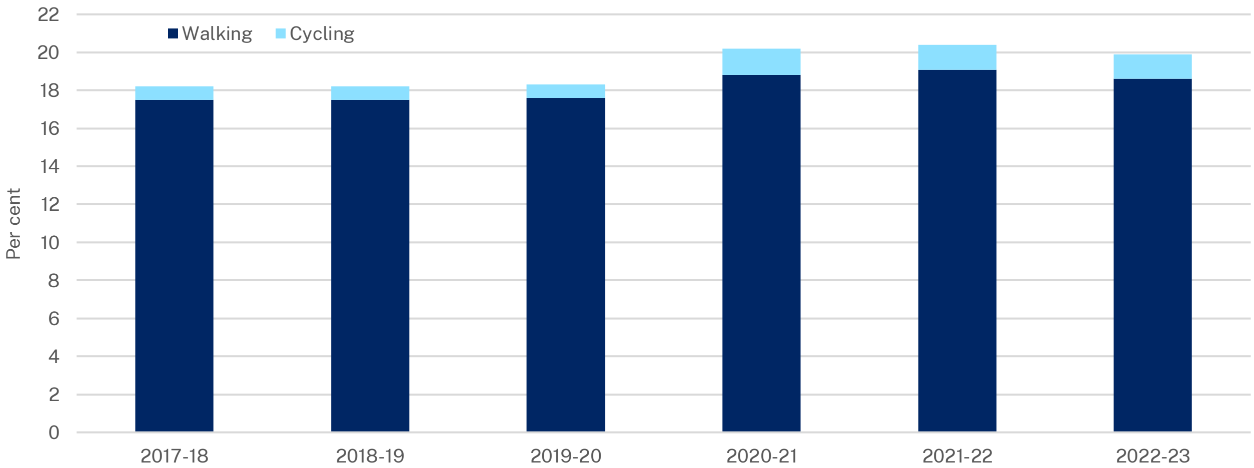
Active transport

Transport for NSW conducts the Household Travel Survey once a year. This survey reflects the personal travel habits of participants in the Sydney Greater Metropolitan Area. The information collected is used to report average travel patterns and includes when the travel occurred, where it was from and to, the purpose, mode, and cost.

Between 2019-20 and 2022-23, the proportion of trips reportedly taken by walking and cycling increased from 18.3, to 19.9 per cent (Chart 1.9). Walking remained the predominant mode of active transport in 2022-23 (18.6 per cent of all trips).

Transport for NSW also conducts Customer Satisfaction surveys twice yearly in May and November. Customer satisfaction increased for pedestrians from 87 to 91 per cent between May 2019 and November 2023. Customer satisfaction for cyclists also increased, from 85 per cent in May 2019, to 92 per cent in November 2023.

Chart 1.9: Mode share for trips taken by walking or cycling, Greater Sydney



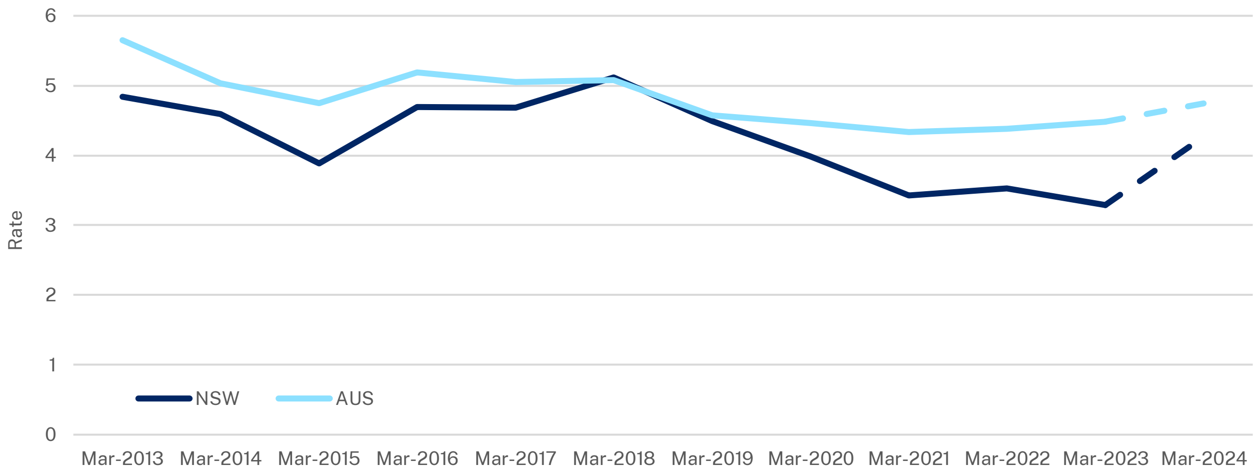
Source: TfNSW, 2023

Road performance

Road fatalities

Road fatalities per 100,000 people measure road safety and accounts for changes in population but not mode share. NSW road fatalities per 100,000 people declined from a peak of 5.12 in March 2018, to 3.29 in March 2023. In the 12-month period ending March 2024, fatalities per 100,000 population is estimated to be 4.27 in New South Wales and 4.74 for Australia (Chart 1.10).

Chart 1.10: Road fatalities per 100,000 people



Source: BITRE, 2024; ABS, 2024; NSW Treasury; data for 2023 and 2024 are preliminary

According to the NSW Centre for Road Safety, speed continued to be the largest contributor to road fatalities. From 2018 to 2022, 40.4 per cent of total fatalities resulted from crashes involving excessive speed. Fatalities from crashes involving alcohol accounted for 17.0 per cent, and fatalities from crashes involving fatigue were 16.3 per cent over the same period. Fatalities from crashes where an available seatbelt was not worn were 9.2 per cent (TfNSW, 2024).

1.5 Public order and safety

Introduction

The NSW Government provides a range of services to keep people and communities safe, including police, courts, emergency services, corrective services, and programs to promote public safety. An effective legal system supports a safe, just, and inclusive New South Wales.

Crime and violence

Reported crime rate

Between 1995 and 2023, reported crime per capita decreased for some major offence categories. While reported property offences saw declines, there has been an increase in reported domestic and sexual assault (Chart 1.11).

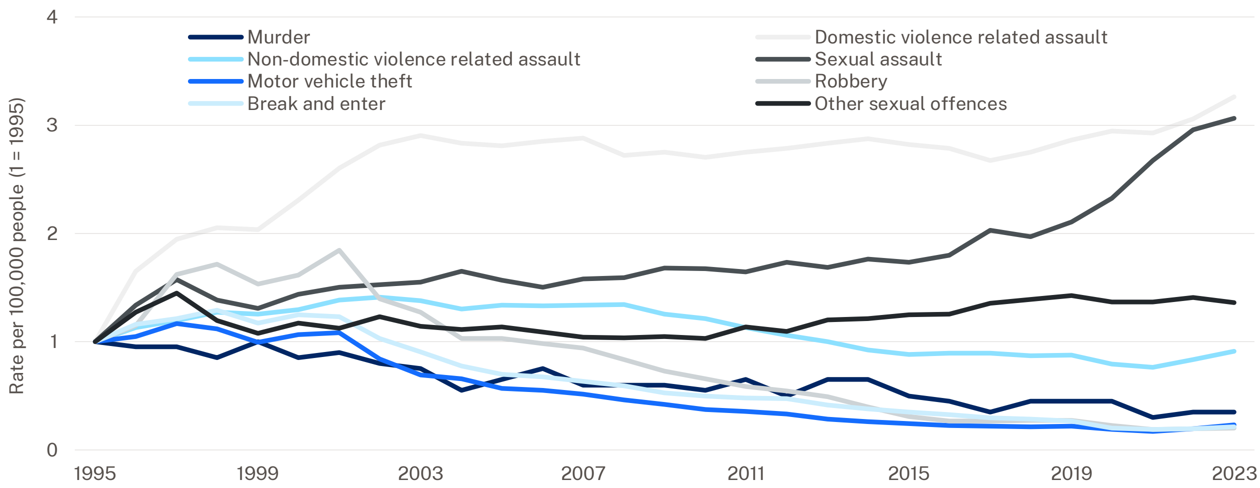
Between 2014 and 2023 there were declines in reported property offences such as break and enter and motor vehicle theft. The rate of reported break and enter fell by 43.8 per cent, from 622.9 incidents per 100,000 people in 2014, to 350.1 in 2023. Reported motor vehicle theft fell by 11.8 per cent, from 198.3 incidents per 100,000 people in 2014, to 174.9 in 2023.

Following steady declines, reported property offences fell further during the COVID-19 lockdowns of 2020 and 2021. While reported property offences increased in 2022 and 2023, they remain well below pre-pandemic levels. Reporting of offences such as domestic violence related assault and sexual assault have, however, increased over the same period.

The rate of reported domestic violence related assaults increased by 13.6 per cent, from 388.9 per 100,000 people in 2014, to 441.7 per 100,000 people in 2023. The rate of reported sexual assaults has increased significantly by 73.9 per cent, from 66.6 per 100,000 people in 2014, to 115.8 per 100,000 people in 2023.

Reported crime rates can underrepresent the true extent of crime in the community because of underreporting of some crimes. Victim experience surveys are more representative of community experience as they are less impacted by willingness to report, and the approach taken by police in recording reported crime.

