

Research Report

July 2008

Contact with the South Australian
child protection system:

A statistical analysis of longitudinal
child protection data



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Research and Analysis Unit

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**Government
of South Australia**

Department for Families
and Communities

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1

Executive Summary

1 Executive Summary

The Study

This study has undertaken longitudinal statistical analysis of the Families SA Client Information System in order to explore the extent to which a cohort of children (born in 1991) have come into contact with the South Australian child protection system, the nature of the contact, outcomes and patterns. Some comparative analysis has also been conducted on cohorts born in 1998 and 2002.

The project has been a joint initiative of Families SA and the Research and Analysis Unit in the South Australian Department for Families & Communities.

Results

There were a total of 19,622 live births in South Australia in 1991. As of January 2007, 4410 individual children born in 1991 had been the subject of at least one child protection notification (22.5% of the birth cohort). A total of 13,813 notifications had been received for these children. Approximately half the children notified have been the subject of an investigation of child abuse and approximately one quarter (1097 children - 5.6% of the cohort) have had at least one substantiation of child abuse.

For the children born in 1991:

- The most common child abuse notification ratings were *Notifier Concerns* and *Tier 2*. These also had the *highest* frequency (ie numbers of notifications per child).
- Almost half the children notified have only been notified once. The maximum number of notifications per child was 48.
- The more notifications received about a child, the more likely they were to have been the subject of each level of notification rating; to have had abuse investigated and substantiated; to have had notifications and substantiations for each type of abuse; and to go on to have multiple other contacts with Families SA.
- Children subject to a Tier 1 notification were much more likely than other children to have abuse substantiated.
- Almost three quarters of children who were subject to a notification have not had any other contact with the Families SA system. Only a relatively small number have had multiple contacts.

The median age at first notification was 8.6 years. Children were not found to be at greater risk of notification at any particular age. Age at first notification was found to be a predictor of:

- Multiple notifications (the younger the age at first notification, the more likely it was that multiple notifications would be received)
- Substantiated abuse
- Being placed in alternative care.

A comparison of three cohorts of children – born in 1991, 1998 and 2002 – found that children are increasingly likely to be notified for alleged child abuse or neglect and have contact with the child protection system. The analysis suggests that:

- the likelihood of a child born in 2002 experiencing at least one notification is double that of children born in 1991
- the rate of increase in notifications for infants and very young children is particularly high
- the total number of notifications per child is increasing
- children in the more recent cohorts are more likely to have abuse substantiated; however this likelihood has increased at a lesser rate than notifications
- a declining proportion of notifications are investigated and substantiated.

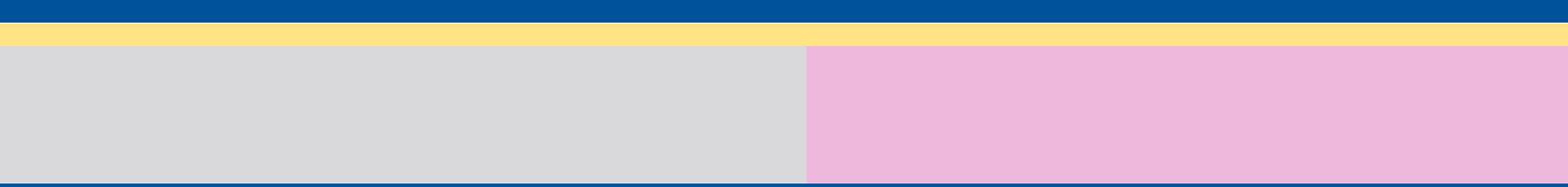
Compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were found more likely to:

- Be the subject of a child protection notification, investigation and substantiation
- Be the subject of higher ranked (more serious) notifications of abuse
- Be notified for emotional abuse and neglect
- Have a first notification at a younger age
- Be notified on multiple occasions
- Go on to experience an alternative care placement, adolescent at risk intake, emergency financial assistance or young offender order.

Gender differences were found between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys and girls which were not apparent in the general population. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls emerged as particularly at risk. Compared to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males and then also to non-Indigenous males and females, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls were:

- the subject of higher numbers of notifications and substantiation,
- more likely to be notified for, and have a substantiation of, emotional and physical abuse
- more likely to go on to experience an adolescent at risk intake.

Analysis of data between children born in the three cohort years indicates that children are increasingly more likely to be notified. The likelihood of notification has increased at a greater rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.



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2. The Study

The Child Protection Cohort Study has involved statistical analysis of the longitudinal data held in the Families SA Client Information System in order to explore the extent to which a cohort of children (born in 1991) have come into contact with the South Australian child protection system, the nature of the contact, outcomes and patterns. Some comparative analysis has also been conducted on cohorts born in 1998 and 2002.

The project has been a joint initiative of Families SA and the Research and Analysis Unit in the South Australian Department for Families & Communities.

This is the first time such an analysis of the data has been attempted. Distinguishing features of the analysis include using individuals as the unit of analysis and the consolidation of the entire data base across years (rather than analysis focused on an individual year). Data was extracted from the system for all children with a birth date in 1991 who had at least one notification for alleged child abuse or neglect. A range of statistical techniques were used to analyse this data in terms of relationships, trends and outcomes.

A birth year of 1991 was chosen for two reasons. Firstly, it is the earliest year for which reliable Client Information is held on the computerised central data base. Secondly, children born in that year were aged between 15 and 16 at the time of data extract (January 2007). Thus an almost complete picture of their contact with the system over their childhood could be constructed.

For the purposes of the study, the 19,622 live births in SA in 1991 have been used as the size of the cohort population. It has been assumed that total exits and entries into this population (from children born elsewhere entering SA, children leaving SA or deaths) are equalised (ie no adjustments have been made for changes in this cohort size over years).

The resulting analysis gives, for the first time, evidence of the extent to which a cohort of children are being notified and coming to the attention of South Australian child protection services and the nature of those notifications and contacts. It has also enabled some analysis of pathways and outcomes over time. The comparison with later birth cohorts (born in 1998 and 2001) provides a basis for examining trends over time.

Policy and practice implications of the findings are not explored in this report. However, the data and results clearly raise many issues which are worthy of detailed policy consideration.

3

Contact with the Child Protection System

3. Contact with the child protection system

This section presents findings relating to the extent to which the cohort of children born in 1991 have come into contact with the South Australian child protection system and the nature of that contact.

3.1 How many of the cohort have been notified?

There were a total of 19,622 live births in South Australia in 1991¹. As of January 2007, 4410 individual children born in 1991 had been the subject of at least one child protection notification (22.5% of the birth cohort). A total of 13,813 notifications had been received for these children. 1097 children in the cohort had been the subject of at least one substantiation of child abuse (5.6% of the cohort).

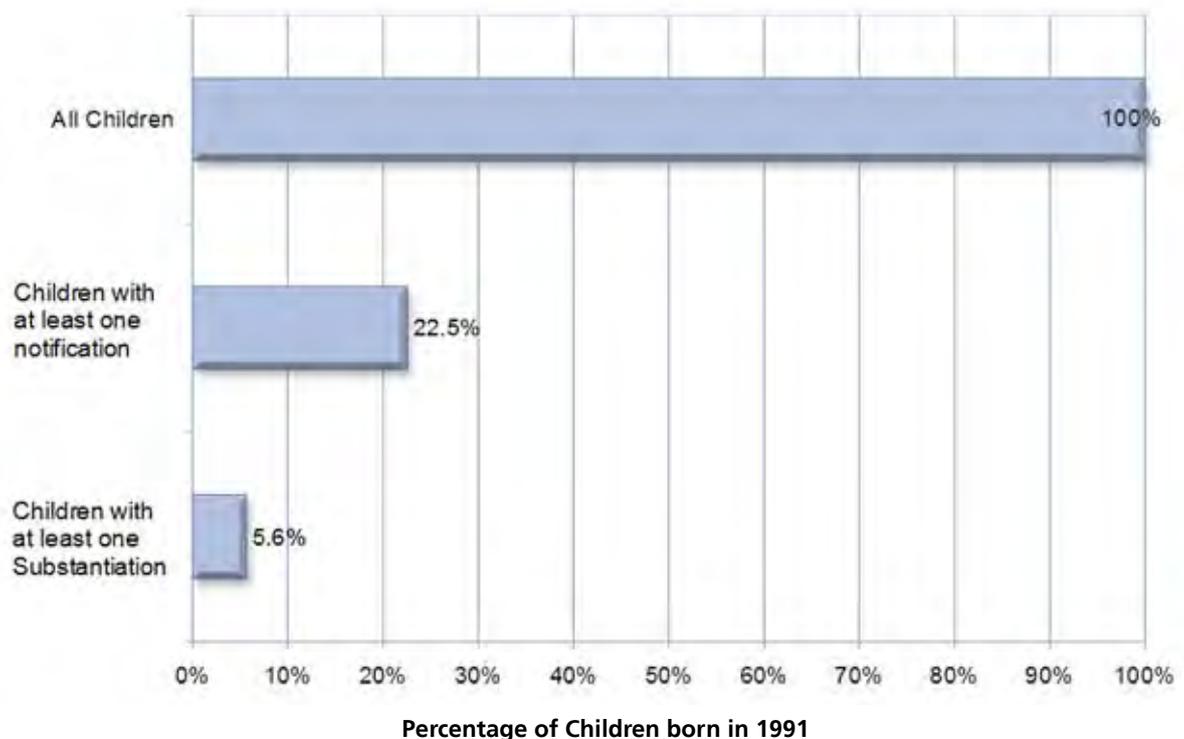


Figure 1: Contact with child protection system, children born in 1991

3.2 Types of notifications

Table 1 summarises the types of notifications received for the 4410 children. The most common form of notification was *Notifier Concern* – 55.1% of children notified (or 12.4% of the birth cohort) received at least one of these and they comprised 33% of all notifications for the age cohort.

¹ Pregnancy Outcome Statistics Unit, Epidemiology Branch, Department of Health, South Australia.

Table 1: Types of notifications received by children born in 1991*

Types of CP Notification	Number of Children	% of 1991 live births (n=19622)	% of children with a CP notification (n=44100)
Tier 1	234	1.2%	5.3%
Tier 2	1639	8.4%	37.2%
Tier 3	1261	6.4%	28.6%
Extra-familial abuse (EXF)	519	2.6%	11.8%
No Grounds for intervention (NGI)	353	1.8%	8.0%
Not Available (NA)	1409	7.2%	32.0%
Notifier concern (NOC)	2432	12.4%	55.1%

* as at January 2007. Note totals refer to the numbers of children receiving at least one of the type of notification (children may have received more than one notification within that type, or a range of different notification types)

Note: It is not possible to identify the type or rating of notifications received prior to 1998 (when the Tier classification system was introduced). The 'Not available' category above therefore refers to notifications received prior to 1998.

Table 2 also summarises data on the classifications of the 13813 of notifications, but with regards to the number of each type received (rather than on a per-child basis). The most common notification ratings are seen to be *Notifier Concerns* and *Tier 2*.

Table 2: Number of each Type of Notification from all Notifications

Type of Notification	Number of Notifications	%
Tier 1	303	2.2
Tier 2	3450	25.0
Tier 3	1888	13.7
Extra-familial abuse (EXF)	673	4.9
No Grounds for investigation (NGI)	394	2.9
Not Available (NA)	2565	18.6
Notifier Concerns (NOCS)	4562	33.0
Total notifications*	13813	

Note: It is not possible to identify the classification of notifications received prior to 1998 (when the Tier classification system was introduced). The 'Not available' category above therefore refers to notifications received prior to 1998.

* 22 notifications (0.2% of all notifications) received two classifications around the time when the Tier classification system was introduced (1998)

3.3 Number of notifications per child

Most commonly, children had been the subject of only one notification (48.5% of children in the cohort). The maximum number of notifications received for an individual child was 48 (Figure 2, Table 3 and Table 4).

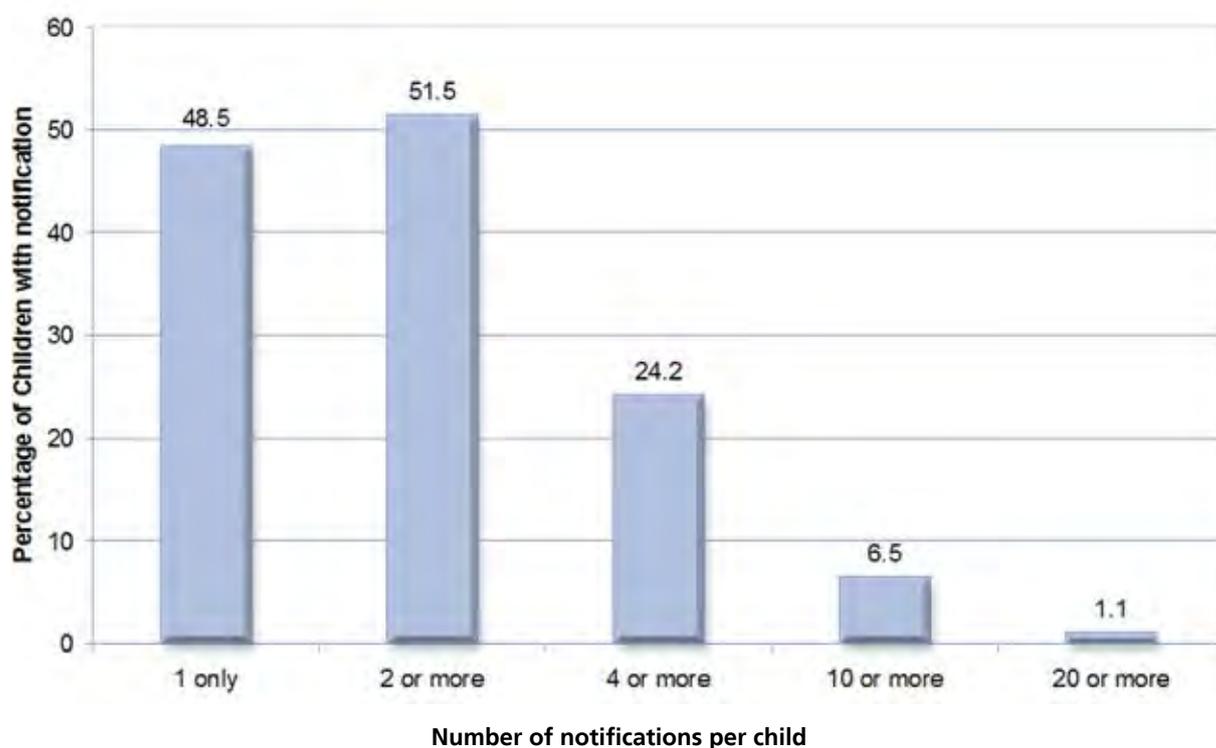


Figure 2: Number of Notifications per Child

Table 3: Distribution of Number of Notifications per Child for all children with a notification (N=4410)

Number of notifications	Number of children	%
1	2137	48.5
2 to 3	1205	27.3
4 to 9	781	17.7
10 to 19	237	5.4
20+	50	1.1
Total	4410	

Table 4: Summary of number of notifications per child

	Number of children	Mean	SD	Median	Range	IQR*
CP notifications	4410	3.1	4.1	2	1 to 48	1 to 3

* IQR – Inter-quartile range (25th to 75th percentile)

3.4 Types of Abuse

Table 5 summarises the nature of the abuse alleged to have occurred in the total notifications received. Allegations of physical abuse were the most common and were received for almost half of the children with a notification.

Table 5: Children with Alleged Abuse (N=4410)*

Alleged Abuse	Number of Children	%
Physical	2040	46.3
Sexual	1323	30.0
Emotional	1534	34.8
Neglect	1928	43.7
Likely	33	0.7
Threat	21	0.5
Criteria not met	440	10.0
Total	4410	

* More than 1 alleged abuse type could be experienced

3.5 Substantiations of abuse

Approximately half of the children who had been notified had been the subject of an investigation (of alleged child abuse). Approximately a quarter of children with a notification had abuse substantiated (Table 7 and 14).

Table 6 summarises data relating to the frequency of investigations and substantiations per child.

Table 6: Summary of Investigations and Substantiations per Child

	Number of Children	Mean	SD	Median	Range	IQR
Outcome						
Had an Investigation	2187	2.2	2.7	1	1 to 25	1 to 2
Had a Substantiation	1097	1.8	1.4	1	1 to 11	1 to 2

* IQR – Inter-quartile range (25th to 75th percentile)

As Table 6 indicates, for children who were the subject of an investigation:

- the median number of investigations was 1
- the maximum for any individual child was 25 investigations
- most - 58% - only had 1 investigation.

Most children who have been the subject of a notification have never had abuse substantiated (75% - 3313 children). Of those who have had a substantiation: most have only had one. Of all children notified, only 9% (396 children) have had 2 or more substantiations, with 1% (60 children) having 5 or more (the maximum for any child was 11) (Table 6). This indicates that repeat incidents of substantiated abuse are concentrated in a relatively small population of children.

The distribution of the number of substantiated notifications per child is shown in Figure 3 and Table 7.

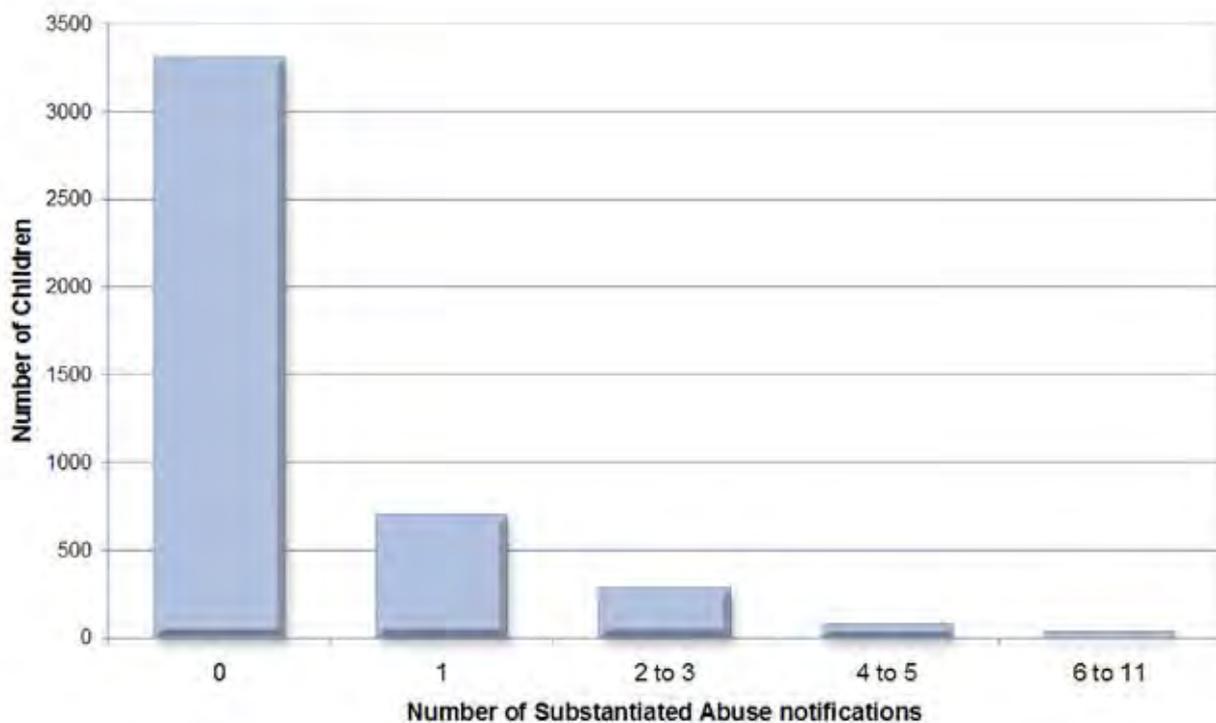


Figure 3: Distribution of Number of Substantiated Abuse notifications per Child (N=4410)

Table 7: Frequencies of the number of Substantiated Abuse notifications per child (N=4410)

Number of Substantiated Abuse notifications per child	Number of Children (N=4410)	% of Children	Cumulative % of Children
0	3313	75.1%	75.1%
1	701	15.9%	91.0%
2	199	4.5%	95.5%
3	90	2.0%	97.6%
4	47	1.1%	98.6%
5	29	0.7%	99.3%
6	11	0.2%	99.5%
7	11	0.2%	99.8%
8	6	0.14%	99.93%
9	0	0.00%	99.93%
10	1	0.02%	99.95%
11	2	0.05%	100.0%

3.6 Other contacts

Analysis was conducted of the extent to which children in the 1991 cohort who had at least one notification also had other designated contacts or services with Families SA (as recorded in the Families SA data base at January 07). This analysis indicated that **for the 4410 notified children:**²

- 578 had had been placed in alternative care at least once
- 92 had been placed at least once under a 12 month Care and Protection Order
- 118 had been placed under the Guardianship of the Minister
- 748 had been the subject of at least one Adolescent at Risk Intake
- 136 had been the subjects of at least one Youth Justice Order.

