



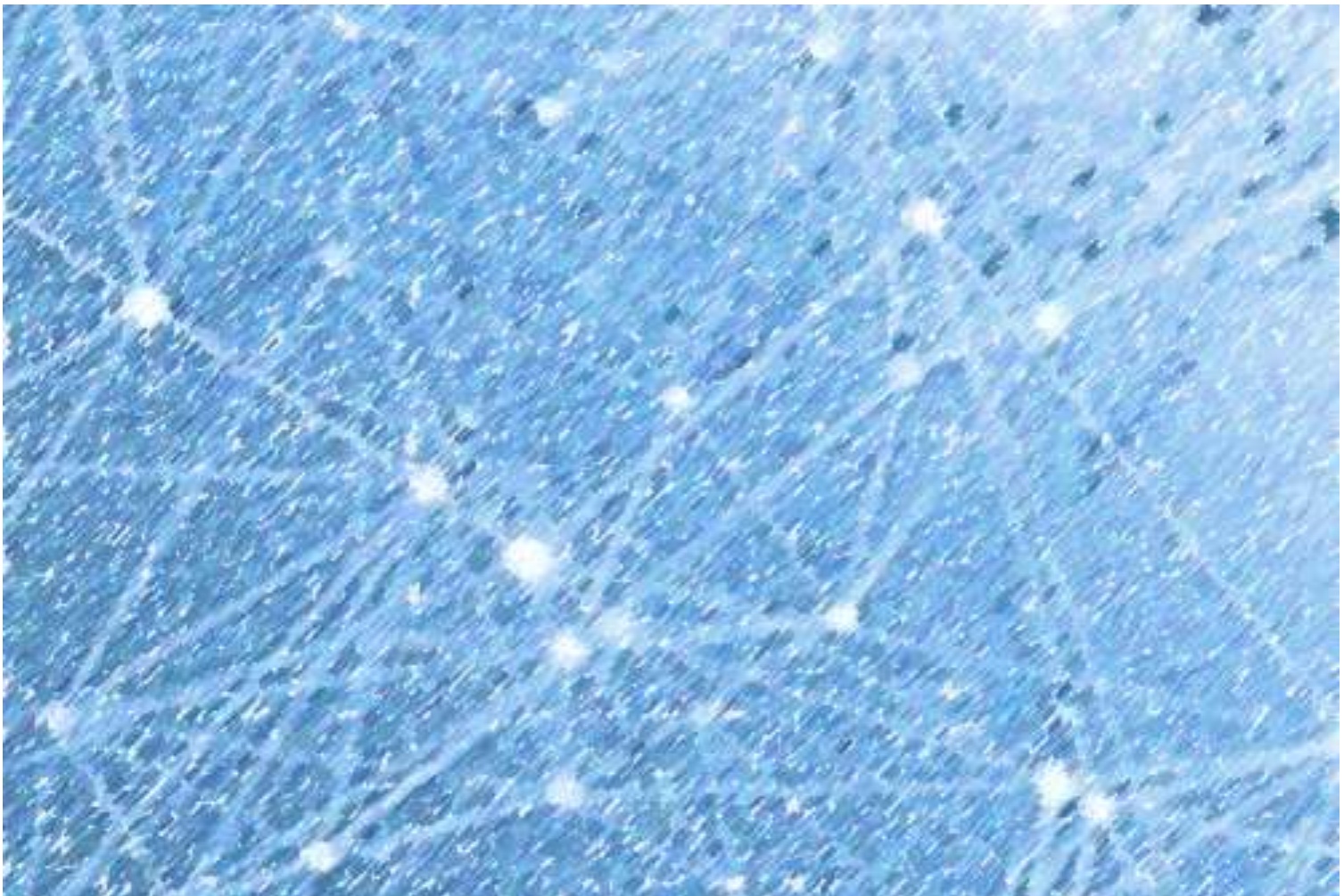
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CENTRE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH &
METHODS

ANU College of Arts & Social Sciences

Childcare in Australia: Historical trends in provision and Australian Government funding. A statistical compendium 1969-2022

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Glossary

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACECQA	Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
APG	Aboriginal Play Group
AR	Annual Report
ASC	After School Care (a component of OSHC)
BBF	Budget Based Funded
BSC	Before School Care (a component of OSHC)
CBCS	Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics – former name of Australian Bureau of Statistics
CBDC	Centre Based Day Care
CCA	Child Care Assistance (1984-2000)
CCR	Childcare Cash Rebate (1993-2000) Child Care Rebate (2008-2018) formerly CCTR
CCS	Child Care Subsidy (2018-)
CCTR	Child Care Tax Rebate (2004-2009)
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CURF	Confidentialised Unit Record File
DCS	Department of Community Services
DCS&H	Department of Community Services and Health
DE	Department of Education
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
DET	Department of Education and Training
DH&FS	Department of Health and Family Services
DHAC	Department of Health and Aged Care
DHH&CS	Department of Health, Housing and Community Services
DHHLG&CS	Department of Health, Housing, Local Government and Community Services
DHS&H	Department of Human Services and Health
DSS	Department of Social Security (1972-1998) Department of Social Services (2013-current)
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
FaCS	(Department of) Family and Community Services
FaCSIA	(Department of) Family and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
FDC	Family Day Care
GDP	Gross Domestic Product.
HREOC	Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
IHC	In Home Care
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IT	Information Technology
JET	Jobs, Education and Training Program, in some data collections also known as JETCCFA (JET Child Care Fee Assistance)
LDC	Long Day Care (former terminology for CBDC), in some data collections it is used to cover both CBDC and FDC
LF	Labour Force
LFS	Labour Force Survey

MACS	Multifunctional Aboriginal Child Care Service
MFS	Multifunctional Child Care Service
Mobile	Mobile Child Care Service
NEC	Not Elsewhere Classified
NFP	Not for profit
NOSHSA	National Outside School Hours Services Alliance
NT	Northern Territory
Occ.	Occasional Care
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSHC	Outside School Hours Care
PBS	Portfolio Budget Statement
PC	Productivity Commission
ROGS	(Productivity Commission) Report on Government Services
SIH	Survey of Income and Housing
SRC	Social Research Centre
TableBuilder	An ABS facility to extract tables from various data collections
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
WF	Workforce
WFH	Work from Home

Note on language use.

Over time practice has varied in the use of language around the sector. This includes the relative use of 'childcare' or 'child care', 'preschool' or 'pre-school' and 'program' or 'programme'. Unless citing formal program names, or quoting source material, the terms childcare, preschool and program have been used.

1. Background to childcare in Australia and Australian government support

This note presents some data on Australian¹ government expenditures on childcare and on the size of the formal childcare sector, in particular the segments of it which have been underpinned by Australian government financial support, directly and through subsidies paid to parents.

While the initial objective of this note was to present single 'best estimates' of the volume of funding and the volume of care, the nature of the data available, and the extent to which attempting to derive such a 'consistent and authoritative' estimate would require significant assumptions and extrapolation, limits such an approach. Nevertheless it is considered of value documenting the information which is available and making it accessible in a single document.²

1.1. Background

The Australian childcare system has grown rapidly over the past half century, and has longer historical roots. Historical activities have included the free kindergarten movement in the late 19th century and a Commonwealth government foray into childcare provision during the Second World War, along with support for Lady Gowrie Centres from the late 1930s on³. Across these periods childcare has also been provided through informal arrangements, both charged, and uncharged, and through regulated, and unregulated, private provision. While childcare funding today is primarily provided by the Commonwealth government, over time there has also been involvement of state and local governments using both their own purpose funds, and as an agent with regard to Commonwealth funding.

This history is also coloured at times by the parallel development of both childcare and early childhood education, in particular the preschool sector, and the cross overs between their respective activities and roles.

1.1.1. Early studies

In 1968-69 a study by the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labour and National Service (1970) sought to identify the number of childcare services which were registered under relevant state or local government provisions for the provision of full day care to children under school age. The study reported that there were "555 Child Care Centres in Australia with the capacity to provide full-day care for approximately 14,000 children" (Women's Bureau 1970, 10). Of these it indicated that some 40 centres, catering for around 2,000 children, received some form of government assistance from state or local authorities. Additionally the study recorded 20 centres run by Commonwealth Hostels Limited as full day 'child minding' for newly arrived migrants. These had a capacity of 1,200 children. The study reported

¹ The terminology of Australian, Commonwealth and Federal government is used interchangeably.

² This also recognises that while it may not be possible to derive wholly robust long time series, for some purposes 'adequate' series can be developed.

³ While the Gowrie centres are commonly classified as child care, Levy (1990?, 6) in her short history of the centres indicates: "Apart from a short period during World War Two when the Melbourne Gowrie operated as a war time nursery for female munitions workers, the Centres operated as pre-schools until 1984 ... [when] New terms of reference established by the Federal Government in 1977 set the Gowries on a path, which oriented them to the provision of advisory, resource and demonstration support targeted at assisting the development of federally funded day care services".

The initial government intent for the centres was cited by Levy as: "Demonstration Centre in each capital city at which not only will the methods for the care and instruction of young children be tested and demonstrated but also problems of physical growth, nutrition and development will be studied" (p. 3).

that, in addition to these services which offered full-day care, there were a range of complementary services, providing less than full day care, including kindergartens, play groups and occasional care services.

The Social Welfare Commission reported in 1974 that “In the period 1969-1973, there was a 56% increase in the number of child care centres in Australia and an increase of 121% in the capacity of centres (i.e. number of places)” (1974, 57). In the same year a state based study by the Union of Australian Women (1974) reported that in Victoria there were 22 childcare centres, including one occasional care service, subsidised by the Victorian state government with capacity for 1,015 children. In addition it reported that there were 280 private childcare centres registered with the state Health Department catering for 7,457 children, and one employer based service catering for 90 children. The study further noted the presence of some Family Day Care services which had been developed as a pilot supported by the Brotherhood of St. Laurence, and by one local government.⁴

Marie Coleman reported, as at December 1975, a national count of 56,516 childcare places, 44,346 of which were in ‘Licensed Commercial Day Care Centres’, 2,575 in Family Day Care, and the balance in what were described as full day care services (8,188 places) and multi-purpose childcare centres funded by the Commonwealth Office of Child Care (1,407 places) (Coleman 1976, 13).

1.1.2. Data challenges

Throughout this document reference will be made to a number of caveats with regard to particular series and time periods, or more generally. These include:

- The major Australian government collections effectively reflect just the population of services which were eligible for government support. Because the scope of this has extended over time caution needs to be exercised in differentiating the impact of such changes from actual growth in provision.⁵
- Commonwealth funding has at various times been allocated via the states, directly to services (as capital, as operational subsidies, and as fee offsets) and to parents.
- Funding and data collections have at times included the preschool sector as well as the childcare sector.⁶
- A range of metrics exist to measure childcare services, in particular with respect to reporting on capacity and child utilisation. In some collections this is based on ‘places’ – usually the maximum number of children the service is licensed to have at any one time. In other cases it is based on child counts, which, as many children only attend on some days, can frequently exceed the number of places. The significance of ‘places’ was particularly marked when the actual provision (or funding) of places was subject to planning controls. Additionally places are variously reported on the basis of being ‘approved’ and ‘operational’.

1.1.3. Broader demographic and labour market context

More broadly the data considered here should be viewed in the context of demographic and labour force changes over the period:

- Between June 1971 and June 2021 the population of children aged under 6 years has increased from 1.49 million to 1.83 million – an increase of 23.1 per cent, while that of children aged six to eleven

⁴ Similarly the Social Welfare Commission in 1974 reported while: “The Australian Pre-schools Committee estimated that, by 1985, 54% of children in Australian Government sponsored day care services would be accounted for within family day care programmes”, that: “At present family day care is making a minimal contribution to the total supply of day care” (Social Welfare Commission 1974, 43–44).

⁵ It should also be noted that over the period there have been considerable changes to the actual nature of childcare services provided, in particular with regard to standards and staff qualifications.

⁶ This raises a more fundamental question of the relative roles and complementarities of childcare and pre-school education. This is beyond the scope of considerations here.

years has increased from 1.52 million to 1.95 million, a 28.1 per cent increase (ABS Cat No 3101.0, Table 59). Most of this growth has been concentrated in the period since the early 2000s.

- There have been marked changes in family structure. Between 1981 and 2021 the proportion of families with dependent children aged under 15 years headed by a single parent has increased from 12.5 per cent to 19.5 per cent.⁷
 - Within couple family households with children in this age range the proportion with dual earners has increased from 41.0 per cent in 1981 to 70.6 per cent in 2021 – with the proportion with a single male full-time employed breadwinner falling from 51.7 per cent to 18.9 per cent over the same period.
 - The proportion of single parents employed has increased from 43.2 per cent to 62.1 per cent (ABS Labour Force, various).
 - Data on the workforce participation by women with dependent children is considered in more detail in Attachment B.

1.2. Key dates and chronology

Over time there have been many changes in the Australian government's role in providing support for childcare and in the program structures developed to deliver it, as well as the placement of ministerial and departmental responsibility for childcare.

1.2.1. Portfolio responsibility

Table 1 provides a timeline of the agency responsibility for childcare. In some cases the changes shown reflect a renaming of a department, or the addition of some functions. In other cases it has involved the splitting of a department, or the transfer of responsibility for childcare between departments.

While many of these transitions were seamless, in some cases, the shift resulted in some disruption and changes in the way in which data was reported.

⁷ Dolan (1999, 20) reports prior to this that the proportion of families with children headed by a sole parent increased from 7.1 per cent in 1970 to 8.7 per cent in 1975 and 12.6 per cent in 1980.

Table 1. Australian Government responsibility for childcare

1970	Department of Education and Science (and subsequently Department of Education) Lady Gowrie funding until 1976. (Prior to this responsibility for Lady Gowrie Centres was with the Department of Health.)
1972	Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet
1976	Department of Social Security
1984	13 December 1984 split and creation of Department of Community Services
1987	July 1987 merged to Department of Community Services and Health. (Note between 1990 and 1995 responsibility for the JET program ⁸ including its childcare provision was with the Department of Social Security.)
1991	June 1991 Department of Health, Housing and Community Services
1993	24 March 1993 Department of Health, Housing, Local Government and Community Services
1994	March 1994 Department of Human Services and Health
1996	March 1996 Department of Health and Family Services
1998	21 October 1998 split and creation of Department of Family and Community Services
2007	3 December 2007 transferred to Department of Education, Employment and Workforce Relations
2013	18 September 2013 split and creation of Department of Education and Training
2014	23 December 2014 transferred to Department of Social Services
2015	21 September 2015 transferred to the Department of Education and Training
2020	1 February 2020 merged into Department of Education, Skills and Employment
2022	1 July 2022 split and creation of Department of Education

1.2.2. Program structure

As noted, support for childcare provision and use has evolved significantly over time, having implications for how the sector was conceived of in documentation, and in particular what was actually measured and reported. Table 2 documents some of the major changes to Australian government support for the childcare sector, in particular those relating to changes in the broad scope of the program. It is emphasised, however, that this is not a comprehensive summary of program changes.

⁸ The Jobs, Education and Training (JET) program was designed to assist sole parents, carers, widowed people and low-income parents to re-enter the workforce by providing access to affordable child care. Under the program childcare costs for participants could be fully funded.

Table 2. Key childcare program dates

Pre 1972	Funding of Lady Gowrie Centres.
1972	<i>Child Care Act 1972 (Cwlth)</i> . Capital and recurrent funding for not-for-profit long day care services.
1974	Funding extended to preschool services.
1976	Preschool funding block granted to states and more generally including to FDC, through the Children's Services Program (noting that this extended to activities beyond childcare).
1983	New funding arrangements as of 1 January 1983. Three elements: non means tested 'operational support' subsidies for (community based) LDC and FDC; 'special economic needs' subsidies to services to enable them to offer income tested fee rebates to parents; and supplementary services grants for additional needs children.
1984	The 'economic needs' subsidies become fee relief as recurrent support to services through the Childcare Assistance (CCA) program. Shift from submission based to planning framework for services.
1985	Withdrawal of block funding preschool grants to states
1986	1 April 1986 funding for not for profit LDC & FDC changed to a per child basis rather than staff costs. Cap introduced on level of fee subject to Fee Relief.
1987	Funding for Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services introduced, and pilot of Multifunctional Services in rural locations.
1991	CCA extended to for-profit long day care services January 1991.
1993	Fee Relief extended to Occasional Care Services. National Standards for CBDC introduced. Introduction of Commonwealth Childcare Cash Rebate (CCR) 1 July 1993.
1995	National Standards for FDC and OSHC introduced.
1997	Cessation of operational subsidies for community based LDC. Introduction of differentiated limits on hours of care for working and non-working parents.
1998	Vacation Care Services which had previously been funded by block grants to states moved into Commonwealth program, initially with some operational subsidies. Replacement of operational subsidies to OSHC, including vacation care, with CCA funding. Subsidies linked to childhood immunisation. Family Support Program transferred to states.
1999	Planning controls for Long Day Care centres lifted 31 December 1999.
2000	Child Care Benefit (CCB) was introduced on 1 July 2000, combining the previous CCA and CCR into a single payment.
2001	In Home Care Initiative launched.
2003	Introduction of Budget Based Funded (BBF) program mainly for the support of childcare in remote Indigenous communities.
2004	Introduction of Child Care Tax Rebate (CCTR).
2006	Cap on OSHC and FDC services removed.
2007	CCTR changed to being a transfer payment rather than a tax rebate and expanded in scope.
2008	ABC Learning entered administration 3 November 2008. ⁹
2009	CCTR renamed Child Care Rebate (CCR).
2014	Introduction of restrictions on some FDC practices, and compliance action ramped up.
2018	July 2018 CCB and CCR combined into a new Child Care Subsidy (CCS) program. Significant changes to IHC, Occasional Care services now treated as Centre Based Day Care services, and BBF funding ceases and mainstream services brought into scope of CCS, with balance of activities moved to other portfolios. New IT system and more comprehensive reporting of children using care.

⁹ ABC Learning was a Brisbane company which expanded rapidly to become largest publicly traded childcare operator in the world. It operated more than a thousand services in Australia prior to its collapse. Some 650 of these were transferred to the not-for-profit GoodStart Early Learning.

2. Expenditure

This chapter addresses the level of government spending on childcare. Reflecting its major role it primarily focuses on the expenditure by the Australian government, although also considering the contributions of other levels of government.

2.1. Australian government expenditure

Prior to the introduction of funding under the *Child Care Act 1972 (Cwlth)*, and the specific spending on war time care, the only Australian Government funding for childcare was for the Lady Gowrie Centres¹⁰. This commenced with the allocation of £100,000 in 1937-38 to the “National Health Campaign” to a trust account¹¹ which was used for the initial capital expenditure and operations of the centres. In subsequent years this funding was topped up, and funding continued through the Department of Health up until 1970 as spending on “Child Health Centres”¹², when it became the responsibility of the Department of Education. Between 1970-71 and 1974-75 these grants-in-aid were paid by the Department of Education, with funding rising from \$150,000 in 1970-71 to \$325,000 in 1974-75. In 1975-76 the funding appears to have been subsumed into overall childcare funding.

In 1972-73, following the passing of the *Child Care Act 1972 (Cwlth)*, the Commonwealth significantly lifted its support of childcare with 1972-73 appropriations comprising \$200,000 for ‘Research and evaluation’, \$1,050,000 for ‘recurrent grants to eligible organisations’ (Appropriation (No. 1) 1973-74, 32) and ‘Assistance for approved capital projects’ \$3,750,000 (Appropriation (No. 2) 1973-74, 9).¹³

Over subsequent periods expenditure increased gradually until 1981, before a series of much stronger increases. Tracking expenditure over time is however complex. As detailed in Table 3, three main series can be identified. The first is based on data derived from the annual reports, and in some cases budget documents, of the various departments that have been responsible for the program over time. This spans the period from 1969 to 2021. The second is a short series from 1991 to 1998 produced by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare as part of their publication ‘Australia’s Welfare’. The third, commencing in 1996, has been developed by the Productivity Commission as part of its ‘Report on Government Services’. Both the second and third series are reported by their authors as being based on unpublished data provided by the relevant department.

Each of these series attempts to address, at times in different ways, some of the issues which arise in identifying and conceptualising childcare spending over the period. These include:

- Over the initial decade or so of Commonwealth funding the budgetary allocations related to spending both on childcare and some elements of preschool funding. Indeed Spearritt (1979, 32) suggests that in the pre-1975 period virtually all of the funding flowed to the preschool sector.

¹⁰ As detailed in footnote 3, whether these should be considered as child care is questionable.

¹¹ The 1938-39 Budget reports the allocation of £100,000 to the “National Health Campaign” (Commonwealth 1938, 83). The nature of the fund and its role in funding the Lady Gowrie Child Centres is detailed in Commonwealth 1945, 36).

¹² For example *Appropriation Act 1962-63 (Cwlth)* (p. 57) identifies an appropriation of £50,000 for these centres in 1962-63. By 1969-70 the funding was identified as being “Lady Gowrie Child Centres – Grants-in-aid” with an appropriation of \$120,000 (*Appropriation Act (No. 1) 1969-70 (Cwlth)*, 40).

¹³ Notwithstanding these appropriations, expenditure in 1972-73 was much smaller. *Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 1973-74 (Cwlth)* reports (p. 32) expenditure in 1972-73 of \$42,649 against the appropriation of \$200,000 for research and evaluation, \$185,301 relative to \$1,050,000 for recurrent grants and *Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 1973-74 (Cwlth)* nil for the \$3,750,000 capital support.

- Following this, with the development of the ‘Children’s Services Program’, the scope of reported spending also potentially relates to other activities such as play-groups and family support services.¹⁴
- At the more technical level it is also noted that:
 - The balance between capital and recurrent funding has varied considerably over time.
 - There have been different approaches over time, and between series, as to whether the reported spending relates just to program funds or also includes the administrative costs of the department. Additionally where these costs are included, there are inconsistencies and differing approaches to estimation.
 - In some cases where expenditure has been split across departments, including where responsibility has shifted between these within a reporting year, caution is needed as to whether this has been recorded comprehensively.

A number of these issues play out within particular series and hence it is noted that:

- The ‘Departmental Program Expenditure’ series ignores the difference between recurrent and capital spending and only considers program expenditure. Where possible the expenditure excludes non-childcare related funding such as the Family Support Program. A particular issue concerns the period between 1973 and 1984 where data is drawn from the 1983-84 Department of Social Security Annual Report which presents spending under the “Children’s Service Program” as “Expenditure on pre-schools” and “Expenditure on children’s services other than pre-schools”. Although the bulk of spending in this second category is on childcare, this classification will tend to result in some overstatement. While it is possible to identify administrative spending in some years, a consistent series was not able to be derived as this data was presented in other years as an aggregate across a series of activities in addition to childcare.
- The AIHW series, which is only available for a short period, only presents ‘total spending’ which includes program expenditure and expenditure on program administration.
- The Productivity Commission series has over time been presented as different aggregates. While splits between recurrent program, capital and administration expenditures are available for the years between 1998 and 2010, since 2011 the data has been presented as a single figure for recurrent expenditure covering both the recurrent program spending and administration, and as capital expenditure.¹⁵

¹⁴ Brennan described this as: “In recent years, however, the non pre-school section of the Children’s Services Program has been spread over an ever-widening range of services ... In short as one writer has commented, this part of the program has become a ‘general welfare slush fund’” (1982, 23).

¹⁵ In most of the Productivity Commission Reports of Government Spending from which this data is drawn it is presented in real terms, variously using the ‘GDP Price Deflator’ and ‘General Government Final Consumption Expenditure (GGFCE) Deflator’. These have been converted back to current price expenditures using the deflator as shown in the particular publication.