Chart 1.11: Reported crime, NSW

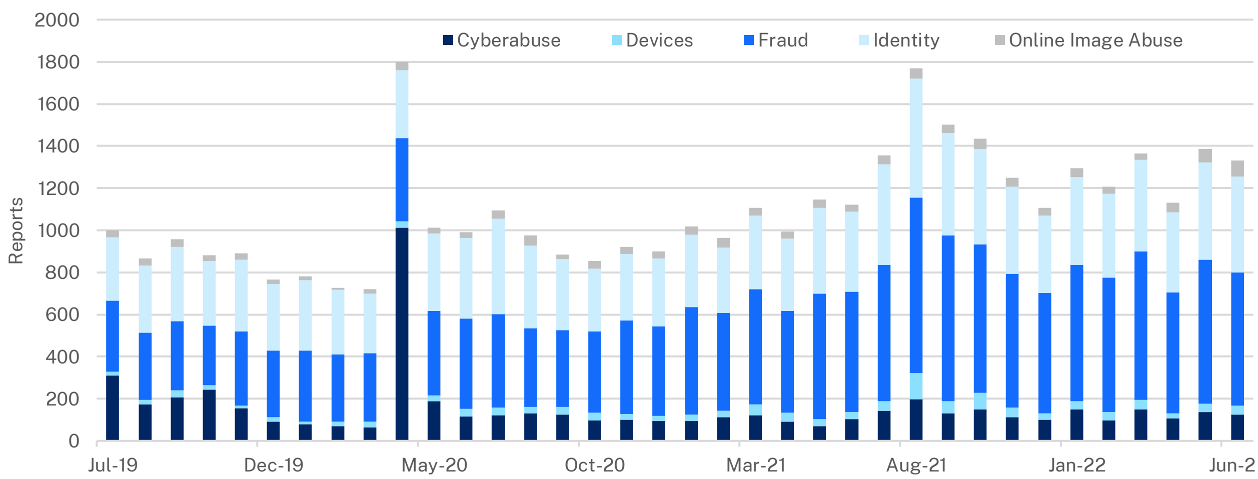


Source: BOCSAR, 2023; NSW Treasury

Incidents of reported cybercrime

Cybercrime includes online experiences of fraud, identity theft, abuse, image abuse, and device offences such as malware and ransomware. In New South Wales, cybercrime increased by 42 per cent from July 2019 to June 2022 (BOCSAR, 2023). Over this period, there were 39,494 reports of cybercrime and over $404 million reportedly lost. The categories with the largest increases were device-related offences (117 per cent), fraud (95 per cent), and online image abuse (70 per cent) (Chart 1.12).

Chart 1.12: Incidents of reported cybercrime, NSW



Source: BOCSAR, 2023

Experiences of personal fraud

Personal fraud includes card fraud, identity theft, and scams. The proportion of individuals in New South Wales who have reported experiencing personal fraud within the past 12 months has trended up between 2014-15 and 2022-23.

In 2014-15, 8.3 per cent of the NSW population aged 15 years and over reported experiencing personal fraud within the past 12 months. This increased by 2.8 percentage points, to 11.1 per cent in 2022-23.

Card fraud has increased significantly. In 2014-15, 6.0 per cent of the NSW population aged 15 years and over reported experiencing card fraud within the past 12 months. This increased by 2.8 percentage points to 8.8 per cent in 2022-23 (ABS, 2024).

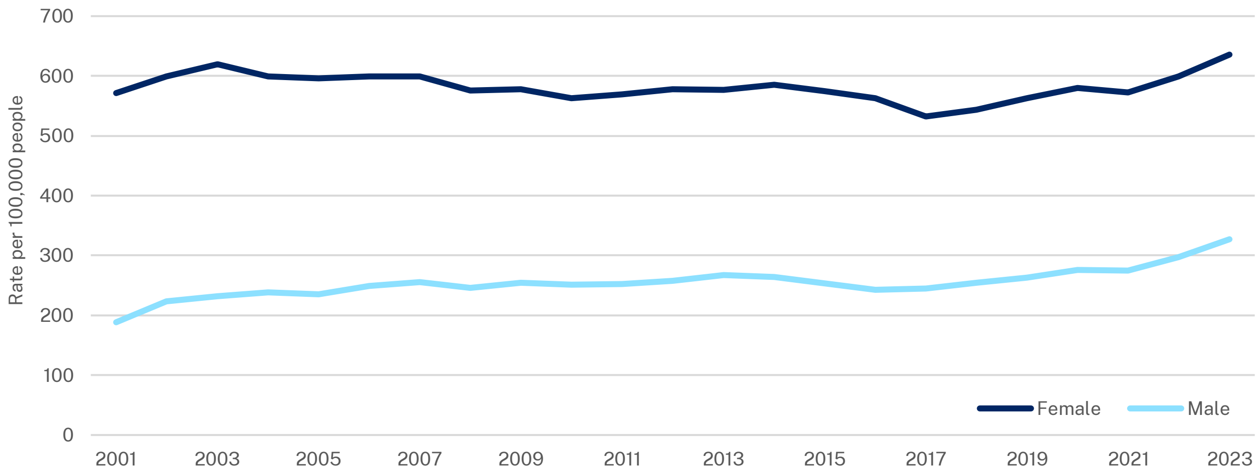
Victims of domestic violence and sexual assault

Reported incidents of domestic violence

Females are twice as likely to be the victim of reported domestic violence compared with males. NSW reports of domestic violence saw an increasing trend between 2001 and 2023.

Between 2001 and 2023, reported incidents involving female victims increased by 11.2 per cent from 571.5, to 635.7 per 100,000. Over the same period incidents of reported domestic violence involving male victims also increased by 73.6 per cent from 188.4, to 327.1 per 100,000 population (Chart 1.13).

Chart 1.13: Reported incidents of domestic violence, NSW



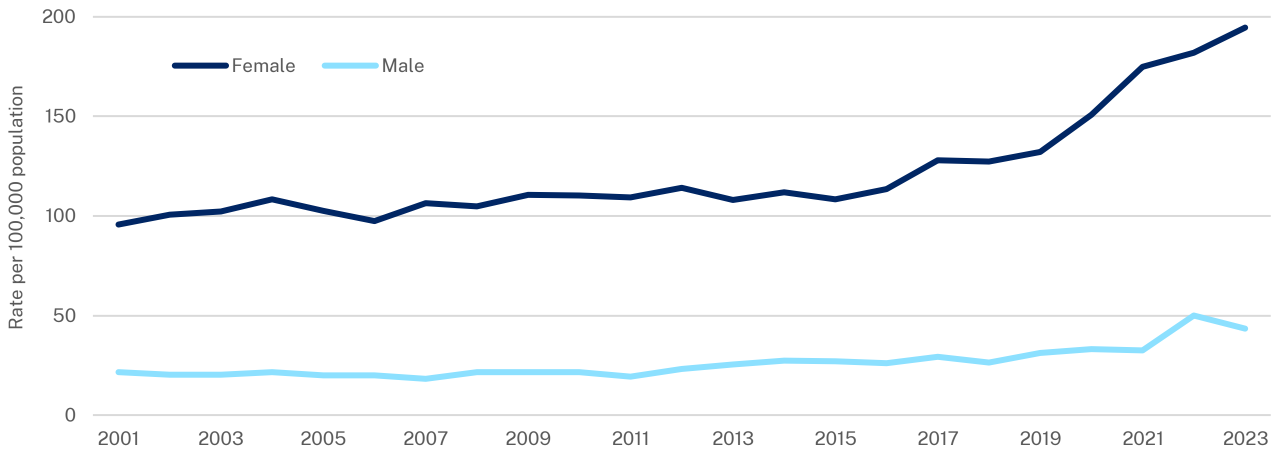
Source: BOCSAR, 2024

Reported incidents of sexual assault

NSW females are four times as likely to be the victims of a reported sexual assault compared with males. Both females and males have, however, experienced increased incidents of sexual assault between 2001 and 2023.

Between 2001 and 2023, incidents of reported sexual assault by female victims increased by 103.3 per cent, from 95.7 to 194.6 per 100,000 population. Over the same period, incidents reported by male victims increased by 102.8 per cent, from 21.4 to 43.4 per 100,000 (Chart 1.14).

Chart 1.14: Reported incidents of sexual assault, NSW



Source: BOCSAR, 2024

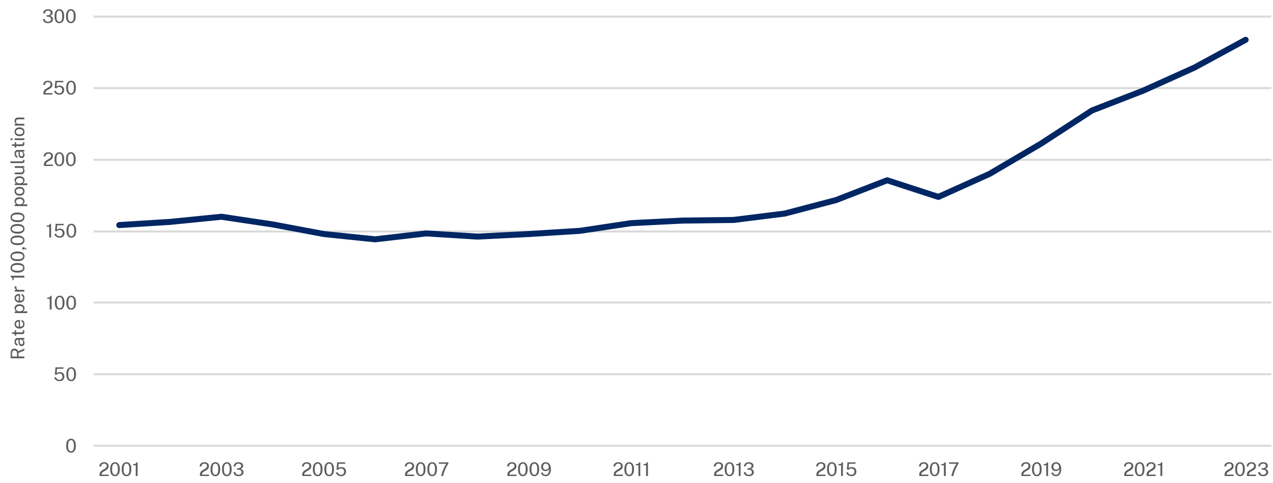
Incidents of Breach Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders

Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders (ADVOs) are orders made by the court to protect individuals from violence, threats and harassment from a spouse, de facto partner, ex-partner, family member, carer or person living in the same household.

Incidents of Breach ADVOs recorded by NSW Police have shown an upward trend between 2001 and 2023. Incidents increased by 83.9 per cent over this period, from 154.3 incidents per 100,000 population in 2001, to a high of 283.8 incidents per 100,000 population in 2023.

The rate of incidents has witnessed a sharp rise since 2017 driven largely by more proactive policing in this area. Incidents increased by 63.1 per cent between 2017 and 2023, from 174.0 incidents per 100,000, to 283.8 incidents per 100,000 (Chart 1.15).