The extent to which children born in 1991 experienced a notification, and then other designated contacts, services or outcomes, is summarised in Figure 4.

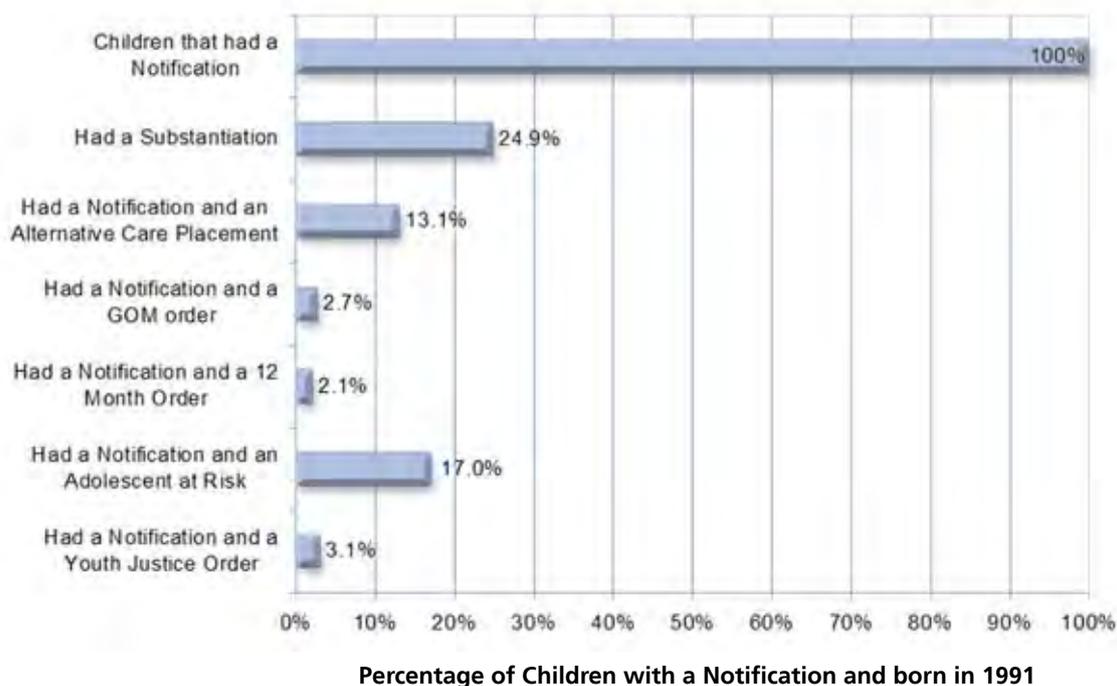


Figure 4: Contact with child protection system, children born in 1991 subject to a notification (N=4410)

² Note that other children or young people born in 1991 – who were not notified – may have also experienced these contacts/services/outcomes so the total number of the birth cohort experiencing each contact/service/outcome would be higher. For example, not all young people who are the subject of an Adolescent at Risk intake or are placed on a Youth Justice order have previously been notified for child abuse.

4

Notifications, substantiated abuse and other contacts

4. Notifications, substantiated abuse and other contacts

This section presents findings relating to notification ratings and frequency; children with multiple notifications and other subsequent other contacts with the Families SA system.

4.1 Notification ratings + frequency

Table 8 summarises the number of the various types of notifications per child **for children that received that type**.

Tier 2 and *Notifier Concerns* - the most common notification ratings - were also the ratings with **highest frequency** and the **greatest range**. For example, at least one child was the subject of 20 *Tier 2* notifications; and another was the subject of 22 *Notifier Concerns*.

Table 8: Summary of the number of each type of notification per child for children with that type

Type of notification	Number of children	Mean	SD	Median	Range	IQR*
Tier 1	234	1.3	0.7	1	1 to 6	1 to 1
Tier 2	1639	2.1	2.0	1	1 to 20	1 to 2
Tier 3	1261	1.5	1.0	1	1 to 9	1 to 2
Extra-familial abuse	519	1.3	0.8	1	1 to 8	1 to 1
No Grounds for intervention	353	1.1	0.4	1	1 to 4	1 to 1
Not Available	1409	1.8	1.7	1	1 to 13	1 to 2
Notifier concerns	2432	1.9	1.7	1	1 to 22	1 to 2

* IQR – Inter-quartile range (25th to 75th percentile)

4.2 Children with multiple notifications

The more notifications received about a child, the more they were likely to have been the subject of each **type** of notification rating. That is, children with multiple notifications were more likely to have notifications across the range of ratings, including the highest risk. For example, *Tier 1* notifications were received for only 1.4% of children with one notification, but for 22.4% of those with seven or more. By contrast, the most common notification type for children with only one notification was *Notifier Concerns* (Table 9).

Table 9: Percentage of Children with a Type of Notification within number of notifications categories

	Number of notifications				p*
	1 (n=2137)	2 to 3 (n=1205)	4 to 6 (n=554)	≥ 7 (n=514)	
Had a Tier 1	1.4%	3.1%	9.6%	22.4%	<.001
Had a Tier 2	16.4%	38.9%	62.8%	91.6%	<.001
Had a Tier 3	12.6%	28.8%	48.4%	73.3%	<.001
Had an Extra-familial abuse (EXF)	8.2%	10.1%	13.4%	28.8%	<.001
Had a No Grounds for Intervention (NGI)	3.6%	8.4%	12.3%	21.0%	<.001
Had a Not Available (NA)	23.2%	30.6%	43.3%	59.1%	<.001
Had a Notifier Concerns (NOCS)	35.0%	61.3%	82.5%	94.9%	<.001

* Chi-Squared tests used to compare rate of notification type between number of notifications

Note: the Tier classification system was introduced in 1998. The 'Not available' category above refers to notifications received prior to 1998.

Children who were the subject of multiple notifications were significantly more likely to have both an investigation and substantiation of abuse. The likelihood of having abuse substantiated increased steadily with the number of notifications (Table 10 and Figure 5).

Table 10: Percentage of Children with Investigation and Substantiated Abuse according to number of notifications

	Number of notifications				p*
	1 (n=2137)	2 to 3 (n=1205)	4 to 6 (n=554)	≥ 7 (n=514)	
Had an Investigation	30.1%	51.1%	78.5%	95.7%	<.001
Had a Substantiated Abuse	11.2%	20.0%	41.2%	75.5%	<.001

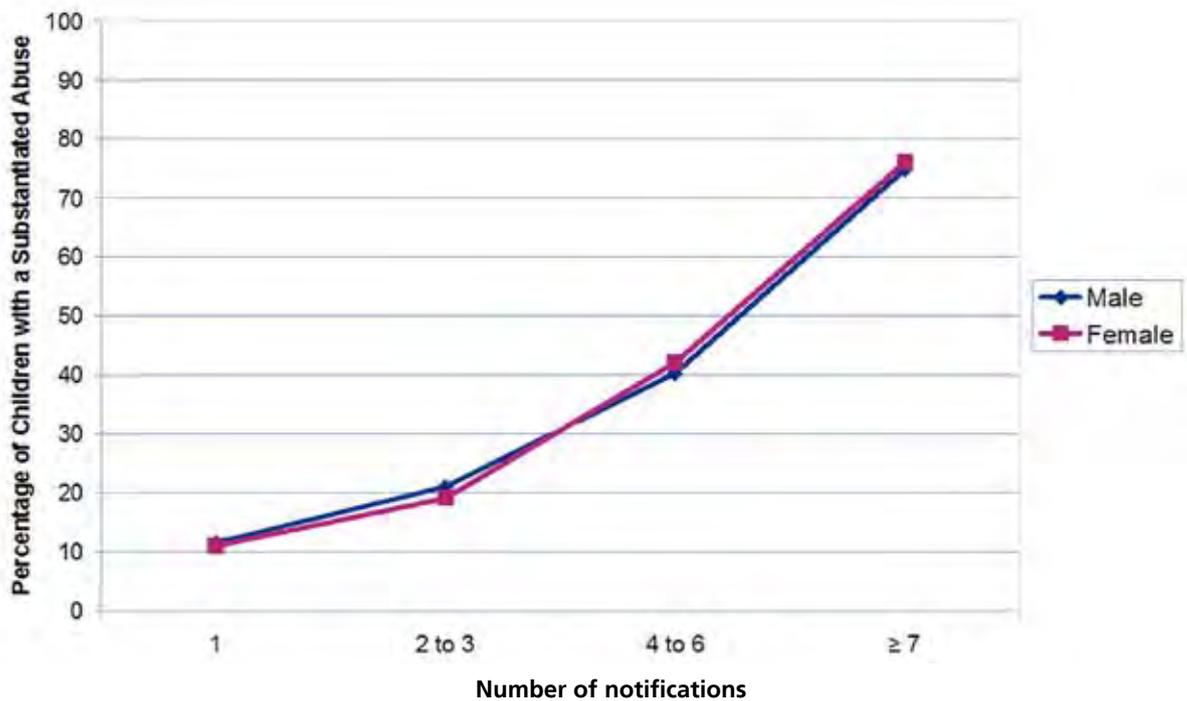


Figure 5: Percentage of Children with a Substantiated Abuse within number of notifications categories between Genders

Children with multiple notifications were also more likely to have notifications and substantiations for each **type** of abuse, suggesting that children who are the subject of multiple notifications are more at risk of each type of abuse. For example, whilst there were allegations of neglect for only 22.5% of children with one notification, this rose to 91.4% for children with 7 or more notifications (Table 11). Similarly, 4.2% of children with one notification had a substantiation for neglect, rising to 51% of those with 7 or more notifications (Table 12).

Table 11: Percentage of Children with an allegation of Abuse within number of notifications categories

	Number of notifications				p*
	1 (n=2137)	2 to 3 (n=1205)	4 to 6 (n=554)	≥ 7 (n=514)	
Had an Allegation of Physical Abuse	31.5%	48.3%	63.4%	84.2%	<.001
Had an Allegation of Sexual Abuse	21.3%	30.2%	39.2%	55.8%	<.001
Had an Allegation of Emotional Abuse	17.5%	35.4%	55.8%	82.5%	<.001
Had an Allegation of Neglect	22.5%	48.0%	71.8%	91.4%	<.001

* Chi-Squared tests used to compare rate of notification type between number of notifications

Table 12: Percentage of Children with a Substantiated Abuse within number of notifications categories

	Number of notifications				p*
	1 (n=2137)	2 to 3 (n=1205)	4 to 6 (n=554)	≥ 7 (n=514)	
Had a Substantiated Physical Abuse	5.2%	9.8%	15.9%	39.9%	<.001
Had a Substantiated Sexual Abuse	4.1%	4.2%	8.1%	15.4%	<.001
Had a Substantiated Emotional Abuse	2.9%	7.2%	17.3%	45.3%	<.001
Had a Substantiated Neglect	4.2%	9.3%	22.7%	51.0%	<.001

* Chi-Squared tests used to compare rate of notification type between number of notifications

Children with multiple notifications were also significantly more likely to go on and have **every other form of contact** with Families SA (alternative care placement, care and protection order, emergency financial assistance payment, adolescent at risk intake and young offender order). That is, the number of notifications significantly increased the likelihood of all kinds of other contacts (Table 13).

Table 13: Percentage of Children with a Families SA Contact within number of notifications categories

	Number of notifications				p*
	1 (n=2137)	2 to 3 (n=1205)	4 to 6 (n=554)	≥ 7 (n=514)	
Had an Alternative Care Placement	4.8%	10.2%	20.0%	47.1%	<.001
Had a 12 month order	0.1%	0.9%	2.5%	12.5%	<.001
Had a GOM order	0.9%	1.7%	3.4%	11.7%	<.001
Had an Adolescent at Risk Intake	7.5%	16.1%	28.3%	45.9%	<.001
Had an Emergency Financial Assistance	1.6%	3.7%	8.5%	27.4%	<.001
Had a Young offender order	1.0%	1.9%	4.5%	13.0%	<.001

* Chi-Squared tests used to compare rate of notification type between number of notifications

4.3 Notification outcomes

Of the 1097 children with substantiated abuse, the most common substantiated abuse type was neglect (Table 14).

Table 14: Children with Investigation and Substantiated Abuse (N=4410)*

Outcome	Number of Children	%
Investigation	2187	49.6
Substantiated abuse	1097	24.9
Substantiated physical abuse	522	11.8
Substantiated sexual abuse	262	5.9
Substantiated emotional abuse	479	10.9
Substantiated neglect	589	13.4

* A child can be subject to more than one substantiated abuse type

The percentage of children that had a notification of a certain type of abuse for whom abuse was substantiated (either for that type of abuse or another type) is shown in Figure 6. That is, out of all the children who were subject to at least one notification of neglect, 37% had a substantiation of abuse (of one form or other). Percentages with substantiations are similar across abuse types. This may suggest that no particular abuse type (eg neglect) is more or less likely to be substantiated.

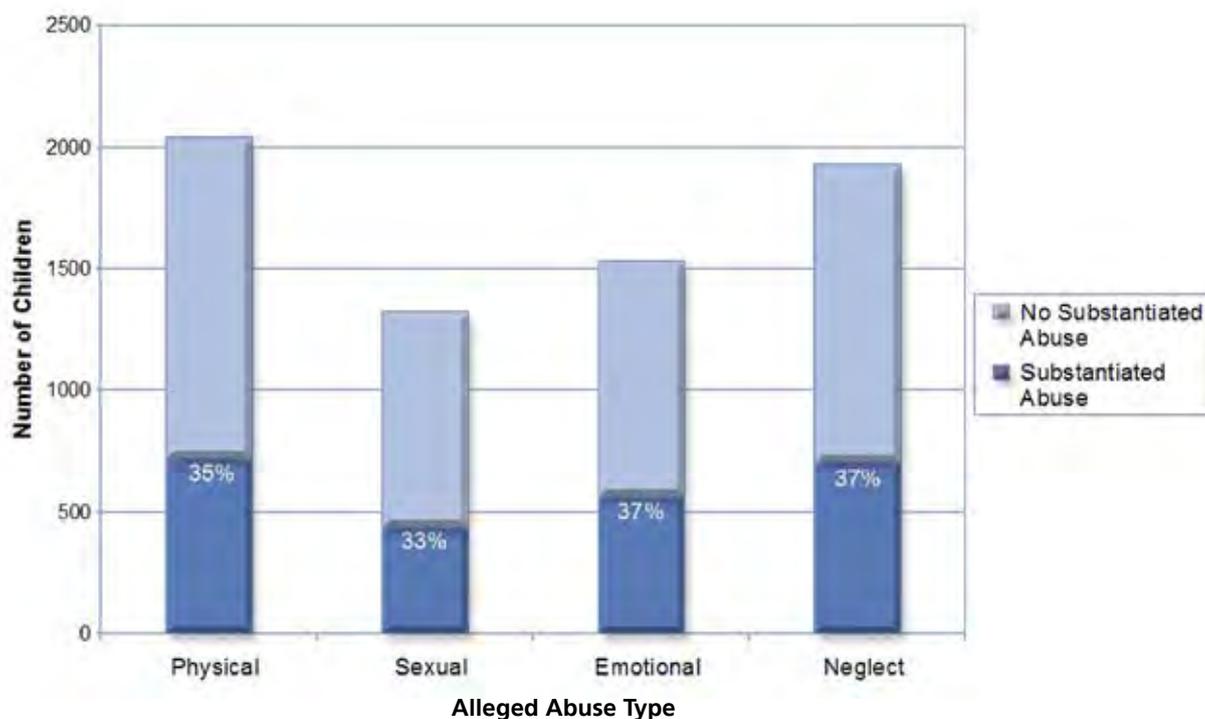


Figure 6: Percentage of Children with an Alleged Abuse Type that were later subject to a Substantiated Abuse

The number of different alleged abuse types experienced by a child was positively associated with the likelihood of being subject to a substantiated abuse. That is:

- 15% of children who were notified for only one type of abuse subsequently had abuse substantiated
- 30% of children with notifications for 2 types of abuse had at least one substantiation
- 51% of children with notifications for 3 types of abuse had at least one substantiation and
- 77% of children with notifications for all 4 types of alleged abuse had at least one substantiation.

Children who were the subject of a Tier 1 notification were much more likely than other children to have abuse substantiated: 74% of children with a Tier 1 notification had a substantiation compared to 22% of children without a Tier 1 notification (Figure 7).

- The odds of substantiated abuse in children with a Tier 1 notification were estimated to be 4.2 times greater than children without a Tier 1 notification (after controlling for the influence of the total number of notifications, gender and cultural background).