Table 3. Australia, Australian Government Childcare expenditure 1969-2022, current prices

Year ending 30 June	Departmental Program expenditure	AIHW	Productivity Commission				Total recurrent	Total
			Program recurrent	Capital	Administration			
Expenditure (\$millions)								
1969	0.1 (a)(b)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1970	0.2 (a)(b)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1971	0.2 (a)(b)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1972	0.2 (a)(b)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1973	0.4 (b)(c)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1974	2.5 (b)(d)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1975	8.2 (b)(d)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1976	16.9 (d)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1977	18.1 (d)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1978	25.2 (d)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1979	31.1 (d)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1980	36.1 (d)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1981	42.9 (d)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1982	47.4 (d)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1983	65.0 (d)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1984	80.1 (d)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1985	119.7 (d)(e)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1986	146.4 (e)(f)(g)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1987	175.2 (e)(f)(g)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1988	215.2 (e)(g)(h)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1989	213.1 (e)(g)(h)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1990	215.8 (e)(g)(h)(i)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1991	245.7 (e)(g)(h)(i)	256.6	-	-	-	-	-	-
1992	439.8 (e)(g)(h)(i)	450.6	-	-	-	-	-	-
1993	546.2 (e)(i)(j)(k)	555.7	-	-	-	-	-	-
1994	676.4 (e)(i)(j)(l)	691.9	-	-	-	-	-	-
1995	873.3 (e)(i)(j)(l)	899.2	-	-	-	-	-	-
1996	978.3 (e)(l)(m)(n)	1,013.6 (z)	841.4	10.8	17.1	-	869.3 (aa)	
1997	1,050.7 (e)(l)(m)(l)	1,117.3 (z)	904.7	13.3	12.7	-	930.7 (ab)(ac)	
1998	948.6 (e)(l)(m)	1,025.8 (z)	914.2	13.9	70.1	-	998.3 (ad)	
1999	935.7 (e)(l)(o)(p)	-	889.8	16.0	80.5	-	986.3 (ad)	
2000	1,119.8 (e)(l)(o)	-	902.2	18.1	158.3	-	1,078.6 (ad)	
2001	1,210.2 (l)(o)	-	1,200.8	7.3	153.7	-	1,361.8 (ad)	
2002	1,515.0 (o)	-	1,506.2	2.9	144.1	-	1,653.2 (ae)	
2003	1,568.2 (o)	-	1,483.2	3.0	200.3	-	1,686.5 (ae)	
2004	1,600.6 (o)	-	1,594.1	9.2	173.8	-	1,777.1 (ae)	
2005	1,702.9 (o)	-	1,670.0	15.4	156.3	-	1,841.6 (ae)	
2006	1,760.3 (q)	-	1,798.9	6.6	128.0	-	1,933.6 (ae)	
2007	2,206.6 (q)	-	2,132.3	1.7	137.4	-	2,271.3 (ae)	
2008	3,462.8 (r)	-	2,429.2	8.3	157.0	-	2,594.5 (ae)	
2009	3,692.1 (s)	-	3,648.1	1.0	115.8	-	3,764.9 (ae)	
2010	3,682.5 (s)	-	3,649.4	33.1	114.2	-	3,796.7 (ae)	
2011	4,144.4 (s)	-	(ag)	4.9	(ag)	4,280.6	4,285.5 (af)	
2012	4,640.4 (s)	-	-	30.3	-	4,740.1	4,770.4 (ah)	
2013	5,242.7 (s)	-	-	22.1	-	5,366.2	5,388.3 (ah)	
2014	6,274.8 (t)	-	-	18.9	-	6,211.9	6,230.8 (ah)	
2015	7,165.7 (u)	-	-	26.0	-	7,071.3	7,097.3 (ah)	
2016	7,325.4 (v)	-	-	9.7	-	7,440.0	7,449.7 (ah)	
2017	7,543.3 (w)	-	-	8.2	-	7,651.0	7,659.2 (ah)	
2018	7,316.2 (w)	-	-	10.4	-	7,444.8	7,455.2 (ah)	
2019	7,708.7 (x)	-	-	1.4	-	7,859.7	7,861.1 (ah)	
2020	8,366.9 (y)	-	-	1.4	-	8,521.8	8,523.2 (ah)	
2021	9,953.4 (y)	-	-	0.5	-	10,095.6	10,096.1 (ah)	
2022	10,070.7 (y)	-	-	0.8	-	10,258.4	10,259.2 (ai)	

(a) Lady Gowrie Centres, Grant-in-aid, Appropriation Bills (No. 1).

- (b) 1969 \$120,000; 1970 \$150,000; 1971 \$150,000; 1972 \$195,000; 1973 \$416,501; 1974 \$2,495,000; and 1975 \$8,153,000.
- (c) Recurrent grants to eligible organisation, Lady Gowrie Centres, Appropriation Bill (No. 1).
- (d) "Expenditure on children's services other than pre-schools", Department of Social Security Annual Report 1983-84.
- (e) See Appendix A for a more detailed breakdown of these expenditures and the items included.
- (f) Department of Community Services Annual Reports.
- (g) Children's Services Program, Grants, and Payment to States and the NT, less 'pre-school block grants' where made, excludes Family Support Program.
- (h) Department of Community Services and Health Annual Reports.
- (i) Includes expenditure on JET (Jobs, Education and Training) child care by the Department of Social Security.
- (j) Department of Human Services and Health Annual Reports
- (k) Taken from 1993-94 Annual Report.
- (l) Includes other services to families.
- (m) Department of Health and Family Services Annual Reports.
- (n) JET child care funding was transferred into the Department of Health and Family Services.
- (o) Department of Family and Community Services Annual Reports.
- (p) Expenses 1998-99 (Estimated full-year effect). In this year responsibility for child care transferred from the Department of Health and Family Services to the Department of Family and Community services and the part-year expenditures listed in the two annual reports do not appear to wholly reflect total expenditure.
- (q) Department of Family and Community Services Annual Reports.
- (r) Department of Family and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs Portfolio Budget Statement 2007-08 & Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Annual Report 2007-08.
- (s) Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Annual Reports.
- (t) Program responsibility moved to Department of Education only part year data available, estimate derived from Table 4.1, p. 117, Productivity Commission 2014, Childcare and Early Childhood Learning, Inquiry Report No. 73, Canberra.
- (u) Department of Education and Training Annual Report 2014-2015 & Department of Social Services Annual Report 2014-15.
- (v) Department of Education and Training Annual Report 2015-2016 & Department of Social Services Annual Report 2015-16.
- (w) Department of Education and Training Annual Reports.
- (x) Department of Education Annual Report.
- (y) Department of Education, Skills and Employment Annual Report.
- (z) Includes administrative costs, capital loans and repayments and JET, but excludes Family Services. AIHW Australia's Welfare 1999, Table A4.5.
- (aa) Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services 1999.
- (ab) Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services 2001.
- (ac) This data, along with that for a number of other years is footnoted by the Productivity Commission to indicate that it excludes families receiving assistance for informal care.
- (ad) Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services 2003.
- (ae) Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services 2012.
- (af) Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services 2014.
- (ag) The form of presentation of the data changed and shows only total recurrent (program and administrative) expenditure.
- (ah) Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services 2022.
- (ai) Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services 2023.

Table 4 presents the totals of these three series in real dollar terms (adjusted by the CPI¹⁶), with this data being plotted in Figure 1. As illustrated in the chart, while there are some differences between the series in some years, the overall trends are consistent. More significantly the chart shows a pattern of very slow growth in expenditure up to 1991, a relative sharp increase between 1991 and 1997, followed by slower growth until 2006, after which strong, although occasionally disrupted, growth prevailed. This latter

¹⁶ A range of different deflators can be used for this purpose. The Productivity Commission has variously used the GDP price deflator and the General Government Final Consumption Expenditure (GGFCE) deflator. Over the period to 2021 the CPI has increased 11.6 fold, the GDP deflator 12.2 fold and GGFCE deflator 14.4 fold.

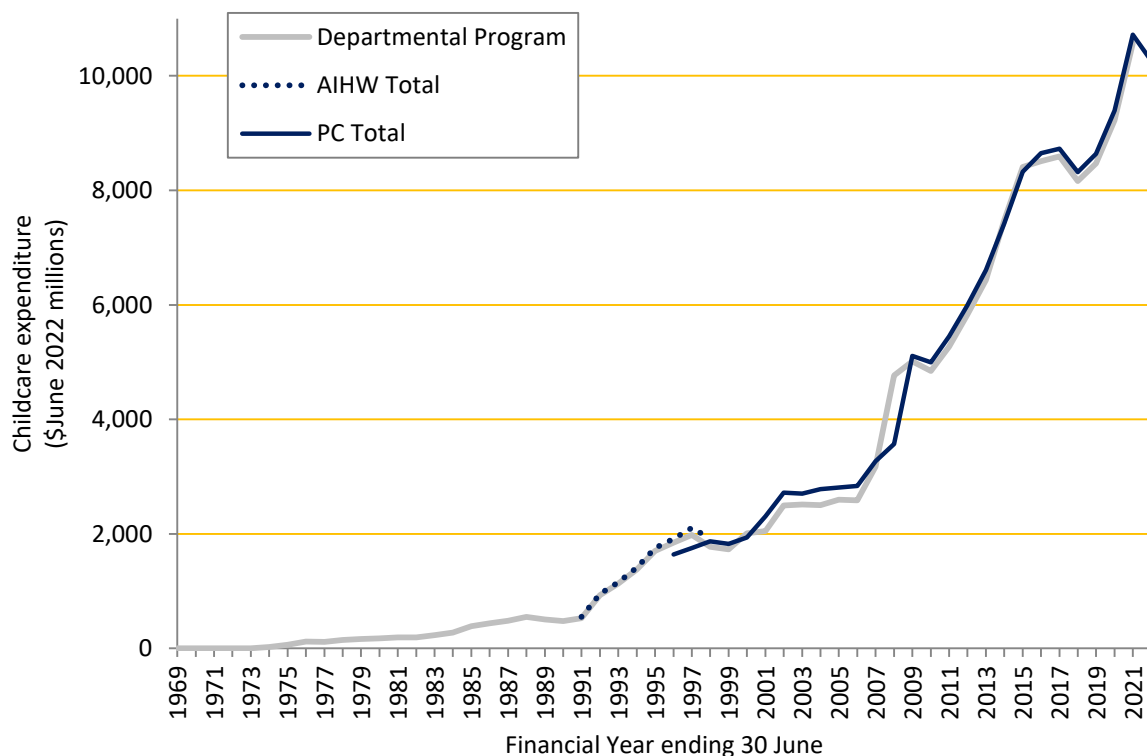
includes a strong growth to, and then a decline from expenditure in 2020-21 associated with the impact of COVID-19.

Table 4. Australian Government real childcare expenditure 1969-2022, \$June 2022

	CPI (2011-12 =100)	Childcare expenditure (a)		
		Departmental Program	AIHW Total	Productivity Commission Total
Expenditure \$(June 2022) millions				
1969	9.4	1.6		
1970	9.7	2.0		
1971	10.2	1.9		
1972	10.9	2.3		
1973	11.8	4.4		
1974	13.5	23.3		
1975	15.8	65.1		
1976	17.7	120.7		
1977	20.1	113.4		
1978	21.7	146.5		
1979	23.6	166.0		
1980	26.2	173.9		
1981	28.4	190.3		
1982	31.5	189.6		
1983	35	234.0		
1984	36.4	277.6		
1985	38.8	389.1		
1986	42.1	438.6		
1987	46	480.3		
1988	49.3	550.5		
1989	53	507.1		
1990	57.1	476.6		
1991	59	525.1	548.4	
1992	59.7	929.0	951.8	
1993	60.8	1,132.8	1,152.5	
1994	61.9	1,377.9	1,409.5	
1995	64.7	1,702.1	1,752.5	
1996	66.7	1,849.6	1,916.3	1,643.4
1997	66.9	1,980.4	2,106.0	1,754.3
1998	67.4	1,774.7	1,919.2	1,867.8
1999	68.1	1,732.6		1,826.3
2000	70.2	2,011.4		1,937.5
2001	74.5	2,048.5		2,305.0
2002	76.6	2,494.0		2,721.6
2003	78.6	2,515.9		2,705.6
2004	80.6	2,504.2		2,780.3
2005	82.6	2,599.7		2,811.4
2006	85.9	2,584.2		2,838.4
2007	87.7	3,172.8		3,265.8
2008	91.6	4,767.0		3,571.6
2009	92.9	5,011.5		5,110.4
2010	95.8	4,847.2		4,997.6
2011	99.2	5,268.2		5,447.6
2012	100.4	5,828.2		5,991.5
2013	102.8	6,431.0		6,609.6
2014	105.9	7,471.7		7,419.3
2015	107.5	8,405.5		8,325.3
2016	108.6	8,505.8		8,650.1
2017	110.7	8,592.7		8,724.7
2018	113.0	8,164.4		8,319.5
2019	114.8	8,467.5		8,634.9
2020	114.4	9,222.6		9,394.9
2021	118.8	10,565.0		10,716.5
2022	126.1	10,070.7		10,259.2

(a) Nominal expenditure as per Table 3.

Figure 1. Australian Government real childcare expenditure 1969-2022, \$June 2022



Source: Table 4.

2.2. State and local government

Some funding for childcare has also been provided by state and local governments. The Fry Report (Australian Pre-Schools Commission 1973, 8) reported in 1972-73 estimated state expenditure on 'Day care' of \$760,346 by New South Wales (NSW), \$412,641 by Victoria, \$9,802 by Western Australia and \$7,941 by Queensland. The accuracy of this data is not clear, and in the case of NSW the estimated expenditure was based on a pro-rating of expenditure across preschool and childcare. Further, the committee noted that "in some cases, the actual expenditure in 1972-73 is an estimate only" (p. 8).

A time series of state spending, on both childcare and preschool can be derived from the Productivity Commission's Reports on Government Services from 1998-99 on¹⁷. This is detailed in Table 5, although it is noted that some caution needs to be exercised with this data, as it is compiled from a number of historic reports and in some years the limited time series published appears to have been subject to revision, including potentially in some cases reallocation of expenditure between the two sectors.¹⁸

¹⁷ While some data is available for earlier years, this is not necessarily complete.

¹⁸ While sufficient to constrain the development of a wholly consistent series over time the extent of these inconsistencies tends to be relatively small, and can be considered as not overly limiting for more general use. They may however result in some misalignment with other data drawn from particular years or sources.

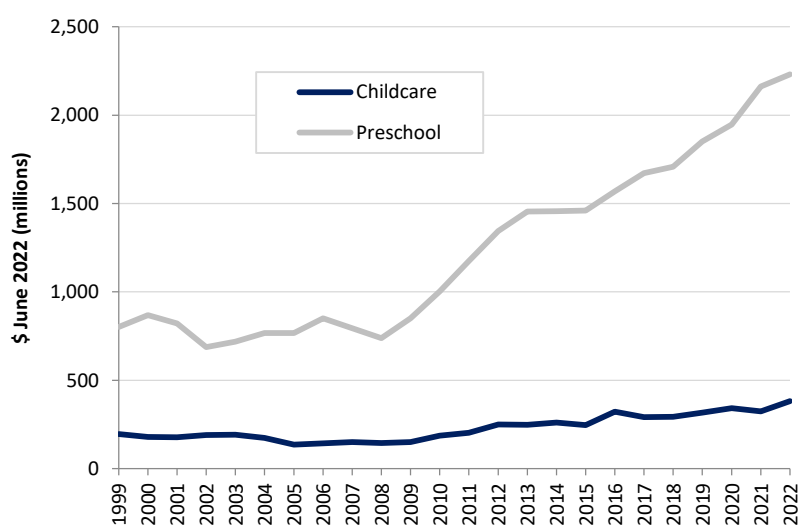
Table 5. State government expenditure on childcare and preschool 1998-99 to 2021-22

	Nominal expenditure		CPI (2011-12 =100)	Real expenditure	
	Childcare	Preschool		Childcare	Preschool
	\$ millions			\$(2022) millions	
1998-99	105.6	433.3	68.1	195.5	802.3
1999-00	100.0	483.2	70.2	179.7	868.0
2000-01	104.9	485.4	74.5	177.6	821.6
2001-02	115.3	417.7	76.6	189.8	687.7
2002-03	119.9	447.7	78.6	192.3	718.2
2003-04	111.2	490.1	80.6	174.0	766.7
2004-05	89.5	503.2	82.6	136.7	768.3
2005-06	97.1	579.8	85.9	142.6	851.2
2006-07	104.7	552.2	87.7	150.5	793.9
2007-08	105.9	537.1	91.6	145.8	739.4
2008-09	110.8	626.8	92.9	150.3	850.8
2009-10	142.0	762.3	95.8	186.9	1,003.4
2010-11	159.9	923.7	99.2	203.2	1,174.1
2011-12	199.6	1,070.8	100.4	250.7	1,344.9
2012-13	202.7	1,186.1	102.8	248.6	1,454.9
2013-14	219.7	1,223.7	105.9	261.6	1,457.1
2014-15	209.5	1,245.8	107.5	245.7	1,461.3
2015-16	276.9	1,351.9	108.6	321.5	1,569.7
2016-17	255.5	1,468.7	110.7	291.1	1,673.0
2017-18	263.5	1,530.4	113.0	294.1	1,707.8
2018-19	289.3	1,686.0	114.8	317.7	1,851.9
2019-20	311.0	1,766.5	114.4	342.8	1,947.2
2020-21	304.8	2,036.7	118.8	323.5	2,161.8
2021-22	382.6	2,230.9	126.1	382.6	2,230.9

Source:

1998-99 to 2001-02, Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services 2004
 2002-03 to 2004-05, Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services 2006
 2005-06 to 2006-07, Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services 2010
 2007-08 to 2010-11, Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services 2013
 2011-12 to 2020-21, Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services 2022
 2021-22, Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services 2023

Figure 2. State government expenditure on childcare and preschool 1998-99 to 2021-22



Source: Table 5

As illustrated in Figure 2, from 2008-09 onwards there has been strong growth in state spending on preschools. A strong driver of this has been support for this sector provided by the Australian

government to the states under the National Partnership on Early Childhood Education and the National Partnership on Universal Access to Early Childhood education. The Productivity Commission reports this latter as \$472.5 million in 2021-22.

The level of spending on both childcare and preschool varies considerably between states. This is detailed in Table 6. Because of the complexities of the different systems and the populations to which assistance is directed there are limited metrics to allow for direct comparisons between the states. In the table two possible metrics are used. The first is spending per child aged under 5 years. The second is the state spending as a proportion of the Australian government childcare spending in the state.

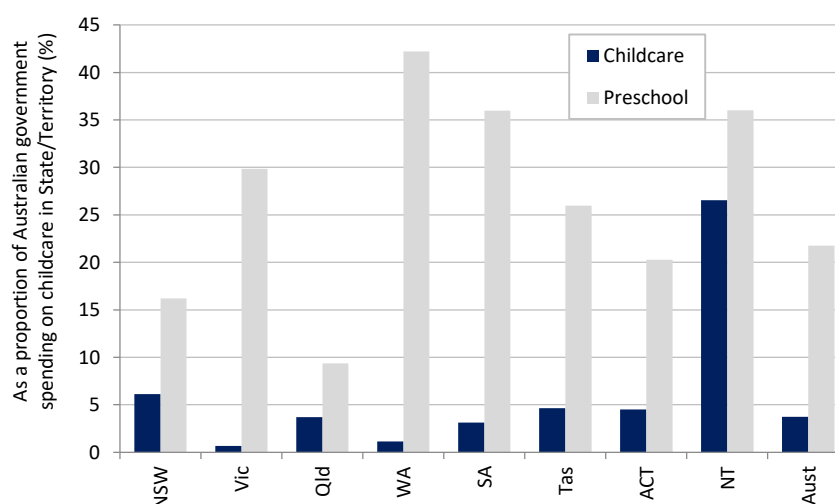
Table 6. State and Australian government spending on childcare and state spending on preschool, by state, 2021-22

	NSW	Vic.	Qld	WA	SA	Tas.	ACT	NT	Total
Children 5 years and under (2021)	578,044	466,623	369,273	205,942	118,064	35,696	32,486	20,998	1,827,418
Spending (\$million)									
Australian govt. childcare	3,257.5	2,588.9	2,492.0	883.1	561.6	147.4	218.5	110.6	10,259.2
State childcare	199.7	17.4	91.8	10.1	17.5	6.8	9.8	29.3	382.6
State preschool	527.3	772.9	233.4	372.8	202.1	38.3	44.3	39.8	2,230.9
Estimated spending per child aged 5 years and under (\$)									
Australian govt. childcare	5,635	5,548	6,748	4,288	4,757	4,130	6,725	5,266	5,614
State childcare	346	37	249	49	149	191	302	1,397	209
State preschool	912	1,656	632	1,810	1,712	1,073	1,365	1,897	1,221
State spending as a proportion of Australian government childcare spending (%)									
State childcare	6.1	0.7	3.7	1.1	3.1	4.6	4.5	26.5	3.7
State preschool	16.2	29.9	9.4	42.2	36.0	26.0	20.3	36.0	21.7

Source: Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services 2023

As illustrated in the table, and Figure 3, there is considerable variation in the relative level of state spending, both in the balance of spending on the two functions, and under the different metrics relative to each other.

Figure 3. State government spending on childcare and preschool as a proportion of Australian government spending by state, 2022



Source: Table 6

In addition to this direct role, a range of more indirect assistance to childcare provision can occur. For example, the Victorian Department of Education and Training (2022) reports on 'leases at significantly below market terms and conditions' including for 'childcare and early learning centres' (p. 179). At the same time however in a 2023 submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Early Childhood

Education and Care the National Outside School Hours Services Alliance (NOSHSA) (2023) reports “NOSHSA have long held concerns about the ... significant fees paid to schools for rent/lease charges, facilities upgrades and other ‘value adds’ given to schools for purchases that have little, if anything, to do with the provision of quality OSHC. Schools regularly use OSHC (particularly in the Government schools sector) to revenue raise” (p. 1-2).

2.3. Local Government

The role played by local governments in childcare provision varies. In addition to the statutory role played by this level of government in planning and land use which directly impinge on all childcare services, a number are engaged directly in the provision of services as operators, and in some cases funders, both directly and through the use of facilities on a concessional basis, as well as offering ‘add-on’ services. The magnitude of this is however difficult to ascertain. The Productivity Commission in its 2014 Inquiry Report summarised this as: “While it is difficult to measure the total value of local government support to ECEC, it is clear that local government is making a significant contribution to ECEC in Australia” (Productivity Commission 2014, 138). It does not appear that subsequent to this any more comprehensive information is available. It is however probable that, as with state funding, there is considerable variation across jurisdictions.

3. Scope of childcare provision

There have been two broad approaches to reporting the level of childcare provision in Australia:

- Places – these represent the maximum number of children that can be accommodated by a service at any one time.

This approach was particularly relevant to service based administrative and planning systems, and as a measure of the potential volume of provision. It also reflects some regulatory provisions, including local planning rules, which consider service size on this basis. However, as a measure, it has limitations where services may decide not to operate at the maximum level they could, and as it does not provide insight into the actual number of children using care services, since only a relatively small proportion of children attend services on a full-time full-period basis, and so effectively the number of children using care can exceed the number of actual places.

- Counts of children attending the service

Counts of children attending services are available from both administrative and survey sources. A key issue which arises with this data relates to the pattern of use of care. Analysis of departmental administrative data for the financial year 2019, for example, reports while in any one week an average of 971,000 children used childcare, the number using care at a point within any particular quarter averaged 1,309,202, while 1,579,459 were recorded as having used care at some time over the year. Where children use multiple services, additional issues arise with respect to double counting (if children are counted on the basis of each service attended, or where they are counted by type of service and these are aggregated).

Early data on the scope of service provision is problematic. This was acknowledged at the time, with the Social Welfare Commission reporting in 1974, for example: “Attempts by the Social Welfare Commission project team to update statistics on the range of early childhood services available in each State resulted in a fragmentary collection of data – as the Pre-Schools Committee had found. Therefore there was little value in partially updating the Australian Pre-Schools Committee statistics” (1974, 31).¹⁹

Notwithstanding this, some early estimates do exist:

- 1969: “approximately 14,000” places in “child care centres which provide full-day care for children of pre-school age” (Women’s Bureau 1970, 7 & 10).²⁰
- 1969: 20,800 children aged under 6 years “who were the responsibility of persons²¹ in the labour force” were in a “Nursery, crèche, care centre, home care centre, etc” (CBCS Ref No 17.2 1969, 10).
- 1973: 38,700 children aged under 6 years “who were the responsibility of persons in the labour force” were in a “Nursery, crèche, care centre, home care centre, etc” (ABS Ref No 17.2 1973, 13).

¹⁹ Even two decades later the AIHW reported: “there is currently no children’s services data collection and data on children’s services are highly fragmented” (AIHW 1997, 99).

²⁰ In more detail this research, which was based on services registered with state and local governments, reported 13,725 places in 555 centres, along with an additional 20 full-day “child minding centres” in Commonwealth hostels with capacity to care for approximately 1,200 children” (Women’s Bureau 1970, 15). In addition it excluded a number of positions in “Day nurseries” in Victoria which were funded by the Department of Health but were exempt from registration (p. 7). It noted that of the 555 centres only 40 were in receipt of a subsidy (p. 15), and just two were sponsored by employers (p. 10).

²¹ This population was further defined as: “Females, and widowed, divorced and permanently separated males” (CBCS Ref No 17.2 1969, 10).

- 1975: 56,516 places, comprising: 44,346 places in 1,119 “Commercial day centre”, along with 8,188 places in 182 “full day care services funded through the Office of Child Care”, 2,575 places in Family Day Care, and 1,407 places in “Multi-Purpose Child Care Centres, funded through the Office of Child Care”. (Coleman 1976, 13).
- 1977: 65,000 licensed day care places (20,000 subsidised by government) (DSS AR 1976-77, 40).²²
- 1978: 6,000 children in family day care supported through the Commonwealth Children’s Services Program (DSS AR 1977-78, 33).

In the following section four series of data are presented: estimates and counts of approved places derived from various administrative sources; counts of children attending childcare from childcare subsidy systems; reported numbers in the censuses of childcare services; and estimates from ABS household surveys.

3.1. Childcare places

The number of children who can be cared for by a childcare service at any one time (other than a Family Day Care service) forms part of service approval under state legislation and regulations.²³

Up until 1999 for Centre Based Day Care services, and 2006 for Family Day Care and Outside School Hours Care, there were caps on the number of places which were eligible for financial support.

Three series of data have been published detailing the number of places. The first, covering 1982 to 2000, is drawn from departmental publications, and the second is from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare’s ‘Australia’s Welfare’ publications. This contains data for the period 1991 to 2008. The third comes from the Productivity Commission’s Report on Government Services for the period 1996 to 2011. In addition, a fourth, more recent, although partial, series has been derived from the data published by ACECQA as part of its reporting on quality standards.

3.1.1. Departmental approved/operational places

Table 7 presents the departmental reported number of variously ‘approved’, ‘operational’, and ‘available’ places. The initial part of this is a 1982 to 1992 time series of ‘approved places’ in June each year published in the 1991-92 DHH&CS Annual Report. While data up to 1993 continued to be published in Annual Reports for ‘approved places’, from 1994 to 1999, the count is reported as ‘operational places’. The apparent difference between these series would seem to concern the existence of places which, while having been approved for provision, were not yet operational.²⁴ Following this there was sporadic publication of the total number of ‘available places’ in annual reports and Portfolio Budget Statements.²⁵

²² The scope of these was further presented as: “With the minor exception of a few family day care schemes run by the South Australian Department for Community Welfare, day care is largely provided by private enterprise, local government authorities or community bodies” (DSS AR 1976-77, 40-41).

²³ Typically: “A service approval for an education and care service other than a family day care service is granted subject to a condition that the approved provider must ensure that the number of children educated and cared for by the service at any one time does not exceed the maximum number of children specified in the service approval” *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 (Victoria)*, Section 51(4A). In the case of Family Day Care the number of places is at the individual educator level (based upon child age) and limits can be set on the maximum number of family educators per service.