Chart 1.15: Incidents of breach apprehended domestic violence orders, NSW

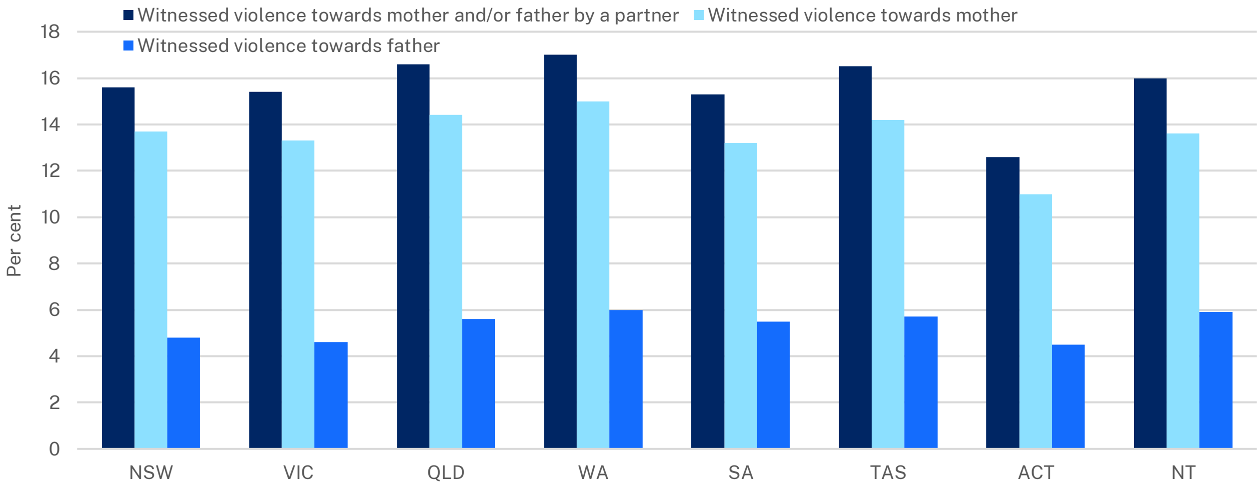


Source: BOCSAR, 2024

Childhood witnessing of parental violence

In 2021-22, approximately 2.6 million adult Australians had reported witnessing parental violence, before the age of 15. Women were more likely to have reported witnessing parental violence than men. Nationally in 2021-22, approximately 1.6 million adult women and 1 million adult men had reported witnessing parental violence before the age of 15. In New South Wales, approximately 486,700 adult women reported witnessing parental violence before the age 15, in 2021-22. This was an estimated 15.6 per cent of all adult women in New South Wales. Adult women were more likely to have witnessed violence towards their mother than towards their father. An estimated 13.7 per cent of NSW adult women reported witnessing violence towards their mother and 4.8 per cent reported witnessing violence towards their father (Chart 1.16).

Chart 1.16: Adult women, experiences of domestic violence witnessing, before the age of 15, NSW



Source: ABS, 2023

Courts

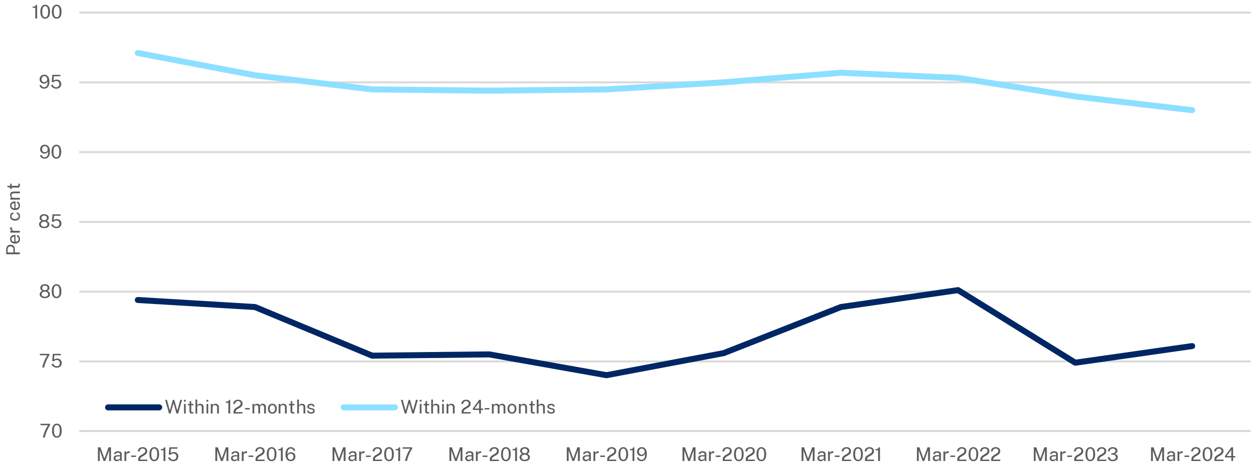
District Court Finalisations

In recent years, District Courts have benefitted from investment in additional judges and justice reform measures, including encouraging early appropriate guilty pleas. These have eased the pressure on the system by both reducing demand and increasing efficiency.

The proportion of District Court cases finalised within 12-months increased from a low of 74.0 per cent in the 12-months to March 2019, to a peak of 80.1 per cent in the 12-months to March 2022. The improvements over this period were likely due to the fall in serious crimes during COVID-19 lockdowns. Post COVID-19, the number of cases finalised within 12-months has declined, likely due to the need to work through a backlog of deferred trials built up through the pandemic.

Post-pandemic, the share of cases finalised within 12-months has remained relatively stable and sits at 76.1 per cent for the 12-months to March 2024. The proportion of District Court cases finalised within 24-months is slightly below pre-pandemic levels at 93.0 per cent (Chart 1.17).

Chart 1.17: Share of District Court criminal cases finalised, NSW

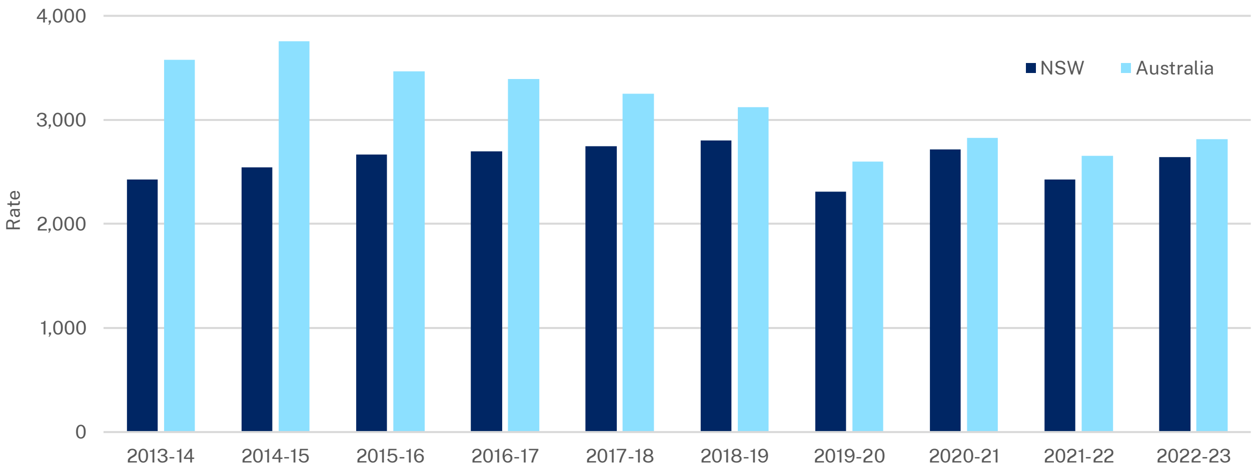


Source: BOCSAR, 2024

Criminal Court Finalisations

Court finalisation rates are an indicator of the effectiveness of caseload management and delivery of timely justice. New South Wales consistently finalises fewer cases compared with the average for Australia. In 2022-23, New South Wales averaged 2,642 court finalisations per 100,000 people within all criminal courts, compared with the Australian average of 2,814 (Chart 1.18). While below the Australian average, New South Wales has had the highest volume of finalisations for the past 5 years and one of the lowest numbers of full time equivalent judicial officers per 1,000 finalisations (RoGS, 2024).

Chart 1.18: Finalisations per 100,000 people, all criminal courts



Source: RoGS, 2024

Incarceration, reoffending and youth justice

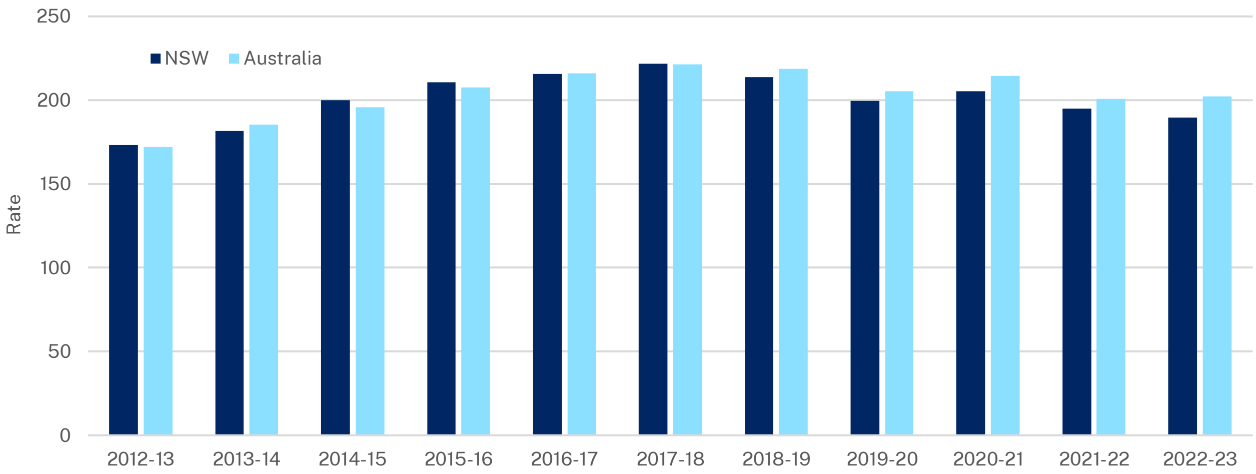
Incarceration rate

Factors impacting incarceration rates include crime rates, crime clearance rates, court finalisations and sentencing guidelines.