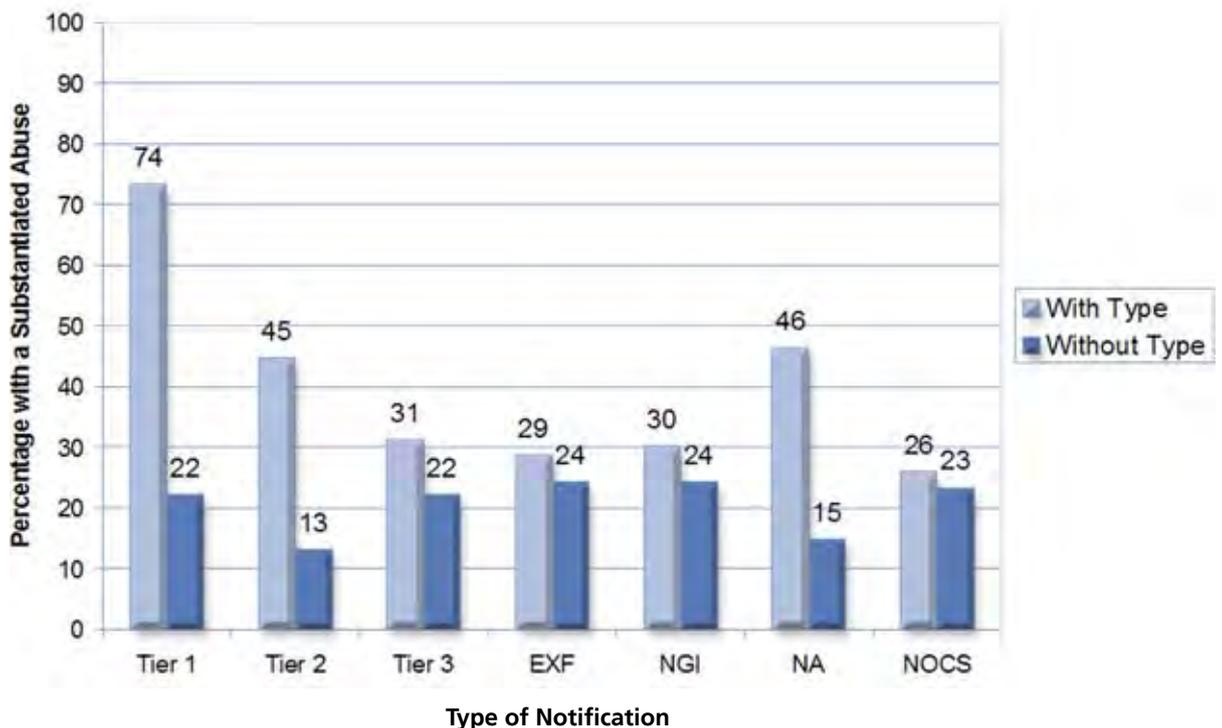


Figure 7: Percentage with a Substantiated Abuse between children with and without each type of notification

4.4 Other Families SA contacts

The great majority of children who were subject to a notification (73%) have not gone on to have any other contact with the Families SA system through an Alternative Care Placement, Adolescent at Risk intake, or Legal Order (whether Care and Protection or Young Offender) (Figure 8).

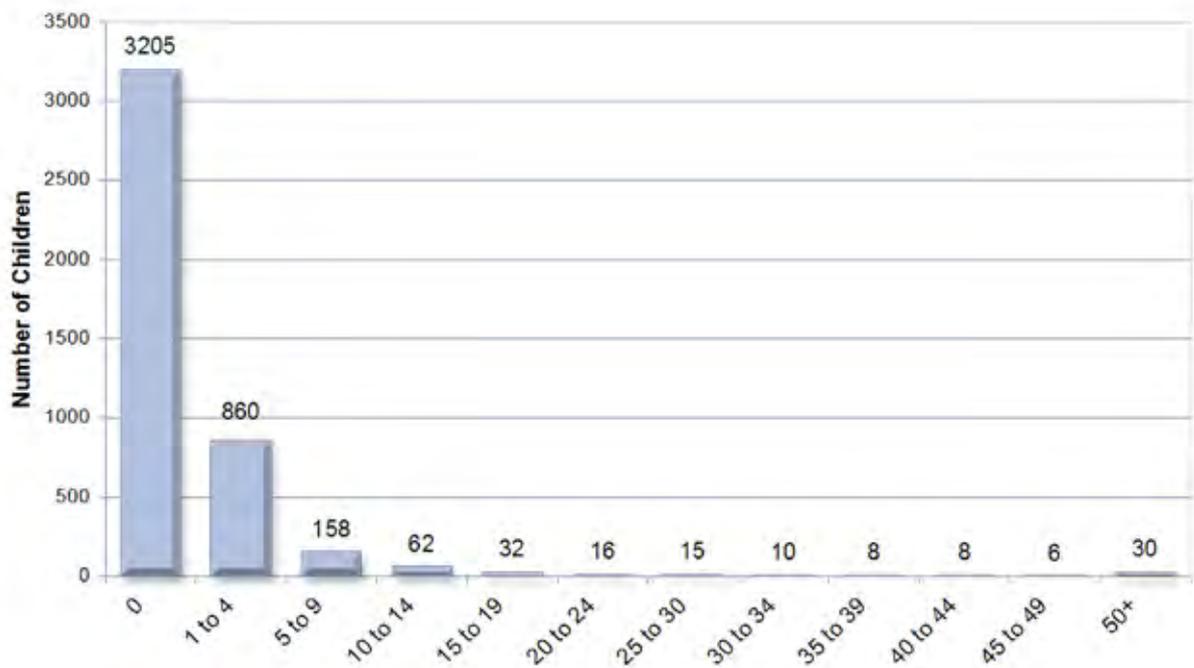


Figure 8: Distribution of Number of any other Contacts per Child (N=4410) (excluding notification)

A relatively small number have had multiple contacts of various kinds, with 8% having 5 or more, 4% having 10 or more, 1.4% having 30 or more and 0.7% having 50 or more.

Figure 9 summarises other contacts according to gender. As indicated, males were significantly more likely to experience an alternative care placement or a young offender order whilst females were significantly more likely to experience an adolescent at risk intake.

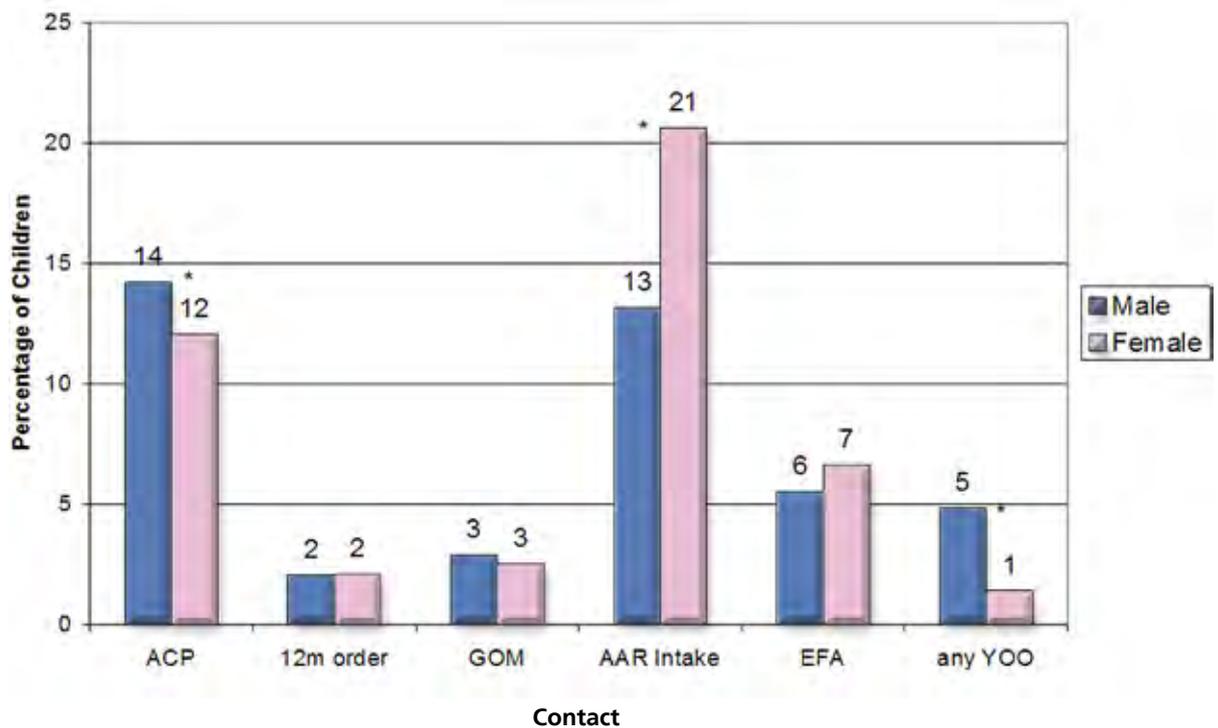


Figure 9: Percentage of Children with each Type of Contact by Gender (* significant difference ($p < .05$) between Genders) (N=4410)

A descriptive summary of the number of contact per child **for children that received that given contact** is shown in Table 15.

Table 15: Summary of the number of contact per child for children with that outcome or contact

	Number of children	Mean	SD	Median	Range	IQR*
Alternative Care Placement	578	7.3	12.7	3	1 to 96	1 to 7
12 month order	92	1.6	0.8	1	1 to 5	1 to 2
GOM order	118	1.4	0.7	1	1 to 5	1 to 2
Adolescent at Risk intake	748	2.3	2.6	1	1 to 39	1 to 3
Emergency financial assistance	268	3.3	10.6	1	1 to 164	1 to 3
Young Offender Order	136	6.3	8.0	3	1 to 38	1 to 8
Any orders or placements	1205	6.8	15.1	2	1 to 263	1 to 6

* IQR – Inter-quartile range (25th to 75th percentile)

The median number of **alternative care placements** was 3, with the maximum being 96 for one child (Figure 11). However, most commonly children were only in one placement (32%), with 17% having 11 or more.

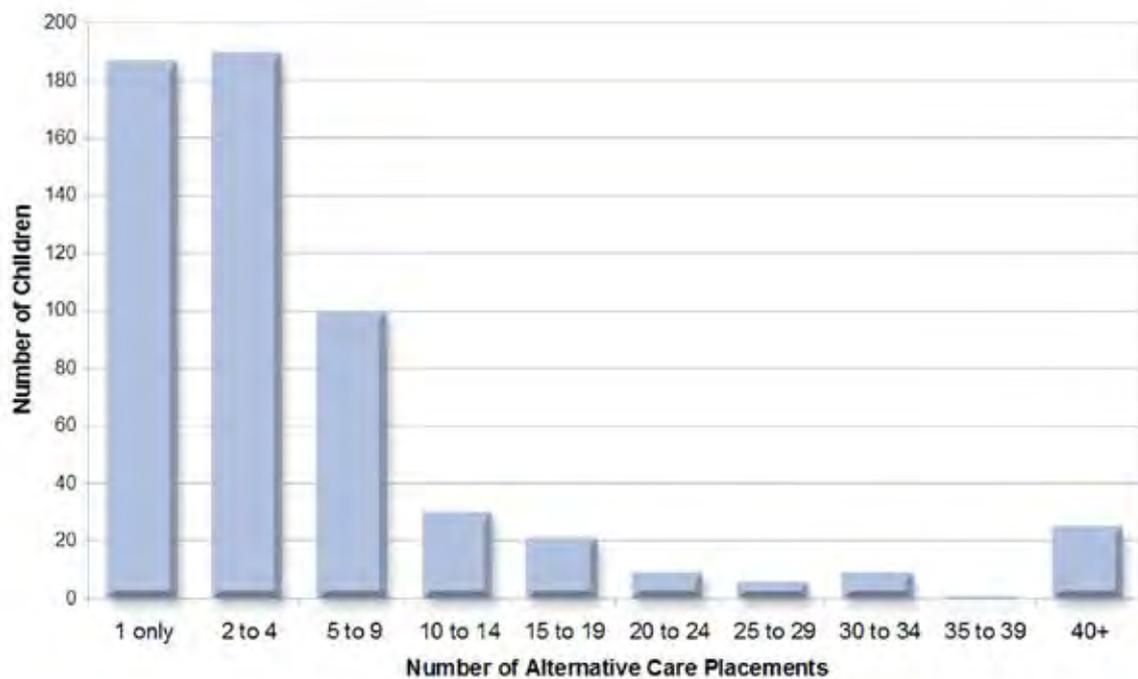


Figure 10: Distribution of the Number of Alternative Care Placements per Child (N=578)

Most children (59%) received only one **12 month order** (Figure 11) although 12% had 3 or more (with the maximum number being five).

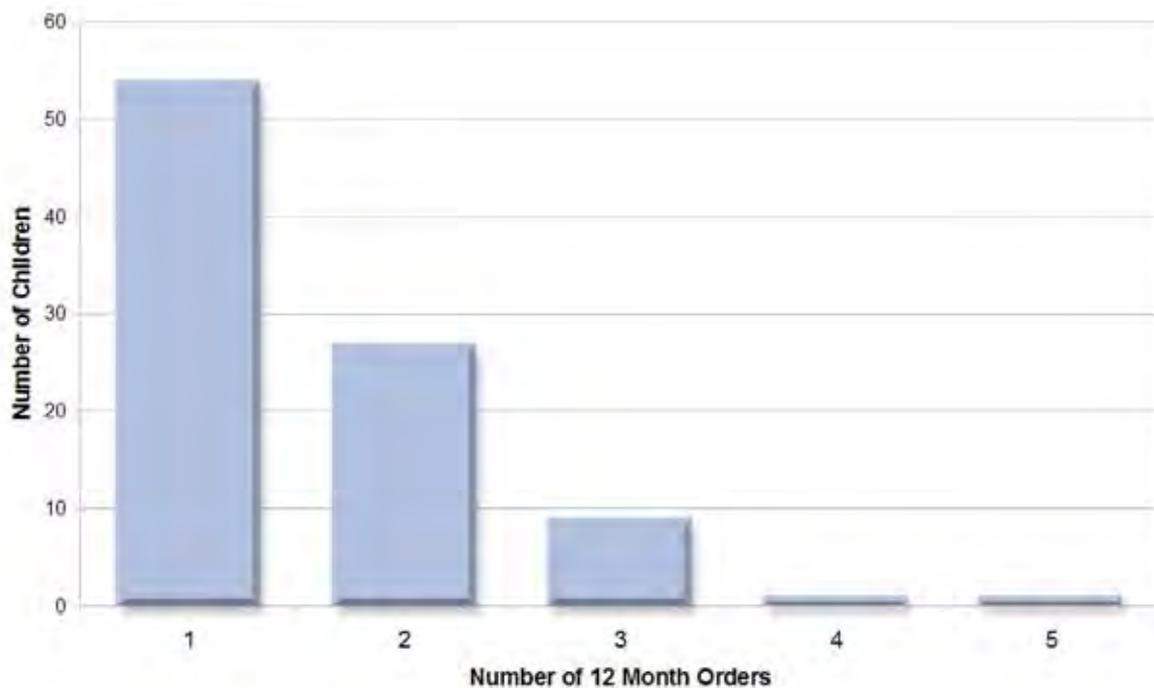


Figure 11: Distribution of Number of 12 Month Orders per Child (N=92)

Similarly, the great majority of children (72%) had only one Guardianship of the Minister Order (Figure 12), although 9% had 3 or more with the maximum number for one child being five.

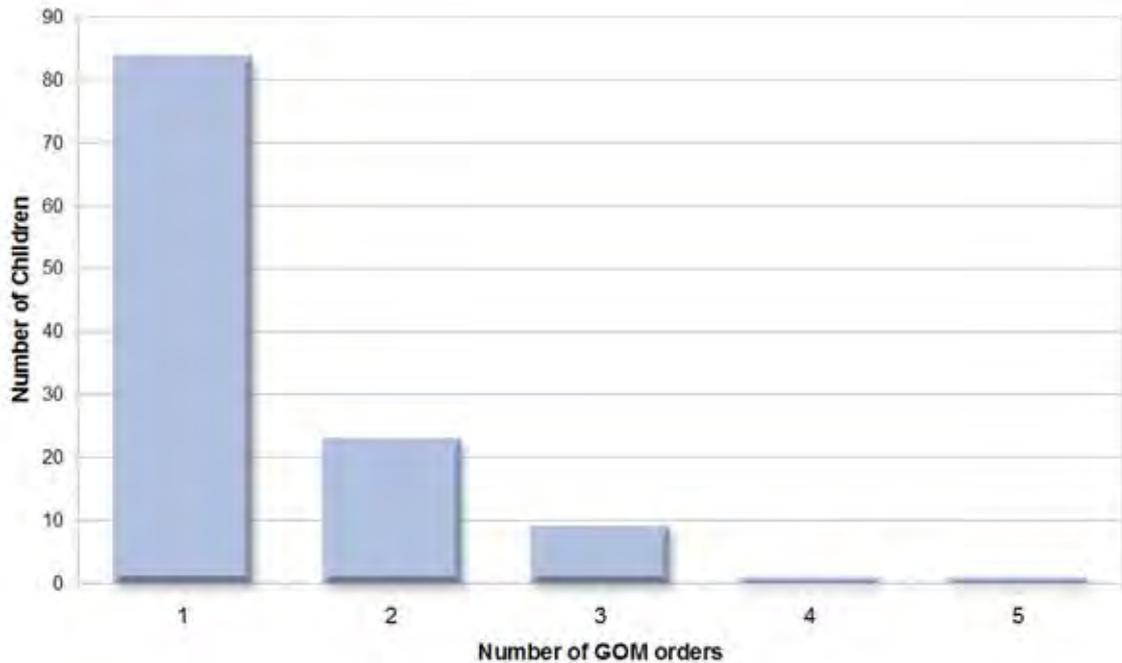


Figure 12: Distribution of Number of GOM Orders per Child (N=118)

The distribution of the number of **adolescent at risk intakes per child** is shown in Figure 13. Whilst most children (55%) were the subject of only one Adolescent at Risk Intake, 11% had 5 or more with the maximum being 39 for one child.

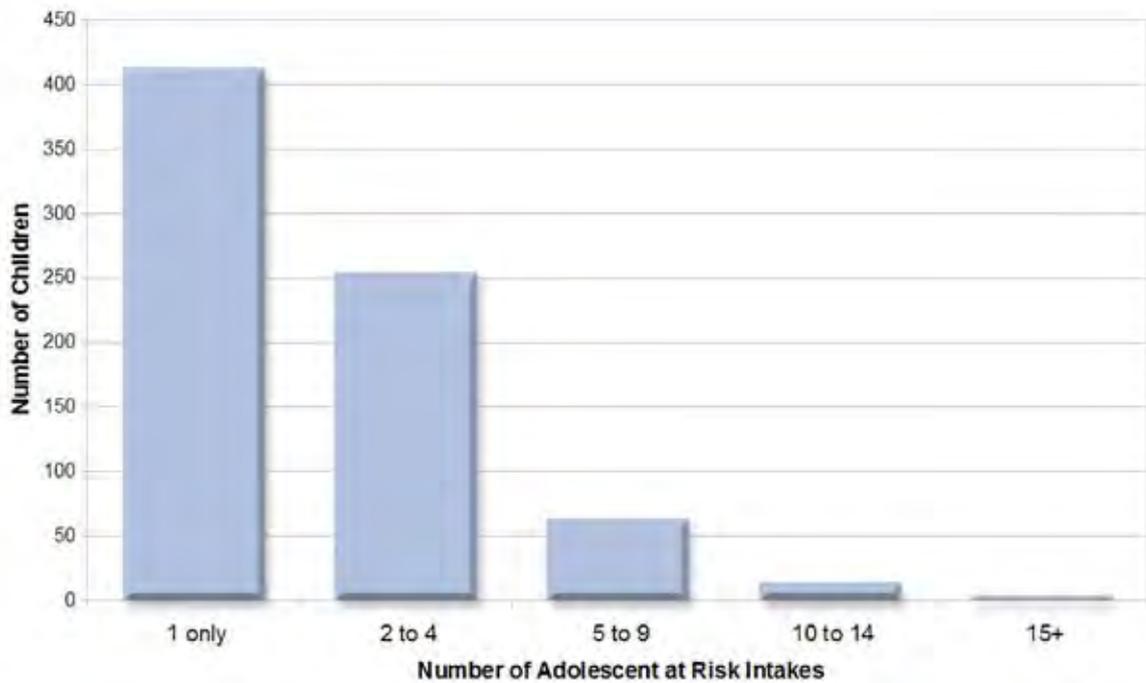


Figure 13: Distribution of Number of Adolescent at Risk Intakes per Child (N=748)

The distribution of the number of young offender orders per child is shown in Figure 14. The median number of young offender orders was 3 with the maximum of 38 orders for one child. The majority of children had 1 young offender order (36%), 21% had 10 or more orders and 7% had 20 or more orders.