²⁴ In the 1991-92 Annual Report (DHH&CS 1992) the department reported that in June 1992 there were a total of 195,707 ‘approved places’ (p. 84) and a lesser number, 192,782, of ‘operational places’ (p. 82). This indicates a ratio of 0.985:1 between operational and approved places.

²⁵ In its 2000-01 Annual Report, for example, FaCS just published some aggregate December 2000 data (“around 457,800 places”) indicating that this was the latest available (FaCS AR 2000-01, 82)). This approach was further explained in the following year as: “The old child care data gathering system is no longer available. A new one is being developed. It is expected that more up to date data will be available in 2002-03” (FaCS AR 2001-02, v.2 p. 80). While in some years additional figures are presented in Portfolio Budget Statements, some caution needs to be exercised as these are typically reported without a specific reference date or any supplementary explanatory material.

As with most administrative based data, the collection is shaped by the policy environment. The two main impacts of this are:

- Private sector, for-profit Centre Based Day Care services are only included from 1991 when these became eligible for financial support.
- The large jump in places in Outside School Hours Care between 1997 and 1998 would appear to reflect the inclusion of Vacation Care services which had previously been supported through block grants to the states.

Table 7. Departmental reported approved (to 1994) and operational (1995 on) childcare places, 1982-2008

June (unless otherwise noted)	Centre Based Day Care				Family Day Care	Outside School Hours Care (b)	Occasional care	Multi-functional Service ²⁶	Total
	Community	Private (a)	Employer	Total					
					Places				
1982	18,568 (c)	-	-	18,568	15,100	7,910	(c)	-	41,578 (d)
1983	20,008 (c)	-	-	20,008	20,100	9,870	(c)	-	49,978 (d)
1984	23,048 (c)	-	-	23,048	24,250	11,620	(c)	-	58,918 (d)
1985	31,398 (c)	-	-	31,398	32,197	14,766	(c)	-	78,361 (d)
1986	34,602 (c)	-	-	34,602	34,035	15,866	(c)	-	84,503 (d)
1987	37,936	-	-	37,936	38,361	31,287	2,876	-	110,460 (d)
1988	40,555	-	-	40,555	39,510	30,194	3,674	-	113,933 (d)
1989	39,516	-	-	39,516	39,550	30,568	4,632	-	114,266 (d)
1990	39,601	-	-	39,601	40,974	37,212	4,797	-	122,584 (d)
1991	41,086	32,296	4,404	77,786	42,950	44,974	5,131	-	170,841 (e)
1992	41,699	42,743	5,721	90,163	45,714	48,757	5,930	-	190,564 (e)
1993	43,564	53,920	7,480	104,964	48,200	52,127	5,973	-	211,264 (e)
1994	43,400	70,600	9,800	123,800	51,700	59,800	4,600	1,600	241,500 (f)
1995	44,600	88,600	11,300	144,500	54,000	64,100	4,700	1,600	268,900 (g)
1996	45,600	109,700	12,800	168,100	60,100	71,800	4,900	1,600	306,500 (g)
1997	46,300	121,600	15,000	182,900	62,700	79,000	4,900	1,700	331,200 (g)
1998	51,700	129,700	13,200	194,600	63,700	134,400	5,000	1,700	399,400 (h)
1999	50,600	127,100	12,600	190,300	64,000	161,000	5,000	1,700	422,100 (h)
2000	50,400	128,400	12,100	190,900	66,300	179,700	4,700	1,800	443,400 (h)
2001	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	500,027 (i)
2002	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	498,200 (j)
2003	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	517,654 (i)
2004	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	561,876 (i)
2005	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	587,000 (k)
2006	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2007	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	667,000 (l)
2008	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	713,200 (m)(n)

(a) Department notes: "Includes private, employer sponsored and previously unfunded non-profit services (eg Victorian Day Nurseries and TAFE centres)" (DHH&CS AR 1991-92, 84).

(b) Excludes vacation care.

(c) Included in Centre Based Day Care.

(d) DHH&CS AR 1991-92

(e) DHHLG&CS AR 1992-93

(f) DH&FS AR 1995-96

(g) DH&FS AR 1997-98

(h) FaCS AR 1999-2000

(i) FaCS AR 2004-05 (Note data for 2001 is at June; 2003 and 2004 is for September.)

(j) FaCS PBS 2003-04

(k) FaCSIA PBS 2006-07

(l) DEEWR PBS 2008-09

²⁶ In some years this data is differentiated between 'Multifunctional' and "Multifunctional Aboriginal Child Care Services". In June 2000 there were 600 of the former and 1,200 of the latter. (FaCS AR 1999-2000)

(m) DEEWR PBS 2009-10

(n) Note, while the PBS refers to the '2009' budget, the count is consistent with the number used by AIHW for 2008 (see Table 8).

3.1.2. AIHW places

A second series of the number of places in childcare, as shown in Table 8, is derived from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare "Australia's Welfare" publications. Data from this source is available for the period 1991 to 2008. In large part the data reported in this series mirrors the departmental data, with the exception of some relatively minor deviations in 1991, 1992 and 1993, and some differences in the level of disaggregation.

Table 8. AIHW reported childcare places, 1991-2008

	CBDC				Family Day Care	Outside School Hours Care	Occasional Care	Total
	Community	Private	Employer	Total				
					Places			
1991	39,567	36,700	(a)	76,267	42,501	44,449	5,059	168,276 (b)
1992	40,262	53,210	(a)	93,472	45,454	48,222	5,634	192,782 (b)
1993	42,777	53,920	7,455	104,152	47,855	50,340	5,626	207,973 (b)
1994	43,399	70,587	9,787	123,773	51,651	59,840	6,228	241,492 (b)
1995	44,566	88,614	11,295	144,475	54,041	64,046	6,365	268,927 (b)
1996	45,601	109,691	12,771	168,063	60,091	71,846	6,575	306,575 (b)
1997	46,294	121,559	15,012	182,865	62,714	78,970	6,564	331,113 (b)
1998	51,710	129,671	13,173	194,554	63,725	134,354 (c)	6,722	399,355 (b)
1999	50,589	127,128	12,609	190,326	64,037	160,955	6,754	422,072 (d)
2000	50,368	128,415	12,132	190,915	66,294	179,743	6,492	443,444 (b)
2001	61,248	132,561	(a)	193,809	70,840	230,511	4,867	500,027 (d)
2002	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2003	64,255	147,390	(a)	211,645	71,123	229,934	4,952	517,654 (e)
2004	65,260	164,343	(a)	229,603	74,508	253,720	4,045	561,876 (f)
2005	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2006	-	-	-	262,931 (g)	75,138	274,132	3,928	616,129 (f)
2007	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	665,900 (h)
2008	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	713,200 (h)

(a) 'Employer and other non-profit centres' are included in 'Private-for-profit long day care centres' in 1991 and 1992. In 2001, with the introduction of the Childcare Operator System, data from the 'employer' category was recoded according to ownership status to either community-based or private-for-profit previously funded under block grant arrangements and a change to a consistent counting methodology.

(b) AIHW Australia's Welfare 2003

(c) The large increase between June 1997 and June 1998 is due to the inclusion for the first time of vacation care places previously funded under block grant arrangements and a change to a consistent counting methodology.

(d) AIHW Australia's Welfare 2003 with FDC and Total taken from AIHW Australia's Welfare 2007

(e) AIHW Australia's Welfare 2005

(f) AIHW Australia's Welfare 2007

(g) Composition of CBDC not provided

(h) AIHW Australia's Welfare 2009, total places only published

3.1.3. Productivity Commission reported places

The Productivity Commission has published in its Report on Government Services data on places in childcare between 1995-96 and 2010-11, although in the last two years only data for Centre Based Day Care services is provided, see Table 9. The data is drawn variously from the Child Care Census and departmental administrative data.

In reporting this data in the 2012 ROGS the Productivity Commission indicated:

Since the uncapping of approved places in 2006, services are not required to report their approved places to DEEWR. Approved places information is not available for all services, and where it is available, services are free to offer care above or below their previously approved

figure, up to the limit of their licence. Accordingly, places should be considered indicative of service capacity. (PC ROGS 2012, Footnote (b) to Table 3A.8)

Table 9. Productivity Commission reported places 1995-96 to 2010-11

	Centre Based Day Care	Family Day Care	Outside School Hours Care Places	Occasional Care	Other	Total
1996	168,000	60,200	71,900	4,900	1,670	308,666
1997 (a)	-	-	-	-	-	-
1998	194,530	63,700	133,970	4,930	1,790	400,918
1999	190,300	64,040	161,000	4,980	1,780	422,100
2000	190,900	66,300	179,700	4,700	1,800	443,400
2001	191,200	67,200	192,800	4,800	1,800	457,800
2002	193,809	70,840	230,511	3,074	1,800	500,034
2003	211,645	71,123	229,934	3,159	1,793	517,654
2004	229,603	74,508	253,720	2,901	1,144	561,876
2005	247,318	75,656	261,238	2,909	1,745	588,866
2006	262,931	75,138	274,132	2,808	1,120	616,129
2007	285,989	74,923	303,243	2,849	1,120	668,124
2008	305,140	74,457	325,691	2,845	..	708,133
2009	318,894	73,456	316,316	2,728	..	711,394
2010	327,113	..	..	..	..	..
2011	335,395	..	..	..	..	..

Notes: .. Data reported as 'Not Available'.

(a) Only data for June 1996 and June 1998 published in 1999 ROGS

Source: Productivity Commission Report on Government Services, 1999, 2001, 2005, 2008, 2012

3.1.4. Derived ACECQA places

A third, more contemporary, but limited, series of the number of places in childcare, as noted above, can be derived from the data published by ACECQA as part of its reporting on quality standards. This data contains a value for: "The maximum number of children the service can care for at any one time". This information is provided for Centre Based Day Care and Outside School Hours Care services in Table 10. Of note is the detailed breakdown by provider type (although in early years this data is impacted by many records having missing data in this classification).²⁷

In relation to the two series above, the comparability of this data for Outside School Hours Care seems limited. Specifically, while the AIHW series reports 274,132 places in 2006 (a level not inconsistent with the early data in the departmental series), the ACECQA series only identifies 244,403 places in 2013. A possible explanation for this relates to whether Before School, After School and Vacation care services offered by the same organisation are considered to be separate services, or they are treated as a single service. From the data it would appear that the departmental and AIHW are, at a minimum, treating BSC and ASC separately to Vacation Care, while ACECQA is counting at the sponsoring organisation level.²⁸

²⁷ ACECQA refer to the 'Management Type' classifications in the Australian Bureau of Statistics' National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection as the basis of this classification (see ABS 2014). It further indicates that this field is not mandatory and may not in all cases be current.

²⁸ Data from the Childcare Censuses, cited in Table 15, indicates that the number of children attending Before and After School Care grew from 173,000 in 2006 to 261,110 in 2013, and the number attending Vacation Care from 107,280 to 147,371.

Table 10. Childcare places derived from ACECQA Quarterly National Quality Standard Data, 2013-2022

Q2	Private not for profit community managed	Private not for profit other organisations	State/ Territory and Local Government managed	State/ Territory government schools	Independent/ Catholic Schools	Private for profit	Other/ Missing (b)	Total
Places								
Centre Based Day Care								
2013 (a)	54,519	73,501	18,159	822	9,012	235,798	8,917	400,728
2014	54,630	74,076	18,226	799	9,539	244,406	7,884	409,560
2015 (b)	48,366	71,367	18,898	869	9,434	230,626	48,734	428,294
2016	57,268	76,346	19,780	904	11,195	281,442	497	447,432
2017	56,925	78,867	19,729	918	12,137	302,418	129	471,123
2018	56,159	81,207	19,694	1,008	13,440	328,823	129	500,460
2019	57,008	83,758	19,174	571	14,122	358,099	129	532,861
2020	57,672	84,958	19,290	784	16,155	383,892	154	562,905
2021	58,266	86,281	19,311	798	17,810	409,590	210	592,266
2022	58,484	87,346	19,342	867	18,818	432,478	210	617,545
Outside School Hours Care								
2013 (a)	67,407	26,352	8,089	28,855	16,303	81,084	16,313	244,403
2014	79,099	28,758	9,016	28,280	16,499	96,051	20,185	277,888
2015	80,782	28,672	10,556	30,646	16,467	104,777	13,470	285,370
2016	84,259	32,127	10,182	29,282	18,497	119,520	239	294,106
2017	83,397	33,357	9,813	27,129	17,482	126,305	1,204	298,687
2018	70,929	47,775	9,028	25,919	17,331	132,323	1,054	304,359
2019	72,419	51,320	8,623	25,469	17,822	136,954	1,009	313,616
2020	71,089	56,080	8,319	24,910	19,064	142,103	1,069	322,634
2021	71,731	60,781	7,897	23,928	20,243	147,247	1,080	332,907
2022	72,645	66,515	7,641	23,185	20,682	156,229	1,113	348,010

(a) Data for Q3 2013 as earlier data are not available.

(b) Early data, and in particular data for 2015 Centre Based Day Care, has a high number of records with missing information on the management type of services.

Source: Derived from ACECQA "Quarterly National Quality Standard Data (Q3 2013 - Q3 2021)" (ACECQA 2021) and "National Quality Standard Data as of 1 July 2022" (ACECQA 2021)

3.1.5. Aggregating the series

While there are some minor discrepancies between the series published by the AIHW and by Departments, they can be considered for the most part as being equivalent, although bearing in mind the potential, within series inconsistency, related to 'approved' versus 'operational' places. As noted above, it is less clear the extent to which the derived ACECQA series is conceptually compatible, although this would appear to be mainly related to the OSHC sector, as well as the absence of data on FDC.

With these caveats Table 11 presents a composite table of places, drawing upon the sector specific Departmental data for 1982 to 1997, Productivity Commission data for 1998 to 2011, and ACECQA data for 2013 to 2022.

Table 11. Childcare places, consolidated series 1982–2022

	CBDC	FDC	OSHC	Total
			Places	
1982	18,568	15,100	7,910	41,578
1983	20,008	20,100	9,870	49,978
1984	23,048	24,250	11,620	58,918
1985	31,398	32,197	14,766	78,361
1986	34,602	34,035	15,866	84,503
1987	40,812	38,361	31,287	110,460
1988	44,229	39,510	30,194	113,933
1989	44,148	39,550	30,568	114,266
1990	44,398	40,974	37,212	122,584
1991	81,326 (a)	42,501	44,449	168,276
1992	99,106	45,454	48,222	192,782
1993	109,778	47,855	50,340	207,973
1994	130,001	51,651	59,840	241,492
1995	150,840	54,041	64,046	268,927
1996	174,638	60,091	71,846	306,575
1997	189,429	62,714	78,970	331,113
1998	194,530	63,700	133,970 (b)	392,200
1999	190,300	64,040	161,000	400,918
2000	190,900	66,300	179,700	422,100
2001	191,200	67,200	192,800	443,400
2002	193,809	70,840	230,511	457,800
2003	211,645	71,123	229,934	500,034
2004	229,603	74,508	253,720	517,654
2005	247,318	75,656	261,238	561,876
2006	262,931	75,138	274,132	588,866
2007	285,989	74,923	303,243	616,129
2008	305,140	74,457	325,691	668,124
2009	318,894	73,456	316,316	708,133
2010	327,113			
2011	335,395			
2012	-	-	-	-
2013	400,728	-	244,403 (c)	-
2014	409,560	-	277,888	-
2015	428,294	-	285,370	-
2016	447,432	-	294,106	-
2017	471,123	-	298,687	-
2018	500,460	-	304,359	-
2019	532,861	-	313,616	-
2020	562,905	-	322,634	-
2021	592,266	-	332,907	-
2022	617,545	-	348,010	-

- Not available

(a) Inclusion of for-profit, and some formerly unfunded not for profit Centre Based Day Care Services.

(b) Large increase reflects the inclusion of Vacation Care Services.

(c) Data does not appear to be wholly comparable with early series, potentially as a result of treatment of services offering a range of different Outside School Hours Care services.

Source: Table 7, Table 9 and Table 10.

3.2. Children using care

Counts and estimates of children using childcare come from three sources: departmental administrative systems which are primarily concerned with the number of children who are in receipt of assistance, or attending services which are eligible for the receipt of such support; censuses of childcare services undertaken, or funded, by the Australian government; and household surveys of childcare use conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

3.2.1. Childcare administrative data

Departmental annual reports between 1988-89 and 1992-93 contained a series of tables presenting “estimated numbers of children attending Children’s Services Program funded services”, broken down by

service type and state. This is summarised at the national level in Table 12. The source of this data is not provided in the publications.

Table 12. Departmental published estimated number of children attending funded childcare services, 1989-1993

June	Centre Based Day Care		Family Employer and other non- profit	Family Day Care	Occasional Care and Other	Outside School Hours Care (b)	Total
	Community	Private (a)					
Children							
1989	63,789	-	-	56,713	9,336	29,055	158,894
1990	67,058	-	-	54,959	16,287	42,744	181,048
1991	68,099	58,231	-	56,968	20,230	67,948 (c)	271,476
1992	67,751	90,652	-	66,127	26,455	50,754	301,739
1993	75,700	100,350	14,500	78,800	20,950	53,500 (d)	343,800

(a) In 1991 these were classified as "Fee Relief Only Centres".

(b) Excludes Vacation Care.

(c) No explanation is given for what appears to be the very high number of children attending Outside School Hours Care in June 1991. While the Annual Report states that there was growth in this sector "Similarly, the significant increase in Outside School Hours Care places resulted in the estimated level of demand met for formal care for 5-12 year olds increasing from 34 per cent in 1989-90 to 44 per cent in 1990-91" (DHH&CS AR 1990-91, 170), this refers to an increase in approved places from 37,212 to 44,449 (a 19.4 per cent increase), not the 59.0 per cent seen in attendance. Further it does not explain the fall in reported children attending in 1992, despite a further growth to 48,222 places.

(d) Source reports this as "includes Year Round Care".

Source: DCS&H AR 1988-89 & 1989-90, DHH&CS AR 1990-91 & 1991-92 and DHHLG&CS AR 1992-93.

In the early 2000s, Departmental Annual Reports included some estimates of the number of children "using formal, Australian Government-approved child care services" (FaCS AR 2003-04, 8), with the previous year's annual report indicating that this was drawn from 'Centrelink Administrative data'. The available data is shown in Table 13.

Table 13. Departmental published estimates of children using approved childcare services 2001-2005

Quarter	Number of children
Children	
September 2001	709,000 (a)
September 2002	759,000 (a)
September 2003	763,000 (b)
December 2003	755,000 (c)
December 2004	787,000 (c)
December 2005	802,000 (d)

Source (a) FaCS AR 2002-03
 (b) FaCS AR 2003-04
 (c) FaCS AR 2004-05
 (d) FaCSIA AR 2005-06

After this, the department's published data was more limited, focusing on children eligible for assistance until June 2009 when the department commenced a regular quarterly publication of the number of children attending care²⁹. This is detailed in Table 14 and Figure 4. This data counts the number of children who utilised care on at least one occasion during the quarter. As has been previously noted, this measurement approach generates higher estimates of childcare usage than those based on point of time or weekly counts.

²⁹ The sporadic publication of this data over the decade stands in contrast to the announcement by the Department of Families and Community Services in 1999: "With the introduction of Child Care Benefit from July 2000 data on the number of children will be collected on a regular basis. Number of children in each service type will be then available as a performance measure" (FaCS AR 1998-99, 187).

Table 14. Departmental reported number of children attending childcare by type of care, June quarter 2009 to September quarter 2021

	Form of childcare used:					Total (a)
	Centre Based Day Care	Family Day Care	Outside School Hours Care	In Home Care	Occasional Care	
			Children			
Jun 2009	476,170	99,960 (b)	242,500	-	7,150	800,370
Sep 2009	530,030	106,640 (b)	253,760	-	8,120	871,110
Dec 2009	543,840	106,230 (b)	242,600	-	7,950	874,320
Mar 2010	545,190	108,900 (b)	258,230	-	6,830	879,050
Jun 2010	528,140	105,380 (b)	256,160	-	6,910	869,770
Sep 2010	556,650	108,090 (b)	267,530	-	7,460	910,810
Dec 2010	568,080	108,200 (b)	255,850	-	7,320	911,990
Mar 2011	593,240	114,110 (b)	280,200	-	7,120	950,760
Jun 2011	585,000	112,720 (b)	288,090	-	7,580	963,870
Sep 2011	607,510	115,660 (b)	292,810	-	7,660	992,520
Dec 2011	611,440	115,410 (b)	282,550	-	7,300	987,590
Mar 2012	598,450	117,790 (b)	299,420	-	6,130	976,230
Jun 2012	587,100	118,700 (b)	304,120	-	6,510	986,280
Sep 2012	615,630	125,230 (b)	315,220	-	6,950	1,030,970
Dec 2012	623,980	128,930 (b)	303,210	-	7,230	1,033,150
Mar 2013	621,250	135,770 (b)	327,220	-	7,130	1,042,280
Jun 2013	606,710	142,400 (b)	334,480	-	7,650	1,057,900
Sep 2013	637,590	155,430 (b)	345,160	-	8,260	1,111,100
Dec 2013	646,750	165,440 (b)	335,110	-	8,130	1,120,880
Mar 2014	641,740	179,200 (b)	354,020	-	6,920	1,127,730
Jun 2014	631,400	192,510 (b)	367,940	-	7,430	1,161,150
Sep 2014	658,400	203,790 (b)	369,630	-	7,750	1,201,110
Dec 2014	664,890	208,380 (b)	339,260	-	7,630	1,184,750
Mar 2015	660,760	220,420 (b)	382,580	-	6,670	1,211,200
Jun 2015	643,810	220,850 (b)	391,150	-	7,010	1,224,170
Sep 2015	676,050	227,990 (b)	398,730	-	7,380	1,269,190
Dec 2015	685,760	220,230	368,650	4,890 (b)	7,100	1,247,820
Mar 2016	677,380	208,310	409,370	4,700	5,960	1,242,470
Jun 2016	660,370	206,080	413,010	4,670	6,270	1,250,270
Sep 2016	694,500	207,260	417,650	4,630	6,530	1,288,480
Dec 2016	706,570	201,430	401,380	4,680	6,530	1,280,770
Mar 2017	699,510	202,190	433,480	4,510	5,660	1,281,260
Jun 2017	682,060	179,400	436,260	4,530	5,850	1,268,140
Sep 2017	721,090	178,480	445,140	4,540	6,140	1,312,650
Dec 2017	734,250	167,220	431,420	4,500	6,180	1,302,940
Mar 2018	721,610	163,660	458,750	4,280	5,390	1,287,900
Jun 2018	694,830	149,670	453,850	4,040	5,300	1,269,260
Sep 2018	751,450	131,600	468,740	2,740	(c)	1,316,350
Dec 2018	769,960	126,930	453,060	2,410	-	1,316,080
Mar 2019	766,790	124,490	478,930	2,230	-	1,306,300
Jun 2019	738,700	115,207	473,538	2,265	-	1,294,522
Sep 2019	781,380	112,360	481,630	2,390	-	1,340,410
Dec 2019	797,760	108,600	465,370	2,380	-	1,339,970
Mar 2020	785,040	107,670	489,800	2,340	-	1,318,900
Jun 2020	-	-	-	-	-	(d)
Sep 2020	747,130	87,050	367,100	2,150	-	1,178,370
Dec 2020	795,340	93,280	408,070	2,280	-	1,266,880
Mar 2021	816,880	94,710	468,190	2,450	-	1,317,010
Jun 2021	782,760	90,800	486,120	2,500	-	1,328,540
Sep 2021	816,070	90,450	472,290	2,460	-	1,346,140
Dec 2021	826,760	87,610	454,530	2,420	-	1,338,580
Mar 2022	820,440	85,950	490,480	2,340	-	1,335,660
Jun 2022	787,500	81,550	516,920	2,160	-	1,356,550
Sep 2022	825,850	82,420	536,660	2,150	-	1,413,230

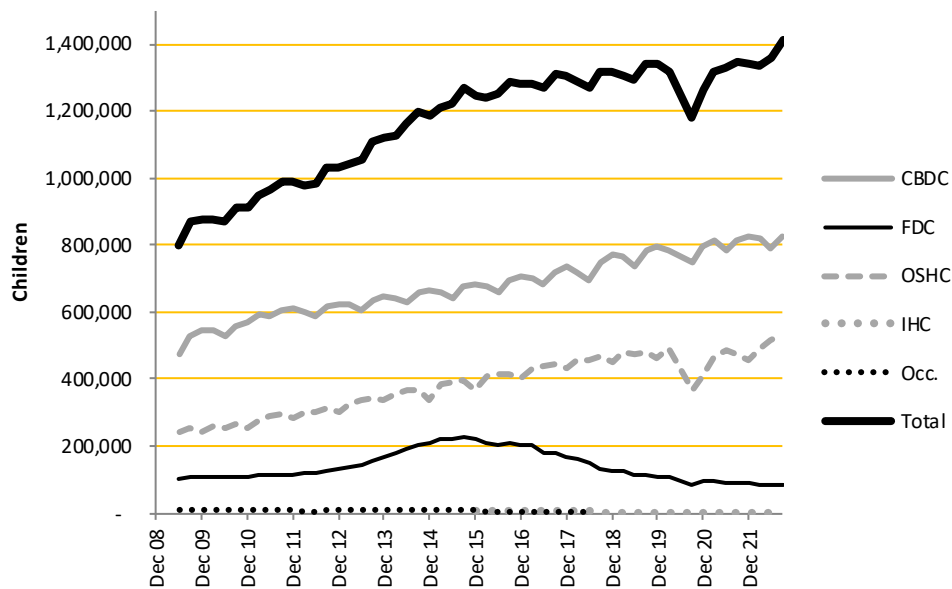
(a) Total does not equal sum of the individual elements as children may attend more than one type of care in the quarter.