The NSW incarceration rate has increased from 173 per 100,000 adults in 2012-13, to a high of 222 per 100,000 adults in 2017-18. By 2022-23, the NSW incarceration rate had fallen to 190 per 100,000 adults, below Australia's incarceration rate of 202 per 100,000 adults (Chart 1.19).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults were more likely to be incarcerated than their non-Indigenous counterparts. In New South Wales, the incarceration rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders is nearly 14 times higher than for non-Indigenous adults. In 2022-23 there were 1,894 incarcerated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders per 100,000 adults, compared with 139 for non-Indigenous.

Chart 1.19: Incarceration rate per 100,000 adults



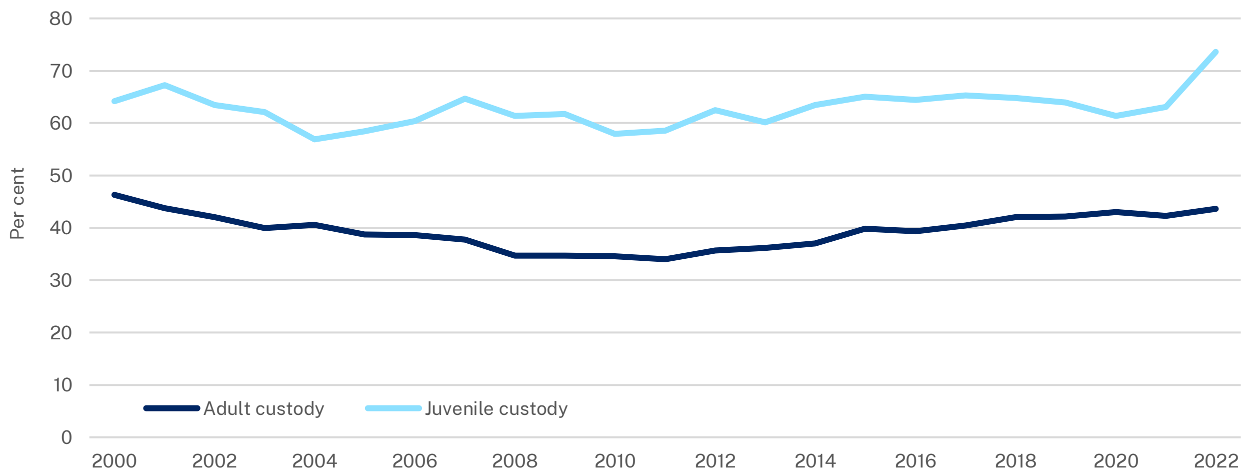
Source: ABS, 2024

Reoffending rates

BOCSAR reports on the number of individuals in adult and juvenile custody who reoffend as a share of the number released in the past 12 months. The proportion of adult reoffenders has fallen by 2.7 percentage points, from 46.3 per cent in 2000, to 43.6 in 2022.

Individuals in juvenile custody are more likely to reoffend than those in adult custody. Although reoffending rates for those in juvenile custody increased sharply between 2021 and 2022, this was pandemic related (Chart 1.20). The pandemic saw fewer juveniles in custody, leading to a reduction in those released, making the rate sensitive to reoffending by a small number.

Chart 1.20: Share of reoffenders, NSW



Source: BOCSAR, 2024

Fire and Emergency

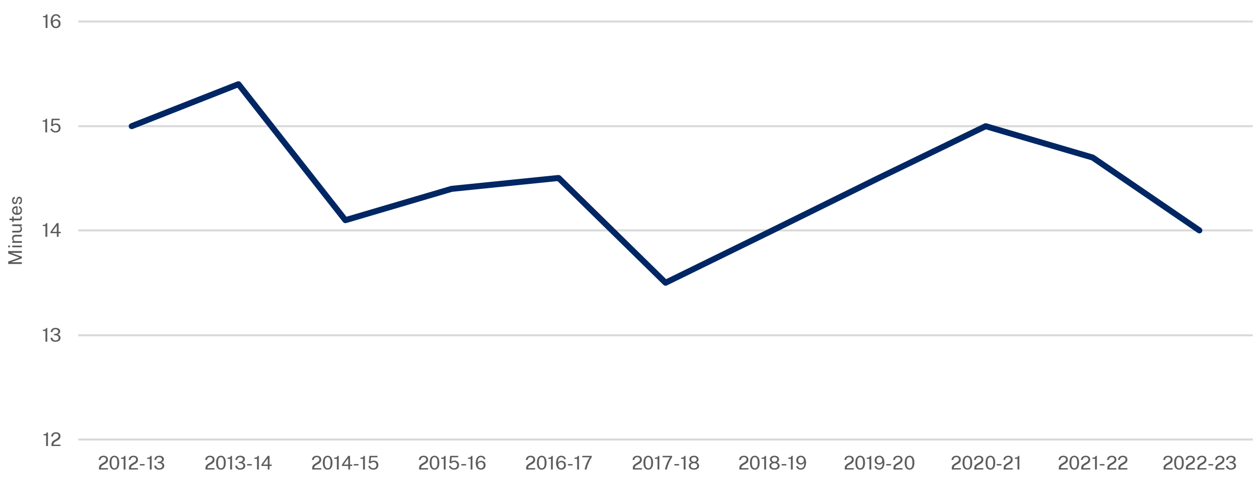
Response time to structure fires

As reported in the 2023-24 Budget, the time taken for 90 per cent of the first responding fire crew to arrive at the scene of a structure fire improved to 14 minutes in 2022-23, down from 14.7 minutes in 2021-22 (RoGS, 2023). Response time includes call taking, mobilisation and travel time. This reflects the average response times across metropolitan, regional and rural areas of New South Wales.

Due to lower population densities in regional areas, greater reliance on on-call and volunteer responders and longer distances, average response times are significantly higher than in major cities. Travel times can be impacted by road traffic volumes, road works and mobilisation of NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) members and on-call Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW) staff.

Large incidents such as major floods or bushfires also reduce the availability of FRNSW crews in their base fire stations, particularly in regional areas that rely upon on-call crews. The data presented combines response times across metropolitan, regional and rural areas of New South Wales.

Chart 1.21: 90th percentile response time to structure fires, NSW



Source: RoGS, 2024

1.6 Social protection

Introduction

The NSW Government provides services to protect families and children and support vulnerable people. Services include child protection, social housing provision, homelessness services and disability support.

Effective social protection programs prevent abuse, neglect, and exploitation, providing children and vulnerable people with a secure environment where they can thrive. This benefits both individuals and families receiving support as well as the whole community.

Child protection in New South Wales

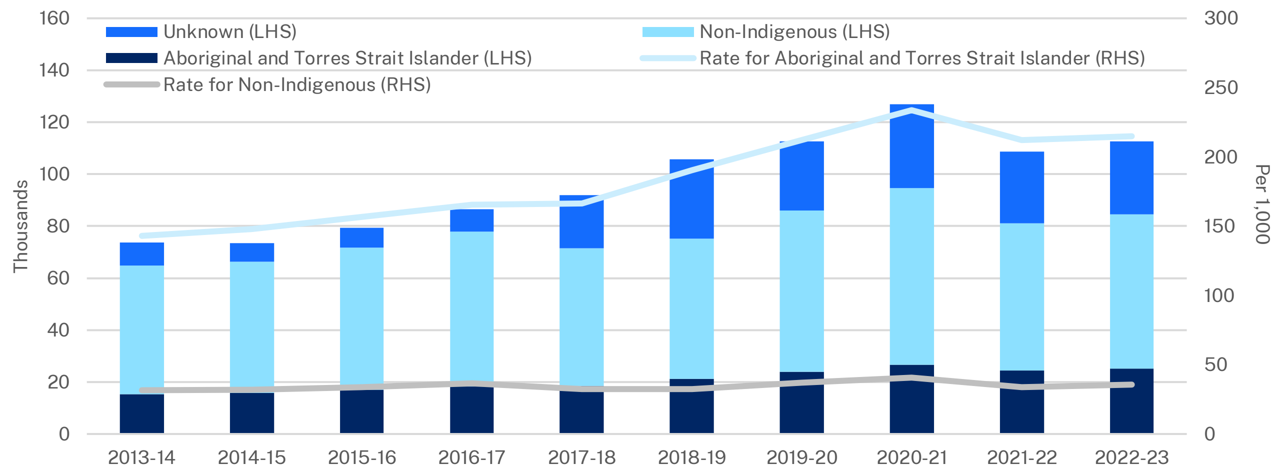
Risk of Significant Harm (ROSH) reporting

The Department of Communities and Justice has a statutory responsibility to protect children and young people who are at risk of abuse or neglect, or whose families do not have the capacity to provide care and protection.

A risk of significant harm (ROSH) assessment identifies whether there is a reasonable cause to believe a child has been, is being or is likely to be abused, neglected, or otherwise harmed. In 2022-23, 112,592 children were reported at risk of significant harm. This represents a 3.6 per cent increase from 2021-22.

The rate per 1,000 children slightly increased for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous children by 2.7, and 1.8, respectively over the same period. Out of all children investigated (26,498), 50.7 per cent (13,444) had the ROSH substantiated, a slight decrease from 51.9 per cent in 2021-22.

