

# Baseline outcomes for NDIS participants

30 June 2020

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# Executive summary

## Background

Fundamentally, the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) was set up to allow people with disability to live “an ordinary life”: to fully realise their potential, to participate in and contribute to society, and to have a say in their own present and future – just as other members of Australian society do.

These aims are embedded in the legislation which established the Scheme, the National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013<sup>1</sup> (the NDIS Act), and included in the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) Corporate Plan 2020-2024<sup>2</sup>.

The NDIS Act underscores the Scheme objectives:

- To support the independence and social and economic participation of people with disability;
- To enable people with disability to exercise choice and control in the pursuit of their goals and the planning and delivery of their supports;
- To maximise independent lifestyles and full inclusion in the community; and
- To facilitate greater community inclusion of people with disability.

## The NDIS Outcomes Framework questionnaires

The NDIS Act further indicates that the Scheme adopts an insurance-based approach. An insurance-based approach considers the lifetime cost of participants (including early investment), and the outcomes achieved across participants’ lifetimes. Measurement of outcomes and costs (both to the NDIS and other mainstream service systems) is critical in understanding the success of the NDIS and is a legislative requirement.<sup>3</sup>

Measurement of outcomes encompasses a wide range of areas, ranging from participants’ progress towards achievement of their own individual goals, to the broad economic and societal benefits that are expected to emerge from the Scheme in the longer term.

The NDIS Outcomes Framework questionnaires have been developed to measure progress towards a common set of accepted goals for each participant, so that the results can be aggregated to provide a picture of how and where the Scheme is making a difference. In addition, a common set of goals allows benchmarking to Australians without disability and to other OECD countries.

## This report

This report summarises baseline results for NDIS participants entering the Scheme during the four year period from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2020. A separate report covers longitudinal change for participants who have been in the Scheme for one year or more at 30 June 2020.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/C2019C00332/Download>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ndis.gov.au/about-us/publications/corporate-plan>

<sup>3</sup> Further, the National Disability Insurance Scheme forms part of the broader National Disability Strategy 2010-2020. The strategy is a commitment from all governments to a shared vision of an inclusive Australian society that enables people with disability to fulfil their potential as equal citizens. In particular, the strategy emphasises the need for improved performance of mainstream services in delivering outcomes for people with disability.

Two previous reports have covered both baseline and longitudinal experience, as at 30 June 2018 and 30 June 2019.<sup>4</sup>

The focus of this report is on baseline results for participants entering the Scheme in the most recent financial year (2019-20). However, brief comparisons with results for prior year entrants are also provided.

Since participants entering the Scheme at different times may have different characteristics (for example, due to phasing), a brief summary of how 2019-20 entrants compare to participants entering in the earlier three year period is also provided, on key characteristics such as disability and level of function.

The global COVID-19 pandemic that took hold from early 2020 is likely to have had an impact on at least some participant outcomes, such as community participation, and for older age groups, employment. This report investigates effects of the pandemic on outcomes via multiple regression models that allow for discontinuities in indicator levels, as well as different time trends, pre- and post-onset of the pandemic.

## Baseline versus progress

It is important to recognise that, with respect to how they are going in different areas of their lives, participants do not enter the Scheme on an equal footing – a fact that is illustrated by the results of this baseline report. A whole range of individual and external factors will impact on the experiences of participants at baseline, including the nature and severity of their disability, where they live, and the extent of support they receive from family and friends.

An example of this baseline variability is provided by young adult participants with a psychosocial disability. These participants were found to have consistently poorer baseline outcomes, across all life domains. On the other hand, participants with a hearing impairment generally experience better baseline outcomes.

Consequently, the success of the Scheme should be judged not on baseline outcomes, but on how far participants have come since they entered the Scheme, acknowledging their different starting points.

The purpose of this report is to provide a snapshot view of outcomes at the time participants enter the Scheme, based on information provided by them in interviews conducted using the NDIS outcomes framework questionnaires. At this time, the NDIS has not had an opportunity to have an impact on outcomes. The separate longitudinal report considers how far participants have progressed since entry to the Scheme. Together, the reports provide insight into how the Scheme is making a difference, and point to any areas where improvements may be required.