- (b) Until December 2015 children using In Home Care were included with those using Family Day Care.
- (c) In July 2018 as a result of the introduction of the new childcare funding structure, Occasional Care services were brought within scope of Centre Based Day Care services.
- (d) Data not collected due to impact of COVID-19.

Source: Quarterly reports in the following series: 2009–2011: DEEWR Child Care Update, 2011–2013: DE Child Care + Early Learning in Summary, 2014–2018 DET Early Childhood and Child Care in Summary, 2018–2022: DE Child Care in Australia.

Also, as illustrated in Figure 4, there is a distinct seasonality to participation, especially with regard to Centre Based Day Care. This emphasises the need for caution in making comparisons between quarters. The chart also clearly shows the initial growth and then decline in children attending Family Day Care services.

Figure 4. Reported number of children attending childcare, June 2009 to September 2022



Source: Table 14

3.2.2. Departmental surveys and census

In 1993 the AIHW reported:

In 1979, the Office of Child Care, then in the Department of Social Security, began a national data collection on government-supported child care services. This collection was conducted yearly except in 1983 and 1985. With increased Commonwealth involvement in the funding of child care, and the extension of the range of child care services available, the annual census grew in coverage and in the range of information collected. Detailed data is now available on all types of Commonwealth-funded child care services and their users. (AIHW 1993, 35)

While initially conducted annually, over time the frequency and structure of this collection varied, as did the language used to describe it. One of the variations saw the collection being conducted over a two year period, with data on some types of services being collected in one year, and on the others in the next. In some cases the partial results were published for the year in which the survey was undertaken. In other years the two sets of results were published as a combined census, with adjustment for changes in the service provision covered by the initial collection. There have also been varying practices with regard to the reporting of results. In some years the primary results have been published solely for respondent services, whereas in others data has been adjusted to account for under-enumeration due to non-

response.³⁰ Table 15 presents a systematic series adjusted for under-enumeration, except for 1984 where the original publication has not been able to be located and insufficient information exists to determine whether the figure cited in other publications has had such adjustment.^{31, 32} The Social Research Centre, which currently undertakes the census under contract to the Department, refers to it now being undertaken on a “typical three-year collection cycle”.

Typically the survey/census has collected data on the service, and the children attending, for a ‘reference week’, the timing of which has varied across the years. Of particular note is that since 1994 the survey has collected data from Outside School Hours Care services with respect to before and after school care, and with respect to vacation care, at two different time points. This is to enable the collection of data on use of before and after school care during school terms, and of vacation care in school year vacations. This strategy is recognised as introducing some double counting of children who use both services.³³

While the census provides information on services and children attending them, a priority in the collection has been on employees, in particular with regard to educational qualifications.

As with many of the other data collections, the scope of the censuses over time reflects the scope of childcare support programs, with for example data only being collected on private Centre Based Day services from 1991 onwards, following the extension of childcare assistance to this sector.³⁴

Table 15 presents the detailed results from the census, with Table 13 providing three summary measures drawn from this.

³⁰ The adjustment approach which appears to have been used when both the response and adjusted data have been published is to adjust the raw count on the basis of the ‘state by sector’ response rate. This approach has been adopted here. It is noted though that there may be some discrepancies with the published adjusted figure due to the rounding of response rates in the published material.

³¹ With respect to this collection it is noted that in its report on the 1992 Census the department states: “The Census of Child Care Services has been conducted regularly since 1986” (DHHLG&CS 1992, 1). It is not clear whether this reflects a perspective that the 1984 collection was ‘irregular’, or was not considered as being part of the series.

³² While SRC (2017 vii) and DEEWR (AR 2009-10, 20) refer also to a 2008-09 Child Care Provider Survey (CCPS), data from this does not appear to have been released except for a minor citation in the Annual Report.

³³ While some double counting of children may occur where children attend multiple services, more generally, this is considered relatively minor.

³⁴ The report on the 1986 Census notes, for example: “Other day care services which do not receive funding from the Children’s Services Program (eg services funded entirely by State Government Departments or privately operated services) were not included in the collection” (DCS 1986, 2).

Table 15. Workforce Census estimates of children using care, adjusted for non-response, 1984-2021

	Centre Based Day Care			Family Day Care	Occasion- al Care	In OSHC			Other				Total	Total	
	Comm- unity	Employer &NFP	Private			Home Care	Before & After School	Vacation	MACS	MFS	Mobile	APG			
	Children														
1984	36,163	-	-	36,163	37,720	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	73,883 (d)
1985	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1986	53,801	-	-	53,801	45,570	-	-	15,155	-	-	-	-	-	-	114,526 (e)
1987	56,749	-	-	56,749	49,512	5,040	-	24,648	-	-	-	-	-	-	135,949 (f)
1988	59,746	-	-	59,746	56,154	6,027	-	29,740	-	-	-	-	-	-	151,667 (g)
1989	64,060	-	-	64,060	53,969	10,825	-	34,672	-	980	-	-	-	980	164,506 (h)
1990	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1991	65,896	(a)	69,591	135,487	60,966	13,087	-	47,067	-	1,443	954	-	-	2,397	259,005 (i)
1992	70,028	11,157	77,620	158,805	70,126	13,976	-	52,932	-	1,670	1,043	3,902	-	6,615	302,454 (j)
1993	75,879	12,220	100,552	188,651	76,784	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	- (k)
1994	77,700	16,100	133,500	227,300	88,700	13,058	-	78,078	12,500	1,765	997	3,175	2,459	8,396	428,032 (l)
1995	79,733	17,535	156,056	253,324	91,791	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	- (m)
1996	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1997	82,802	18,886	193,014	294,702	84,971	26,588 (d)	-	99,518	30,972	1,715	1,020	3,267	1,924	7,926	544,677 (n)
1998	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1999	81,330	(b)	220,210	301,540	83,080	8,914	-	107,422	69,302	1,724	1,014	3,012	1,447	7,196	577,454 (o)
2000	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2001	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2002	113,040	(b)	254,100	367,140	95,630	8,720	1,500	148,040	103,560	1,890	1,010	3,390	1,270	7,560	732,150 (p)
2003	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2004	113,690	(b)	269,330	383,020	89,300	7,610	3,240	160,800	101,710	1,760	1,060	3,060	1,200	7,080	752,750 (q)
2005	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2006	(c)	(c)	(c)	420,110	84,350	7,050	3,200	173,770	107,280	1,560	-	2,410	1,320	5,300	801,060 (r)
2007	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2008	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2009	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2010	-	-	-	543,539	93,738	6,401	3,513	211,514	130,747	-	-	-	-	-	989,452 (s)
2011	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2012	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2013	..	..	..	585,069	134,036	7,257	5,730	261,110	147,371	-	-	-	-	-	1,140,573 (t)
2014	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2015	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2016	-	-	-	619,357	183,015	5,249	3,687	299,208	158,306	-	-	-	-	-	1,268,822 (u)
2017	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2018	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2019	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2020	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2021	-	-	-	713,564	75,450	-	1,842	314,100	176,697	-	-	-	-	-	1,281,653 (v)

.. No census conducted in the year.

- Service type not collected at this level of detail, out of scope of census, or not a program type in the year.

MACS Multifunctional Aboriginal Child Care Service

MFS Multifunctional Service

Mobile Mobile Child Care Services and Toy Libraries

APG Aboriginal Play Group

- (a) Publication indicates that 'private' "includes private, employer sponsored and previously unfunded non-profit services (eg TAFE centres)" (Table 1).
- (b) The 1999 Report indicates "Private long day care centres in previous years were reported in two categories ie. Private long day care centres and employer sponsored and non-profit long day care centres. In the 1999 Census of Child Care Services results for private long day care centres are reported as combined data ie. including employer sponsored and non-profit long day care centres."
- (c) Only total CBDC recorded from 2006 onwards.
- (d) This comprises 11,238 children attending "Occasional Care" and 15,350 attending "Neighbourhood model occasional care services".
- (d) As published in AIHW (1993, 133). Possibly uncorrected for under-enumeration.
- (e) DCS, 1986 Survey of Day Care Services. Adjusted for non-response at sector level.
- (f) DCS&H, Children's Services Program 1987 Census of Day Care Services. Adjusted for non-response at sector level. Publication notes an estimate of 136,000 children (p.4).
- (g) DCS&H, Children's Services Program 1988 Census of Day Care Services. Adjusted for non-response at sector level. Publication notes an estimate of 152,000 children (p.3).
- (h) DCS&H, 1989 Census of Child Care Services. Adjusted for non-response at state by sector level, publication reports an estimate of "about 166,000 children" (p. 3).
- (i) DHH&CS, 1991 Census of Child Care Services. Adjusted for non-response at state by sector level, publication reports an estimate of "about 262,000 children". This publication further reports "One important development affecting the 1991 Census is the extension of the long day care fee relief system to include private, employer sponsored centres and previously unfunded non-profit services (eg. TAFE centres)" (p.1).
- (j) DHHLG&CS, 1992 Census of Child Care Services. Adjusted for non-response at state and service level.
- (k) DHS&H, 1993 Census of Child Care Services. Census only conducted for Long Day Care and Family Day Care, adjusted for non-response at state by sector level. Publication reports an estimate of "about 265,300 children" (p. 3). This is consistent with the calculated estimate of 265,435.
- (l) DHS&H, 1994 Census of Child Care Services. Estimates for Long Day Care and Family Day Care as reported in publication "based on 1993 Census figures and growth in places to June, 1994" (p. 5), these appear to be adjusted for non-response. Other data adjusted for non-response at state by sector level, publication reports an estimate of "about 428,300 children". The publication, as with subsequent publications, indicates in table footnotes: "Children attending both Outside School Hours Care and Vacation Care are counted under each Service Type".
- (m) DH&FS, 1995 Census of Child Care Services. Census only conducted for Long Day Care and Family Day Care, adjusted for non-response at state by sector level, publication reports an estimate of "about 346,700 children" (p. 6). This estimate appears to be consistent with a sector level only correction for under-enumeration.
- (n) FaCS, 1997 Census of Child Care Services and 1996 Census of Child Care Services. While data was collected from some service types in 1996, and others in 1997, given a number of the tables present this data in a consolidated format, this approach has been adopted here. In reporting on these censuses the department commenced reporting estimates adjusted for non-response. They advise that: "The estimation technique that was used was a stratified sample weighting approach where weights were attached to each record ... by service type State/Territory and geographical locations" (p. 2). In addition to what are simply identified as "Occasional Care" this census contains data for what are described as "Neighbourhood Model Occasional Care Services" The publication reports these as: "Neighbourhood model services are services established in neighbourhood settings (as opposed to the larger formula-funded services in central locations), often using existing capital infrastructure. The State governments are responsible for administering the program, and the Commonwealth contribution is by way of a block grant to the States/Territories in lieu of operational subsidy and Childcare Assistance" (p. 277). These services do not appear to be included in any of the other Censuses and are omitted in the time series published in the 1999 and 2002

publications. While both this publication and the 1999 publication give the number of children in Family Day Care as 84,971, in the 2002 publication there appears to be a transcription error with the number reported as 84,790.

- (o) FaCS, 1999 Census of Child Care Services, Commonwealth Child Care Support. Data for Centre Based Day Care, Family Day Care and Outside School Hours (including vacation) Care as published as including "an estimate of non-respondent services". (Analysis indicates that the estimation approach only used sector level response rates. Using sector and state level response level weighting produces an estimate of 576,323 in lieu of the published 577,454). Here the estimates as published are used, however as the table only published an adjusted total for "Other Services" the estimates for these have been derived by adjustment for state and sector non-response, and then benchmarked to the aggregate published total. (This has also been undertaken in 2002, 2004 and 2006). Note the timing of the census shifted to May rather than August.
- (p) FaCS, 2002 Census of Child Care Services. Methodology as per 1999. Note the 2006 Census report notes "the 2001 Census only surveyed family day care schemes using the 'Harmony' software system. For this reason care should be taken in comparing family day care results between the 2001 Census and other Censuses" (p.2). Additionally there was a change in the classification approach to Centre Based Day Care with the classification into 'private' and 'community' shifting from the management structure of the service to the "management structure of the legal entity that owns the service" (p. 2).
- (q) FaCS, 2004 Census of Child Care Services. Methodology as per 1999.
- (r) FaCS, 2006 Australian Government Census of Child Care Services. Methodology as per 1999. The Report notes "Multifunctional Children's Services were no longer a service type in 2006. Long day care and Family day care components of Multifunctional Children's Services were collected under the relevant service categories in 2006" (p.5).
- (s) SRC, 2011, 2010 National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census. The report indicated that the data on children have been weighted to take account of non-response. It further notes that in reporting time series data: "In 2004, 'other service types' also included Multifunctional Children's Services. In 2006 'other service types' included non mainstream services such as multifunctional Aboriginal children's services, mobile and toy library services, and Aboriginal playgroups and enrichment programs. Data was not collected from 'Other services' in 2010 as non mainstream services were out of scope of the National ECEC Workforce Census" (p. 16).
- (t) SRC, 2014, 2013 National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census. See notes for 2010.
- (u) SRC, 2017, 2016 Early Childhood Education and Care National Workforce Census. See notes for 2010.
- (v) SRC, 2022, 2021 Early Childhood Education and Care National Workforce Census. Following the Introduction of the 2018 Child Care Package Occasional Care Services were no longer differentiated from other Centre Based Day Care Services. See also notes for 2010.

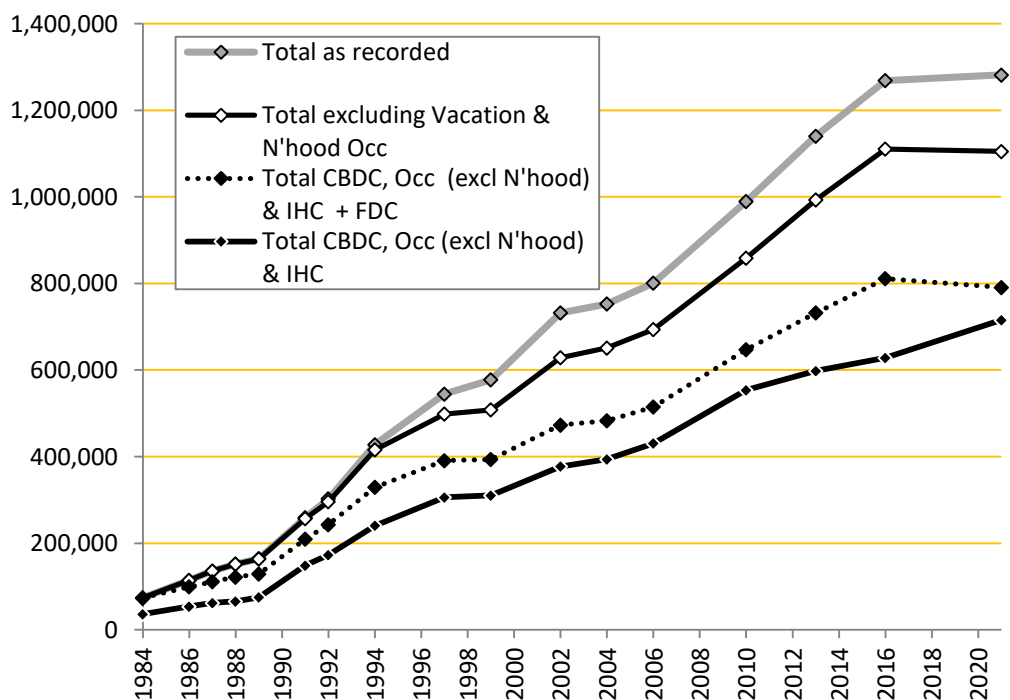
Table 16 presents a series of restrictive totals derived from the census data: the actual census total number of children; the number of children attending various forms of centre-based care, including Occasional Care as well as those attending In Home Care; this total along with Family Day Care; and fourthly, these children along with those attending non-vacation Outside School Hours Care. The rationale for this selection is to avoid the issues associated with double counting of children using both, before or after school care, and vacation care and provide a series which can be considered as having some greater internal consistency. These are also plotted in Figure 5.

Table 16. Workforce Census estimates of children using care, selected sub-totals (adjusted for non-response), 1984-2021

	Total as recorded	Total CBDC, Occ. (excl N'hood) & IHC	Total CBDC, Occ. (excl N'hood) & IHC + FDC	Total excluding Vacation & N'hood Occ.
	Children			
1984	73,883	36,163	73,883	73,883
1985	-	-	-	-
1986	114,526	53,801	99,371	114,526
1987	135,949	61,789	111,301	135,949
1988	151,667	65,773	121,927	151,667
1989	164,506	74,885	128,854	163,526
1990	-	-	-	-
1991	259,005	148,574	209,541	256,608
1992	302,454	172,780	242,906	295,839
1993	-	-	-	-
1994	428,032	240,358	329,058	415,532
1995	-	-	-	-
1996	-	-	-	-
1997	544,677	305,940	390,911	498,355
1998	-	-	-	-
1999	577,454	310,454	393,534	508,152
2000	-	-	-	-
2001	-	-	-	-
2002	732,150	377,360	472,990	628,590
2003	-	-	-	-
2004	752,750	393,870	483,170	651,040
2005	-	-	-	-
2006	801,060	430,360	514,710	693,780
2007	-	-	-	-
2008	-	-	-	-
2009	-	-	-	-
2010	989,452	553,453	647,191	858,705
2011	-	-	-	-
2012	-	-	-	-
2013	1,140,573	598,056	732,092	993,202
2014	-	-	-	-
2015	-	-	-	-
2016	1,268,822	628,293	811,308	1,110,516
2017	-	-	-	-
2018	-	-	-	-
2019	-	-	-	-
2020	-	-	-	-
2021	1,281,653	715,406	790,856	1,104,956

Source: Derived from Table 17

Figure 5. Workforce Census estimates of children using care, selected sub-totals (adjusted for non-response), 1984-2021



Source: Table 16

3.2.3. ABS Childcare surveys

The ABS has conducted household based surveys of childcare since 1969, with the most recent survey being conducted in 2017.³⁵ Over this period the focus and scope of the survey has changed significantly. In particular the scope, especially with regard to child level reporting, was limited in the earlier surveys:

- The 1969 and 1973 surveys focused on children aged under 6 years who “were the responsibility of persons in the labour force” – who in turn were defined as “females, and widowed divorced and permanently separated males” – effectively families in which all parent(s) were in the labour force.³⁶ In both of these surveys attendance at preschools and kindergartens was classified as childcare.
- The 1977 survey slightly changed this to define children as those aged under 12 years not attending school and replaced ‘responsible parent’ labour force participation, with employment.

³⁵ The ABS indicates that the release date of the next publication of this series is ‘Unknown’ and the survey does not appear to be listed in the agency’s work program. Personal correspondence (Baxter 2023a) indicates that the series has been cancelled: ‘I have a 2020 email from the ABS confirming that this survey had been discontinued. It says: “The Australian Bureau of Statistics is advising that the Childhood Education and Care Survey (CEACS) has been withdrawn from the survey program. The survey contained a large number of entrenched references to obsolete child care subsidies and programs so it had become less relevant.” Notwithstanding this claim this dataset is a rich source of information and the available unit record files allow for detailed analysis. See for example Baxter (2013).

While some data is available on childcare use in the 2019-20 Survey of Income and Housing, these are more limited with a focus to “provide data items examining the interactions between child care use, income and labour force participation” (ABS 2022a). More significantly, in the light of the above cancellation, which appears to predate this publication, the ABS then states: “These data items are not intended to provide a detailed exploration of child care: this can be found in Childhood Education and Care, Australia, June 2017” (ABS 2022a).

³⁶ In the case of unemployed persons the 1973 publication indicates: “For unemployed persons, includes proposed care arrangements” (ABS 1973 Cat No 4402.0, 13). In 1969 the number of children in care of employed persons was reported as 18,500, and those in the care of a person in the labour force as 20,800 (ABS 1969).

- In 1980 the scope of the survey was extended to all families with children not at school and changed to focus from employment of the 'responsible parent' to 'all parent(s) employed'.
- The 1984 to 2002, surveys recorded childcare use for all children under 12 years, with this extending to include age 12 in 2005 (although this publication also included time series data on the basis of children aged under 12).
- From 2008 onwards the ABS commenced reporting participation in childcare on the basis of usual attendance, rather than in the previous week (ABS 2008 Cat No 4402.0, 45).

Additional differences across the surveys include:

- The timing of the surveys varies between March, May, June and November.
- Variations across surveys in deriving the total number of children using care of any particular type, or in aggregate where children attend multiple forms of care, as well as preschool. Two specific cases are:
 - In 1984 and 1987 disaggregation of care used was into categories by type for children who used one form of care, with children who used multiple forms being classified separately into "Two or more arrangements". While in the 1996 survey publication ABS provided a time series table which reclassified the 1987 data into the form used subsequently, this was not provided for 1984.
 - Until 2005, the aggregate number of children who used any formal care also included those who attended preschool. ABS issued a revised time series back to March 1996 which excluded preschool attendance from the formal care definition, but not for the earlier data.

Table 17 provides June 1980, November 1984, June 1987 and June 2008 data for a number of subpopulations, linking to different approaches, to provide some insight into the impact of these changes.

Table 17. ABS Child Care Surveys, Children using childcare, 1969-2017

		Centre Based Day Care	Family Day Care	OSHC	Occasional Care	Multiple	Other/ NEC	Total	Population	Rate
										- Children - -%-
May 1969	Children <6, resp. parent in LF + preschool	-	-	-	-	-	-	20,800 (a)	243,800 (b)	8.5 (i)
May 1973	Children <6, resp. parent in LF + preschool	-	-	-	-	-	-	38,700 (a)	334,000 (b)	11.6 (ii)
May 1977	Children not at school, resp. parent employed (excl WFH) + preschool	-	-	-	-	-	-	37,700 (a)	230,000 (c)	16.4 (iii)
June 1980	Children not at school	90,500	-	-	-	-	-	90,500	1,128,000	8.0 (iv)
	All parents employed + preschool	61,800	-	-	-	-	-	61,800 (a)	284,300	21.7 (iv)
	All Parents employed	39,200	-	-	-	-	-	39,200	284,300	13.8 (iv)
Nov. 1984	Children < 12 yrs	91,100	37,400	-	-	12,100	12,000	152,600 (d)	2,897,400	5.3 (v)
	Not attending school	75,100	29,100	-	-	11,900	11,300	127,400 (d)	1,300,800	9.8 (v)
June 1987	Children < 12 yrs	154,600	51,800	-	-	-	15,700	222,100 (d)	2,887,900	7.7 (vi)
	Aged 0-4 years	123,600	39,200	-	-	-	11,900	174,700 (d)	1,214,300	14.4 (vi)
Nov. 1990	Children < 12 yrs	113,100	78,100	44,000	-	-	57,400	292,600 (d)	3,003,700	9.7 (vi)
June. 1993		146,700	80,700	85,800	50,000	-	30,000	393,200 (d)	3,085,900	12.7 (vi)
March 1996		177,700	96,200	111,700	52,400	-	22,000	447,000 (e)	3,102,800	14.4 (vi)(vii)
June 1999		242,000	87,100	154,100	42,900	-	29,400	533,000	3,123,000	17.1 (vii)(viii)
June 2002		297,000	95,900	171,000	36,300	-	11,700	597,000	3,100,000	19.3 (vii)(ix)
June 2005		323,800	106,100	227,000	49,500	-	18,000	704,400	3,115,100	22.6 (x)
June 2008	Prev. week <12 yrs	387,000	63,000	235,000	25,000	-	20,000	711,000	3,223,000	22.1 (vii)
	Usual < 13 yrs	408,000	71,000	253,000	25,000	-	21,000	756,000	3,498,000	21.6 (vii)
June 2011		496,800	80,100	281,800	22,800	-	-	863,900 (f)	3,647,600	23.7 (xi)
June 2014		520,200	96,500	298,800	15,900	-	-	919,400 (f)	3,843,800	23.9 (xi)
June 2017		602,000	115,000	363,700	19,900	-	-	1,089,000 (f)	4,009,200	27.2 (xi)

Notes:

- (a) Includes preschool.
- (b) Excludes those attending school.
- (c) Excludes children whose 'responsible' parent worked at home.
- (d) Total is sum of the specific care types as it was not possible to separately estimate the level of non-preschool multiple use. On the basis of data from 1996 to 2017, this is likely to overestimate the actual number of children by around 2.5 per cent.
- (e) Total care derived from 2008 publication.
- (f) ABS, TableBuilder used as published tables omit count of Occasional Care.

Sources:

- (i) ABS. 2009. Child Care May 1969
- (ii) ABS, Child Care May 1973
- (iii) ABS, Child Care May 1977

- (iv) ABS, Child Care Arrangements, Australia, June 1980
- (v) ABS, Child Care Arrangements, Australia, November 1984
- (vi) ABS, Child Care, Australia, March 1996
- (vii) ABS, Childhood Education and Care, June 2008
- (viii) ABS, Child Care, Australia, June 1999
- (ix) ABS, Child Care, Australia, June 2002
- (x) ABS, Child Care, Australia, June 2005
- (xi) ABS, TableBuilder Childhood and Care datasets 2011, 2014, 2017

From this data, and the identified subpopulations, it is possible to define some 5 broadly consistent overlapping time series segments, as detailed in Table 18 and Figure 6. These show a tendency for each of the new 'standard definitions' to incorporate a larger population of children using childcare.

Table 18. ABS Child Care Surveys, Children using childcare, consistent time series segments, 1969-2017.