Chart 1.22: Children 0-17 years reported at ROSH, NSW

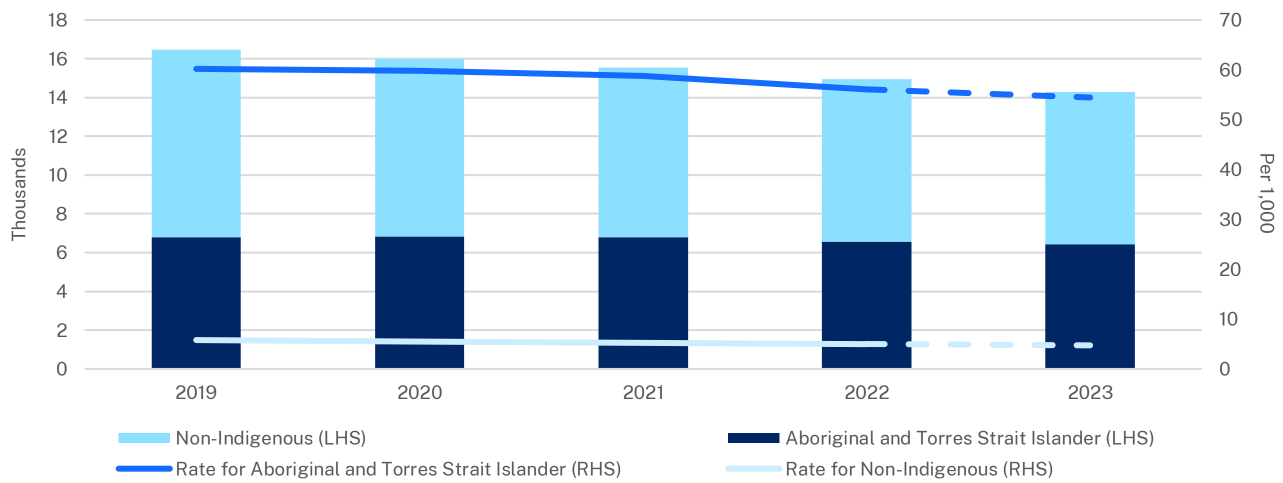


Source: RoGS, 2024; ABS, 2024

Out-of-home care (OOHC)

Out-of-home care (OOHC) is provided to children and young people who cannot live with their parents due to child safety concerns. OOHC emphasises safety, stability and permanency in children's living arrangements. Children and young people remain in care until they can be safely restored with family, or alternative permanency arrangements are finalised.

Chart 1.23: Children 0-17 years in OOHC, NSW



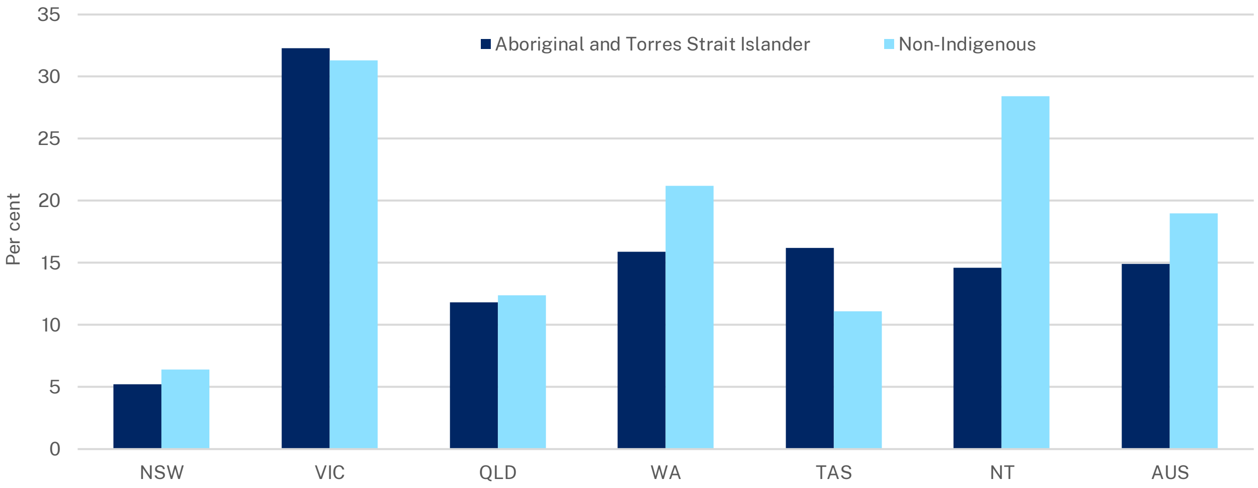
Source: RoGS, 2024; ABS, 2024; Department of Communities and Justice, 2024; NSW Treasury, 2024

Note: (1) Population projections have been applied to calculate rates of children in OOHC in 2023
(2) Data is on a calendar year basis

The flow of children entering OOHC rose from 2,045 in 2021-22, to 2,175 in 2022-23. The number of children in OOHC care has fallen 4.4 per cent to 14,273 in December 2023, from 14,936 in December 2022 (Chart 1.23). In 2023 the rate per 1,000 children is also at its lowest for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous children, being 54.4 and 4.7 respectively. This is primarily due to the number of children discharged from OOHC continually being higher than the number admitted.

Placements for OOHC aim to place children with relatives or kin, with siblings, and locally. The placement principles for Aboriginal children place strong emphasis on continuity with family, community, and culture. Meeting all these requirements is desirable but challenging because placement decisions must consider many factors relating to a child's wellbeing. As at 30 June 2023, 55.7 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and 52.0 per cent of non-Indigenous children were placed with a relative or kin (Department of Communities and Justice, 2024).

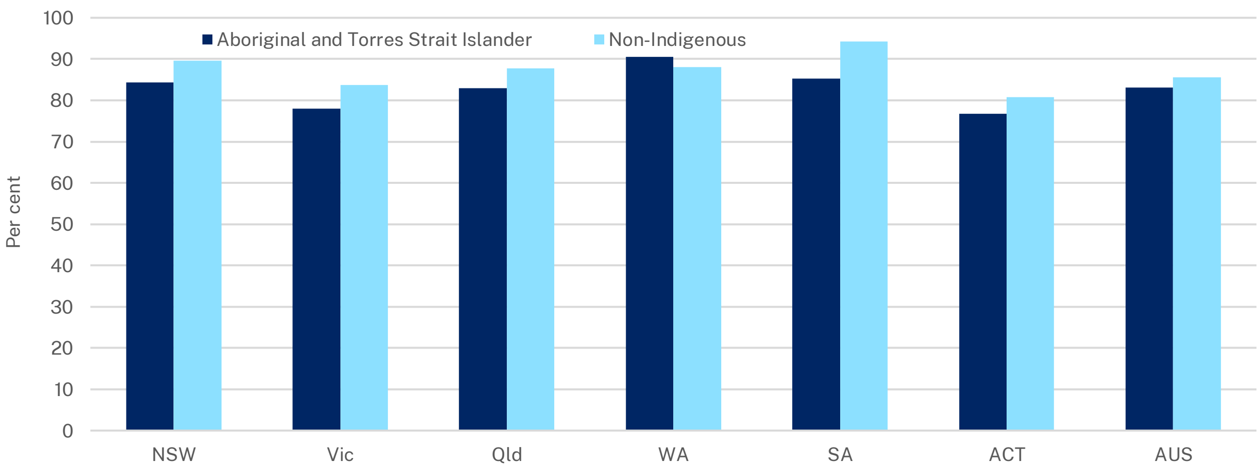
Chart 1.24: Children exiting OOHC to restoration, guardianship or adoption in 2021-22



Source: AIHW, 2024
Note: Data for South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory not available for 2021-22 on 22 May 2024.

A key principle to child protection is that children should not stay in out-of-home care longer than is necessary. When it is safe to do so, children should be reunited with their families, placed with a permanent legal guardian, or be adopted (Productivity Commission, 2024). Only around 6 per cent of NSW children in OOHC were restored in 2021-22. This rate is low compared with other states. More recent performance data from the Department of Communities and Justice has this rate holding steady for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and increasing for non-Indigenous children.

Chart 1.25: Children in OOHC in 2020-21 restored and did not return within 12 months



Source: AIHW, 2024

New South Wales performs better than the national average in reuniting children with their families and guardians and preventing their return to OOHC within 12 months. In 2020-21, 89.6 per cent of non-Indigenous, and 84.4 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, who were restored, did not return to OOHC. This compares favourably with the national average of 85.6 per cent, and 83.1 per cent, respectively.

Social housing and homelessness

Social housing assists families and individuals who are unable to access or maintain an appropriate level of accommodation. Current housing market conditions, including a constrained rental market with rising rental costs, present challenges for those transitioning out of social housing.

The NSW Government is supporting initiatives that assist in reducing homelessness. It coordinates with specialist homelessness services, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and local community groups, to help break recurring cycles of homelessness. These initiatives include a balanced mix of prevention and early intervention measures alongside crisis responses.

Supply of social housing

There are three types of social housing:

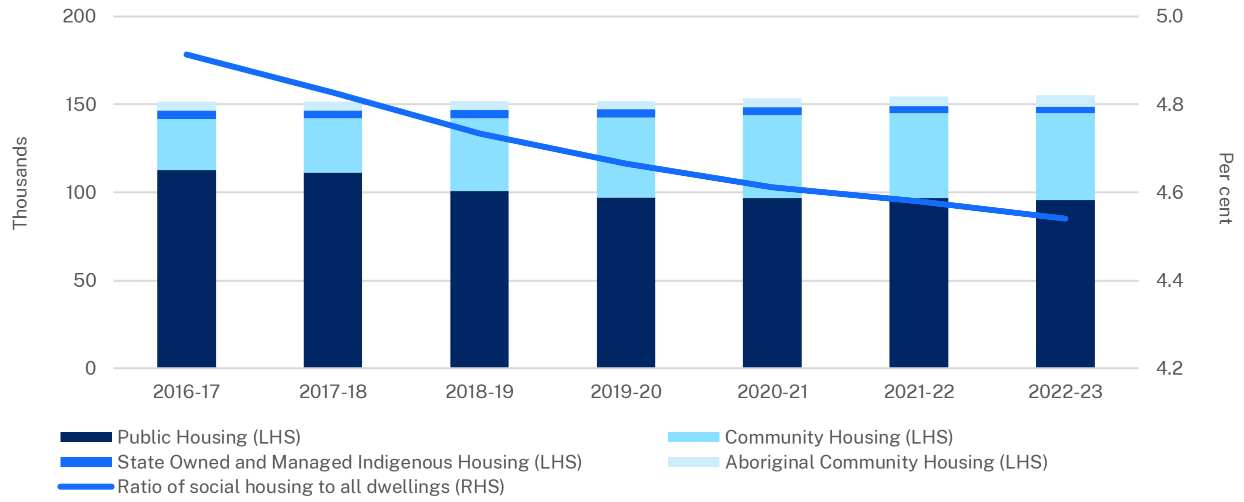
- public housing, owned and managed by the NSW Government
- community housing, managed and sometimes owned by registered not-for-profit organisations
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing, managed by both the NSW Government and Aboriginal housing providers, including registered Aboriginal community housing providers.

On 30 June 2023, New South Wales had 155,262 social housing dwellings. This is an increase from 151,630 social housing dwellings in 2016-17. In 2022-23, social housing dwellings comprised 95,765 public housing, 49,275 community housing, 6,485 Aboriginal Community Housing, and 3,737 State Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing (Chart 1.26). Over the years, there have been significant transfers of social housing dwellings from public housing to community housing programs.