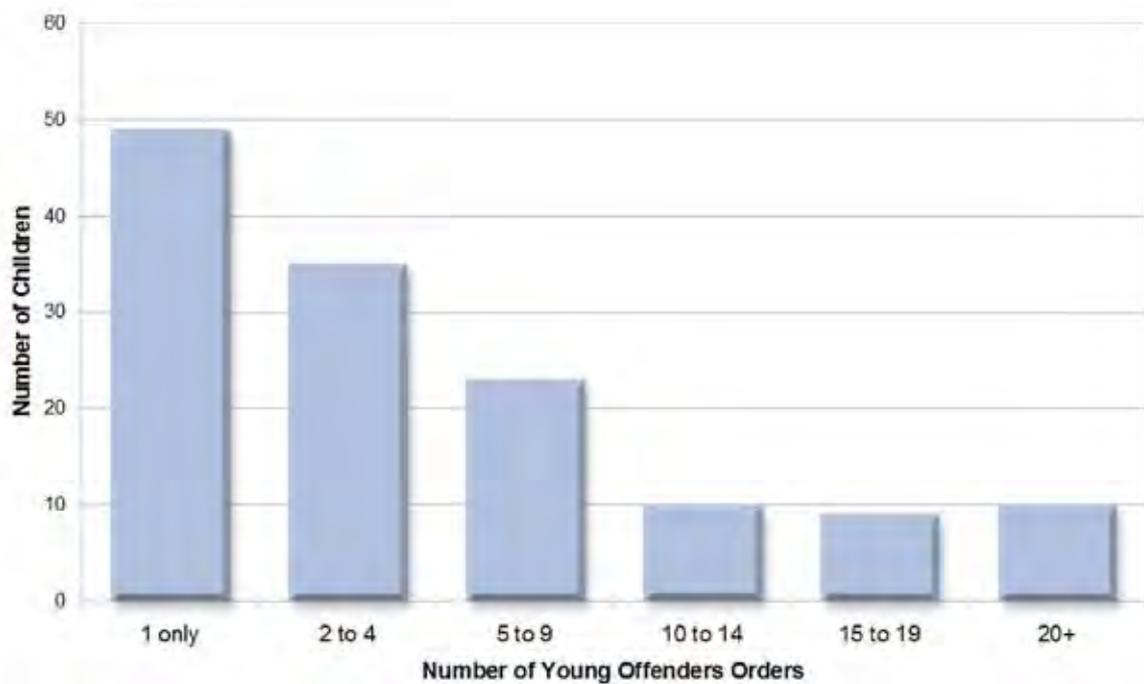


Figure 14: Distribution of Number of Young Offender Orders per Child (N=136)

5

Age at first notification

5. Age at first notification

In this section, results are presented relating to the age of the child at first notification, including the relationship of age with other variables and outcomes.

5.1 Age of first notification

The length of time (years) was calculated between a child's first notification of alleged child abuse or neglect and 1 January 1991³.

- The median age for the first child protection notification was 8.6 years. Thus, half of the 4410 children had their first notification by 8.6 years after 1 January 1991 (ie by approximately July 1999).

Figure 15 summarises the timing at which children in the 1991 cohort received their first notification. The increase in the percentage of children with their first notification tended to be consistent over the 16 year period. This suggests the likelihood of a child receiving their first notification did not change with time. That is, a 4 year old child had the same likelihood of a first notification as an 8 or 15 year old child.

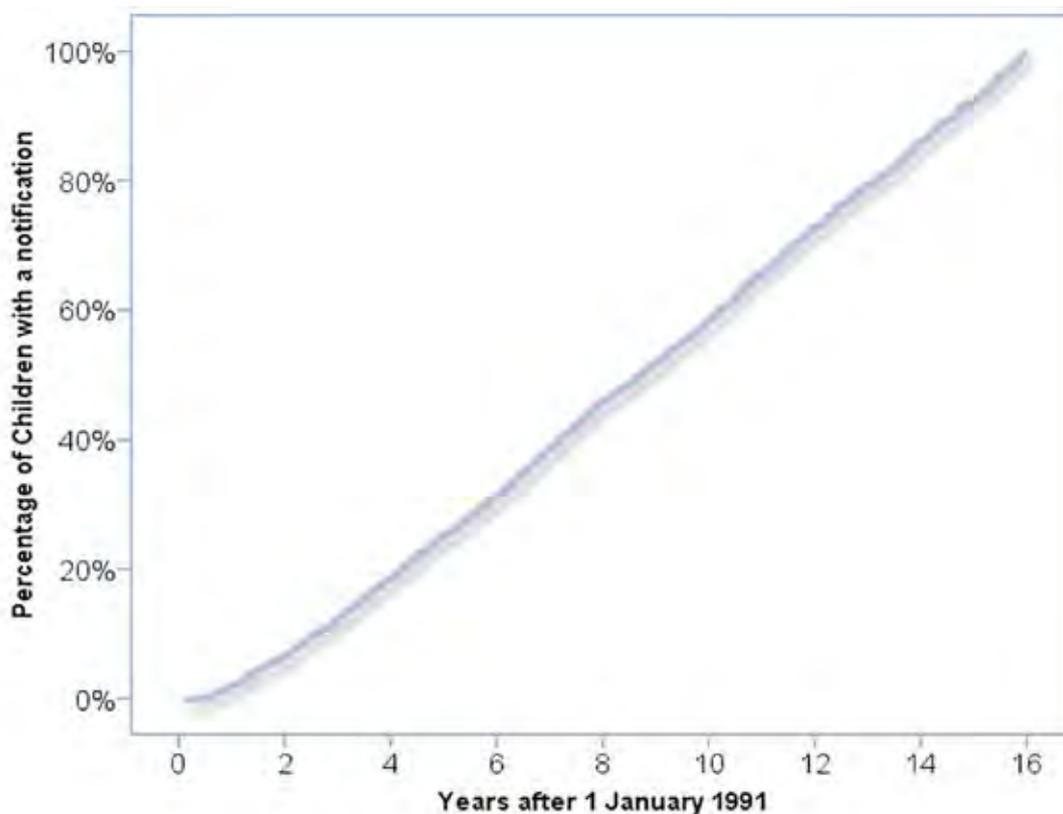


Figure 15: Percentage of Children with a notification over time (N=4410)

³ This length of time is generally referred to as 'age' in this Report. All children in the study were born in 1991, however actual date/month of birth was not known. Their 'age' was defined as years from 1st January 1991.

5.2 Cultural background and age at first notification

Of those children for whom a notification had been received, 10% had an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background, 75% an English speaking background and 5% a non-English speaking background. The cultural background of 10% of children was unknown.

Children with an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultural background tended to have their first notification approximately one year earlier than those from other cultural backgrounds (Figure 16).

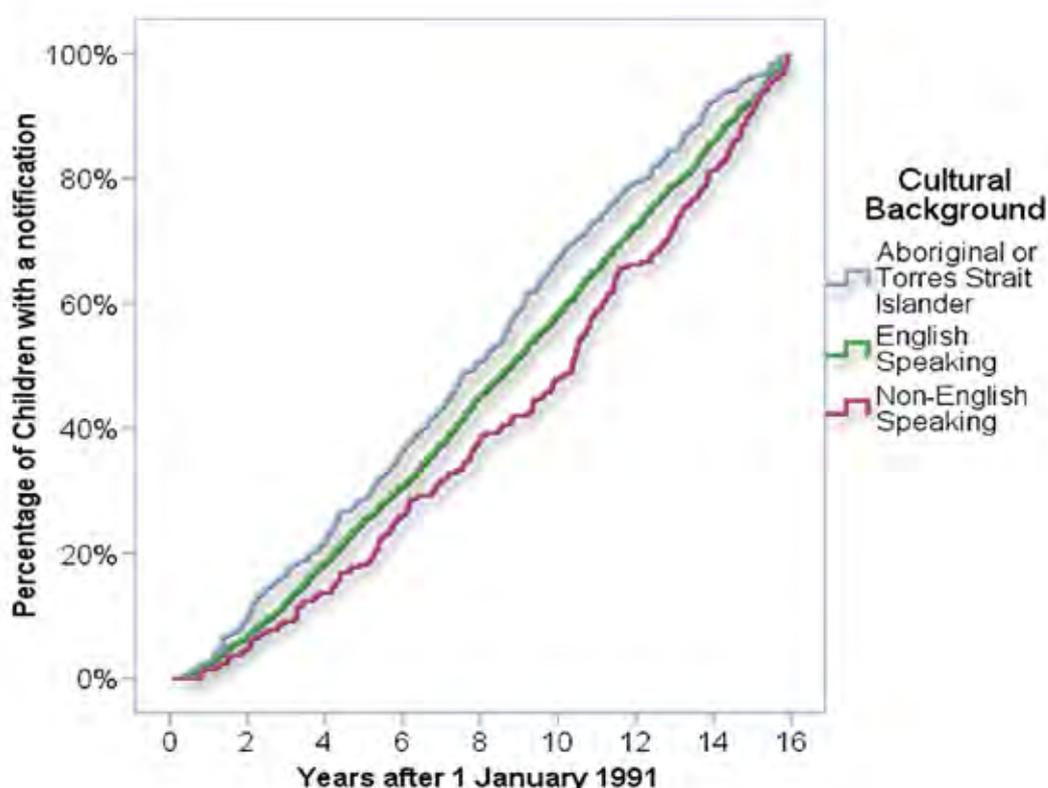


Figure 16: Percentage of Children with a notification between cultural backgrounds (N=4410)

5.3 Age at first notification as a predictor

Children who were notified earlier were more likely to be the subject of multiple notifications throughout their childhood. Thus, children who were the subject of an early notification tended to continue to be notified; and the younger the age at first notification, the more likely it was that multiple notifications would subsequently be received.

Figure 17 depicts this pattern. In this Figure, the population of children with a notification is divided into four groups: 1) those with only one notification; 2) those with two to three; 3) four to six and 4) greater than seven. Children with more than seven notifications tended to have their first notification before other groups in the sixteen year period, followed by children with four to six notifications, children with two to three notifications and then children with only one notification.

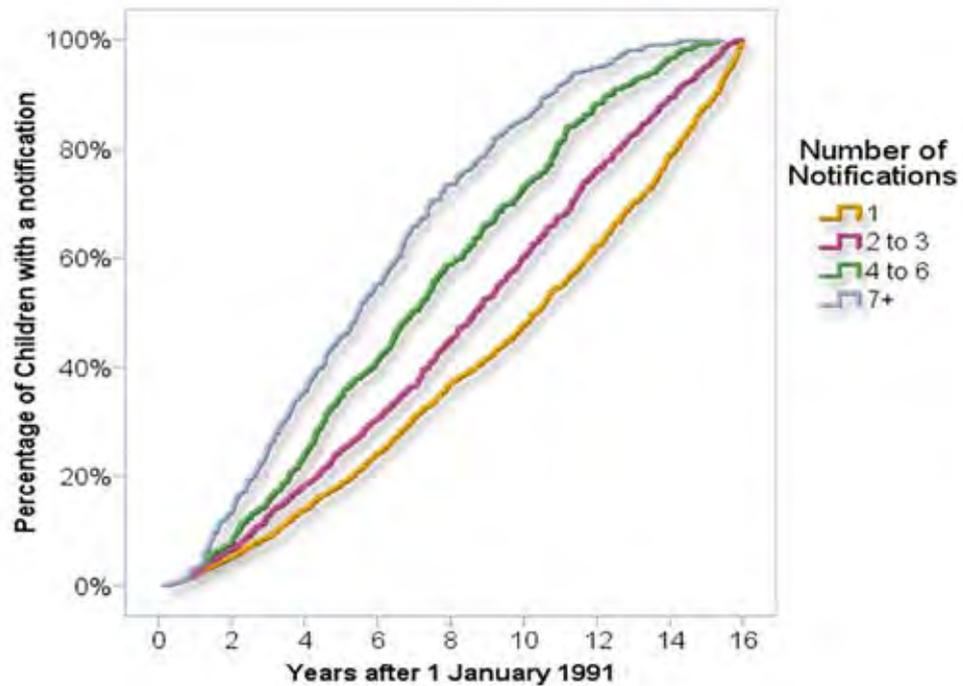


Figure 17: Cumulative percentage of children with a notification over time between Number of Notifications groups (N=4410)

Children with at least one substantiation of abuse were also significantly more likely to be notified early (Figure 18). That is, children with an earlier first notification were more likely to have abuse substantiated. The percentage of children with at least one substantiation tended to decrease as age at first notification increased.

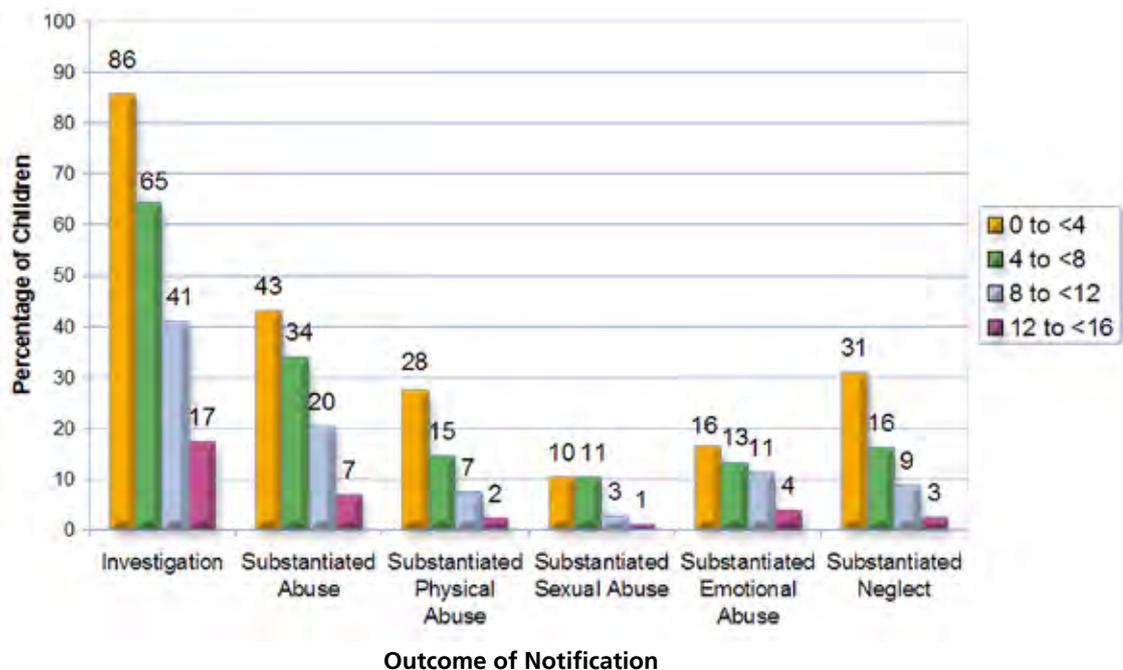


Figure 18: Percentage of Children with Outcome of Notification by Timing of First Notification (years after 1 January 1991)

The odds of having abuse substantiated was estimated to be 5.6 times higher if first notification was received when the child was under 4 years of age (compared to 12 to 16 years), 3.9 times higher if first notification was 4 to 8 years of age and 2.3 times higher if first notification was 8 to 12 years.

Children with an earlier first notification were also more likely to experience an alternative care placement. If children were placed in alternative care it was likely to occur soon after their first notification (Figure 19).

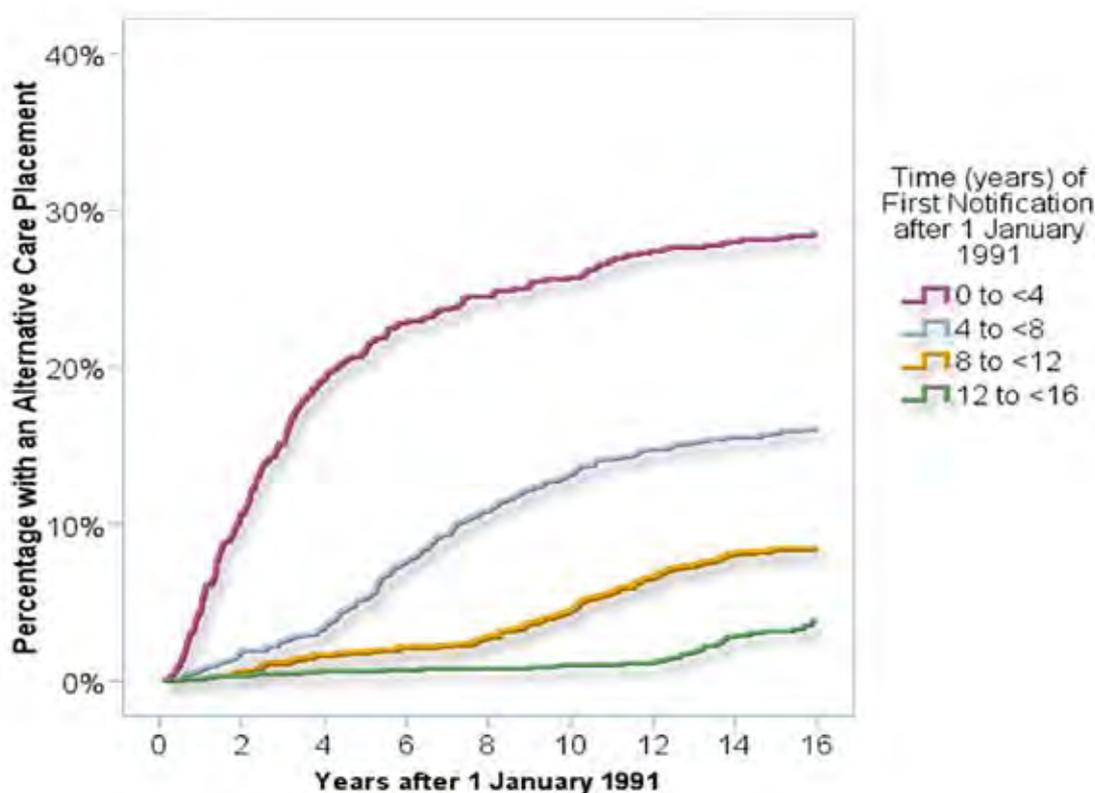


Figure 19: Cumulative percentage of children with an Alternative Care Placement over time by timing of first notification (N=4410 with a notification)

Children aged between 0 to 4 years at their first notification had a 4.5 times higher likelihood of being placed in alternative care compared to children aged between 12 and 16 years at first notification. Those aged between 4 to 8 years at first notification were 2.3 times more likely.

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6. Trends over time

This section compares data for children born in 1991 with those born in 1998 and 2002, in order to identify changing patterns over time. The number of live births in SA was 19622 in 1991, 18613 in 1998 and 17623 in 2002⁴.