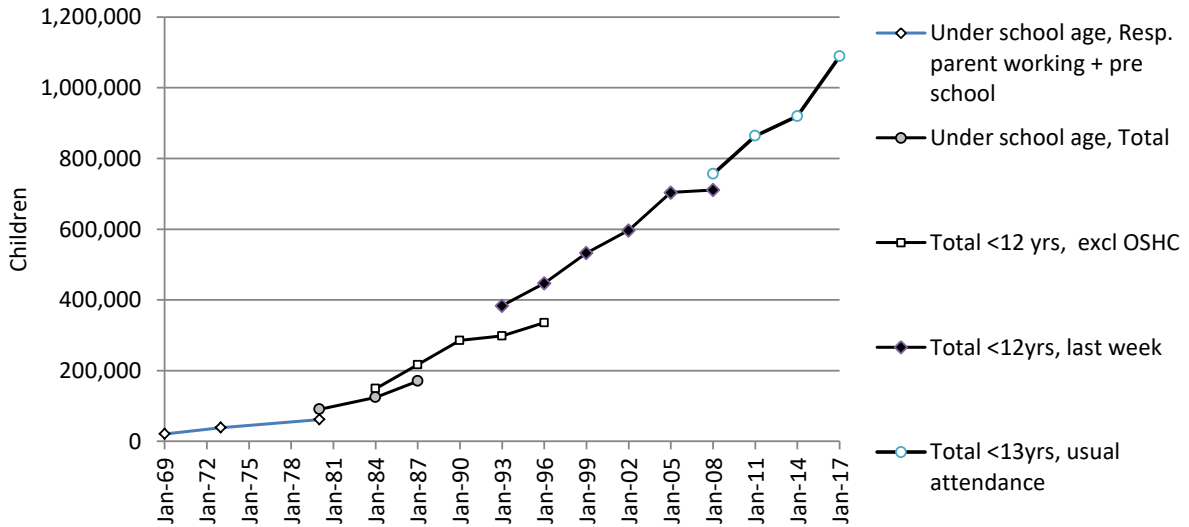
	Under school age, Parent working + pre school	Total	Total, excl OSHC	Total, last week	Total, usual attendance
	Children				
May-69	20,800	-	-	-	-
May-73	38,700	-	-	-	-
May-77(a)	-	-	-	-	-
Jun-80	61,800	90,500	-	-	-
Nov-84	-	124,308	148,897	-	- (b)
Jun-87	-	170,460	216,710	-	- (b)
Nov-90	-	-	285,499	-	- (b)
Jun-93	-	-	297,858	383,658	- (b)
Mar-96	-	-	335,300	447,000	-
Jun-99	-	-	-	533,000	-
Jun-02	-	-	-	597,000	-
Jun-05	-	-	-	704,000	-
Jun-08	-	-	-	711,000	756,000
Jun-11	-	-	-	-	863,900
Jun-14	-	-	-	-	919,400
Jun-17	-	-	-	-	1,089,000

(a) Not included in table as data excluded parents who worked at home and hence is not comparable with other estimates.

(b) Total adjusted for over-count due to summation of individual forms of care.

Source: Summarised from Table 17

Figure 6. ABS Child Care Surveys, Children using childcare, 1969-2017

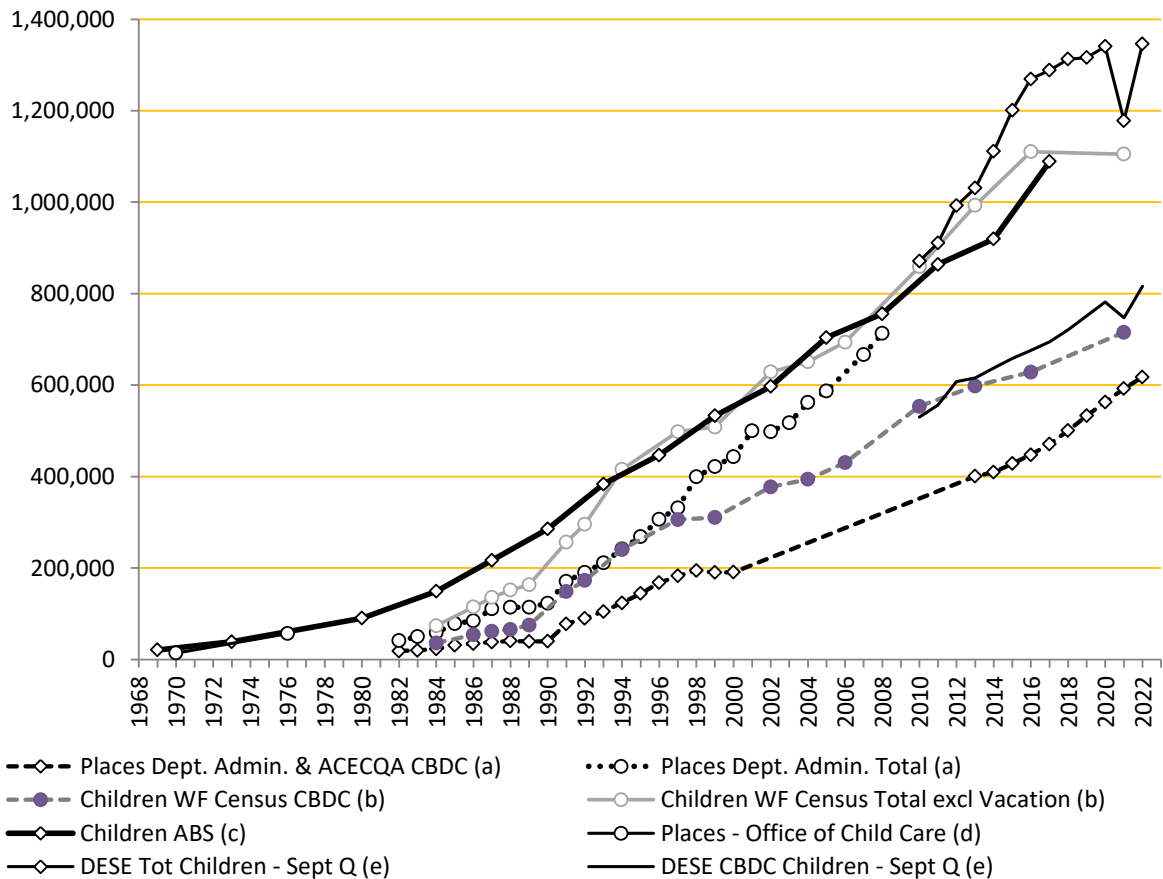


Source: Table 18.

3.3. Overview

Figure 7 draws together a number of the series of counts of places and children using childcare as detailed above. While these show a consistent pattern of growth in the provision and use of childcare, as well as reflecting the different conceptual bases of the series, in particular with regard to the scope of services included, it is clear that there are also considerable variations at single points of time, even between conceptually similar estimates.

Figure 7. Consolidated counts of children using childcare and places, 1969-1972



Notes:

(a) Table 8.

(b) Table 13.

(c) Derived from Table 15 using the higher estimate in each year.

(d) Women's Bureau (1970) and Coleman (1976).

(e) Table 11.

Source: As per specific table notes.

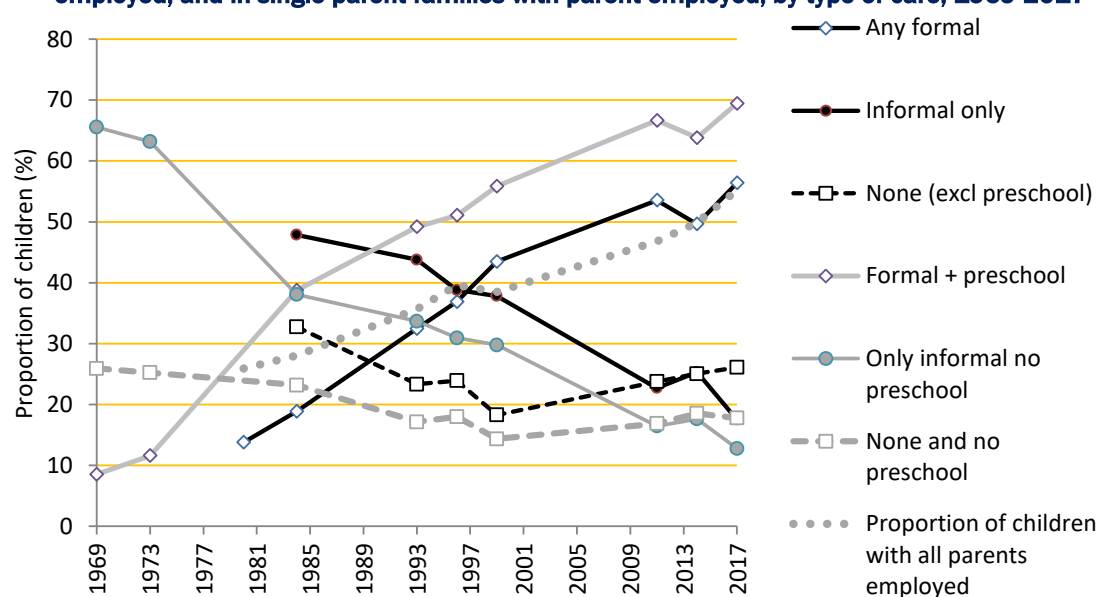
4. Relative use of formal and informal childcare

Data from some of the ABS Child Care surveys also provides an insight into the relative roles of formal and informal childcare in providing care for the children of working parents. Indeed this question was one of the key foci of the initial surveys which was “to obtain, for persons who were in the labour force and also had the responsibility for the care of children under twelve years of age, information about the arrangements they made to have their children cared for while they themselves were at work” (ABS 1969, 3).

This is considered here with a focus on the relative use of formal and informal care by working parents of young children.³⁷ Specifically it considers the use of care by pre school-age children of couples where both parents are employed and of single parents who are employed. For the purpose of this analysis 3 classifications of care are considered: children who use any form of formal care³⁸; those that use no formal care but some informal care; and those who use no formal or informal care.³⁹ Over time however there have been a number of changes in the structure of the survey, in the results published, and in the more detailed data available from which specific series can be drawn. Some of these have been noted in discussion in section 3.2.3. Additionally, as noted in the footnotes below, data has not been able to be extracted from a number of the surveys.

Trends are shown in Figure 8 and Table 19. Two series are given. The main series from 1984 is focused on childcare only, and the longer series from 1969 which, reflecting earlier ABS practice, includes preschool as a form of formal care.

Figure 8. ABS Child Care Surveys, distribution of preschool children in couple families both employed, and in single parent families with parent employed, by type of care, 1969-2017



Source: Table 19

³⁷ While a wider population can be chosen using later surveys, this approach allows for a longer time period.

³⁸ The focus is on the use of types of care not the actual volume of care, or whether this type of care is the main type used.

³⁹ Informal care includes care at home by relatives (other than parents) and others, and care by these in another place. The category of those who use neither formal nor informal care includes those where the parents (or in early surveys the responsible parent) works from home, and in couples where work schedules allow for one parent to care while the other is working.

Table 19. ABS Child Care Surveys, preschool children in couple families both employed, and single parent families with parent employed, by type of care, 1969-2017

	May 1969 (a)	May 1973 (b)	May 1977 (c)	June 1980 (d)	Nov. 1984	June 1987 (e)	June 1993	March 1996	June 1999	June 2002 (f)	June 2005 (f)	June 2008 (f)	June 2011 (g)	June 2014 (g)	June 2017 (g)
Children ('000)															
Formal care = Childcare services															
Formal	-	-	-	39.2	69.2	-	155.6	181.0	209.3	-	-	-	373.9	386.7	493.8
Informal only	-	-	-	-	175.4	-	209.6	190.5	182.1	-	-	-	158.5	197.3	153.5
None	-	-	-	-	120.1	-	111.8	117.4	88.1	-	-	-	165.9	195.3	228.7
Total (h)	-	-	-	-	366.7	-	478.9	490.9	481.4	-	-	-	698.3	779.3	876.0
Formal care = Childcare services and Preschool															
Formal	20.8	38.7	37.7	61.8	141.4	-	234.5	249.6	267.7	-	-	-	465.4	497.2	608.2
Informal only	159.8	211.0	124.5	179.0	138.8	-	160.7	151.3	142.8	-	-	-	115.0	137.5	112.0
None	63.2	84.3	0.0	43.5	84.5	-	81.8	88.0	68.9	-	-	-	117.9	144.6	155.8
Total (h)	243.8	334.0	0.0	284.3	364.7	-	476.9	488.9	479.4	-	-	-	698.3	779.3	876.0
All preschool children	-	-	-	1,098.0	1,300.7	-	1,337.6	1,235.2	1,245.1	-	-	-	1,492.7	1,563.9	1,586.7
Distribution (%)															
Formal care = Childcare services															
Formal	-	-	-	-	18.9	-	32.5	36.9	43.5	-	-	-	53.5	49.6	56.4
Informal only	-	-	-	-	47.8	-	43.8	38.8	37.8	-	-	-	22.7	25.3	17.5
None	-	-	-	-	32.7	-	23.3	23.9	18.3	-	-	-	23.8	25.1	26.1
Total (h)	-	-	-	-	100.0	-	100.0	100.0	100.0	-	-	-	100.0	100.0	100.0
Formal care = Childcare services and Preschool															
Formal	8.5	11.6	-	21.7	38.8	-	49.2	51.1	55.8	-	-	-	66.6	63.8	69.4
Informal only	65.5	63.2	-	63.0	38.1	-	33.7	30.9	29.8	-	-	-	16.5	17.6	12.8
None	25.9	25.2	-	15.3	23.2	-	17.1	18.0	14.4	-	-	-	16.9	18.6	17.8
Total (h)	100.0	100.0	-	100.0	100.0	-	100.0	100.0	100.0	-	-	-	100.0	100.0	100.0
Proportion children all parents employed (%)	-	-	-	25.9	28.0	-	35.7	39.6	38.5	-	-	-	46.8	49.8	55.2

(a) 1969: Preschool included as formal care only. Children with 'none' include children whose parents work from home. While not explicit, it would appear informal care also includes care by a resident partner.

(b) 1973: Preschool included as formal care only. Children with 'none' include children whose parents work from home. While not explicit, it would appear informal care also includes care by a resident partner.

(c) 1977: Resident partner now separately identified and excluded from informal care. Data only published excluding children whose parents worked at home and hence no totals possible.

(d) 1980: Publication focuses on any use, and main use and is not suitable for extracting specific series.

(e) 1987 Publication does not provide cross-classified data for preschool children and family labour force status.

(f) 2002, 2005, 2008: Publication does not provide cross-classified data for preschool children and family labour force status. While potentially data can be extracted from CURFS for these years access to these could not be established in the available time frame.

(g) 2011, 2014, 2017: Children under the age of 4 and those recorded as not attending school. Data reported on basis of use in previous week to maintain compatibility.

Source:

1969 CBCS (ABS): Child Care, May 1969, Reference No. 17.2
1973 ABS: Child Care May 1973, Reference No. 17.2
1977 ABS: Child Care, May 1977, Cat No 4402.0
1980 ABS: Child Care Arrangements Australia, June 1980, Cat No 4402.0
1984 ABS: Child Care Survey 1984, Sample File
1993 ABS: Child Care Survey 1993, Sample File
1996 ABS Child Care Survey CC99 1999, Sample File
1999 ABS Child Care Survey CC96 1996, Sample File
2011 ABS: TableBuilder, Childhood Education and Care, 2011
2014 ABS: TableBuilder, Childhood Education and Care, 2014
2017 ABS: TableBuilder, Childhood Education and Care, 2017

5. Childcare costs

There is limited consistent long term data on the cost of childcare to families. As well as fundamental questions as to whether the gross or net cost (taking into account subsidies) are to be addressed, the unit of childcare to be measured, ie the cost for a fixed unit of care – ie an hour, or some estimation of ‘average’ use, and the type of care, this is also affected by factors including:

- The various approaches to childcare support over time. This includes support provided through operational subsidies to services, and parental subsidies which at times have been paid directly to parents, and on other occasions provided to services as offsets to fees. These raise questions around what constitutes the actual ‘cost’ to be measured, and makes comparison over time difficult.
 - Given that many of these subsidies are targeted, this in turn results in a wide distribution of actual costs across the population of families.
- Differing charging practices of services, in particular the extent to which some operate on the basis of sessional fees and others on hourly charges.⁴⁰

As discussed below, while some data is available in publications by the department and the Productivity Commission, the main focus is on the price index produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

5.1. Departmental and Productivity Commission series

Both the government departments responsible for childcare, and the Productivity Commission as part of their Report on Government Services, provide some data on the cost of childcare.

5.1.1. Departmental statistics

The department has published data on the average hourly cost of childcare by sector since 2011⁴¹. This is derived by dividing the total fees charged across each sector by the total hours charged⁴². This series is presented in Table 20 in nominal and real terms and illustrated in Figure 9.

In the figure a very marked increase in hourly fees for the Family Day Care sector is discernible between the June and September quarters of 2018. This was reviewed by the Child Care Package evaluation (Bray et al 2021) and reflects a shift in the sector from charging on a sessional basis to charging on an hourly basis. The evaluation found that it was associated with a reduction in hours charged for and effectively had little impact on the cost of care to families. It however highlights the need for caution in interpreting this data.

⁴⁰ In large part childcare, especially Centre Based Day Care, operates on a sessional basis. That is, parents are charged for a session – most commonly 10, 11 or 12 hours of length and are charged a fixed fee for the session regardless of the actual time spent by the child in care (which is usually less). As such the actual cost of utilised hours of care tend to be higher than hourly fees derived from sessional charging. This is further complicated by services offering a number of session lengths frequently at the same price, as a means of allowing families to fit their childcare usage within the ‘approved’ hours of care for which they are entitled, see Bray et al 2021, 155-171.

Further complications arise with regard to policies concerning charging practices relating to public holidays, sick days, holidays and so forth.

⁴¹ The inclusion in the publications of some time series of rates of change in prices dating back to the early 2000s would indicate that a longer time series is available within the department.

⁴² Described as: “Hourly fee for each service type is calculated by dividing the sum of all fee amounts by the sum of all hours for each service type”.

Table 20. Department reported average hourly fee by service type and total, December quarter 2011 to September quarter 2022

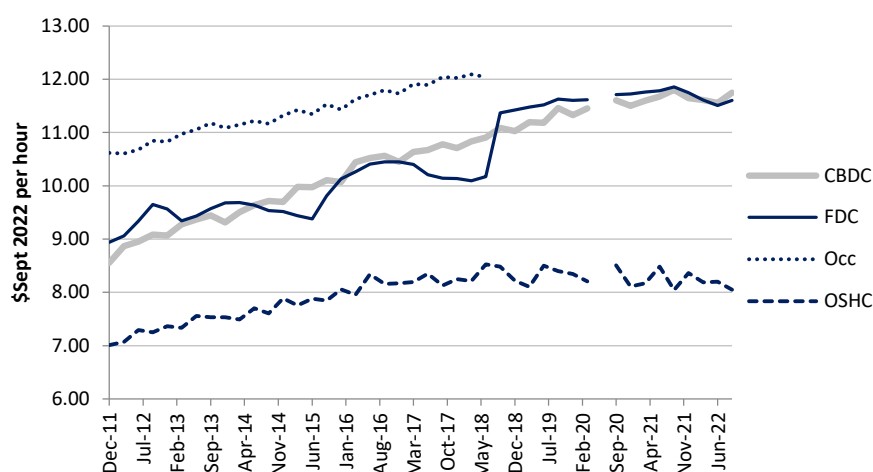
Quarter	Nominal					CPI	Real				
	CBDC	FDC (a)	Occ.	OSHC	Total (b)		CBDC	FDC (a)	Occ.	OSHC	Total (b)
			\$					(\$Sept 2022)			
Dec-11	6.65	6.95	8.25	5.45	6.60	99.8	8.56	8.94	10.61	7.01	8.49
Mar-12	6.90	7.05	8.25	5.50	6.75	99.9	8.87	9.06	10.60	7.07	8.68
Jun-12	7.00	7.30	8.35	5.70	6.90	100.4	8.95	9.34	10.68	7.29	8.82
Sep-12	7.20	7.65	8.60	5.75	7.10	101.8	9.08	9.65	10.85	7.25	8.96
Dec-12	7.20	7.60	8.60	5.85	7.10	102	9.06	9.57	10.83	7.36	8.94
Mar-13	7.40	7.45	8.75	5.85	7.25	102.4	9.28	9.34	10.97	7.34	9.09
Jun-13	7.50	7.55	8.85	6.05	7.35	102.8	9.37	9.43	11.05	7.56	9.18
Sep-13	7.65	7.75	9.05	6.10	7.50	104.0	9.44	9.57	11.17	7.53	9.26
Dec-13	7.60	7.90	9.05	6.15	7.55	104.8	9.31	9.68	11.09	7.53	9.25
Mar-14	7.80	7.95	9.15	6.15	7.65	105.4	9.50	9.68	11.15	7.49	9.32
Jun-14	7.95	7.95	9.25	6.35	7.75	105.9	9.64	9.64	11.22	7.70	9.40
Sep-14	8.05	7.90	9.25	6.30	7.85	106.4	9.71	9.53	11.16	7.60	9.47
Dec-14	8.05	7.90	9.40	6.55	7.85	106.6	9.70	9.52	11.32	7.89	9.46
Mar-15	8.30	7.85	9.50	6.45	8.00	106.8	9.98	9.44	11.42	7.75	9.62
Jun-15	8.35	7.85	9.50	6.60	8.05	107.5	9.97	9.38	11.35	7.88	9.62
Sep-15	8.50	8.25	9.70	6.60	8.25	108.0	10.11	9.81	11.53	7.85	9.81
Dec-15	8.50	8.55	9.65	6.80	8.35	108.4	10.07	10.13	11.43	8.05	9.89
Mar-16	8.80	8.65	9.80	6.70	8.50	108.2	10.44	10.26	11.63	7.95	10.09
Jun-16	8.90	8.80	9.90	7.05	8.65	108.6	10.52	10.40	11.70	8.34	10.23
Sep-16	9.00	8.90	10.05	6.95	8.75	109.4	10.56	10.45	11.80	8.16	10.27
Dec-16	8.95	8.95	10.05	7.00	8.75	110.0	10.45	10.45	11.73	8.17	10.21
Mar-17	9.15	8.95	10.25	7.05	8.85	110.5	10.63	10.40	11.91	8.19	10.28
Jun-17	9.20	8.80	10.25	7.20	8.90	110.7	10.67	10.21	11.89	8.35	10.32
Sep-17	9.35	8.80	10.45	7.05	9.00	111.4	10.78	10.14	12.04	8.13	10.37
Dec-17	9.35	8.85	10.50	7.20	9.00	112.1	10.71	10.14	12.03	8.25	10.31
Mar-18	9.50	8.85	10.60	7.20	9.10	112.6	10.83	10.09	12.09	8.21	10.38
Jun-18	9.60	8.95	10.60	7.50	9.25	113.0	10.91	10.17	12.04	8.52	10.51
Sep-18	9.80	10.05	(c)	7.50	9.50	113.5	11.09	11.37	(c)	8.48	10.75
Dec-18	9.80	10.15		7.30	9.55	114.1	11.03	11.42		8.21	10.75
Mar-19	9.95	10.20		7.20	9.55	114.1	11.20	11.48		8.10	10.75
Jun-19	10.00	10.30		7.60	9.70	114.8	11.18	11.52		8.50	10.85
Sep-19	10.30	10.45		7.55	9.90	115.4	11.46	11.63		8.40	11.02
Dec-19	10.25	10.50		7.55	9.95	116.2	11.33	11.60		8.34	10.99
Mar-20	10.40	10.55		7.45	10.00	116.6	11.45	11.62		8.20	11.01
Jun-20	(d)					114.4					
Sep-20	10.50	10.60		7.70	10.20	116.2	11.60	11.71		8.51	11.27
Dec-20	10.50	10.70		7.40	10.15	117.2	11.50	11.72		8.11	11.12
Mar-21	10.65	10.80		7.50	10.25	117.9	11.60	11.76		8.17	11.16
Jun-21	10.80	10.90		7.85	10.40	118.8	11.67	11.78		8.48	11.24
Sep-21	11.00	11.05		7.50	10.55	119.7	11.80	11.85		8.05	11.32
Dec-21	11.00	11.10		7.90	10.65	121.3	11.64	11.75		8.36	11.27
Mar-22	11.20	11.20		7.90	10.75	123.9	11.61	11.61		8.19	11.14
Jun-22	11.35	11.30		8.05	10.90	126.1	11.56	11.51		8.20	11.10
Sep-22	11.75	11.60		8.05	11.20	128.4	11.75	11.60		8.05	11.20

Notes:

- (a) Fees and hours in the In Home Care sector were included with Family Day Care until September quarter 2018.
- (b) Total includes In Home Care up to and including the June quarter 2018 after which it was excluded as this service shifted to a per family charging basis.
- (c) From the September quarter 2018 onwards Occasional Care is included in Centre Based Day Care.
- (d) Due to the temporary measures implemented as part of the Australian Government's ECEC COVID-19 relief package, data for June quarter 2020 is not available.

Source: Quarterly reports in the following series: 2011-2013: DE Child Care + Early Learning in Summary, 2014-2018 DET Early Childhood and Child Care in Summary, 2018-2022: DE Child Care in Australia

Figure 9. Department reported average hourly fee by main service type, December quarter 2011 to September quarter 2022



Source: Table 20.

5.1.2. Productivity Commission

The Productivity Commission has published a range of data relating to the cost of childcare in the Reports on Government Services. There has however been considerable variation in the data provided.