Over the six years from 2016-17 to 2022-23 the total number of NSW social housing dwellings has grown at an average annual rate of 0.4 per cent. Over the same period the total number of NSW residential dwellings has, however, grown at 1.7 per cent, resulting in social housing accounting for a declining share of overall housing stock.

On a per capita basis, New South Wales had approximately 1,861 social housing dwellings per 100,000 people in June 2023. This was a decline from 1,930 social housing dwellings per 100,000 people in June 2017.

Chart 1.26: Number of social housing dwellings, NSW



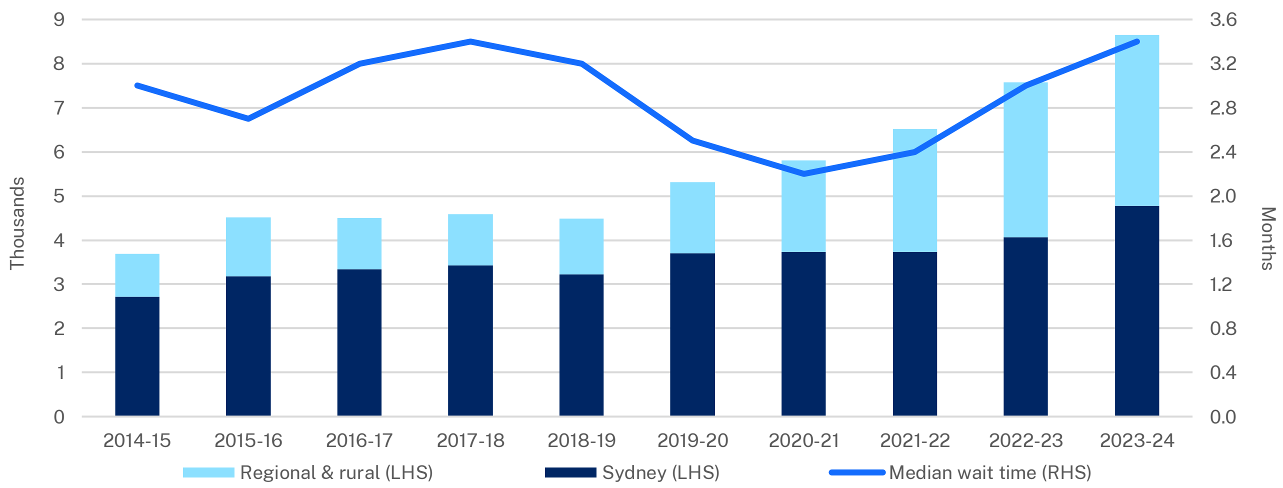
Source: NSW Department of Communities and Justice, 2024; ABS, 2024; NSW Treasury

Demand for social housing

Applications for public housing placements are assessed based on their relative need. Priority status is based on an urgent and ongoing housing need — for example the applicant is homeless or the victim of domestic violence — and their needs cannot be addressed in the private rental market. The number of priority social housing applicants has steadily increased since 2020-21. By 31 March 2024, there were 8,657 priority social housing applicants, with the median wait time of 3.4 months. Among these, there were 4,773 priority applicants in metropolitan Sydney, and 3,884 priority applicants in regional and rural New South Wales.

Growth in priority applicants from regional areas has outpaced those in metropolitan areas. Between 2014-15 and 2022-23, regional and rural priority social housing applicants increased by 261.9 per cent, from 971 to 3,514. Over the same period, Sydney priority social housing applicants increased by 49.4 per cent, from 2,717 to 4,059 applicant households (Chart 1.27).

Chart 1.27: Social housing priority applicants, NSW



Source: NSW Department of Communities and Justice, 2024
Note: Data for 2023-24 refers to data as at 31 March 2024.

Record low vacancy rates across the regions have driven vulnerable households onto the priority applicant waitlist. These households are often also experiencing other risks and vulnerabilities. As at 30 June 2023, 44 per cent of priority applicants had medical needs as their main reason for application, 36 per cent were homeless or at risk of homelessness, and 17 per cent were at risk of abuse, neglect or domestic violence.

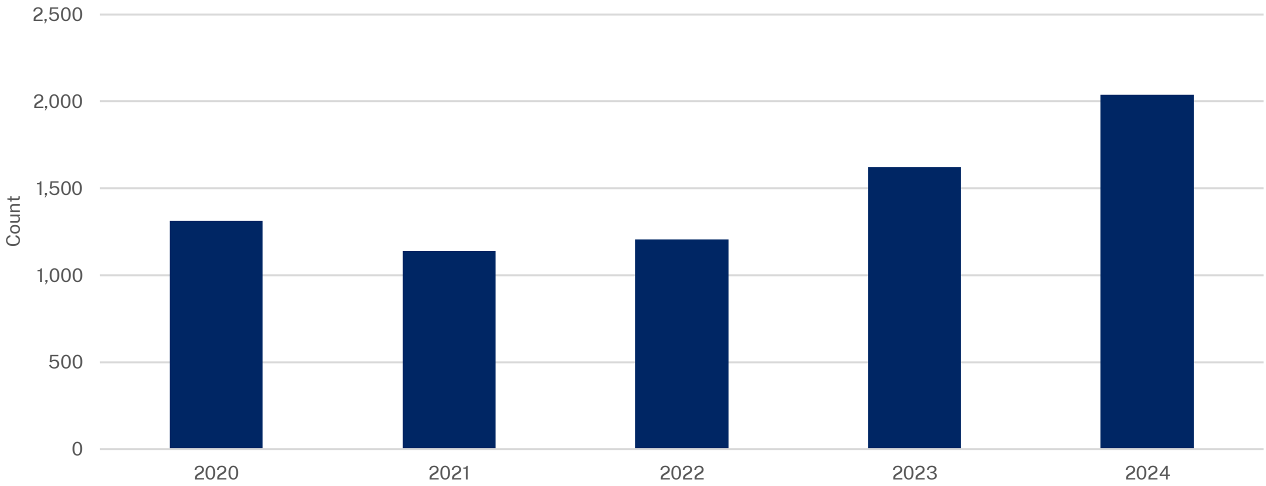
Number of homeless people

NSW street counts of homeless people have seen an upward trend between 2021 and 2024. The 2024 street count found around 2,037 people that were sleeping rough, or in crisis or temporary accommodation beds. This is a 25.5 per cent increase on the 1,623 people counted in 2023 (Chart 1.28).

The number of people who reported being homeless at least once in a month, in any given month, also increased by 4.1 per cent, from 35,910 in 2021-22, to 37,385 in 2022-23 (RoGS, 2024). This can be partly attributed to factors such as low supply of affordable housing and high cost of living pressures.

The proportion of specialist homelessness services clients who returned to homelessness after being housed decreased by 0.6 percentage points from 11.9 per cent in 2018-19 to 11.3 per cent in 2022-23.

Chart 1.28: NSW street counts



Source: Department of Communities and Justice, 2024

1.7 Housing and community amenities

Introduction

Access to housing plays a crucial role in economic prosperity, community development, and the reduction of poverty and homelessness. Cost-of-living-pressures, high inflation and higher interest rates have made it harder for the average NSW citizen to pay rent and buy a house. Affordable and stable housing is foundational to overall wellbeing.

Housing and Community Amenities comprises the planning of housing development, urban renewal, rezoning of land, infrastructure, and public utilities.

Housing and community

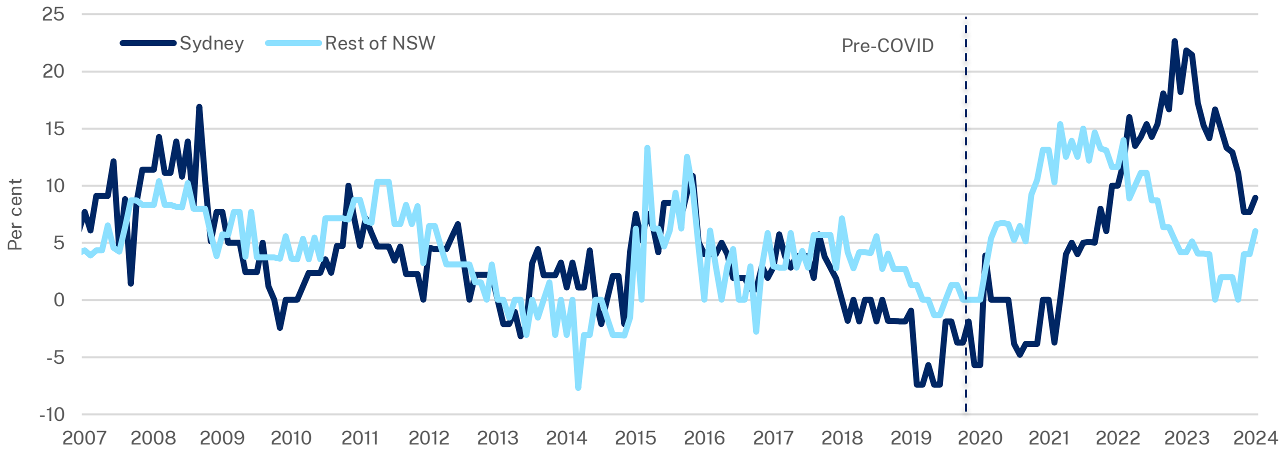
Cost of housing

Secure housing is an essential component of wellbeing, contributing to the safety and financial stability of NSW residents. This section discusses the cost of housing for renters and mortgage holders.

Because many renters are on fixed lease arrangements advertised rental prices lead changes in actual rents paid by approximately 12 months, making it a leading indicator for rents paid. In the year to May 2024, the median advertised cost of dwelling rentals in Greater Sydney and the rest of New South Wales was $730, and $530 per week, respectively. The median rental rate for a house was $770 in Greater Sydney, compared with $550 in the rest of New South Wales. Units by comparison were $700 in Greater Sydney, versus $460 in the rest of New South Wales (CoreLogic, 2024).

Growth in advertised rents started rising sharply from mid-2021, with annual growth peaking at 21.4 per cent through the year to July 2023. Since the July peak, rent price growth has eased but remains elevated, with rents increasing at 9.0 per cent though the year to May 2024 (Chart 1.29).