6.1 Comparison of cohorts: age at first notification

The percentage of children with at least one notification for alleged child abuse or neglect has been compared between the 3 birth cohorts. The data clearly shows that children in the more recent birth cohorts are increasingly more likely to have been notified by a given age. If this trend continues, a far higher proportion of these children will have been notified by age 15 than those born in 1991.

This increasing likelihood of notification is represented in Figure 20, Table 16 and Table 17.

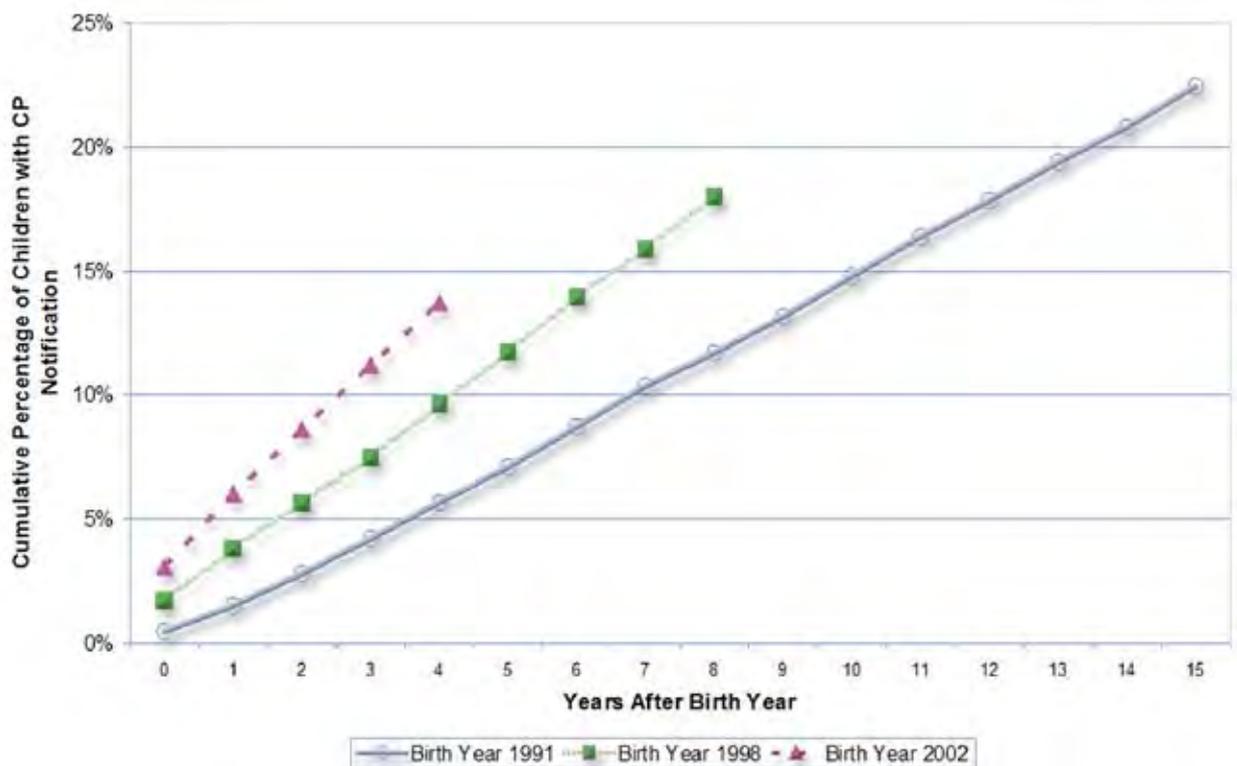


Figure 20: Cumulative percentage of children with a notification for children born in 1991, 1998 and 2002

The **number** of children who had a first notification in each year after their birth year is shown in Table 16. (For example, 256 children born in 1991 had their first notification in 1993 or 2 years after their birth year).

⁴ Pregnancy Outcome Statistics Unit, Epidemiology Branch, Department of Health, South Australia.

Table 16: Number of Children with their first Notification in each year between the 3 cohorts*

Years after birth year	Birth Year		
	1991 (N=19622)	1998 (N=18613)	2002 (N=17623)
0	96	320	545
1	202	390	517
2	256	348	457
3	276	337	459
4	287	399	441
5	279	388	
6	320	419	
7	320	355	
8	262	398	
9	287		
10	319		
11	313		
12	287		
13	302		
14	278		
15	322		

* As at January 2007

The cumulative **percentage** of children with a notification by each year after their birth year is shown in Table 17. (For example, the percentage of children born in 1991 with a notification by 3 years after birth was 4.2% compared to 7.5% of children born in 1998 and 11.2% of children born in 2002.) The data indicates a pattern of increasing likelihood of notification.

Table 17: the Cumulative Percentage of Children with a CP notification for each year after birth year between the 3 cohorts

Years after birth year	Birth Year		
	1991 (N=19622)	1998 (N=18613)	2002 (N=17623)
0	0.5%	1.7%	3.1%
1	1.5%	3.8%	6.0%
2	2.8%	5.7%	8.6%
3	4.2%	7.5%	11.2%
4	5.7%	9.6%	13.7%
5	7.1%	11.7%	
6	8.7%	14.0%	
7	10.4%	15.9%	
8	11.7%	18.0%	
9	13.2%		
10	14.8%		
11	16.4%		
12	17.9%		
13	19.4%		
14	20.8%		
15	22.5%		

6.2 Notification rates

Another way of comparing trends across the three cohorts is examining the rates of children notified per year (Table 18). This analysis suggests that the likelihood of a child born in 2002 experiencing at least one notification is double that of children born in 1991.

Table 18: Number of children to experience first notification per years and per 100 children per year between cohorts

Year of birth	Number of children with a notification	Study length (years)	Average with a notification per year	Person-years (live births)	Rate with notification per 100 children per year
1991	4410	16	276	313,952	1.4
1998	3354	9	373	167,517	2.0
2002	2419	5	484	88,115	2.7

The likelihood of notification has increased markedly in the first five years after birth – that is, the rate of increase in notifications for infants and very young children is particularly high. Thus, the percentage of children with a notification after four years from their birth year was estimated to be 4% of children born in 1991; 7.5% of children born in 1988 and 11% of children born in 2002.

The **number of actual children** (as opposed to the proportion of the cohort) with a first notification in the years after birth is depicted in Figure 21. This indicates much higher numbers of infants being notified over time, particularly in the first year of life.

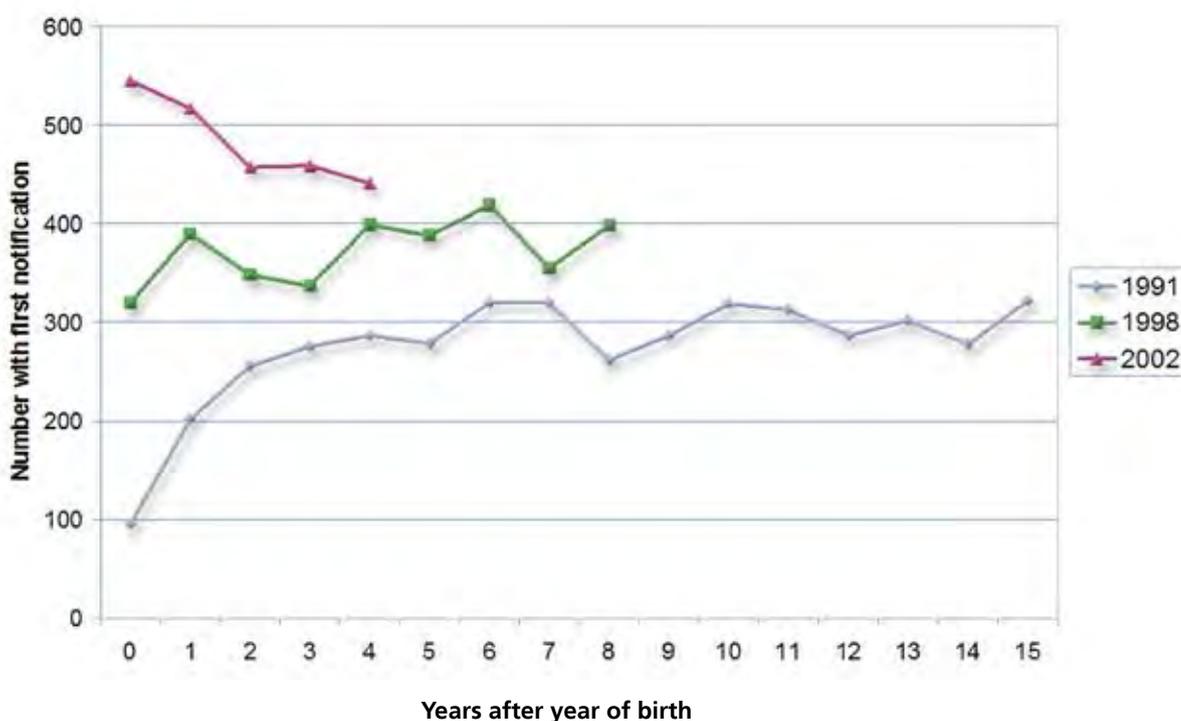


Figure 21: Number of children with first notification within each year after year of birth between 3 cohorts

6.3 Numbers of notification per child

The total number of notifications per child is also increasing. Thus, children born in 2002 already have more notifications per child than those born in 1991, despite being only 5 years of age (Figure 22).

At the time of data extract, the mean number of notifications per child was:

- 3.1 for children born in 1991, compared to
- 3.4 for children born in 1998 and
- 4.1 for children born in 2002.

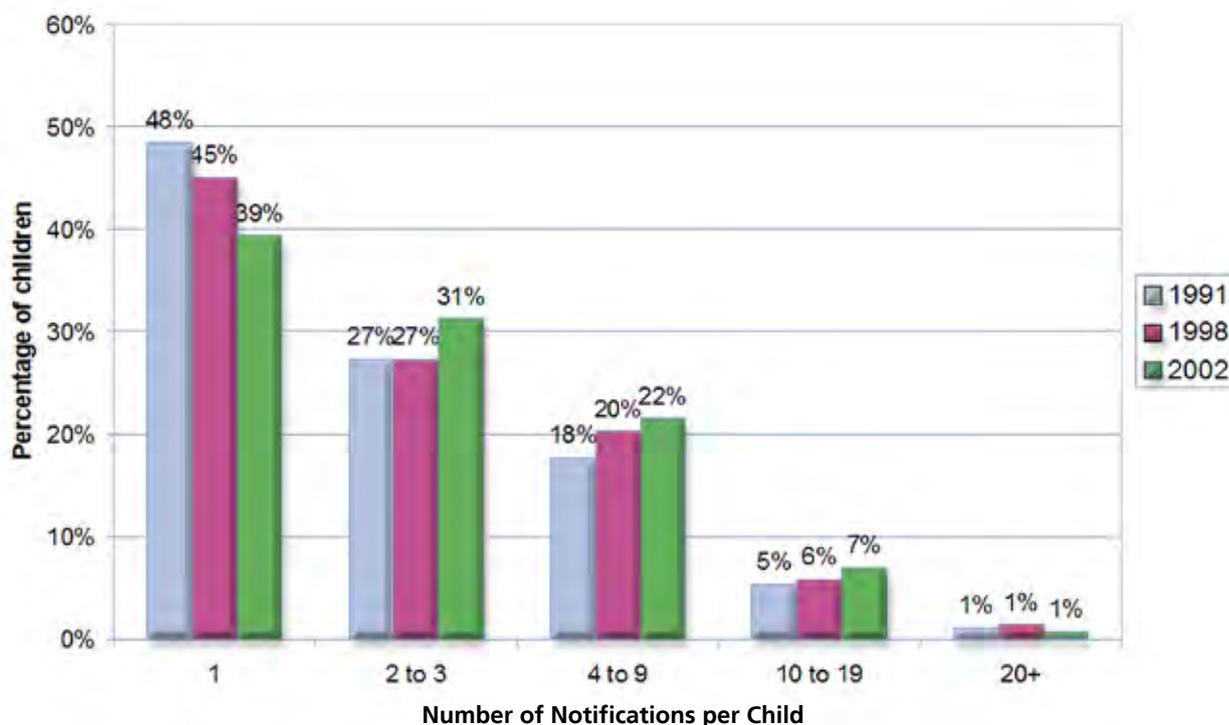


Figure 22: Distribution of Number of Notifications per child within cohorts

The average number of notifications per year and average number of notifications per child per year between the 3 cohorts is shown in Table 19. The average number of notifications per year has almost doubled for children born in 2002 compared to children born in 1991. Further, the average number of notifications **per child** per year has increased by 3.6 times.⁵

Table 19: Summary of Total Number of Notifications between cohort

Year of birth	Total number of notifications	Study Period (years)	Average notifications per year	Children with a notification	Average notifications per child per year
1991	13813	16	863	4410	0.20
1998	11435	9	1271	3382	0.38
2002	8569	5	1714	2452	0.70

⁵ The average number of notifications per child per year was 0.20 notifications (Table 19). This indicates that children with a notification born in 1991 would on average experience 0.2 notifications in a 1 year period (or 1 notification in a 5 year period). The average number of notifications per child per year was 3.6 times higher for children born in 2002 and 1.9 times higher for children born in 1998 compared to children born in 1991.

6.4 Notification outcomes

As may be expected given the increase in notifications, there has also been an increase in the number of children born in 1998 and 2002 who have had abuse investigated and substantiated (Table 20).

- Children born in 1998 were found to be 1.3 times more likely to have an investigation and 1.2 times more likely to have at least one substantiation of abuse compared to those born in 1991.
- Children born in 2002 were 1.8 times more likely to have an investigation and 1.6 times more likely to have a substantiation compared to children born in 1991.
- An average of 69 children per year born in 1991 experienced a substantiation of abuse, compared to 77 children per year (1998 cohort) and 99 children per year (2002 cohort).

Table 20: number of children and rate of children with at least 1 notification outcome per 100 children per year between cohorts

Notification Outcome	Year of birth	Number of children with least 1 outcome	Person-years (live births)	Rate with outcome per 100 children per year
Investigation	1991	2187	313,952	0.70
	1998	1466	167,517	0.88
	2002	1120	88,115	1.27
Substantiated Abuse	1991	1097	313,952	0.35
	1998	692	167,517	0.41
	2002	494	88,115	0.56

However, the increase in the **number** of children in each cohort who have abuse substantiated does not necessarily mean that there is also an increase in the **proportion** of notified children for whom abuse is substantiated. Rather, whilst the increased number of children with a notification may lead to an increase in the total substantiated abuse, this appears to be accompanied by a declining **proportion of total notifications** that are both investigated and substantiated (Table 21).

Table 21: Percentage of children with at least 1 notification outcome within each cohort

	Year of Birth		
	1991 (n=4410)	1998 (n=3382)	2002 (n=2452)
Investigation	49.6%	43.3%	45.6%
Substantiated Abuse	24.9%	20.5%	20.1%

One influence on this pattern will have been the introduction in 1998 of a differential response system to respond to notifications of suspected child abuse and neglect. Since 1998 an investigative response is only required and provided for the higher ranking notifications (Tier 1 and Tier 2), with an assessment and family support response deemed the appropriate response to Tier 3 reports.

7

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

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7. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

This section presents an analysis of results specifically with regard to children from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background.

7.1 Notification rates

It is not possible to precisely identify how many of the 19,622 live births in South Australia in 1991 were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background (due to limitations in the recording of cultural background at the time of birth). However, a reasonable estimate⁶ is that they comprised between 3% and 4% of children born in that year.

Given the uncertainty as to the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children born in 1991, only estimations can be provided on the number or proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children born in that year who had been the subject of at least one notification by January 2007.

As of January 2007, 4410 children born in 1991 had been the subject of at least one child protection notification (22.5% of the birth cohort). 10% of these children were recorded as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (Table 22⁷). This is an over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the notified population of approximately 3 times.

Table 22: Children with a CP notification by cultural background

Cultural Background	Number notified at least once	% of children with notification
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	446	10.1
Other	3532	80.1
Unknown	432	9.8

Analysis was conducted modelling three different possible birth rates (3%, 3.5% and 4%) of live births being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Table 23 and Figure 24). Results indicate that the percentage of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children born in 1991 who, by January 2007, had been the subject of a notification may range from 57% to 76% - substantially higher than the 22.5% of the overall birth cohort.

⁶ Based on estimations by the ABS – *Experimental Estimates and Projections, Indigenous Australians 1991 - 2009*, Cat. No. 3238.0
⁷ Note the relatively high proportion for whom cultural background was unknown

Table 23: Cumulative (cumul) percentage of ATSI children born in 1991 with a notification (nfcn) with various percentages of live births as ATSI

Year	Number of ATSI with 1st nfcn	If 3% of live births were ATSI (n=589) Cumul % of ATSI with nfcn	If 3.5% of live births were ATSI (n=687) Cumul % of ATSI with nfcn	If 4% of live births were ATSI (n=785) Cumul % of ATSI with nfcn
1991	11	2%	2%	1%
1992	32	7%	6%	5%
1993	31	13%	11%	9%
1994	23	16%	14%	12%
1995	31	22%	19%	16%
1996	34	28%	24%	21%
1997	30	33%	28%	24%
1998	35	39%	33%	29%
1999	35	44%	38%	33%
2000	37	51%	44%	38%
2001	29	56%	48%	42%
2002	27	60%	52%	45%
2003	23	64%	55%	48%
2004	35	70%	60%	53%
2005	17	73%	63%	55%
2006	16	76%	65%	57%

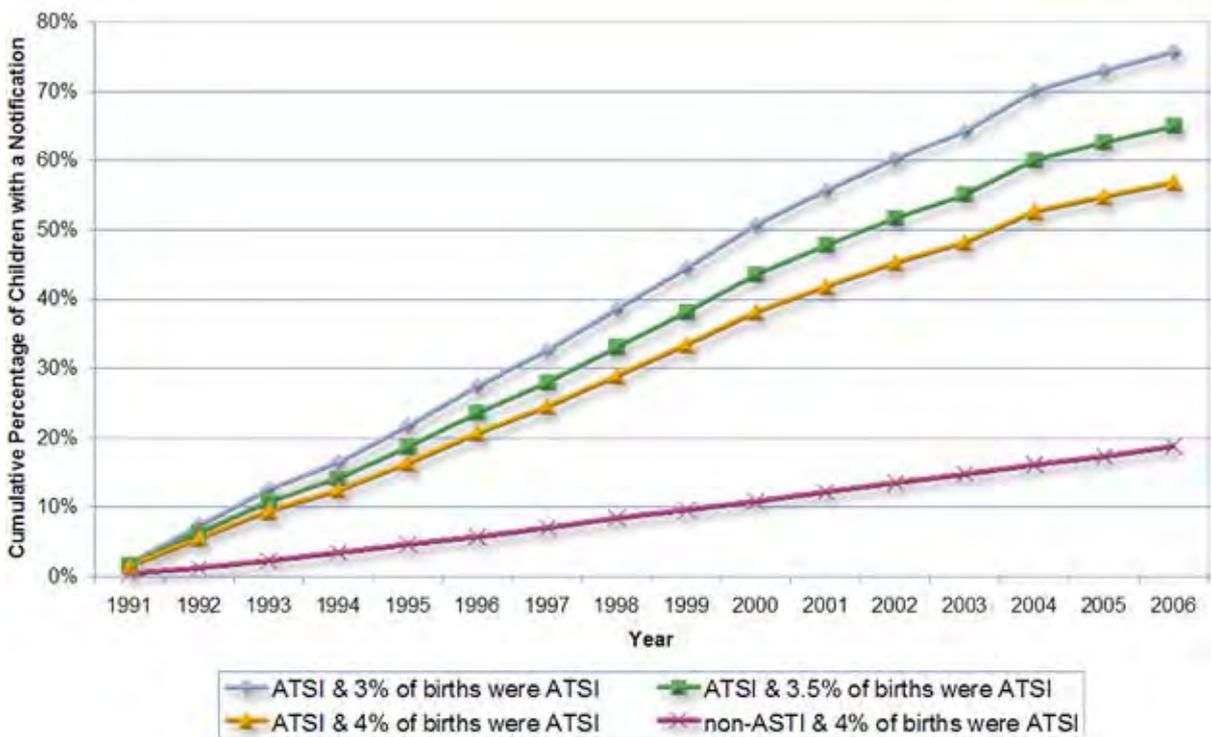


Figure 23: Cumulative percentage children born in 1991 with a notification for ATSI and non-ASTI with various percentages of live births that were ATSI

7.2 Age at first notification

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children born in 1991 tended to have a first notification at a younger age (up to one year younger) compared to those from other cultural backgrounds (Figure 25). The median length of time after 1 January 1991 when a child's first notification occurred was 7.9 years for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children compared to 8.7 years for non-Indigenous children.