- Initially average cost data was published, variously on a weekly, sessional and hourly basis for different services, with this being derived from the Childcare Census, with more limited statistics derived from this source being published for years up to 2006. From 2008, see Table 21, data has been published on the median fee for 50 hours of care for Centre Based Day Care and Family Day Care services.
- The Productivity Commission has also published estimates of the net child care costs for families using some forms of care by income range. These are difficult to construct into a time series given inconsistencies of the levels of childcare usage modelled, the number of children in care and the number and value of income ranges, as well as seeking to make these ranges comparable in real terms.⁴³

⁴³ This series commenced in the 2000 ROGS but without a total for Australia. In the 2001 ROGS the PC published the out of pocket costs, before and after subsidies, as a proportion of disposable income for couple families, with one and with two children, using 50 hours of childcare per week, in Centre Based Day Care, and in Family Day Care at household gross incomes of \$27,000, \$35,000, \$45,000, \$55,000 and \$65,000, with this being replicated – but using the same cut-offs – in subsequent years until 2011, and again in 2015 when the income points were revised. In 2016 the income points were again revised to be \$20,000 steps from \$35,000 to \$215,000 and modelling reduced to one child, but with additional estimates for a family using 30 hours care per week. In 2018 and subsequently only the 30 hours of childcare per week measure was used.

While this approach of 30 hours is an approximation of average usage it does not necessarily link with the actual patterns of usage which may be associated with the income levels used in the modelling, the distribution of these between the members of the couple, and the actual hours of subsidy to which they are entitled. For example the modelling uses a 60:40 income split. Given that 30 hours of care would appear to imply 3 days employment this would suggest that the earnings rate of the person working these three days was 11 per cent higher than that of the member of the couple working full-time. This would appear to be atypical. In a similar fashion a household with gross income of \$35,000 per annum would be wholly reliant upon income support, and hence only being entitled to a subsidy for 24 hours of care per fortnight – and as a consequence would need to pay the full fees associated with the balance of care they are modelled as consuming.

Some additional issues arise in the time series of this data with estimates not being produced for costs in 2005 and 2008.

Table 21. Productivity Commission, median cost of weekly (50 hours) child care, services approved for Australian government subsidies, 2007-08 to 2021-22

Financial year ending June	Nominal		CPI (June)	Real	
	Centre Based Day Care	Family Day Care		Centre Based Day Care	Family Day Care
	\$			\$June 2022	
2008	260	240	91.6	358	330
2009	285	267	92.9	387	362
2010	285	270	95.8	375	355
2011	300	280	99.2	381	356
2012	341	323	100.4	428	406
2013	364	339	102.8	446	416
2014	375	338	105.9	446	402
2015	400	341	107.5	469	400
2016	425	383	108.6	494	444
2017	444	388	110.7	506	442
2018	460	400	113.0	514	446
2019	495	500	114.8	544	549
2020	522	514	114.4	576	567
2021	540	530	118.8	574	562
2022	565	550	126.1	565	550

Source: Productivity Commission ROGS 2015 & 2022

5.2. ABS price index

The most consistent indicator of trends in costs (although not the absolute level) of childcare for parents is the ABS “Child care expenditure class” which forms part of the Consumer Price Index. This is based on a model of families using childcare and encompasses “full-time and part-time care... [in] the community based, private company, and family based day care sectors” (ABS 2019). This data, quarterly from March 1982, the time at which it was first collected⁴⁴, is shown in Table 22 and Figure 10.

The table shows the original Index numbers for the ‘Child care expenditure class’ and ‘All groups CPI’, the overall CPI, along with a ‘Real’ Childcare index which shows the change in cost in constant, real, dollar terms.

The figure, in addition to showing the two ABS price indices, details some of the policy changes which have impacted on the index.

Of particular note is the large fall recorded for childcare between the June quarter of 2007 (index =143.1) and September 2007 (Index = 95.1). The ABS explained this as:

“Child care costs are calculated on a net basis in the CPI. A change in the eligibility criteria for the Child Care Tax Rebate (CCTR) that took effect in the quarter has brought it in-scope of the CPI for the first time. There has also been an additional 10% indexation of the Child Care Benefit (CCB) this quarter, on top of the usual CPI indexation ...

Without the inclusion of the CCTR in the CPI this quarter, child care would have fallen 4.9% and contributed 0.0 percentage points (-0.04 index points) to the movement in the All groups CPI.” (ABS 2007, 4)

Specifically with regard to this, is that while the CCTR was initially introduced in 1994, it had been paid as a refundable tax credit and hence was not viewed by ABS as a cost offset, and it was only when it was paid

⁴⁴ Child care was introduced as part of the changes associated with the introduction of the Tenth series of the CPI. The ABS indicated that in this series: “The composition of the CPI has been expanded to include four major new areas of expenditure (holiday travel and accommodation overseas, pharmaceutical prescriptions, education fees and child care fees)” (ABS 1982, 11).

as a transfer payment that it entered into the calculation (see ABS 2007, 34-38). As such, in terms of the effective cost to parents, it is likely the actual rise in cost seen in the ABS index between 2002 and 2007 was less than indicated, and the fall in 2007 also much less.

Table 22. ABS, Consumer Price Index, All Groups and Child Care Expenditure Class, Index numbers (2011-12=100) and Real Childcare cost Index (March 1982 = 100), March 1982 - September 2022

	March			June			September			December		
	Child Care	All Groups CPI 1982=100	Real March 1982=100	Child Care	All Groups CPI 1982=100	Real March 1982=100	Child Care	All Groups CPI 1982=100	Real March 1982=100	Child Care	All Groups CPI 1982=100	Real March 1982=100
	Index number											
1982	26.5	30.8	100.0	27.3	31.5	100.7	28.0	32.6	99.8	28.7	33.6	99.3
1983	30.4	34.3	103.0	31.0	35.0	102.9	32.2	35.6	105.1	32.8	36.5	104.4
1984	34.3	36.3	109.8	34.9	36.4	111.4	35.0	36.9	110.2	34.0	37.4	105.7
1985	34.8	37.9	106.7	35.1	38.8	105.1	35.5	39.7	103.9	36.5	40.5	104.7
1986	38.2	41.4	107.2	39.9	42.1	110.2	40.7	43.2	109.5	40.9	44.4	107.1
1987	42.8	45.3	109.8	43.4	46.0	109.7	44.6	46.8	110.8	44.9	47.6	109.6
1988	47.4	48.4	113.8	48.3	49.3	113.9	48.9	50.2	113.2	49.6	51.2	112.6
1989	51.6	51.7	116.0	52.1	53.0	114.3	54.0	54.2	115.8	54.3	55.2	114.3
1990	57.4	56.2	118.7	58.2	57.1	118.5	60.1	57.5	121.5	59.1	59.0	116.4
1991	50.4	58.9	99.5	50.6	59.0	99.7	50.9	59.3	99.8	51.1	59.9	99.2
1992	54.2	59.9	105.2	54.2	59.7	105.5	54.6	59.8	106.1	54.6	60.1	105.6
1993	58.8	60.6	112.8	59.5	60.8	113.7	59.3	61.1	112.8	59.5	61.2	113.0
1994	62.8	61.5	118.7	63.9	61.9	120.0	60.6	62.3	113.1	60.2	62.8	111.4
1995	62.0	63.8	112.9	62.6	64.7	112.5	63.3	65.5	112.3	63.5	66.0	111.8
1996	66.2	66.2	116.2	66.7	66.7	116.2	66.9	66.9	116.2	67.0	67.0	116.2
1997	68.1	67.1	118.0	70.5	66.9	122.5	72.0	66.6	125.7	72.8	66.8	126.7
1998	74.5	67.0	129.2	75.7	67.4	130.5	77.7	67.5	133.8	77.8	67.8	133.4
1999	78.9	67.8	135.3	79.7	68.1	136.0	80.6	68.7	136.4	81.2	69.1	136.6
2000	84.0	69.7	140.1	84.2	70.2	139.4	71.5	72.9	114.0	73.2	73.1	116.4
2001	76.6	73.9	120.5	76.9	74.5	120.0	71.9	74.7	111.9	73.2	75.4	112.8
2002	75.6	76.1	115.5	76.1	76.6	115.5	84.6	77.1	127.5	86.1	77.6	129.0
2003	88.1	78.6	130.3	88.7	78.6	131.2	95.1	79.1	139.7	95.1	79.5	139.0
2004	99.3	80.2	143.9	100.3	80.6	144.6	104.9	80.9	150.7	107.6	81.5	153.4
2005	111.2	82.1	157.4	112.8	82.6	158.7	114.4	83.4	159.4	118.6	83.8	164.5
2006	124.5	84.5	171.2	126.8	85.9	171.6	130.9	86.7	175.5	133.5	86.6	179.2
2007	140.7	86.6	188.8	143.1	87.7	189.6	95.3	88.3	125.4	96.5	89.1	125.9
2008	100.8	90.3	129.7	102.1	91.6	129.5	78.7	92.7	98.7	79.8	92.4	100.4
2009	82.2	92.5	103.3	83.0	92.9	103.8	83.7	93.8	103.7	84.7	94.3	104.4
2010	87.3	95.2	106.6	87.6	95.8	106.3	89.7	96.5	108.0	90.7	96.9	108.8
2011	93.3	98.3	110.3	94.1	99.2	110.3	95.9	99.8	111.7	98.4	99.8	114.6
2012	102.3	99.9	119.0	103.4	100.4	119.7	105.5	101.8	120.5	106.9	102.0	121.8
2013	110.4	102.4	125.3	111.0	102.8	125.5	114.8	104.0	128.3	115.4	104.8	128.0
2014	118.5	105.4	130.7	119.4	105.9	131.0	123.1	106.4	134.5	124.8	106.6	136.1
2015	128.6	106.8	140.0	129.5	107.5	140.0	134.7	108.0	145.0	135.0	108.4	144.7
2016	139.3	108.2	149.6	140.4	108.6	150.3	145.4	109.4	154.5	146.0	110.0	154.3
2017	147.7	110.5	155.4	149.0	110.7	156.4	152.3	111.4	158.9	153.9	112.1	159.6
2018	156.4	112.6	161.4	157.9	113.0	162.4	139.3	113.5	142.6	141.2	114.1	143.8
2019	143.9	114.1	146.6	145.4	114.8	147.2	149.0	115.4	150.1	151.3	116.2	151.3
2020	152.8	116.6	152.3	7.6	114.4	7.7	112.6	116.2	112.6	155.0	117.2	153.7
2021	158.4	117.9	156.2	160.3	118.8	156.8	163.7	119.7	158.9	165.1	121.3	158.2
2022	165.1	123.9	154.9	153.0	126.1	141.0	154.8	128.4	140.1	161.8	130.8	143.8
2023	165.1	132.6	144.7									

Source: ABS 2023.

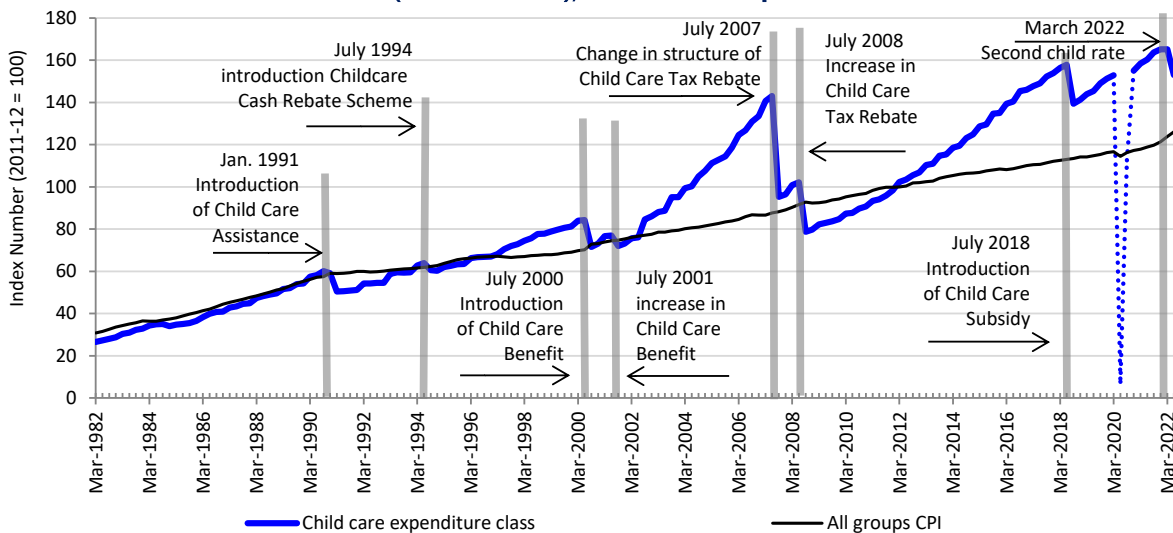
Over more recent periods, in addition to the introduction of the Child Care Subsidy in July 2018 which resulted in an 11.8 per cent fall in the Child Care Expenditure Class Index in September 2018, particular features are:

- The dramatic fall in childcare costs in June 2020. This reflects the effect of temporary measures brought in to respond to COVID-19.

- A further fall in June 2022. This is explained by ABS as:

Child care (-7.3%) ... as the full effect of additional child care subsidies for families with two or more children under the age of 6, which commenced on 7 March, flowed through into this quarter. The New South Wales Government's before and after school care vouchers also reduced out-of-pocket costs for families in Sydney. (ABS 2022b.)

Figure 10. ABS, Consumer Price Index, All Groups and Child Care Expenditure Class, Index numbers (2011-12=100), March 1982-September 2022



Source: Table 22

6. Summary

As indicated in the introduction, the nature of the data collections limits the extent to which definitive long term continuous time series can be derived on the scope of child care provision over time in Australia. In particular, care needs to be taken with regard to the various administrative based collections as the scope of these are usually constrained to the sectors which were deemed to be eligible for receipt of support, rather than childcare services overall.

Similarly while the ABS collection does not suffer from this constraint, it initially had only a narrow focus on the provision of care to children of working parents.

Notwithstanding this, the evidence is of a massive increase in the sector over time:

- From initial estimates of some 15,200 places in 1968-69, and 56,500 in 1975, to provision for some 1.1 to 1.3 million children in 2021 and 2022.
- This has been supported by a large increase in government expenditure – with Commonwealth government funding, in \$2022 terms, increasing from under \$2 million per annum at the beginning of the 1970s to over \$10 billion in 2022.

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Appendix A: Departmental expenditure 1984-85 to 2000-2001

Table 23. Composition of Departmental expenditure 1984-85 to 2000-2001

Financial Year ending 30 June:	Grants for children's services	Payments to States			Child care Fee Relief	Child Care Assistance	Child Care Cash Rebate	Child JET			Loans and support services	Other Services to Families (a)	Support for Child Care	Total	Family Support Services (b)
		Total	less Preschool block grants	Net				DSS	Department	Total					
\$ million															
1985	96.8	56.0	-33.1	22.9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	119.7	3.0
1986	133.0	30.0	-16.5	13.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	146.4	3.6
1987	156.7	18.5	-	18.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	175.2	6.0
1988	183.6	31.6	-	31.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	215.2	9.5
1989	192.7	20.4	-	20.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	213.1	
1990	199.2	15.9	-	15.9	-	-	-	0.8	-	0.8	-	-	-	215.8	
1991	225.9	17.7	-	17.7	-	-	-	2.0	-	2.0	-	-	-	245.7	
1992	402.6	32.2	-	32.2	-	-	-	5.0	-	5.0	-	-	-	439.8	
1993	-	-	-	-	384.0	-	-	8.0	-	8.0	-	154.1	-	546.2	
1994	-	-	-	-	497.4	-	-	9.0	-	9.0	-	169.9	-	676.4	
1995	-	-	-	-	592.1	-	87.5	12.7	-	12.7	0.4	180.7	-	873.3	
1996	-	-	-	-	657.0	-	120.5	-	10.5	10.5	1.4	188.9	-	978.3	
1997	-	-	-	-	-	710.6	126.7	-	6.9	6.9	1.3	205.2	-	1,050.7	
1998	-	-	-	-	-	640.4	123.1	-	5.0	5.0	1.0	179.1	-	948.6	
1999	(c)	-	-	-	-	650.3	117.1	-	4.6	4.6	0.0	163.8	-	935.7	
2000	-	-	-	-	-	749.1	164.4	-	11.1	11.1	0.0	195.1	-	1,119.8	
2001	-	-	-	-	-	0.2	-14.6	1,037.1	-	7.3	7.3	0.0	180.2	1,210.2	

See Table 3 for sources.

(a) This program included some non-childcare spending. However the 1997-98 DH&FS PBS appears to list the main elements of activity as "Program Support, Special Services, Supplementary Services, Special Needs Subsidy Scheme and Youth Activity Services" (p. 198) suggesting that the major part of the spending is childcare related,

(b) This funding, while included in the Children's Services Program appears to relate to the 'Family Support Services Scheme' which operated from 1978. (See Senate (1985, 70-71 & 118) and HREOC (1989, 103-104). The latter reports that this program was replaced in 1986 by a joint Commonwealth/State program from which the Commonwealth withdrew in 1988. The nature of this program which had as its objective "to provide support to families to develop their coping skills, and thus their competence to provide an adequate child rearing environment" (p 104) does not relate to the provision of childcare services.)

(c) This is taken from "Expenses 1988-89 (estimated full-year effect)" reported in FaCS AR 1998-99 (p 183). Utilising Expenditure data in the FaCS AR 1998-99 and DHAC AR 1998-99 produces a total of \$935.061m compared to the \$935.692m utilised in the table, although with some greater variation in the distribution by element.

Appendix B: Workforce participation by women with dependent children

As noted in section 1.1.3, associated with changes in the provision of childcare, and in the use of childcare by employed parents, are changes in the workforce participation of parents. As with data on childcare itself this data is fragmented and limited time series are available. This appendix presents some series relating to the employment of women with dependent children under the age of 15 years.

B. 1. Approach

In adopting this approach it is recognised that the focus on the employment of women with dependent children does not wholly encompass changing patterns of workforce participation by families, and can be seen as reflecting an assumption that it is these women's role to be responsible for the care of children. While this is acknowledged, taking this approach reflects the fact that it is within this population that the major changes in participation have taken place, and indeed this is a frequently cited policy objective. It also reflects the way in which much of this data was collected and reported – for example, with an assumption within couples of male 'heads' and female 'wives'⁴⁵.

The broader changes in family participation is briefly addressed in Figure B. 3 and Figure B. 5. An associated issue with this form of family conceptualisation relates to same sex couples. This is further discussed in section B. 3, however in general, where identified, they have been excluded from reporting, although it is noted that prior to identification, and potentially subsequently some members of such relationships may be recorded in data as single parents.⁴⁶

Data reported on here is drawn from three ABS sources:

- The Labour Force Status of Families. This data has been collected, usually annually, but on occasions more frequently, as part of the broader ABS Labour Force Survey.
- The Survey of Income and Housing. This is a series of household surveys, at various intervals, and under a range of different titles, which include data on household and family composition and labour force participation.
- The Australian Census. Since 1981 sample files from the 5-yearly Australian Census provide information which allows the workforce participation of parents to be derived.

While in a number of cases these collections date to the 1970s and earlier, as detailed in describing each of the sources, only series dating to the early 1980s can be extracted.

The data is presented in terms of the employment to population rate.⁴⁷

B. 2. Labour Force Status of Families

This series, referred to here as the Labour Force Survey (LFS) commenced in 1974, although with only limited data which informs on the population likely to be using childcare available in the early studies⁴⁸.

⁴⁵ Although the published data frequently refers to 'married couples', and 'husband' and 'wife', these refer to both legal and de facto relationships.

⁴⁶ These changing patterns are also considered in further detail in other studies, including Baxter (2023b).

⁴⁷ This measure is used in preference to the participation rate, as while the participation rate can be considered to better measure attachment to the workforce, it neither addresses the question of 'discouraged job seekers' nor the fact that some 80 per cent of flows of women into employment over the period 2003 to 2021 were from being 'not in the labour force', rather than 'unemployed'.

⁴⁸ The 1974 publication indicates that there were 540,100 couples with a dependent child aged under 15 years with both partners in the labour force (ABS 1974, Ref No 6.57 November 1974). This increased to 714,900 in the 1979 survey which reported that 40.8 per cent of women in couples with dependent children aged under 15 years

From 1981 a consistent series can be derived by the age of youngest child in 5 year age groups for women who were a member of a couple, see Table B.1, and for female single parents, Table B.2. The tables show the proportion of these women, by the age of their youngest dependent child, who were employed, on a full-time, and part-time basis. This data is then plotted in Figure B. 1 and Figure B. 2.

Table B.1. Labour Force Survey, Women in couple households, Employment to Population rates by full and part-time employment status and age of youngest child, 1981-2021

	Age of youngest child:								
	0-4 years			5-9 years			10-14 years		
	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total
	Employment to population rate (%)								
Jul-81	10.3	19.3	29.6	20.6	29.6	50.2	27.2	28.2	55.5
Jul-82	10.9	17.8	28.8	20.4	30.1	50.5	28.4	29.6	58.0
Jul-83	10.5	17.2	27.7	20.6	28.9	49.5	26.4	29.5	55.9
Jul-84	11.2	19.1	30.3	20.9	31.3	52.2	27.0	28.7	55.7
Jul-85	12.1	21.9	34.0	22.4	32.5	54.9	27.8	30.9	58.7
Jun-86	12.6	24.6	37.2	23.5	35.0	58.5	30.7	32.0	62.7
Jun-87	13.4	26.6	40.0	23.3	35.6	58.8	31.2	32.1	63.4
Jun-88	12.9	27.9	40.7	24.9	36.7	61.6	32.7	32.7	65.3
Jun-89	13.8	28.6	42.4	26.9	37.8	64.8	32.8	34.8	67.6
Jun-90	14.6	29.5	44.1	27.2	38.4	65.5	35.2	35.4	70.6
Jun-91	14.6	28.1	42.7	25.7	38.1	63.8	34.2	34.9	69.1
Jun-92	14.3	29.6	44.0	25.0	37.3	62.2	32.7	35.4	68.1
Jun-93	14.9	27.6	42.5	24.7	36.3	60.9	32.4	35.2	67.6
Jun-94	14.9	29.0	43.8	24.7	36.9	61.6	33.6	34.1	67.7
Jun-95	16.6	31.4	48.1	27.3	39.6	66.9	36.6	36.5	73.1
Jun-96	15.4	30.6	46.0	25.0	40.0	65.0	37.4	35.0	72.4
Jun-97	16.3	29.9	46.3	26.6	41.3	67.9	33.0	35.5	68.5
Jun-98	16.8	30.5	47.2	25.0	40.6	65.6	34.6	37.5	72.1
Jun-99	15.9	30.2	46.1	27.5	38.8	66.3	33.5	37.8	71.3
Jun-00	16.1	31.9	48.0	25.9	40.8	66.7	36.7	36.7	73.4
Jun-01	16.1	33.2	49.3	27.0	40.6	67.6	36.7	36.8	73.5
Jun-02	14.7	34.0	48.7	25.8	41.3	67.0	33.8	41.7	75.5
Jun-03	16.0	33.5	49.5	25.5	43.8	69.3	33.9	39.5	73.4
Jun-04	14.8	33.4	48.2	27.0	41.0	68.0	38.3	36.2	74.5
Jun-05	15.8	35.6	51.4	29.6	40.5	70.1	38.2	40.5	78.7
Jun-06	16.3	35.3	51.7	27.6	43.6	71.2	36.2	40.2	76.4
Jun-07	15.7	35.1	50.8	27.4	43.7	71.1	36.7	40.9	77.6
Jun-08	15.9	36.7	52.6	30.9	41.5	72.5	36.8	42.2	79.0
Jun-09	17.1	35.3	52.4	28.1	43.3	71.3	40.1	39.8	79.9
Jun-10	18.3	35.9	54.2	29.4	42.3	71.7	36.2	41.5	77.7
Jun-11	18.4	36.0	54.4	28.8	46.0	74.8	38.0	41.5	79.5
Jun-12	19.4	35.6	55.0	30.9	43.1	74.0	38.1	38.6	76.7
Jun-13	19.3	36.0	55.3	30.4	41.9	72.3	39.0	41.1	80.1
Jun-14	21.2	35.1	56.3	30.6	42.0	72.6	37.9	39.4	77.3
Jun-15	23.1	36.0	59.1	30.5	42.9	73.4	38.7	38.2	76.9
Jun-16	22.1	37.2	59.3	31.2	43.0	74.3	40.2	39.7	79.8
Jun-17	22.6	38.1	60.8	36.7	39.7	76.4	39.7	39.9	79.5
Jun-18	24.3	38.8	63.1	35.1	41.1	76.2	42.3	38.4	80.7
Jun-19	24.1	39.0	63.1	37.3	40.3	77.6	42.6	38.7	81.3
Jun-20	24.7	39.6	64.3	35.9	42.5	78.4	41.5	33.7	75.1
Jun-21	28.3	39.0	67.2	39.7	39.3	79.0	44.1	38.1	82.2

Source: 1981-1993 6224.0 Labour Force Status and Other Characteristics of Families. Extracted from original publications; 1994-2008 6224.0.55.001 - Labour Force, Australia: Labour Force Status and Other Characteristics of Families - Electronic Delivery, Jun 2008, FA4 Supertable; 2009-2021 ABS Microdata: Labour Force Status of Families, 2009 to 2021, TableBuilder.

were in employment as were 36.4 per cent of single parents with a youngest child under 15 (ABS 1979, Cat No 6224.0 July 1979). The form in which data is provided does not allow any systematic analysis by age of youngest child.