Chart 1.29: Advertised NSW residential annual rental price growth



Source: CoreLogic, 2024
Note: The regions have been defined using the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) 2021 standard.

For mortgage holders, a mixture of factors including constrained housing supply and rapid cash rate increases, an increase of 4.25 percentage points — from 0.10 per cent, to 4.35 per cent over the 19-months from April 2022 to November 2023 — have significantly increased the cost of servicing a new mortgage. In November 2023, the cost of a new 30-year mortgage was 31.3 per cent of average disposable income, the highest share since 2003. This share has almost doubled from 16.6 per cent in November 2020 (Chart 1.30).

Chart 1.30: Mortgage servicing costs as a share of average household income, NSW

Source: ABS, 2024; CoreLogic, 2024; HILDA, 2023; RBA, 2024; NSW Treasury

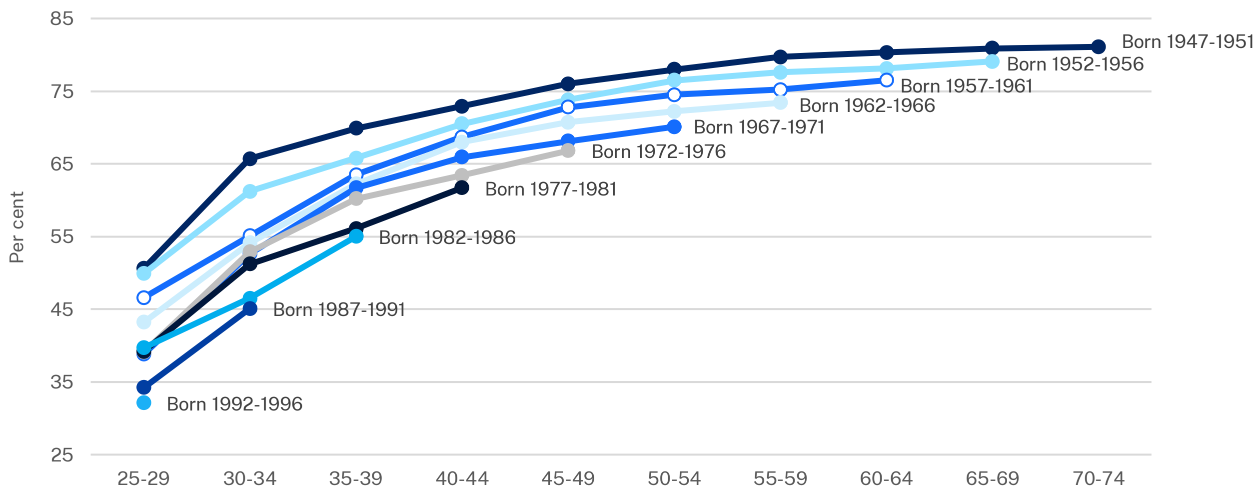
Home ownership

Home ownership provides individuals with security and increased autonomy. Over the past 20 years, home ownership rates have fallen by 7.6 percentage points, from 70.3 per cent in 1994-95, to 64.3 per cent in 2019-20. A steady decline since the late 1990s has accelerated in recent years due to high costs and supply pressures.

Chart 1.31 presents home ownership by age and birth cohort. Across all birth cohorts, home ownership increases with age, yet we are seeing lower rates of home ownership among each successive group. Moreover, younger birth cohorts are unlikely to reach the home ownership rates experienced by older cohorts.

Households are achieving home ownership later in life and ownership among younger cohorts has collapsed. For example, home ownership among 30–34-year-olds has fallen by 20.6 percentage points in 2021 (born in 1987-91), compared with those of the same age in 1976 (born 1947-51) — from 65.7 to 45.1 per cent. A similar trend can be seen across all age and birth cohorts.

Chart 1.31: Home ownership by age and birth cohort, NSW



Source: AIHW, 2023

1.8 General public services

Introduction

General Public Services facilitates the effective functioning of NSW Government agencies. General Public Services include central functions of government such as the Premier's Department, the Cabinet Office, the Treasury, the Legislature, and the Public Service Commission. They deliver services that contribute to the wellbeing of citizens by supporting coordinated, transparent and trusted government, robust and sustainable finances, and effective economic policies.

Trust in NSW Government services

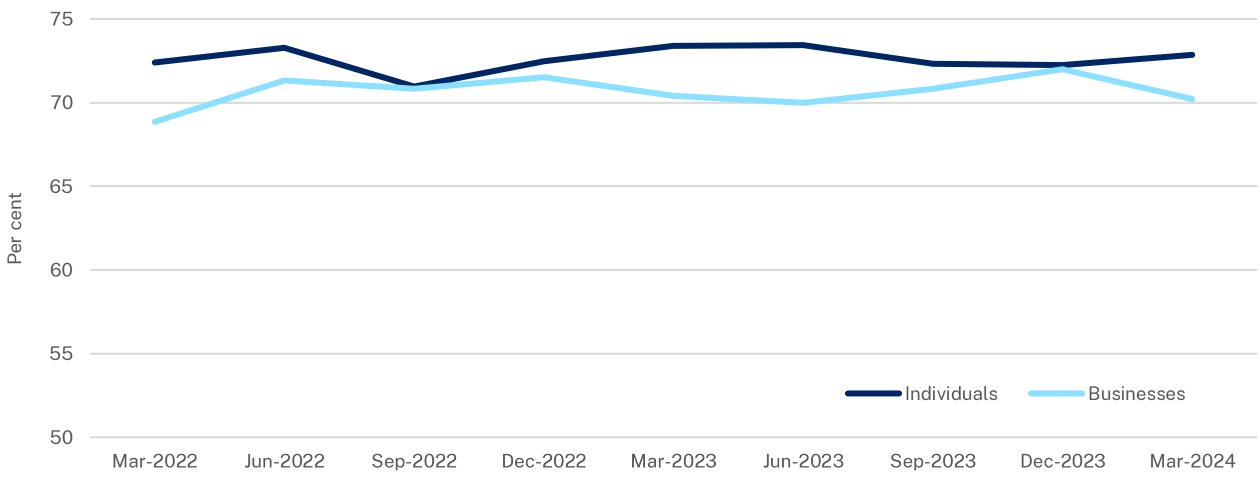
The NSW Department of Customer Service collects monthly information on the experience of government services by people and businesses. Respondents are asked to rate their interaction with a government service on a scale of one to five, where one means 'Do not trust at all' and five means 'Trust a great deal' (Chart 1.32).

shows the proportion of respondents who chose 'Trust a great deal' or 'Somewhat trust' when rating their experience (Department of Customer Service, 2024).

Between 2022 to 2024, trust in government services have remained stable. Trust among individuals ranged between 71.0 and 73.4 per cent. Trust among businesses ranged between 68.9 and 72.0 per cent.

Survey results from March 2022 — the most recent for which comparison can be made — show the share of participants that had trust in government services was higher in New South Wales than in Victoria and Queensland.

Chart 1.32: Trust in NSW Government Services



Source: Department of Customer Service, 2024

1.9 Economic affairs

Introduction

The NSW Government recognises the importance of a thriving economy that fosters growth, shares prosperity, supports high living standards and provides opportunities for residents. Sustained and inclusive economic growth can be achieved through economic policies such as sound regulation, fair and open markets, strong institutions, and stable government.

Income, wealth and inequality

The Gini coefficient (Gini) is a measure of inequality. A higher Gini indicates greater inequality, whereas a lower Gini suggests less inequality. This analysis uses data from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) household panel survey, administered by the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research since 2001 (Chart 1.33).

In 2022, the NSW wealth Gini was 0.570. This means that NSW's wealth distribution is more unequal than equal. On the other hand, the NSW income Gini was 0.341, placing us closer to equality than inequality. In 2021 the OECD average income Gini was 0.313.

Wealth inequality increased from around 2010 to the beginning of the COVID-19 period but fell during the first two years of the pandemic. During this period government support to households and businesses, combined with ultra-low interest rates, strengthened household balance sheets. Moreover, because during COVID the value of cheaper outer metropolitan and regional dwellings increased by more than the value of more expensive city dwellings, inequality among homeowners declined.

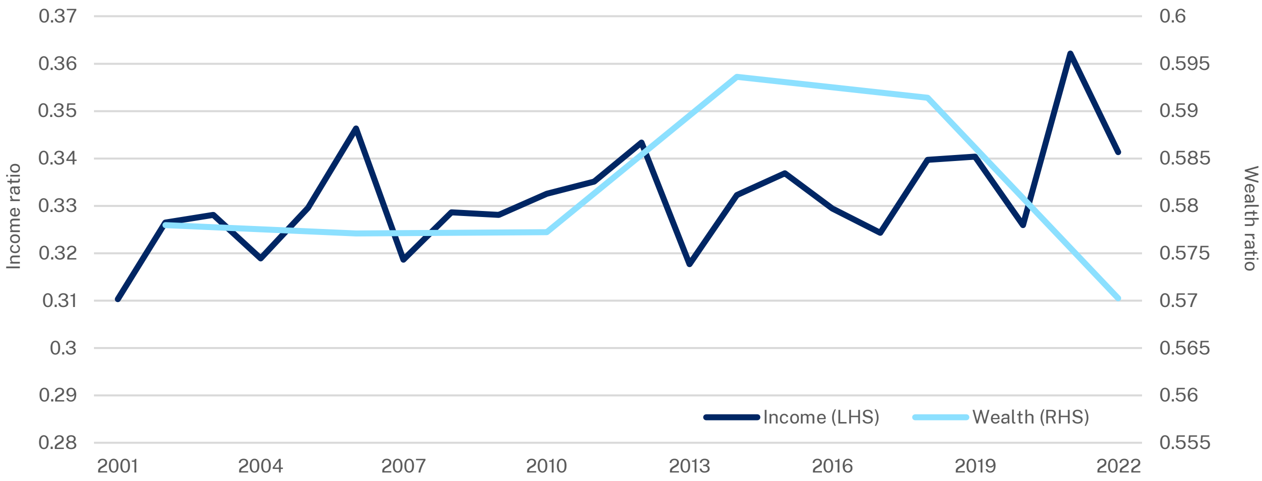
The Commonwealth Productivity Commission has suggested that after 2022 wealth inequality started to increase again. This may have been due to people drawing down on cash buffers and the unwinding of pandemic house price trends.