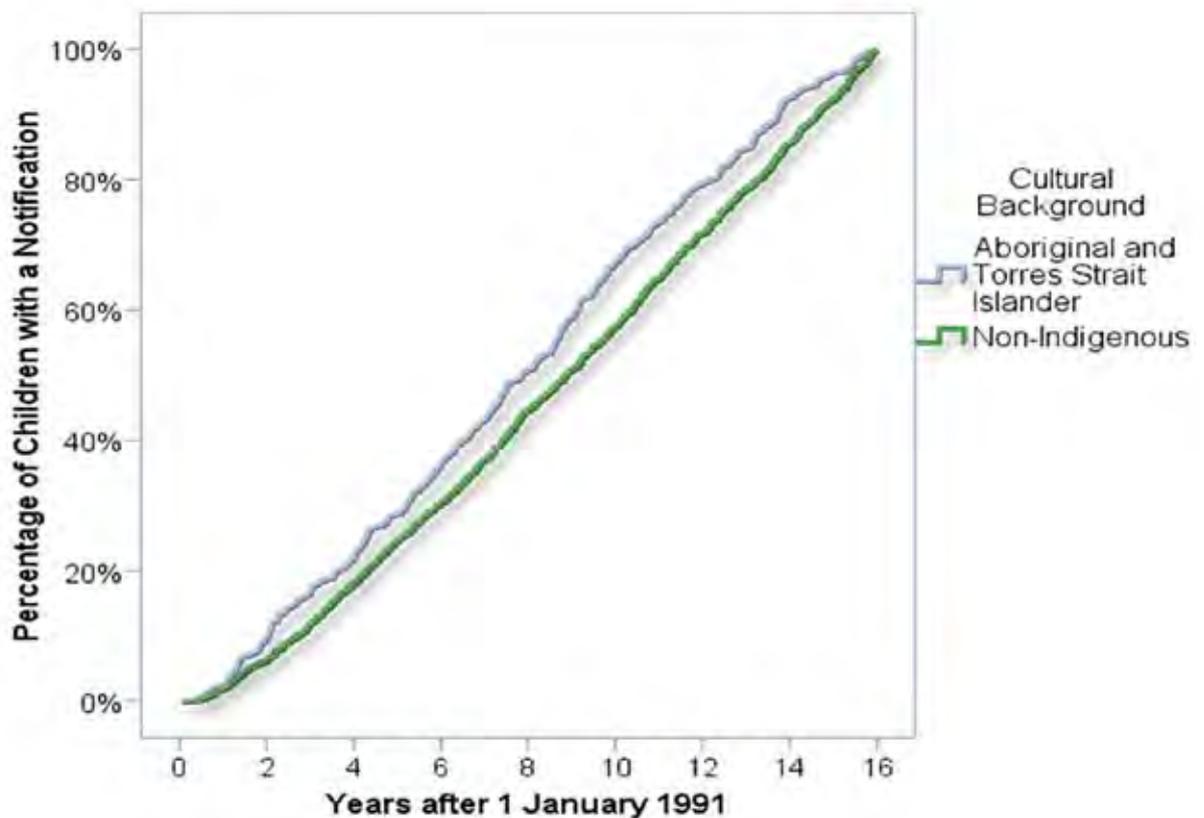


Figure 25: Percentage of Children with a notification between cultural backgrounds

7.3 Number of Notifications per child

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were more likely than other children to be notified on more than one occasion (Figure 25). Thus, 40% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children had 4 or more notifications compared to only 23% of non-Indigenous. Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children had a mean number of 4.8 notifications per child, compared to 3.0 for non-Indigenous.

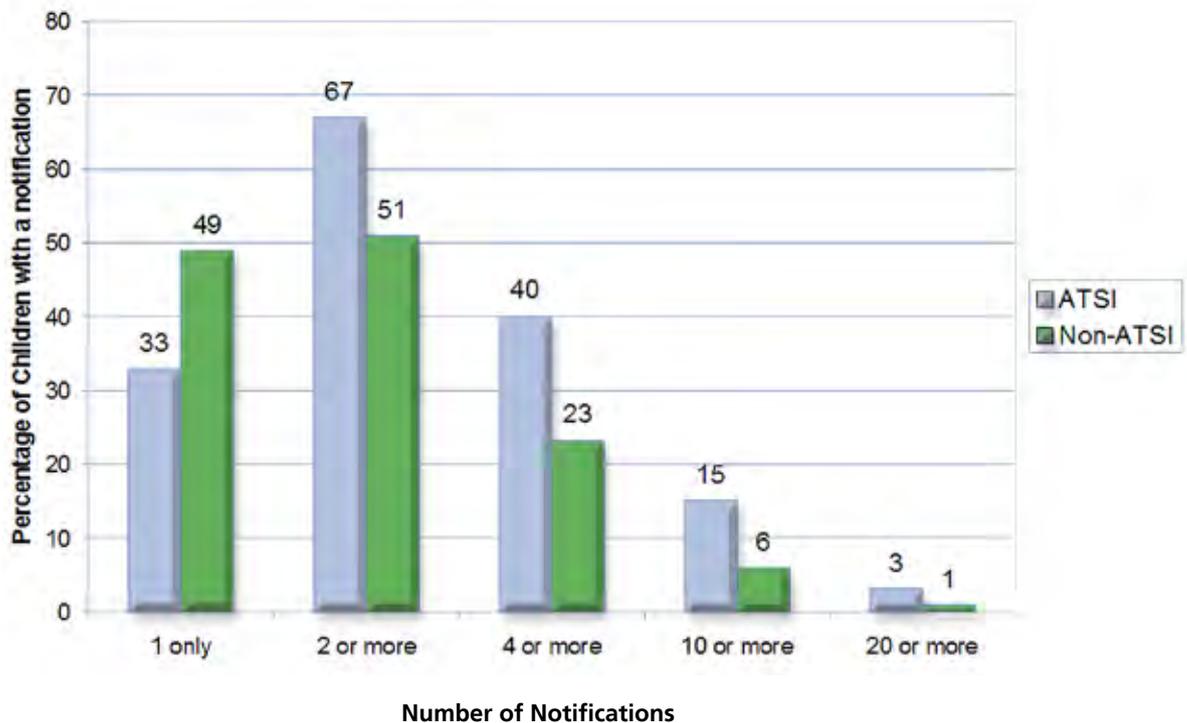


Figure 25: Number of Notifications per Child by Cultural Background

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander **girls** were particularly likely to be the subject of multiple notifications, with a mean of 5.2 notifications per child (Table 25). 43% of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander girls were the focus of four or more notifications (compared to 37% of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander boys and 24% of non-Indigenous girls Table 24). In contrast, there are no gender differences in the number of notifications for non-Indigenous children (Figure 26).

Table 24: Distribution of Number of Notifications per Child by Cultural Background and Gender

Number of notifications	ATSI Male (n=216) %	ATSI Female (n=230) %	Non-ATSI Male (n=1741) %	Non-ATSI Female (n=1789) %
1	36.1	30.0	49.6	48.6
2 to 3	26.9	27.0	27.7	27.7
4 to 9	23.1	27.0	17.1	17.7
10 to 19	11.6	12.2	4.7	5.2
20+	2.3	3.9	1.0	0.9

Table 25: Mean (SD) number of notifications per child by Cultural Background and Gender

	Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	Non-Indigenous
Male	4.3 (5.0)	3.0 (3.9)
Female	5.2 (6.0)	3.1 (4.0)
Both	4.8 (5.5)	3.0 (3.9)

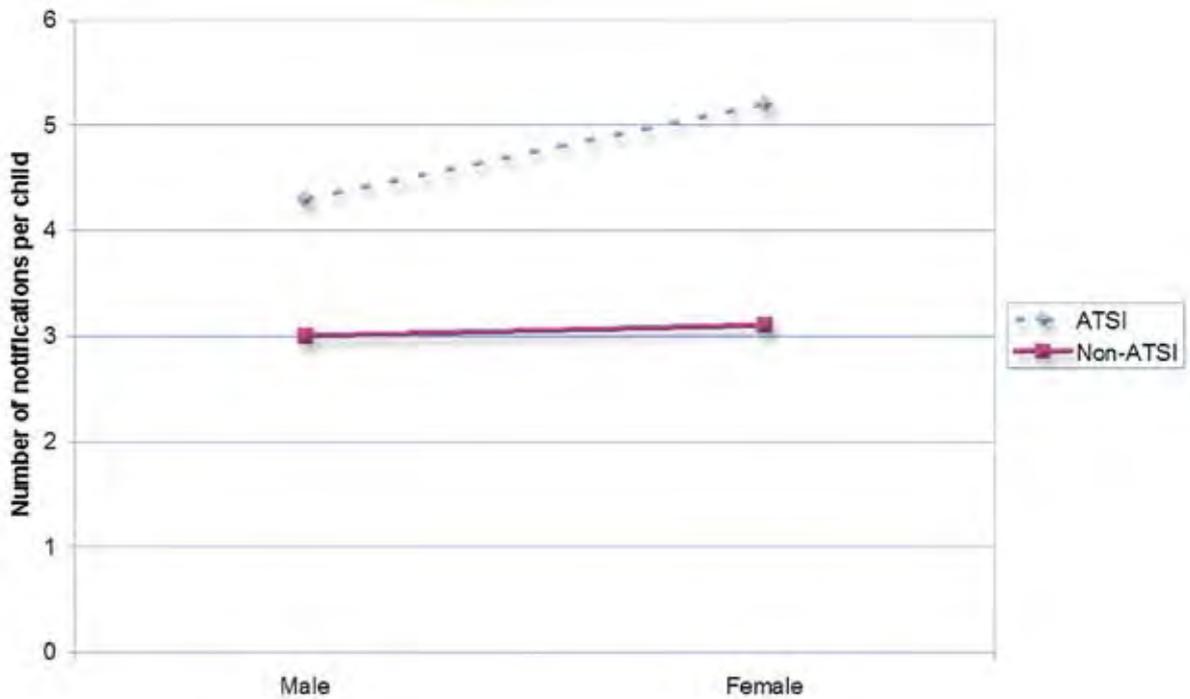


Figure 26: Mean number of notifications per child within gender and cultural background

7.4 Notification rankings

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children tended to be the subject of higher ranked notifications of abuse compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts. They were significantly more likely to receive Tier-level rated notifications (ie notifications rated as either Tier 1, 2 or 3 - Figure 27).

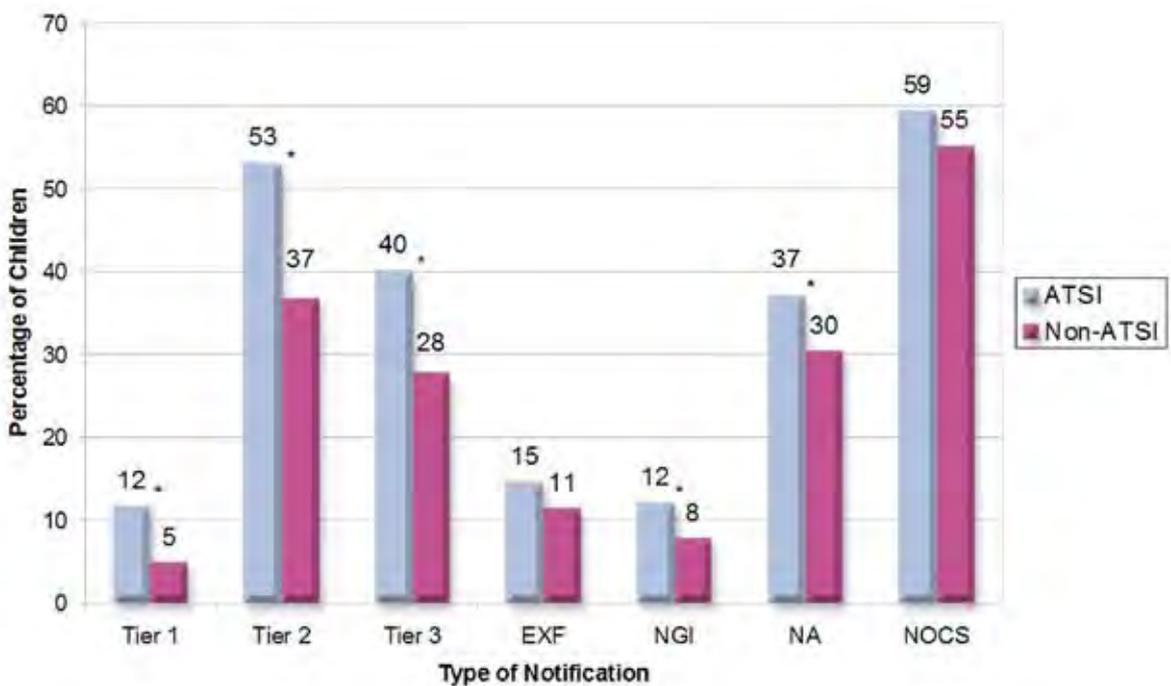


Figure 27: Percentage of Children with each Type of Notification by Cultural Background (* significant difference ($p < .05$) between Cultural Backgrounds) (N=4410)

The same pattern is repeated when examining the data for total notifications (rather than individual children). That is, the proportion of notifications that were classified as Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3 was greater for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children, whilst a lower proportion was classified as 'Notifier Only Concerns' (Figure 28).

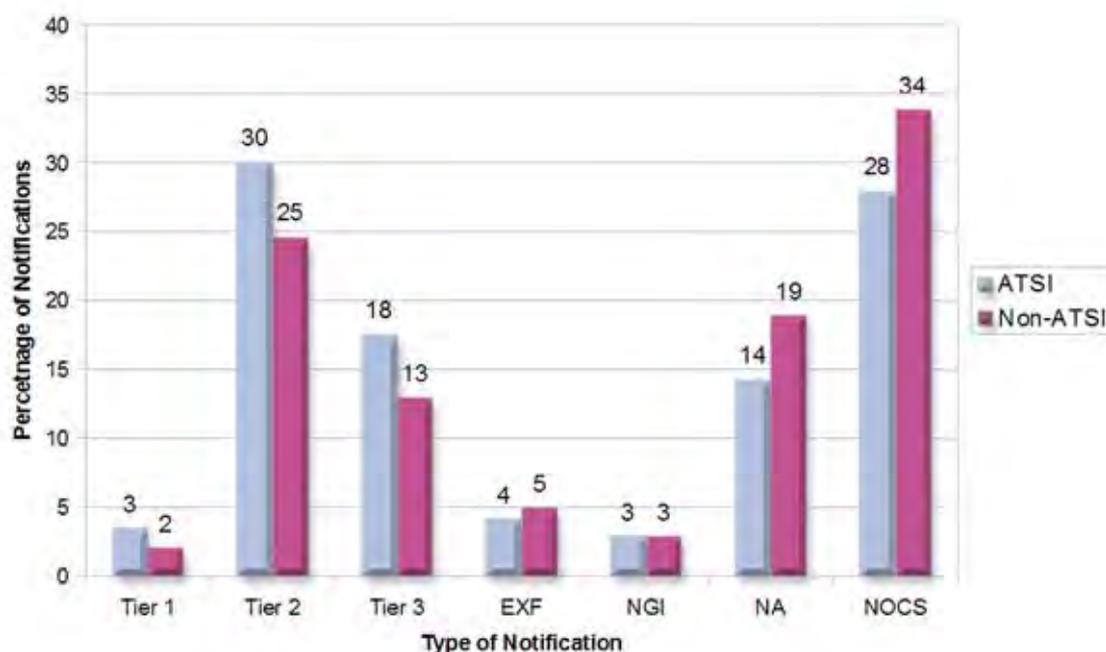


Figure 28: Percentage of each Type of Notification from all notifications by Cultural Background (N=13813)

However, this pattern (of increased likelihood of higher-rating notifications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children) may be influenced by the total number of notifications received (Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children tended to have more notifications therefore being more likely to have notifications of every kind/ranking). Analysis ⁸ therefore compared the likelihood of experiencing a notification ranking between Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children and non-Indigenous children, whilst controlling for the influence of a child's total number of notifications – data was compared for 'matched' children with a similar amount of notifications. This analysis showed that the likelihood of a child experiencing a Tier 1 or a Tier 2 notification was significantly higher for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children compared to non-Indigenous children after controlling for the influence of their total number of notifications. However, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children were **less** likely to be the subject of a notification rated as Notifier Concerns (NOC). Thus, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were found to be more likely to receive a notification ranked at Tier 1 or 2 (ie meeting the criteria for an investigative child protection response).

⁸ Logistic regression was used

7.5 Types of abuse

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were significantly more likely to be the subject of allegations of emotional abuse and neglect. There was no significant difference with regards to allegations of physical and sexual abuse (Figure 29).