Table B.2. Labour Force Survey, Female Single Parents, Employment to Population rates by full and part-time employment status and age of youngest child, 1984-2021

	Age of youngest child								
	0-4 years			5-9 years			10-14 years		
	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total
	Employment to population rate (%)								
Jul-81 (a)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jul-82	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jul-83	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jul-84	8.8	10.4	19.1	17.9	16.6	34.5	25.8	16.9	42.6
Jul-85	12.1	10.0	22.1	18.1	17.1	35.2	27.7	15.5	43.2
Jun-86	11.8	10.0	21.8	23.1	18.4	41.5	31.0	18.7	49.7
Jun-87	10.2	10.2	20.4	22.3	18.9	41.3	31.1	18.7	49.9
Jun-88	11.7	10.4	22.1	25.4	19.8	45.2	25.1	23.3	48.4
Jun-89	11.0	16.5	27.6	23.6	24.8	48.4	32.4	24.5	56.9
Jun-90	13.3	15.9	29.2	21.9	24.1	46.0	32.3	21.1	53.4
Jun-91	11.4	13.7	25.1	21.4	24.1	45.4	33.2	23.2	56.4
Jun-92	10.4	15.6	26.0	20.4	22.2	42.7	30.5	22.7	53.2
Jun-93	9.1	15.1	24.2	19.9	26.2	46.1	33.0	20.8	53.8
Jun-94	9.6	15.2	24.8	22.3	23.4	45.7	30.1	24.1	54.2
Jun-95	11.1	14.7	25.8	21.0	30.9	51.8	31.6	20.7	52.2
Jun-96	9.7	16.9	26.6	19.3	27.7	47.0	29.6	22.1	51.7
Jun-97	11.5	20.1	31.7	17.7	25.2	42.9	29.7	23.1	52.8
Jun-98	7.0	19.0	26.0	20.0	26.6	46.6	27.8	27.3	55.2
Jun-99	9.6	16.0	25.6	21.4	31.7	53.1	26.5	28.3	54.8
Jun-00	9.0	19.5	28.5	22.2	30.0	52.3	31.4	30.3	61.7
Jun-01	8.5	20.8	29.3	18.2	29.2	47.3	30.1	29.3	59.4
Jun-02	9.1	20.8	29.8	16.2	32.9	49.1	27.3	28.7	56.1
Jun-03	9.1	20.9	29.9	16.8	35.0	51.8	27.8	28.5	56.3
Jun-04	9.5	18.2	27.7	20.5	32.4	52.9	26.7	34.0	60.7
Jun-05	8.4	21.2	29.6	21.6	35.8	57.3	24.0	30.8	54.8
Jun-06	9.4	26.2	35.6	21.3	32.3	53.6	28.5	36.5	65.0
Jun-07	11.1	22.8	34.0	22.7	35.4	58.1	31.7	35.8	67.6
Jun-08	13.5	21.4	34.9	29.2	34.6	63.8	38.9	34.6	73.5
Jun-09	8.5	18.1	26.5	24.7	37.6	62.4	32.3	38.2	70.6
Jun-10	8.6	19.2	27.8	21.9	39.0	60.8	36.2	34.2	70.4
Jun-11	12.9	21.3	34.2	27.3	35.7	63.1	36.7	35.0	71.7
Jun-12	10.8	20.7	31.4	26.8	33.7	60.5	34.8	33.1	67.9
Jun-13	12.8	23.1	35.9	20.8	33.2	54.1	36.4	30.4	66.8
Jun-14	14.1	20.2	34.3	21.5	32.5	54.0	33.4	32.4	65.8
Jun-15	14.8	21.7	36.4	28.4	33.1	61.5	32.2	34.8	67.0
Jun-16	14.2	24.2	38.4	25.2	33.1	58.3	35.7	32.2	67.9
Jun-17	12.0	24.1	36.1	30.5	28.8	59.3	37.5	30.1	67.6
Jun-18	14.0	23.4	37.4	24.8	36.1	60.9	39.0	31.7	70.7
Jun-19	14.9	23.9	38.9	32.2	33.6	65.8	41.7	26.3	68.0
Jun-20	15.2	23.4	38.6	27.1	32.1	59.2	46.5	24.3	70.8
Jun-21	15.0	27.6	42.6	30.5	32.8	63.3	43.5	28.1	71.6

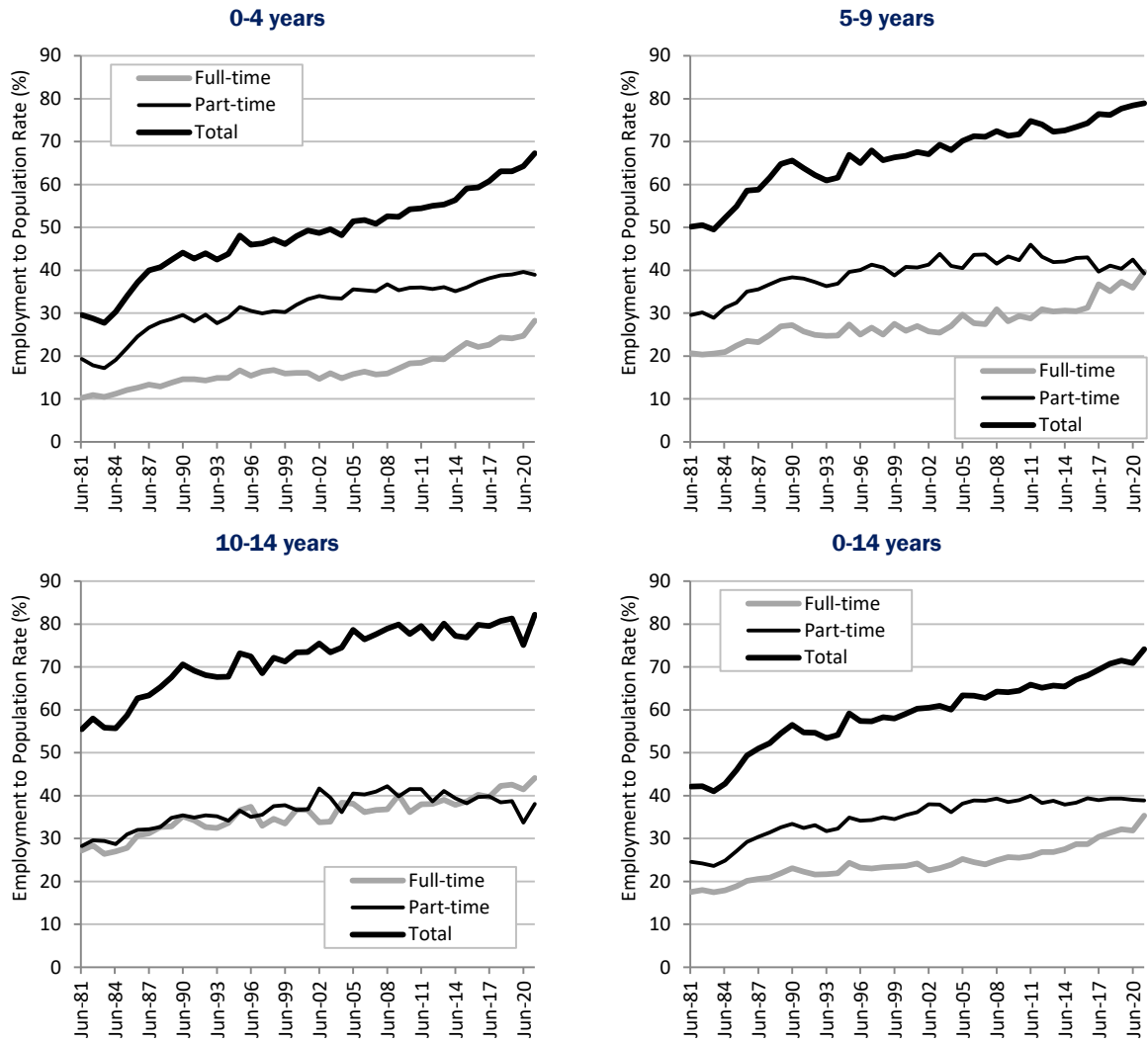
Notes: (a) Data is only available in a compatible format from 1984.

Source: As per Table B.1

In presenting this data it is noted that the series have been subjected to revision over time although not always having these revisions fully backcast. This though appears to have had a more marked impact on the actual population counts rather than relativities, and hence the focus on the rates in the tables⁴⁹.

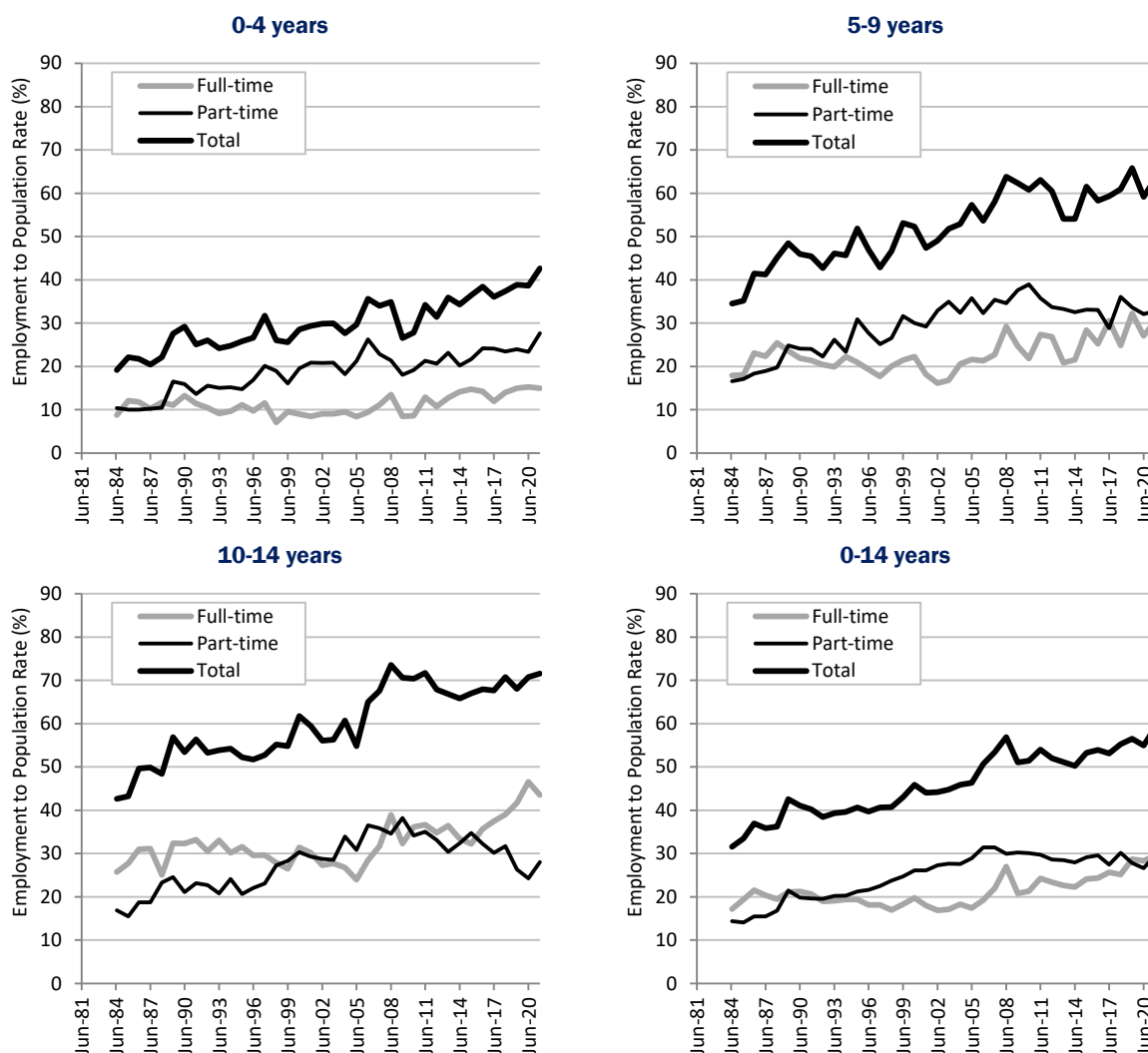
⁴⁹ In addition to the normal problems of these surveys having to be benchmarked to estimated resident populations, and subject to revision after the conduct of the Census, a particular issue which arises is that while the ABS produces rigorous estimates of the population by age, sex and part of state in intercensal periods which are used to benchmark the labour force survey, family benchmarking is not used.

Figure B. 1. Labour Force Survey, Women in couples with dependent children aged under 15 years, employment to population rates by age of youngest child, 1981-2021



Source: Table B.1.

Figure B. 2. Labour Force Survey, Female single parents with dependent children aged under 15 years, employment to population rates by age of youngest child, 1984-2021



Source: Table B.2.

Male single parents⁵⁰

Around 15 per cent of single parents with a dependent child aged under 15 years are male. Table B.3 presents a comparison of some key aspects of the male and female single parent populations since 2009. Notable in this data is some volatility in the estimates relating to males. This reflects a significant level of sampling variability related to the small size of this population. Notwithstanding this, some key features can be observed:

- Male single parents represent a higher proportion of single parents with older children.

⁵⁰ In considering the incidence of single parents it is noted that in some cases these families may relate to the same child where a shared care arrangement is in place. ABS indicates that under the methodology used to collect data: "Conceptually, some of these cases could result in a person being double counted. In cases where information is collected directly from the individual concerned and relates to a specific point in time, the information obtained is likely to be accurate. However where information is collected from a third party there may be problems. In the case of a child who lives for two weeks with one parent followed by two weeks living with the other parent both parents may regard their dwelling as the child's home and report that the child is a usual resident of that dwelling.... it is possible that both parents' dwellings will be included in the survey and both parents will report that their dwelling is the child's Usual Residence" (ABS 2004, Cat No 1389.0).

- Male single parents generally exhibit higher levels of employment participation than female single parents, in particular where the youngest child is relatively young.

Table B.3. Labour Force Survey, Single parents by gender and age of youngest child, aggregate employment to population rates, 2009-2021

	Age of youngest dependent child:											
	0-4 years			5-9 years			10-14 years					
	Total		Male share	Total		Male share	Total		Male share			
	Employ/Pop	Male	Female	Parents	Employ/Pop	Male	Female	Parents	Employ/Pop	Male	Female	Parents
	Employment to population rate (%)											
Jun-09	59.6	26.5	9.5	81.6	62.4	14.5	71.9	70.6	18.1			
Jun-10	71.2	27.8	9.3	71.6	60.8	15.3	75.5	70.4	17.4			
Jun-11	48.4	34.2	8.6	66.8	63.1	18.2	72.2	71.7	18.8			
Jun-12	57.4	31.4	8.8	68.5	60.5	15.8	76.6	67.9	19.3			
Jun-13	60.7	35.9	8.0	79.1	54.1	16.6	68.1	66.8	17.7			
Jun-14	60.1	34.3	9.4	82.8	54.0	12.6	77.7	65.8	22.0			
Jun-15	53.4	36.4	6.6	74.8	61.5	19.1	74.6	67.0	18.6			
Jun-16	71.1	38.4	8.3	70.4	58.3	17.7	80.4	67.9	17.1			
Jun-17	68.1	36.1	9.1	53.8	59.3	16.3	77.2	67.6	19.9			
Jun-18	63.9	37.4	7.1	58.1	60.9	16.6	74.5	70.7	19.4			
Jun-19	66.0	38.9	5.8	62.7	65.8	16.8	79.6	68.0	18.1			
Jun-20	79.5	38.6	10.5	82.2	59.2	18.3	73.6	70.8	22.2			
Jun-21	73.7	42.6	6.5	78.5	63.3	17.9	76.1	71.6	20.3			

Source: ABS Microdata: Labour Force Status of Families, 2009 to 2021, TableBuilder.

To seek to reduce the volatility of the estimates Table B.4 presents an average of the four quarterly estimates available for the 2020-21 financial year. Notable in this is not just the higher proportion of male sole parents who are employed, but also the higher propensity of such parents to be employed on a full-time, rather than a part-time, basis.

Table B.4. Labour Force Survey, Single parents employment to population rates by full- and part-time status, gender and age of youngest child, Annual Average 2020-21

	Age of youngest dependent child:					
	0-4 years		5-9 years		10-14 years	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	Employment to population rate (%)					
Full-time	56.0	15.9	63.8	26.8	57.4	41.1
Part-time	8.1	24.4	14.7	38.1	17.9	28.3
Total	64.2	40.3	78.6	64.9	75.3	69.4
Male share of Single Parents (%)	10.0	-	16.9	-	19.9	-

Source: ABS Microdata: Labour Force Status of Families, 2009 to 2021, TableBuilder.

Broader changes in couple family employment

This data also allows for a broader perspective on the workforce engagement of families with dependent children. Aggregate results for all couple families with a dependent child aged under 15 years are shown in Table B.5 and Figure B. 3. In contrast to the other data discussed here, this considers the joint pattern of engagement without regard to the gender of the partner.

Of particular note in the figure is the decline in these couple families with just one member in full-time employment, with this arrangement declining from 52.4 per cent of couple families with a dependent child aged under 15 years in 1981 to 21.1 per cent in 2021. In contrast, over this period, the proportion with two full-time workers increased from 16.5 per cent to 30.8 per cent and the proportion with one

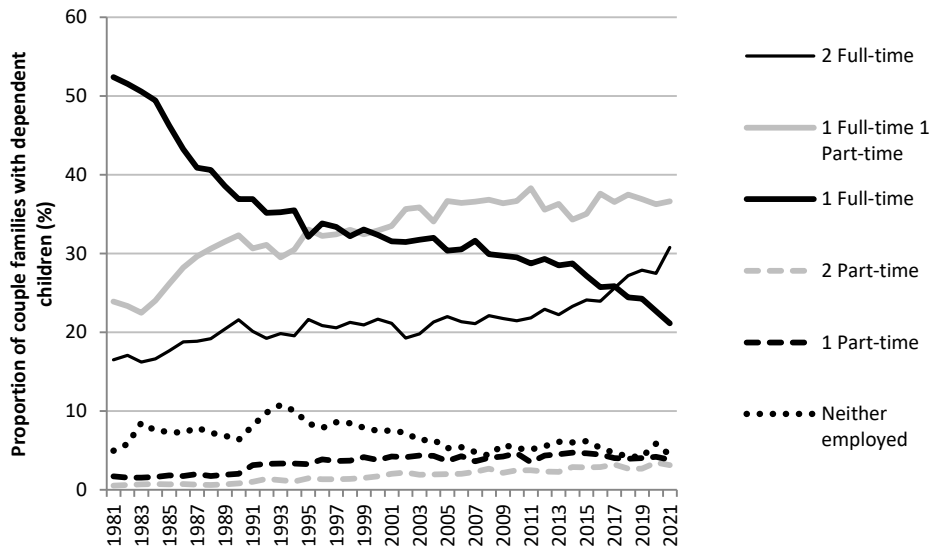
member of the couple employed full-time and one part-time rose from 23.9 per cent to 36.6 per cent. As illustrated the pattern of growth of these two forms of engagement varied markedly over time.

Table B.5. Labour Force Survey, Couple families with dependent children aged under 15 years, structure of paid workforce engagement, 1981-2021

	2 Full-time	1 Full-time 1 Part-time	1 Full-time <i>Single Full-time Male Breadwinner</i>	Total	2 Part-time	1 Part-time	Neither employed	Total
Composition of couple families (%)								
1981	16.5	23.9	51.7	52.4	0.5	1.7	5.0	100.0
1982	17.1	23.3	51.0	51.5	0.6	1.6	5.8	100.0
1983	16.2	22.5	49.7	50.6	0.7	1.6	8.5	100.0
1984	16.6	24.0	48.6	49.4	0.8	1.6	7.5	100.0
1985	17.6	26.1	45.5	46.3	0.7	1.9	7.4	100.0
1986	18.8	28.2	42.3	43.2	0.7	1.7	7.3	100.0
1987	18.8	29.6	39.8	40.9	0.7	2.0	7.9	100.0
1988	19.2	30.6	39.5	40.6	0.6	1.8	7.2	100.0
1989	20.4	31.5	37.6	38.6	0.7	1.9	6.9	100.0
1990	21.6	32.3	36.1	36.9	0.8	2.0	6.3	100.0
1991	20.1	30.6	35.5	36.9	1.0	3.1	8.1	100.0
1992	19.2	31.1	33.7	35.2	1.4	3.3	9.8	100.0
1993	19.8	29.5	34.0	35.3	1.2	3.4	10.8	100.0
1994	19.6	30.5	34.0	35.5	1.1	3.3	10.0	100.0
1995	21.6	33.0	30.5	32.1	1.5	3.3	8.4	100.0
1996	20.9	32.2	32.5	33.8	1.4	3.9	7.9	100.0
1997	20.6	32.5	32.2	33.4	1.4	3.7	8.6	100.0
1998	21.3	33.0	31.1	32.2	1.4	3.7	8.5	100.0
1999	20.9	32.4	31.7	33.0	1.5	4.2	7.9	100.0
2000	21.7	32.9	31.2	32.4	1.7	3.8	7.5	100.0
2001	21.2	33.5	29.7	31.5	2.0	4.2	7.5	100.0
2002	19.3	35.6	29.8	31.5	2.2	4.2	7.2	100.0
2003	19.8	35.9	30.1	31.7	1.9	4.4	6.3	100.0
2004	21.3	34.1	30.7	32.0	2.0	4.3	6.4	100.0
2005	22.0	36.7	28.6	30.4	2.0	3.7	5.3	100.0
2006	21.4	36.4	28.5	30.5	2.0	4.3	5.4	100.0
2007	21.1	36.6	30.2	31.6	2.3	3.6	4.8	100.0
2008	22.1	36.8	28.5	29.9	2.7	4.1	4.3	100.0
2009	21.8	36.4	27.4	29.7	2.2	4.2	5.7	100.0
2010	21.5	36.7	27.5	29.5	2.5	4.6	5.3	100.0
2011	21.8	38.3	26.7	28.8	2.5	3.5	5.2	100.0
2012	22.9	35.6	27.4	29.3	2.3	4.4	5.5	100.0
2013	22.3	36.3	26.3	28.5	2.3	4.5	6.1	100.0
2014	23.3	34.3	26.6	28.7	2.9	4.7	6.0	100.0
2015	24.1	35.1	24.9	27.2	2.8	4.6	6.2	100.0
2016	24.0	37.6	23.7	25.7	2.9	4.5	5.3	100.0
2017	25.6	36.5	23.6	25.9	3.2	4.1	4.7	100.0
2018	27.2	37.5	22.8	24.4	2.7	4.0	4.2	100.0
2019	27.9	36.9	21.9	24.3	2.7	4.1	4.2	100.0
2020	27.5	36.3	20.9	22.7	3.5	4.2	5.9	100.0
2021	30.8	36.6	18.9	21.1	3.2	3.9	4.4	100.0

Source: Extracted from ABS 6224.0 and associated products.

Figure B. 3. Labour Force Survey, Couple families with dependent children aged under 15 years, structure of paid workforce engagement, 1981-2021



Source: Table B.5.

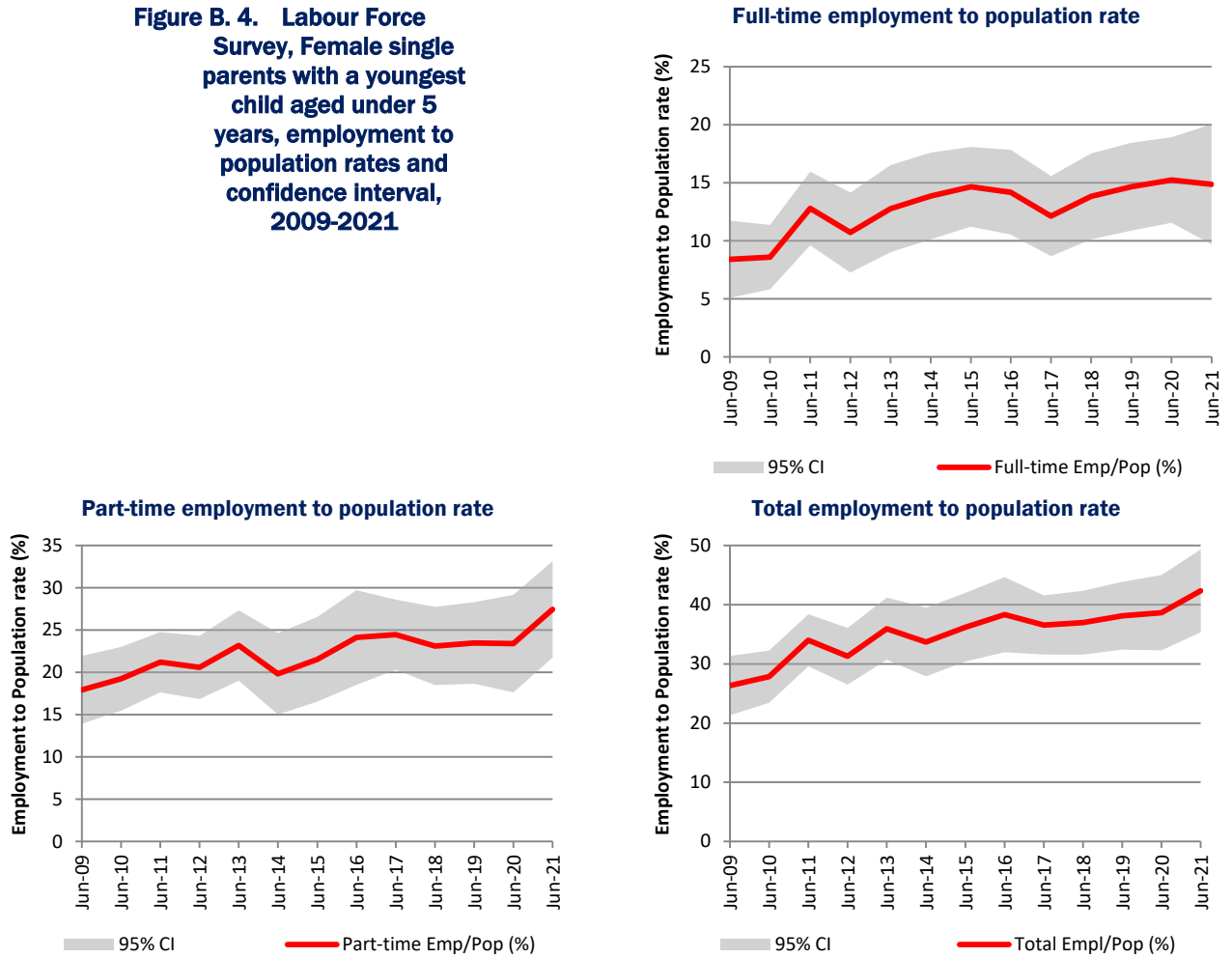
Also notable in the chart is the significant proportion of these families with little workforce engagement. The proportion of these couples without full-time employment rose from 7.2 per cent in 1981 to reach a peak of 15.4 per cent in 1993, before declining to some 10-12 per cent over most of the 2000s, although changing in composition with a rise in the proportion with one or two part-time workers, and a decline in those with no engagement.