Income inequality has increased slightly over the past 20 years, from a Gini of 0.326 in 2002, to 0.341 in 2022. That is, the disparity in NSW incomes has increased over time. Over a similar period from 2007 to 2021, the average OECD income Gini decreased slightly from 0.319 to 0.313.

While the Gini is a commonly used measure of inequality, it has limitations because it summarises distributional information into a single measure. This is because it averages many trends in the distribution of income and wealth between, and within, cohorts. Alternative measures of inequality that compare the experience of high-income with low-income groups can provide additional information. Nevertheless, the Gini is a robust measure of average inequality.

Wealth inequality is influenced by a range of demographic factors. Factors that will continue to influence the wealth Gini over time include income inequality, population ageing, intergenerational wealth transfer, and the housing sector through both the extent of home ownership and house price growth.

Chart 1.33: Income and wealth Gini coefficient, NSW



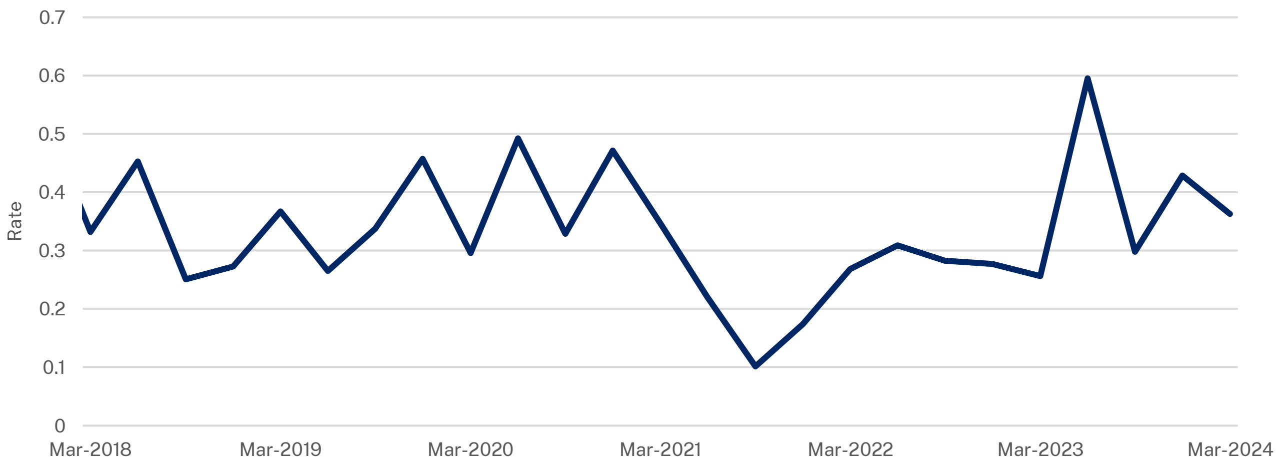
Source: HILDA, 2023; NSW Treasury, 2024

Workplace safety

Workplace safety is important for households because it can save lives. It is also important for economic prosperity because it strengthens businesses by reducing costs, lifting productivity, and improving employee confidence. The NSW Government supports workplace safety through SafeWork NSW.

A notifiable fatality is defined as workers (employees and self-employed) who suffered a fatal injury at work, or bystanders who suffered a fatal injury from work activity (Department of Customer Service, 2024). From March 2018 to March 2024 workplace fatalities averaged 0.3 per 100,000 people (Chart 1.34).

Chart 1.34: Incidence rate of work-related fatalities per 100,000 people, NSW



Source: Department of Customer Service, 2024

1.10 Environmental protection

Introduction

The NSW Government is responsible for the stewardship of the State's natural assets and heritage. This includes protecting and restoring natural assets such as national parks, conserving and recognising heritage, ensuring sustainable water resources, and managing waste. It also includes climate change mitigation and ensuring the State has secure, reliable, and affordable energy as it transitions to a net zero economy.

Protection of the environment and biodiversity is essential for the health and wellbeing of NSW residents. Protecting the environment, and retaining our biodiversity, will support thriving natural environments, communities, and heritage for current and future generations.

Greenhouse gas emissions

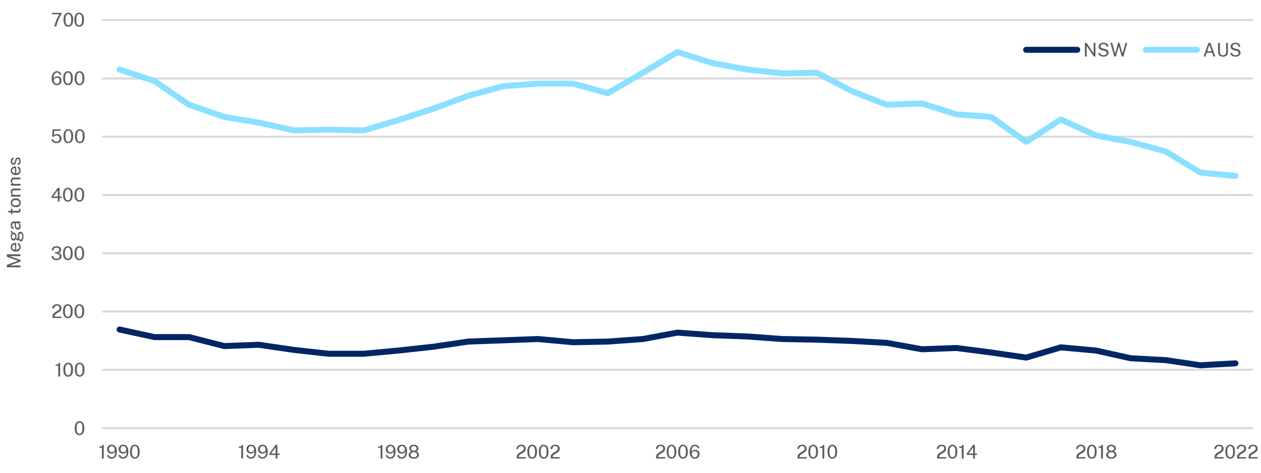
The *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023* establishes New South Wales's approach to addressing climate change. The Act sets targets to deliver net greenhouse gas emissions reductions of 50 per cent on 2005 levels by 2030, 70 per cent by 2035, and net zero emissions by 2050.

There are policies and frameworks in place to support the achievement of these targets including the NSW Environment Protection Authority's Climate Change Policy and Action Plan, the Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap, the Net Zero Plan, and the Commonwealth's Safeguard Mechanism reforms. Efforts have focused on decarbonising the electricity sector as a foundation for achieving emission targets.

CO_2 equivalent emissions emitted in 1990 were approximately 169 million tonnes and had steadily fallen to roughly 127 million tonnes by 1997. Emissions later steadily rose until 2006 to around 164 million tonnes and have since trended down until 2023. From 2012 to 2022, CO_2 equivalent emissions in New South Wales decreased by 24.1 per cent (Chart 1.35). Over the same period, Australian emissions decreased by 22.0 per cent.

A key driver of the downward trend in emissions is the increasing use of renewable energy and the closure of coal-fired electricity generators. Growth in population, which brings increased energy production and consumption, has the opposite effect. Advances in technology and structural shifts in the economy, however, continue to bring reductions in the emissions per capita even as the population grows.

Chart 1.35: Carbon dioxide equivalent Greenhouse Gas Emissions



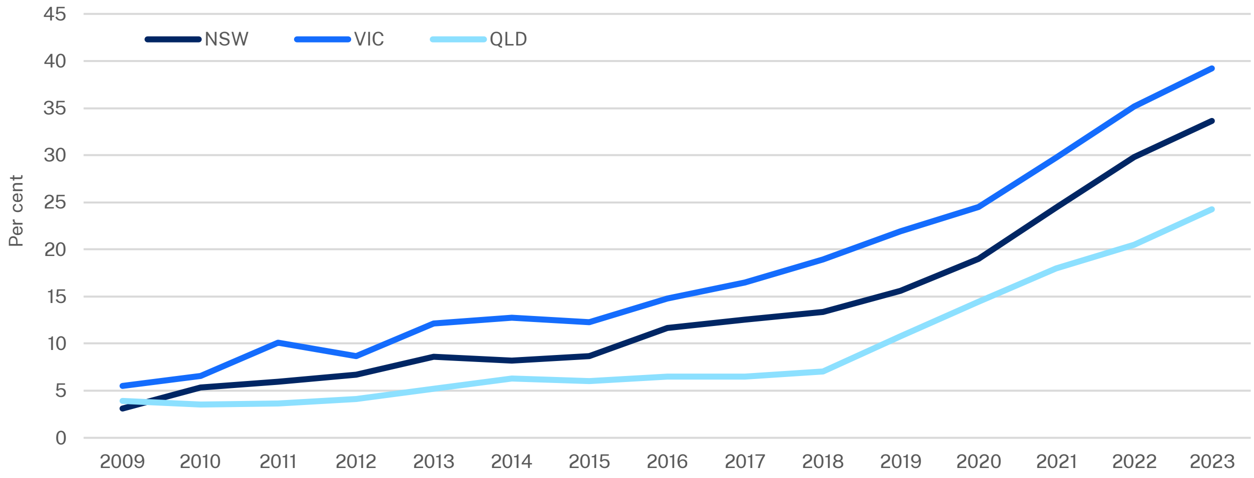
Source: National Greenhouse Accounts, 2023, AR5

Renewable energy

The share of NSW electricity generated from renewable sources has steadily increased since 2009 from 3.1, to 33.6 per cent in 2023. This is consistent with trends in Victoria and Queensland that both increased their shares of renewable electricity generation from 5.5 to 39.2 per cent, and 3.9 to 24.3 per cent, respectively over the same period (Chart 1.36).

The share of renewable energy in New South Wales has more than doubled over the past 5 years. This can be attributed to decreasing costs, bolstered by favourable policies and financing. More affordable renewable energy sources have therefore displaced coal and gas at a faster rate. The share of renewable generation is expected to continue to increase as NSW coal-fired electricity generation plants retire.

Chart 1.36: Share of electricity generation from renewable sources



Source: Australian Energy Statistics, 2024