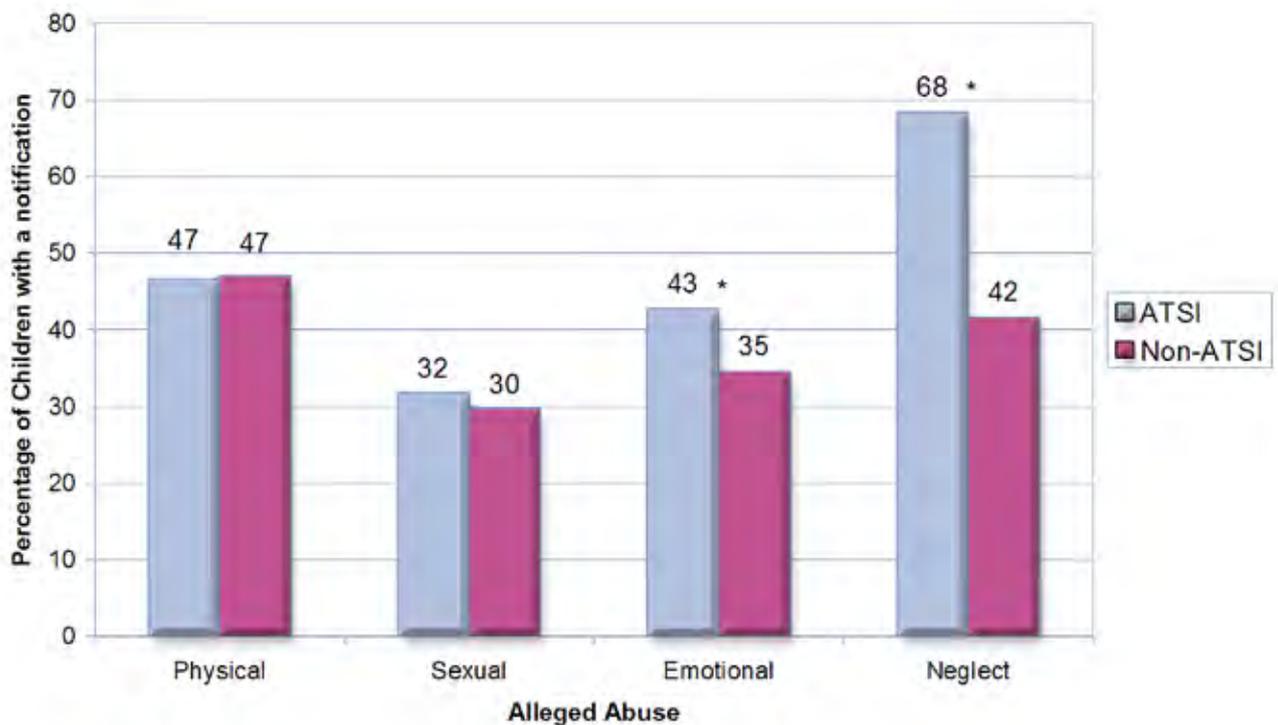


Figure 29: Percentage of Children with an Alleged Abuse by Cultural Background (* significant difference ($p < .05$) between Cultural backgrounds)

Analysis found gender differences for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children which were not apparent in the non-Indigenous population (Figure 30). Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander girls were more likely than Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander boys to be the focus of an allegation of emotional abuse, whilst there was little difference between genders amongst non-Indigenous children. This suggests that being female **AND** Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander may be a greater risk factor for an allegation of emotional abuse. Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander girls were also more likely to have a notification of physical abuse, whilst in the non-Indigenous population the reverse was true (ie, boys were more likely than girls to be notified for physical abuse).

The likelihood of experiencing an allegation of sexual abuse tended to be greater and similar for both Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous girls. The likelihood of experiencing an allegation of neglect tended to be greater for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children but there was little difference between genders for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children and non-Indigenous children.

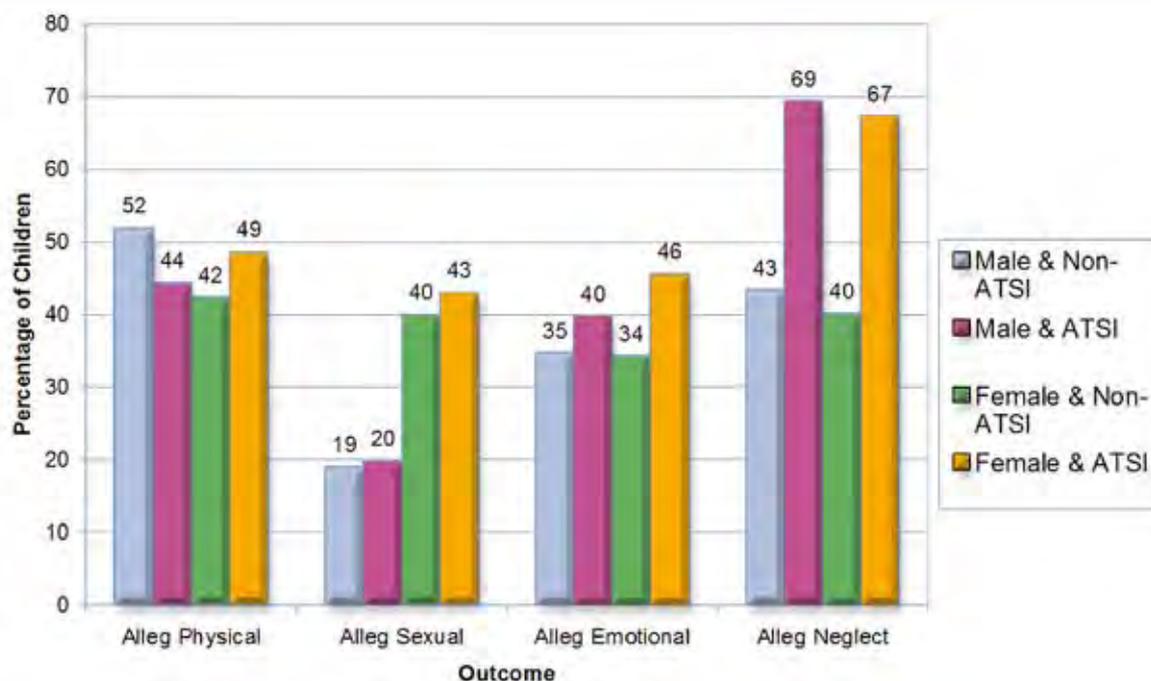


Figure 30: Percentage of Children with an Allegation of Abuse by Gender and Cultural Background

7.6 Substantiated abuse

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children who had been notified were far more likely to experience an investigation and almost twice as likely to have abuse substantiated (Figure 31). Thus, 40% of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children who were notified had a substantiation of abuse compared to only 24% of non-Indigenous children.

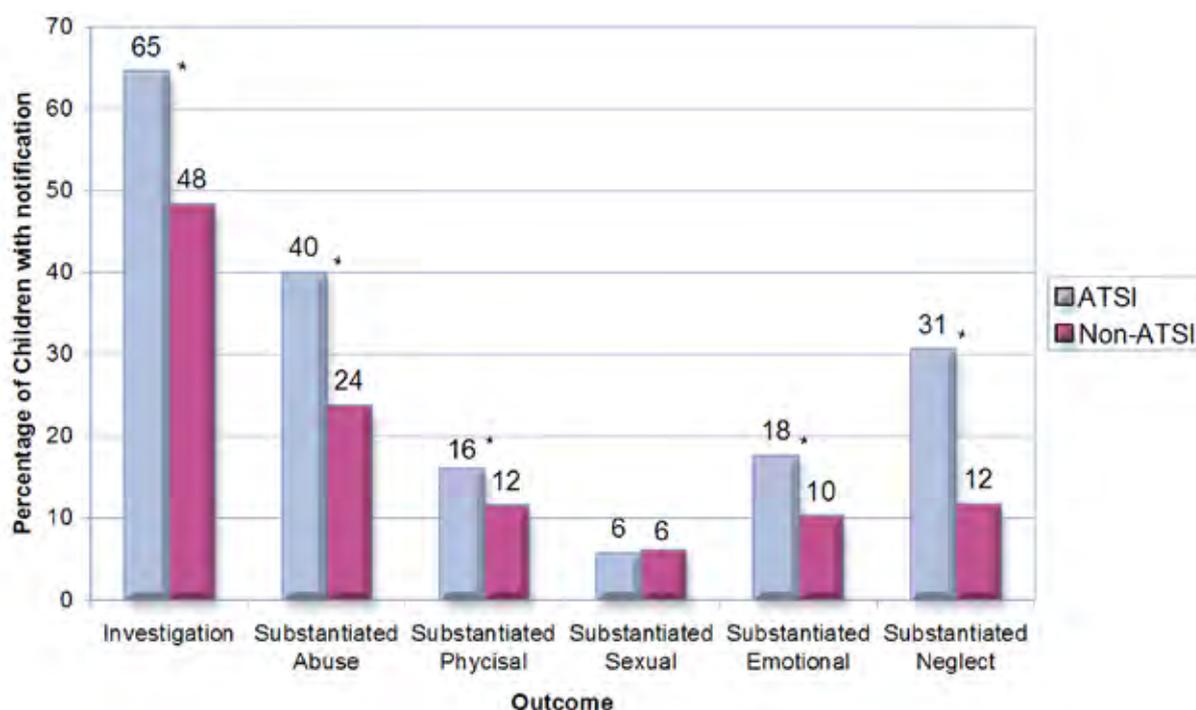


Figure 31: Percentage of Children with Investigation and Substantiated Abuse by Cultural Background (* significant difference ($p < .05$) between Cultural Background)

Gender differences were apparent in the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander population that were not found amongst other children (Figure 32). Thus:

- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander girls were more likely than boys to have a substantiation of physical abuse (18% of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander girls notified, compared to 14% of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander boys). This is in contrast to the non-Indigenous population, where boys were more likely than girls to have physical abuse substantiated.
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander girls were also the most at risk of any group for substantiated emotional abuse.

The likelihood of experiencing substantiated neglect tended to be greater for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children compared to non-Indigenous children but there was little difference between genders for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children and non-Indigenous children.

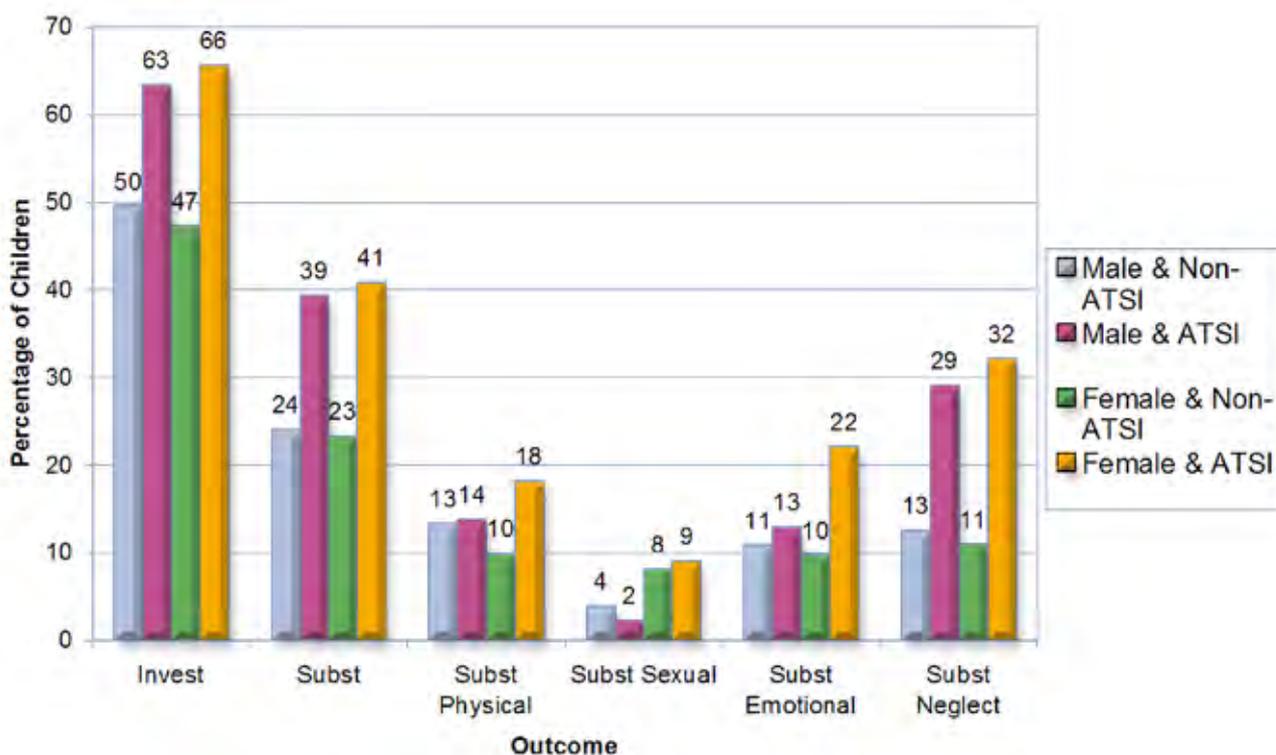


Figure 32: Percentage of Children with an Investigation and Substantiated Abuse by Gender and Cultural Background

For all children (regardless of cultural background), the likelihood of substantiated abuse increased proportionally with the number of notifications. This increase was, however, particularly marked for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children (Table 26, Figure 33).

Table 26: Percentage of Children with Investigation or Substantiated Abuse within number of notifications categories between Cultural Backgrounds

	Number of Notifications			
	1 (n=2137)	2 to 3 (n=1205)	4 to 6 (n=554)	≥ 7 (n=514)
Percentage with an Investigation				
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	38.1%	58.3%	80.8%	97.2%
Non-Indigenous	29.4%	50.3%	78.8%	95.0%
Percentage with a Substantiated Abuse				
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	18.4%	22.5%	52.1%	82.1%
Non-Indigenous	10.7%	19.8%	40.3%	73.6%

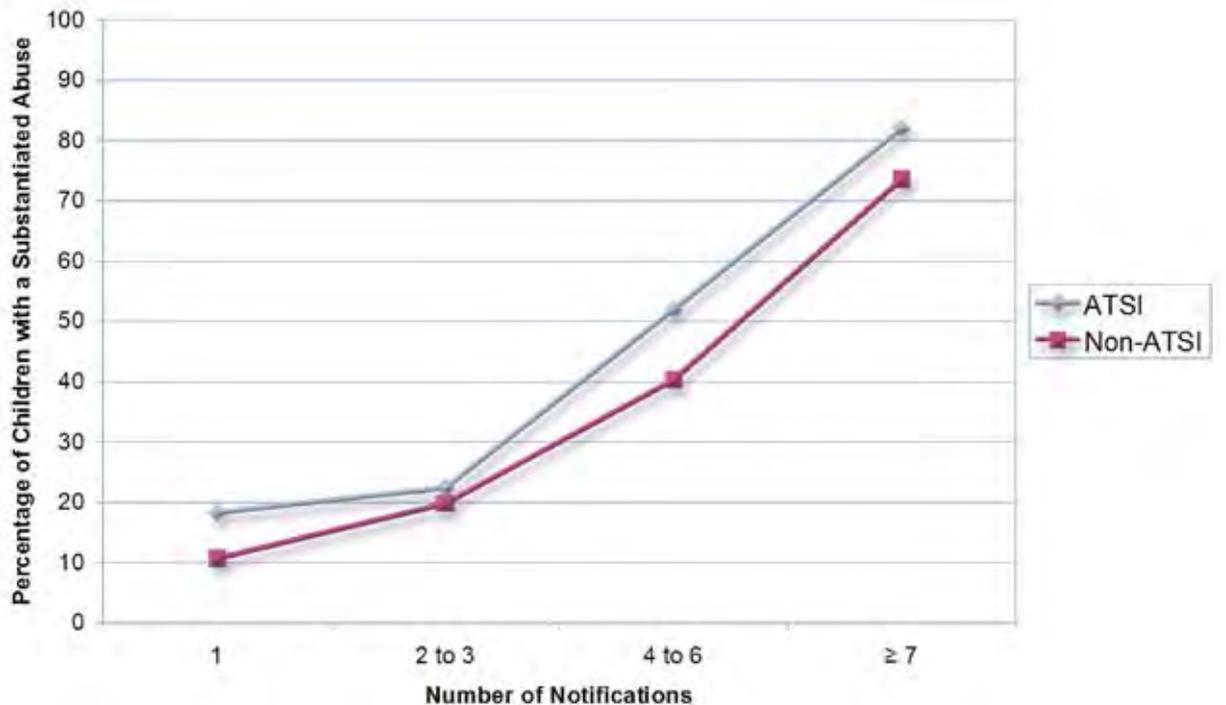


Figure 33: Percentage of Children with a Substantiated Abuse within number of notifications categories between Cultural Backgrounds

As noted previously, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children were more likely to experience multiple notifications, as well as notifications which met the criteria for an investigative response (Tier 1 or Tier 2) and also to receive their first notification at a younger age. These factors could account (all or in part) for the higher rates of investigations and substantiations amongst Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children.

Statistical analysis⁹ was therefore undertaken to compare the likelihood of children experiencing an investigation and substantiation whilst controlling for the influence of total number of notifications, age at first notification, and notification ranking. Results are summarised in Table 27. (Note that the odds ratio (OR) is an estimate of the relative difference in the likelihood of an event between 2 groups. An OR greater than 1 indicates the likelihood was greater for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children compared to non-Indigenous and an OR less than 1 indicates the likelihood was lower for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children. A difference is considered to be significant if the 95% Confidence Interval (CI) does not contain 1).

Analysis – without controlling for the possible influencing factors – indicated that Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children are significantly more likely to experience an investigation, substantiated abuse, substantiated physical abuse, substantiated emotional abuse and substantiated neglect (there was no significant difference in substantiated sexual abuse). These results are also shown in Figure 31.

However, after controlling for possible influencing factors, **no significant differences** were found in the likelihood of experiencing an investigation, substantiated physical or emotional abuse between Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children and non-Indigenous. However, the likelihood of experiencing substantiated abuse (overall) or substantiated neglect was **significantly higher** for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children even after controlling for influencing factors. In addition, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children tended to be less likely to experience substantiated sexual abuse after controlling for possible influencing factors (although this difference did not reach statistical significance).

Particularly striking were differences in relation to the substantiation of neglect (after controlling for the possible influencing factors). Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children were estimated to be 152% more likely to experience substantiated neglect than other children - a result which accounts for the significant difference in substantiated abuse overall. (The analysis estimated that the likelihood of a substantiated abuse (overall) was 1.39 times the size (or 39% higher) in Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children after controlling for possible influencing factors).

⁹ Logistic regression was used

Table 27: Difference in Substantiated Abuse types by cultural background ignoring and controlling for other factors

	Difference (odds ratio (OR) (95% CI)) between ATSI and non-ATSI ignoring influencing factors	Difference (odds ratio (OR) (95% CI)) between ATSI and non-ATSI controlling for influencing factors	Controlling Factors
Investigation			Total number of notifications, Age at first notification, Experienced a Tier 1, Experienced a Tier 2 and Experienced a NOCS
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	1.94 (1.6 to 2.4)	1.13 (0.8 to 1.6)	
Non-Indigenous	1	1	
Substantiated Abuse			
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	2.15 (1.8 to 2.6)	1.39 (1.08 to 1.8)	
Non-Indigenous	1	1	
Substantiated Physical Abuse			
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	1.47 (1.1 to 1.9)	0.86 (0.6 to 1.2)	
Non-Indigenous	1	1	
Substantiated Sexual Abuse			
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	0.96 (0.6 to 1.5)	0.65 (0.4 to 1.01)	
Non-Indigenous	1	1	
Substantiated Emotional Abuse			
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	1.87 (1.4 to 2.4)	1.01 (0.7 to 1.4)	
Non-Indigenous	1	1	
Substantiated Neglect			
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	3.30 (2.6 to 4.1)	2.52 (1.9 to 3.3)	
Non-Indigenous	1	1	

7.7 Other contacts and services

Across the whole cohort, most children who were the subject of a notification (73%) have not gone on to have any other contact with the Families SA system through an Alternative Care Placement, an Adolescent at Risk intake or Legal order (whether Care and Protection or young offender). However, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children were found to be far more likely to go on to experience such a contact (Figure 34), with significant differences in relation alternative care placements, adolescent at risk intakes, emergency financial assistance and young offender orders.