Sampling error

As illustrated above, the series, in particular for single parents and for the detailed age groups, show considerable volatility. While some of this can be attributed to changes in the labour market, and potentially the services, including childcare, available to these women, it is probable that much arises from the data being derived from a population sample.

The impact of this is illustrated in Figure B. 4 which shows, for single parents with a youngest dependent child aged under 5 years, the 95 per cent confidence interval on the estimates between 2009 and 2021.

Figure B. 4. Labour Force Survey, Female single parents with a youngest child aged under 5 years, employment to population rates and confidence interval, 2009-2021



Source: Derived from ABS Microdata: Labour Force Status of Families, 2009 to 2021, TableBuilder

This emphasises the need for caution in interpreting changes in the level of workforce engagement of these women, including seeking to closely relate such movements with short term changes in the provision of childcare.

B. 3. Survey of Income and Housing

The Survey of Income and Housing, under a range of titles including the Income Distribution Survey, has been conducted since 1981-82. It has variously been conducted over 2-3 month periods within a year and as a rolling survey over a 12 month financial year. The intervals between the surveys have also varied. The data from the surveys has been released in the form of Confidentialised Unit Record files which have been used here. The surveys are referenced by either the year in which they were conducted for earlier surveys, and the concluding year for those conducted over a financial year.

Table B.6 presents the employment to population rates for women in couples with dependent children aged under 15, and Table B.7 for female single parents.

Table B.6. Survey of Income and Housing, Women in couples with dependent children aged under 15, Employment to Population rates by full and part-time employment status and age of youngest child, 1982-2020

	Age of youngest dependent child:								
	0-4 years			5-9 years			10-14 years		
	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total
	Employment to population rate (%)								
1982	10.0	21.6	31.6	17.6	32.3	49.9	26.5	30.3	56.8
1986	13.4	28.0	41.3	21.2	37.1	58.3	27.8	35.5	63.3
1990	15.8	31.7	47.5	26.2	42.4	68.6	33.6	39.4	73.1
1995	17.0	26.6	43.7	27.5	34.8	62.3	34.1	34.5	68.6
1996	18.3	29.7	48.1	28.8	35.1	63.8	31.1	39.3	70.4
1997	16.0	28.4	44.4	25.4	36.5	61.9	36.4	34.6	71.0
1998	17.8	29.2	47.0	28.0	38.6	66.6	33.7	36.9	70.6
2000	15.9	28.2	44.1	32.2	38.6	70.8	38.0	36.0	73.9
2001	17.6	31.6	49.2	26.6	39.7	66.3	39.5	35.7	75.2
2003	16.7	31.2	47.9	29.0	37.8	66.8	36.5	36.3	72.8
2004	19.9	34.2	54.1	25.9	42.0	67.9	35.0	40.8	75.8
2006	16.2	38.3	54.5	25.7	42.8	68.4	37.8	38.5	76.3
2008	20.0	35.4	55.3	33.6	42.6	76.2	34.5	46.0	80.4
2010	16.7	34.5	51.2	28.2	47.2	75.3	38.1	42.3	80.3
2012	21.5	34.3	55.8	25.7	46.5	72.2	32.8	48.0	80.8
2014	22.1	36.8	59.0	26.7	45.9	72.6	37.8	40.7	78.5
2016	26.8	35.8	62.6	29.1	43.7	72.8	33.4	40.7	74.1
2018	24.5	40.6	65.2	33.9	45.7	79.6	42.0	38.9	80.9
2020	28.9	35.1	64.0	35.4	42.5	77.9	41.1	37.8	78.9

Source: ABS, Confidentialised Unit Record Files: Income and Housing Survey 1981-82; Income Distribution Survey 1986 & 1990; Survey of Income and Housing 1994-95, 1995-96, 1996-97 & 1997-98; Survey of Income and Housing Costs 1999-2000 & 2000-01; Survey of Income and Housing 2002-03, 2003-04, 2005-06, 2007-08, 2009-10, 2011-12, 2013-14, 2015-16, 2017-2018 & 2019-20.

Table B.7. Survey of Income and Housing, Female Single Parents with dependent children aged under 15 years, employment to population rates by age of youngest child, 1982-2020

	Age of youngest dependent child:								
	0-4 years			5-9 years			10-14 years		
	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total
	Employment to population rate (%)								
1982	9.9	10.9	20.8	21.9	14.3	36.2	27.8	15.7	43.5
1986	9.0	13.8	22.8	22.3	13.5	35.9	35.8	17.7	53.5
1990	10.0	18.3	28.3	20.2	24.6	44.8	34.3	23.2	57.5
1995	10.8	12.2	22.9	20.3	21.9	42.1	39.7	22.4	62.1
1996	11.0	17.9	28.9	19.7	25.1	44.7	28.3	24.1	52.4
1997	6.7	11.8	18.5	21.6	22.8	44.4	30.7	20.0	50.7
1998	10.6	21.0	31.6	22.0	22.2	44.2	23.8	30.4	54.1
2000	10.3	25.3	35.6	22.5	34.8	57.3	33.8	23.7	57.5
2001	9.6	13.9	23.5	32.9	24.8	57.7	28.8	27.1	55.9
2003	10.2	24.0	34.2	19.8	28.4	48.2	29.9	25.4	55.3
2004	13.0	20.7	33.6	23.2	29.3	52.5	21.3	33.9	55.2
2006	7.7	19.4	27.1	16.8	38.4	55.2	24.3	37.6	61.9
2008	11.6	27.0	38.7	21.5	30.4	51.9	32.9	40.6	73.4
2010	7.3	19.1	26.5	18.9	43.0	61.9	29.1	34.2	63.3
2012	13.7	22.6	36.3	22.4	34.2	56.6	32.9	35.5	68.3
2014	13.3	20.9	34.2	14.1	37.2	51.2	27.0	40.3	67.3
2016	7.2	27.1	34.3	28.1	39.5	67.7	35.9	33.7	69.6
2018	16.5	25.9	42.4	24.1	36.9	61.0	36.1	34.4	70.5
2020	24.7	22.2	46.9	23.1	37.9	61.1	38.0	38.8	76.8

Source: As per Table B.6.

Additionally this data provides the flexibility to consider two other aspects of parental workforce engagement. The first is that raised in the introduction – same sex couples, the second is analysis of the transition in Australia from a traditional ‘Single full-time male breadwinner’ model of families.

Same sex couples

Data has been collected on same sex couples in the Survey of Income and Housing since 2003. However the number of these couples identified in the data is too small for any substantive analysis.

- Between 2003 and 2020 the proportion of all couples who are reported as being same sex has risen from 0.3 per cent to 1.6 per cent, with the latter figure representing some 97,000 couples out of an estimated 6.1 million.
- The growth in these couples over the period is likely to reflect both an increasing willingness to identify and change in the population.

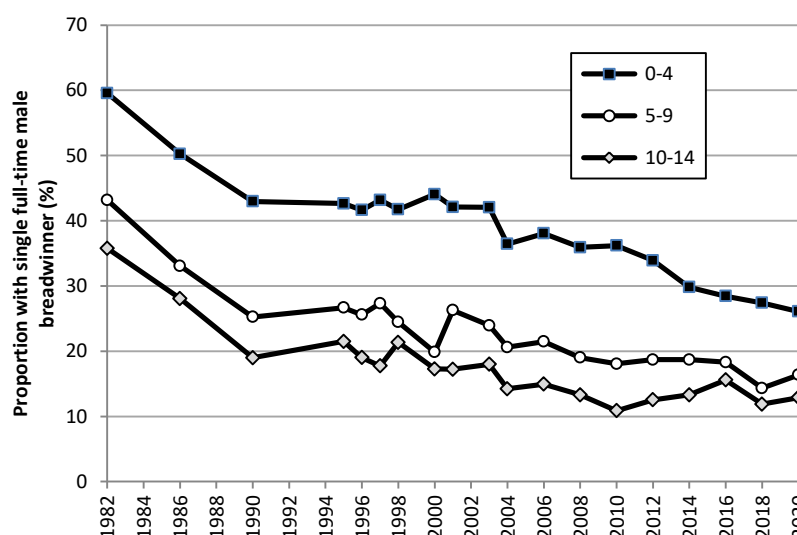
Overwhelmingly the reporting same sex couples do not have dependent children. The highest proportion was reported in 2020 with 18.1 per cent of same sex couples reporting having a dependent child aged under 15 years (14.3 per cent of male couples and 21.4 per cent of female couples).

These couples represent 0.8 per cent of all couples with a dependent child aged under 15 years.

Workforce participation by couples – Single Male Full-time Breadwinners

Figure B. 3 presented aggregate data on trends in the composition of workforce engagement by couples with a dependent child aged under 15 years. Figure B. 5 considers one aspect of this – the proportion of these couples which had a single full-time male breadwinner. The figure shows that this proportion has fallen across child age groups, but with the most dramatic fall being recorded by families with a youngest child aged under 5 years where this proportion has fallen from 59.6 per cent to 26.1 per cent. For couples with an older dependent child the proportion, in 2020, was just 16.4 per cent for those with a youngest child aged 5 to 9 years, and 12.9 per cent with a child aged 10-14 years.

Figure B. 5. Survey of Income and Housing, proportion of couple families with a dependent child aged under 15 years, with a single full-time male breadwinner, by age of youngest dependent child, 1982-2020



Source: As per Table B.7.

B. 4. Census

Australia has had national censuses since 1911⁵¹, and a census has been conducted five yearly since 1961. However specific data relevant to parental employment by age of youngest child was not a standard

⁵¹ In 1881, 1891 and 1901 there were coordinated national censuses conducted by the colonial/state statisticians.

product⁵². Data can however be derived from 1981 onwards from the Census sample files. The specific sample files used here are the 1 per cent sample files. In comparison with the other sources used these are large samples, in 2016 95,000 dwellings, relative to some 23,000 – 25,000 households for the Labour Force Survey and the Survey of Income and Housing⁵³.

The key results are shown in Table B.8. Of particular note in this table is the classification of employment. Rather than using the standard labour force classification which is closely aligned with the international ILO standard, employment status is based on two variables effectively reflecting the response to two questions: “Last week, did the person have a job of any kind?” and “Last week, how many hours did the person work in all jobs?” In this data a significant group of respondents report that while they are employed they worked for less than an hour in the previous week. As seen in Table B.8 this proportion is particularly marked for women with a youngest dependent child aged under 5 years, especially for women in couples, and has grown appreciably over time.

A review of the data for 2016 shows a very close alignment in the incidence of this reported level of activity and child age, with 52.1 per cent of partnered women and 42.2 per cent of female single parents with a youngest child aged under one year reporting that although they were employed, they worked for less than one hour in the previous week. This proportion then falls rapidly to 5.7 per cent and 2.4 per cent, respectively, for those with a youngest child aged one year. It is highly probable that these results reflect the use of maternity leave. A consequence however is that data on full-time and part-time employment is not wholly descriptive for the population and caution is needed in making comparisons with other data sources which use normal employment classifications.

Table B.8. Census, Women in couples, and female single parents, with dependent children aged under 15, Employment to Population rates by employment status and age of youngest child, 1981-2016

	Age of youngest dependent child											
	0-4 years		5-9 years		10-14 years							
	Full-time	Part-time	Worked <1hr	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Worked <1hr	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Worked <1hr	Total
Employment to population rate (%)												
Women in couples												
1981	17.2	15.2	1.1	33.5	26.5	24.4	1.2	52.1	32.8	25.2	1.0	59.0
1986	14.1	20.9	2.3	37.3	24.3	31.1	2.3	57.6	32.1	26.7	3.1	61.8
1991	17.8	24.9	2.5	45.1	28.1	34.9	1.5	64.5	34.8	31.7	2.1	68.6
1996	15.7	28.1	2.5	46.3	26.6	35.5	1.4	63.5	34.9	34.5	1.2	70.6
2001	15.3	29.2	3.7	48.2	25.9	39.5	2.0	67.3	36.0	35.2	1.8	73.0
2006	14.5	32.3	5.4	52.1	26.9	41.2	1.8	69.9	35.7	39.4	1.9	77.0
2011	16.5	33.3	7.2	57.0	28.3	42.4	1.8	72.5	35.1	40.0	1.7	76.7
2016	19.0	33.9	8.0	60.9	30.3	43.1	1.3	74.6	37.2	40.3	1.1	78.6
Female single parents												
1981	12.1	7.8	0.6	20.5	23.5	17.0	1.0	41.5	28.9	17.2	1.3	47.3
1986	8.1	9.6	0.8	18.6	16.6	15.2	2.2	34.0	27.1	18.5	1.5	47.1
1991	10.8	13.5	0.8	25.1	21.0	23.5	0.5	45.0	32.9	21.7	0.3	54.9
1996	8.5	17.4	1.1	27.0	19.3	28.2	1.5	48.9	28.1	27.1	1.4	56.7
2001	8.7	18.1	1.5	28.3	18.9	28.0	2.1	48.9	24.5	31.2	1.7	57.4
2006	9.4	19.7	1.8	30.9	22.1	35.2	1.7	59.0	29.6	33.0	1.8	64.5
2011	10.6	20.9	2.5	34.0	22.0	33.5	1.3	56.7	33.5	32.9	2.1	68.6
2016	11.2	22.3	2.4	35.9	24.5	33.3	2.0	59.7	34.0	34.4	0.8	69.3

Source: ABS Census 1% Basic CURF, 1981, 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2011 & 2016.

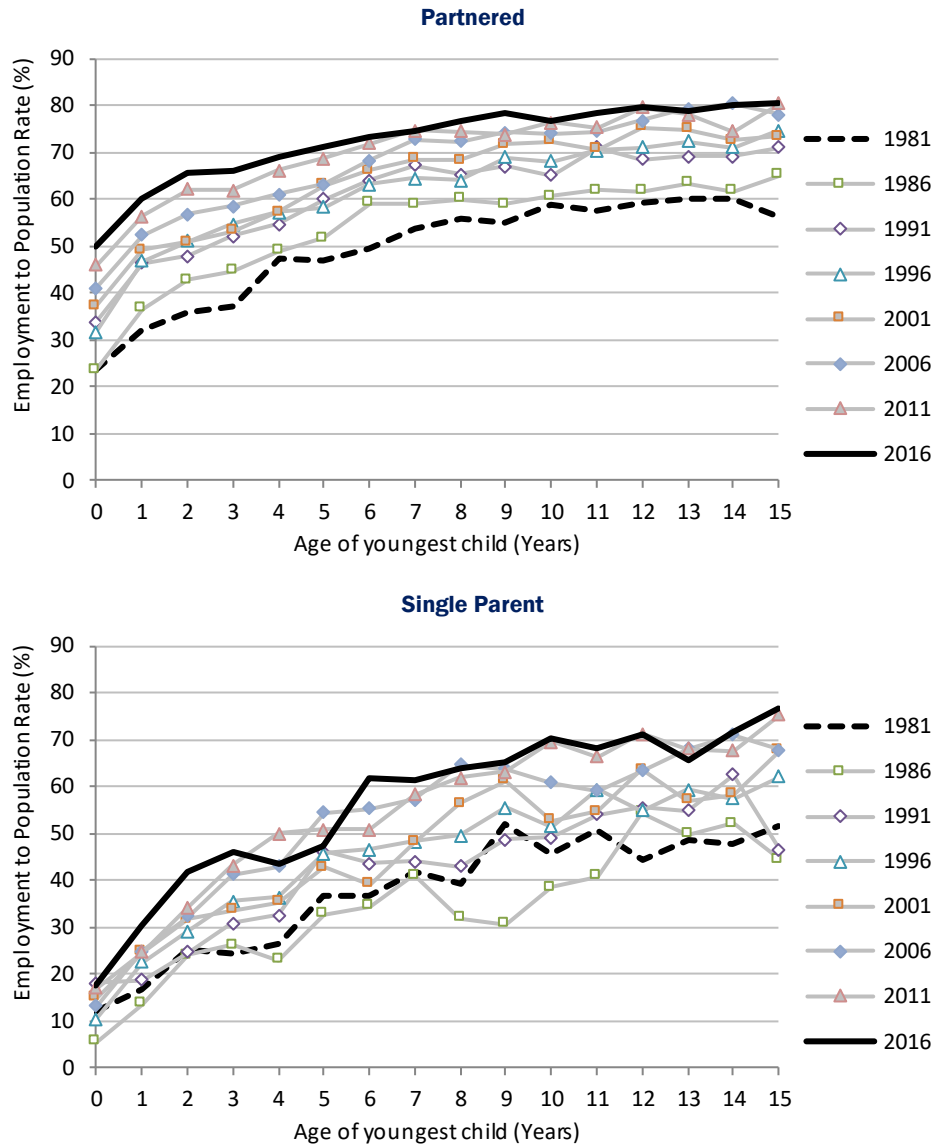
⁵² While there is data available on the employment of ‘married women’ across censuses (although some debate about the accuracy of this (see for example Deacon 1985), more detailed information is limited and it is noted for example that even in 1971 the sole standard tabulation produced for the 1971 census (CBCS 1974 Ref. No. 2.96) which had information relating to employment and dependent children was “Family class x birthplace of head x marital status of head x occupational status of head x period of residence of head” with ‘family class’ giving only a breakdown of the number of children aged under 15 years.

⁵³ The actual sample size of these surveys has varied considerably over time.

Employment by age of youngest child

The larger sample size allows for a more detailed examination of the pattern of workforce engagement by the age of the youngest child. This is shown by single year of child age in Figure B. 6. While this data is still subject to sampling variability which is reflected in some volatility in the series, it clearly shows a distinct profile of increased engagement as children age, and a major shift in the profiles between 1981 and 2016.

Figure B. 6. Women with dependent children, total Employment to Population Rate by age of youngest child, Census 1981-2016



Source: As per Table B.8

Population size

As discussed previously, an issue with data from the household surveys relates to limitations in benchmarking to family type, including the revision of estimates following census population counts. Table B.9 addresses this giving the estimates derived from the ABS census sample files. Of note in this data are the different patterns of growth between couples and single parents. While the number of women in couples with a dependent child aged under 15 remained stable between 1981 and 2006, before growing across the following period, the reverse is seen for female single parents where the number increased strongly between 1981 and 2001, but changed relatively little since.

Table B.9. Census, Estimated number of women in couples and female single parents by age of youngest child, 1981 to 2016

	Women in couples, youngest child aged:				Female single parents with youngest child aged			
	0-4 years	5-9 years	10-14 years	Total	0-4 years	5-9 years	10-14 years	Total
Women								
1981	726,700	466,700	386,000	1,579,400	89,300	81,200	69,300	239,800
1986	754,200	429,600	414,500	1,598,300	95,400	71,700	72,400	239,500
1991	752,300	427,800	383,400	1,563,500	100,900	78,600	77,100	256,600
1996	757,500	435,400	385,500	1,578,400	131,600	102,600	90,700	324,900
2001	725,100	447,200	388,300	1,560,600	136,200	126,700	114,300	377,200
2006	729,600	447,400	403,400	1,580,400	125,200	128,000	119,900	373,100
2011	840,700	453,600	407,400	1,701,700	140,900	119,800	127,300	388,000
2016	878,900	520,700	403,000	1,802,600	134,400	129,600	120,800	384,800

Source: As per Table B.7.

B. 5. Drawing the participation data together

Figure B. 7 plots the total employment to population rates from the above series. This clearly shows that while the broad trends across all series point to increasing participation by these women, there is considerable variation between the series in terms of estimates at individual points of time.

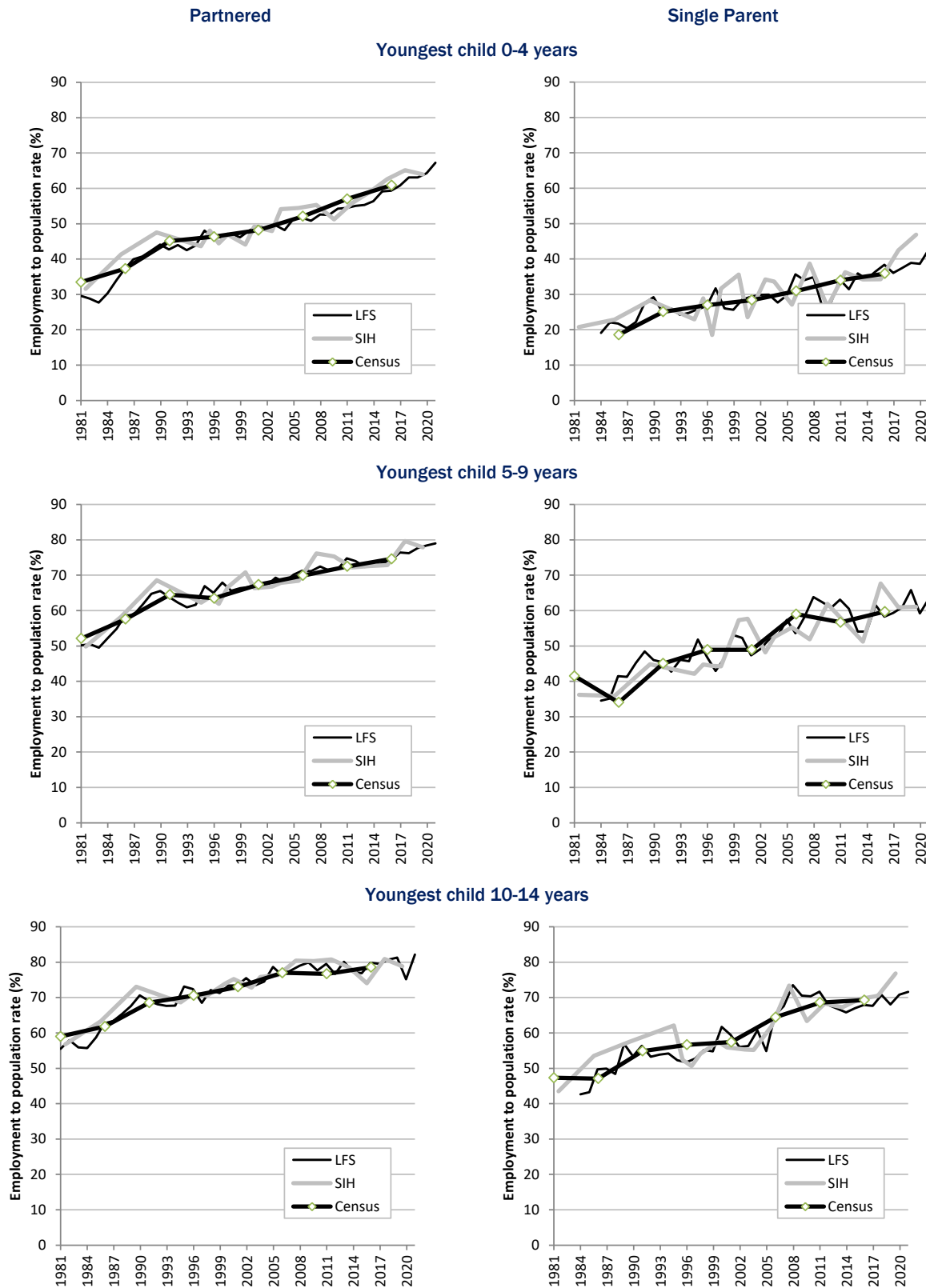
While the timing of the three series does not necessarily well coincide, reviewing some years where there are multiple surveys suggests that there is no consistent pattern of over and under-estimation by any one series. This is considered in Table B.10. While in some cases the difference between the minimum and maximum estimates is relatively small, in other cases the difference is up to 6.5 percentage points. Again the high variability of estimates derived from relatively small samples is likely to be the driving factor, emphasising the need for caution in interpreting this data, and in attempting to link short term changes with changes in childcare provision.

Table B.10. Women in couples, and female single parents, with dependent children aged under 15, minimum and maximum estimated employment to population rates from various sources, by age of youngest child, 2011 and 2016

	Women in couple, age of youngest:			Female single parents, age of youngest		
	0-4 years	5-9 years	10-14 years	0-4 years	5-9 years	10-14 years
Total employment to population rate (%) and which source						
Labour Force Survey June 2011, Survey of Income and Housing 2010-11, Census August 2011						
Maximum	54.4 LFS	72.2 SIH	76.7 Census	34.0 Census	56.6 SIH	68.3 SIH
Minimum	57.0 Census	74.8 LFS	80.8 SIH	36.3 SIH	63.1 LFS	71.7 LFS
Labour Force Survey June 2016, Survey of Income and Housing 2015-16, Census August 2016						
Maximum	59.3 LFS	72.8 SIH	74.1 SIH	34.3 SIH	58.3 LFS	67.9 LFS
Minimum	62.6 SIH	74.6 Census	79.8 LFS	38.4 LFS	67.7 SIH	69.6 SIH

Source: Derived from Table B.1, Table B.2, Table B.6, Table B.7 and Table B.8.

Figure B.7. Women in couples and female single parents with dependent children aged under 15 years, total employment to population rate, by age of youngest child, Labour Force Survey, Survey of Income and Housing, and Census, 1981-2021



Source: Derived from Table B.1, Table B.2, Table B.6, Table B.7 and Table B.8.

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