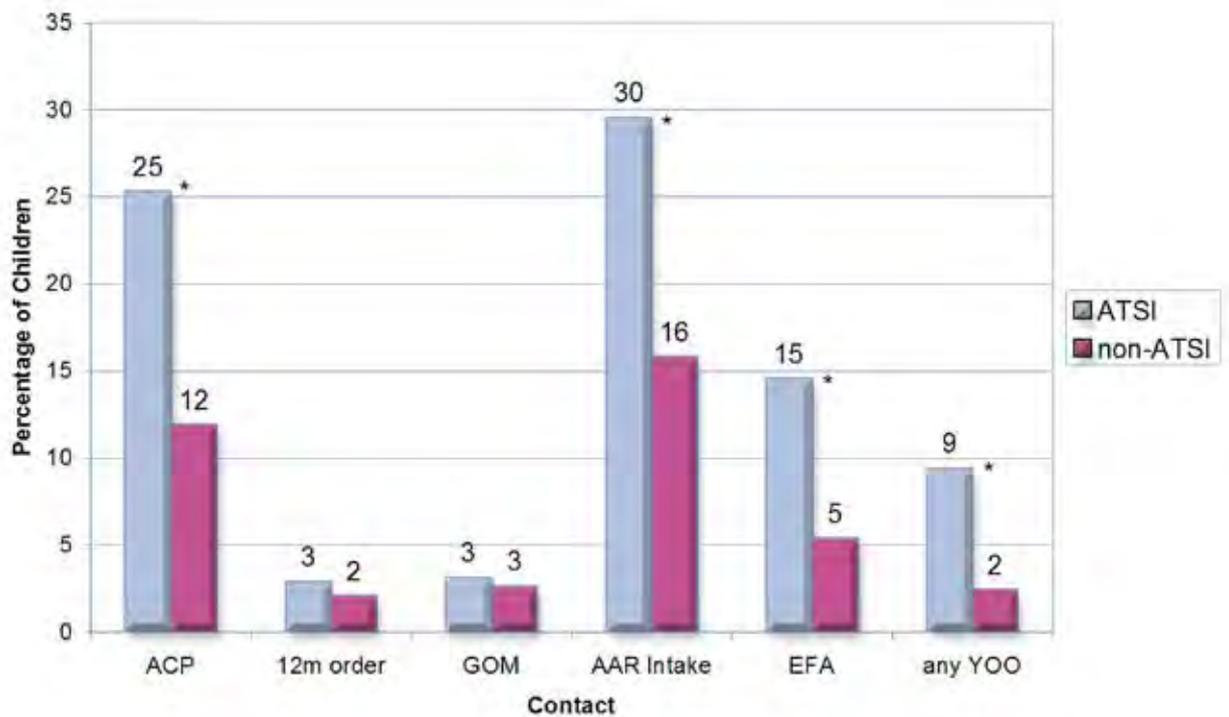


Figure 34: Percentage of Children a notification with each Type of Contact by Cultural Background (* significant difference (p<.05) between Cultural Backgrounds) (N=4410)

Some gender differences were also apparent (Figure 35). Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander girls were particularly more likely to experience an adolescent at risk intake (36% of all those who were notified), followed by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander males (23%), female non-Indigenous children (19%) and male non-Indigenous children (12%). Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander boys were the most likely to experience a young offender order.

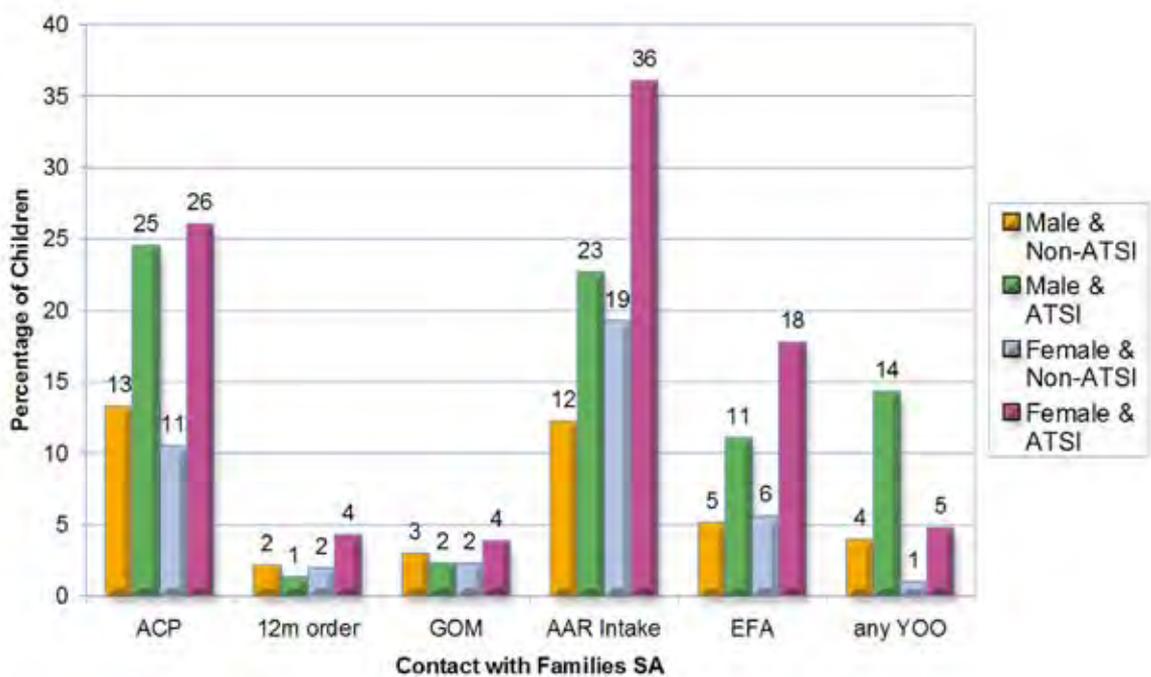


Figure 35: Percentage of Children with each Contact with Families SA by Gender and Cultural Background

A range of factors – such as a higher total number of notifications, younger age at first notification and increased likelihood of being the subject of a Tier rated (more serious) notification and substantiated abuse - may be associated with a higher likelihood of experiencing other contacts or services in Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children.

Statistical analysis ¹⁰ therefore compared the likelihood of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous children experiencing other contacts or services whilst controlling for the influence of total number of notifications, age at first notification, Tier rating of notifications, investigations and substantiations.

Results (Table 28) suggest that, after controlling for possible influencing factors, there was no significant difference in the likelihood of experiencing a 12 month or a Guardianship of the Minister Order (GOM) between Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous children. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were, however, **more likely** to experience an alternative care placement, adolescent at risk intake, emergency financial assistance or young offender order even after controlling for these influencing factors (ie compared to a matched sample of non-indigenous children with similar characteristics).

The analysis estimated that the likelihood of an alternative care placement was 1.64 times more (or 64% higher), likelihood of an adolescent at risk intake was 1.75 times more (or 75% higher), likelihood of emergency financial assistance was 1.80 times more (or 80% higher) and likelihood of a young offender order was 2.72 times more (or 172% higher) amongst Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children after controlling for possible influencing factors.

¹⁰ Logistic regression was used

Table 28: Difference in Other Contacts and Services between Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous ignoring and controlling for other factors

	Difference (odds ratio (OR) (95% CI)) between ATSI and non-ATSI ignoring influencing factors	Difference (odds ratio (OR) (95% CI)) between ATSI and non-ATSI controlling for influencing factors	Controlling Factors
Alternative Care Placement			Total number of notifications, Age at first notification, Experienced a tier 1, Experienced a tier 2, Experienced a NOCS, Experienced an Investigation and Experienced a Substantiated Abuse
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	2.51 (2.0 to 3.2)	1.64 (1.2 to 2.2)	
Non-Indigenous	1	1	
12 Month Order			
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	1.40 (0.7 to 2.6)	0.62 (0.3 to 1.2)	
Non-Indigenous	1	1	
GOM			
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	1.19 (0.7 to 2.1)	0.63 (0.3 to 1.1)	
Non-Indigenous	1	1	
Adolescent at Risk Intake			
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	2.23 (1.8 to 2.8)	1.75 (1.4 to 2.2)	
Non-Indigenous	1	1	
Emergency Financial Assistance			
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	2.98 (2.2 to 4.0)	1.80 (1.3 to 2.5)	
Non-Indigenous	1	1	
Young Offender Order			
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	4.12 (2.8 to 6.0)	2.72 (1.8 to 4.1)	
Non-Indigenous	1	1	

7.8 Trends over time

Some comparative analysis has been undertaken of children born in three different years (1991, 1998 and 2002) as to the extent of their contact with the child protection system. This analysis has indicated that children born in latter years are increasingly more likely to be notified. The likelihood of notification for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children appears to have increased at a higher rate than for the general population (Figure 36)¹¹.

¹¹ Note there are difficulties in comparing the cumulative percentage of children with an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background between the 1991, 1998 and 2002 cohorts given the absence of clear data on numbers of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander births in those years. The comparisons are therefore based on estimation.

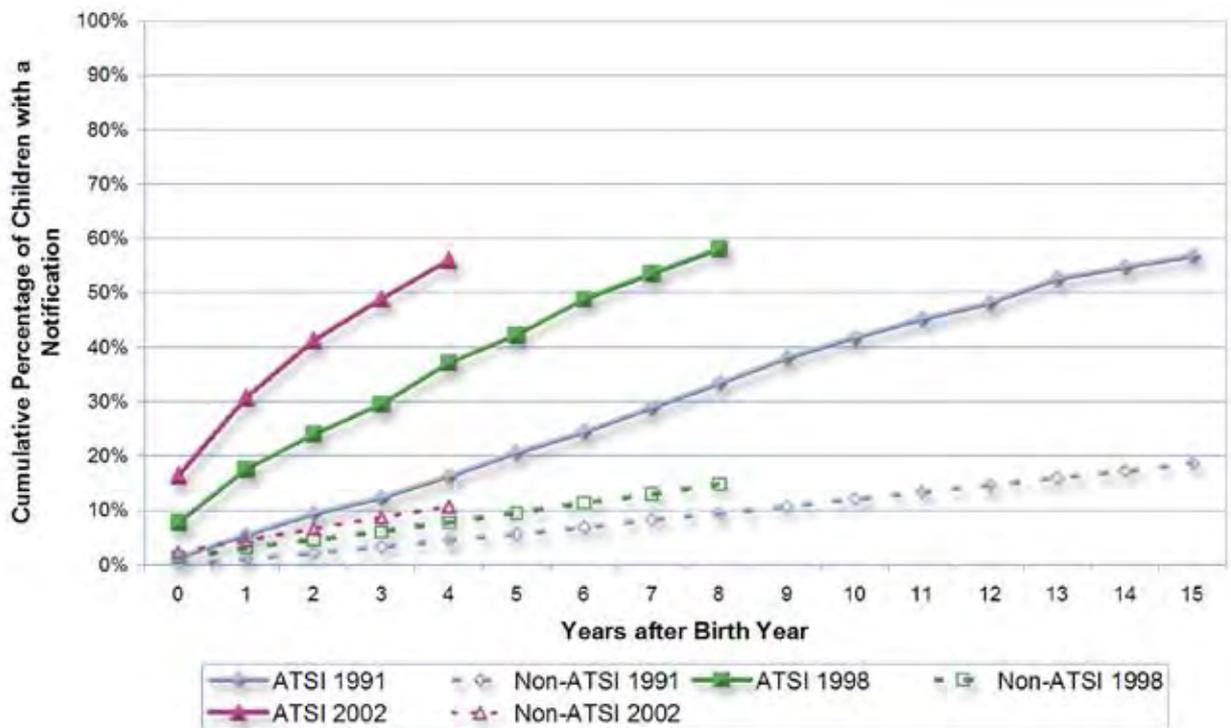


Figure 36: Cumulative percentage children with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background with a notification born in 1991, 1998 and 2002¹²

Thus, it is estimated that, by the end of 2006 for children born in 2002, 56% of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children had been the subject of at least one notification, compared to 11% of non-Indigenous children born in the same year. By contrast over the same time period, it is estimated that 16% of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children born in 1991 had been the subject of a notification by the end of 1995, compared to 5% of non-Indigenous children.

¹² A rate of 4% of live births as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background was assumed for each of the 3 birth cohorts

8

Appendix - Definition of terms

8. Appendix - Definition of terms

Adolescent at risk

A young person aged 12-17 years who is disconnected from their family and support networks and whose behaviours compromise their safety and well-being. The term encompasses a wide variety of behaviours and issues related to young people, for example, running away, homelessness, substance abuse, unsafe sex practices, criminal activity, mental health issues, family breakdown, suicidal threats/behaviour and self-harm/mutilation and parent-adolescent conflict.

Adolescent at risk intake

Families SA can undertake an investigation into the circumstances of a child at risk, which includes not only those children who may be being abused or neglected or threatened but also relates to circumstances such as guardians unable and unwilling, guardians unable to maintain, abandonment, lack of supervision and control, truancy, homelessness etc.

Criteria not met

Notifications received by Families SA are assessed to determine whether the matter meets the criteria for child abuse or neglect and to determine whether there are grounds for intervention. *Criteria not met* is used in cases where a notifier's information contains insufficient information to give reasonable grounds to suspect abuse or neglect; or where the report is about a problem other than child abuse or neglect and for which state intervention is not appropriate.

Custody orders

Under Section 38 (1) (b) of the Children's Protection Act the Youth Court may grant custody of the child or young person, for a specified period not exceeding 12 months, to any one of the following persons:

- (i) a guardian of the child or young person;
- (ii) some other member of the child or young person's family;
- (iii) the chief executive of a non-government organisation that provides facilities for the residential care of children or young people, for placement in those facilities as that officer from time to time thinks appropriate;
- (iv) the Minister;
- (v) any other person that the Court thinks appropriate in the circumstances of the case.

Custody orders enable the designated person or persons to provide for the day to day care of the child or young person whilst the legal guardianship remains with the parent/s. These orders can be made to provide for children and young people who are removed from their family's safety and protection whilst reunification services are provided. Custody orders may be made for a maximum of 12 months and the Minister's powers under Custody Orders are extensive and can be found in Section 51 of the Act.

Differential Response model

Families SA responds to child protection notifications according to a 'Differential Response' model which incorporates a three tier response to notifications, differentiating between children:

- in immediate danger (**Tier 1**)
- primarily at risk of significant harm (**Tier 2**)
- primarily in need with low risk in the short term (**Tier 3**)

Initial categorisation into tiers reflects the different responses required for children in different situations, i.e. emergency, priority or community response.

Emotional abuse/harm

Emotional abuse is a chronic attitude or behaviour directed at a child or young person, or the creation of an emotional environment which is detrimental to or impairs the child's psychological and/or physical development.

Extra-familial abuse (EXF)

Extra-familial abuse relates to notifications received where a criminal response is required rather than a Families SA response. Generally these cases will be those where there are no protective concerns for the child but the matter is one which alleges a criminal offence has been committed, e.g. alleged extra-familial sexual abuse.

Families SA

Families SA is the statutory body responsible for receiving notifications and investigating and/or making inquiries into allegations of suspected child abuse and neglect.

Guardianship orders - twelve months

Section 38 (1) (c) of the Children's Protection Act allows the Court to place a child or young person under the guardianship of the Minister for up to 12 months. Guardianship of the Minister effectively removes all parental rights and responsibilities from the guardian/s. It may be used when reunification is to be considered however, it should only be considered when a custody order would not afford the child or young person with the safety and protection required. Guardianship may also be given to another person or persons (not exceeding two) as the Court thinks appropriate in the circumstances of the case.

Guardianship to eighteen years

Section 38 (1) (d) of the Children's Protection Act allows the Court to place a child or young person under the guardianship of the Minister until the child reaches the age of 18 years. An order of this type would only be considered when there are significant risks of harm to the child or young person by the parent/s, and when it is unlikely that the child or young person can be returned safely to the home.

Investigation

An investigation is the process whereby Families SA obtains more detailed information about a child who is the subject of a notification and make an assessment about the degree of harm to the child and the child's protective needs.

Likely (abuse)

Section 6 (1) of the Children's Protection Act defines the extent of abuse and neglect the State has authority to intervene. This includes cases where the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, sexual abuse, or physical or psychological injury detrimental to the child's well being; or if the child's physical or psychological development is in jeopardy.

Neglect

Neglect is any serious omission or commission by a person which jeopardises or impairs a child's psychological, intellectual or physical development.

No grounds for further intervention (NGI)

Within the legislation under Section 14 there is provision for Families SA not to take action in certain circumstances. Specifically, when Families SA is satisfied that the information or observations on which the notifier formed his or her suspicion were not sufficient to constitute reasonable grounds for the suspicion, or while there are reasonable grounds for such a suspicion, proper arrangements exist for the care and protection of the child and the matter of the apparent abuse or neglect is being adequately dealt with. The latter includes cases where it is clear there is no role for Families SA as the matter is being adequately responded to by others. For example, where Police are conducting an investigation of a child who has been sexually assaulted by someone outside the family and the parents are supportive and protective.

Notification

A report received by Families SA regarding an allegation of suspected child abuse and neglect.

Notifier concern (NOC)

Notifier concerns (NOC) are reports made to Families SA from both mandated and non-mandated notifiers which are concerning enough to be recorded, but do not otherwise warrant a Families SA intervention. That is, the information provided does not constitute reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect as defined by the legislation and thus does not provide grounds for statutory intervention.

Physical abuse/harm

Physical abuse is any non-accidental act inflicted upon a child which results in physical injury to the child.

Sexual abuse/harm

Sexual abuse is any sexual behaviour imposed on a child. The child concerned is considered to be unable to alter and/or understand the perpetrator's behaviour due to his or her early stage of development and/or powerlessness in the situation.

Tier 1

Tier 1 cases include those children where there are reports of major injuries, alleged severe physical abuse of young children, alleged current intra-familial sexual abuse and life threatening neglect or lack of supervision.

Tier 2

Notifications which involve children at immediate or significant risk are classified as Tier 2. These cases will involve children primarily at risk of immediate or significant harm - serious physical, sexual and emotional abuse or neglect of young children and young people at high risk.

Tier 3

Tier 3 consists of cases which primarily involve minor physical abuse (eg. one-off incident, excess discipline), some neglect and emotional abuse (especially of older children) or some serious recent abuse where the perpetrator no longer poses a threat. It includes cases where there may be high needs in the family but fairly low risk to children in the short term.

Substantiation/Confirmation of abuse

Child abuse or neglect cases are confirmed when the investigating social worker has considered all aspects of the child and family's situation and forms an opinion that abuse or neglect has occurred.

Substantiated abuse decisions are made when there are facts and/or observations which support a reasonable belief that abuse or neglect has occurred. In order to determine whether the alleged abuse or neglect is confirmed, there is a requirement that credible evidence or sufficient information exists to conclude that the child has been abused or neglected.

Threat

Section 6 (1) of the Children's Protection Act defines the extent of abuse and neglect the State has authority to intervene in. This includes if the person with whom the child resides (whether a guardian of the child or not) has threatened to kill or injure the child and there is reasonable likelihood of the threat being carried out.

Young offender orders

Under the Young Offenders Act (1993) young people of or above the age of ten years but under the age of eighteen who have been charged with a criminal offence may be subject to a number of sentencing and order options including a community service order, a supervised obligation, a suspended detention order, a home detention order or a detention order.



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