## A lifespan approach

Leveraging research conducted by the NDIS Independent Advisory Council (IAC), the outcomes framework takes a lifespan approach to the measurement of outcomes, recognising that different milestones are important for different age groups.

Reflecting this lifespan approach, the report is organised with a separate chapter for each participant age cohort<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://data.ndis.gov.au/reports-and-analyses/outcomes-and-goals/participant-outcomes-report>

<sup>5</sup> Participants from birth to before starting school, participants from starting school to age 14, participants aged 15 to 24, and participants aged 25 and over.

## Participants from birth to before starting school

### Comparison with prior year entrants

Compared to prior year entrants, participants aged from birth to before starting school who entered the Scheme in 2019-20 tend to be:

- Younger
- More likely to have developmental delay or global developmental delay and less likely to have autism
- More likely to have a high level of function.

### Overall results

#### **Participant living and housing arrangements**

At baseline, 94.8% of participants in the birth to before starting school group who entered the Scheme in 2019-20 lived with their parents (compared to 93.6% of prior year entrants). 90.6% live in a private home either owned or rented from a private landlord (89.8% for prior years), and 7.4% live in a private home rented from a public authority (8.0% for prior years).

#### **Areas of development**

Parents/carers are surveyed about their concerns in eight developmental areas. The area with the highest level of concern for both 2019-20 entrants and prior year entrants was language/communication (94.6% for 2019-20 entrants and 93.8% for prior year entrants), followed by social interaction (86.2% for 2019-20 entrants and 86.1% for prior year entrants). For 2019-20 entrants, 68.1% of parents/carers expressed concerns in six or more of the eight areas (similar to 67.3% for prior year entrants).

#### **Autonomy**

Most children exhibited evidence of growing autonomy, with 68.5% of parents and carers of 2019-20 entrants saying that their child was able to tell them what they want (compared to 70.6% entering in previous years).

#### **Family life**

Baseline outcomes related to family life were generally similar for 2019-20 entrants and prior year entrants. Overall, 65.3% of parents/carers of 2019-20 entrants say that their child fits into the everyday life of the family, similar to 66.4% for prior year entrants.

#### **Childcare**

For participants entering in 2019-20, 52.3% used some form of childcare, similar to earlier entrants (53.7%). Children's experiences at childcare were generally positive. Of 2019-20 entrants using group childcare, 92.6% said that other children were welcoming and 93.1% said that other families were welcoming (compared to 93.6% and 94.6% for prior year entrants, respectively).

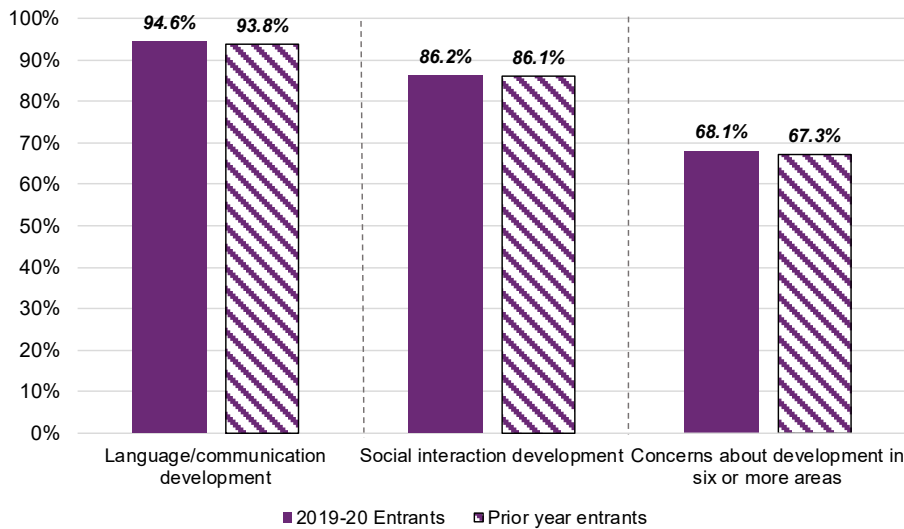
#### **Participation**

The percentage of participants with friends who they enjoy playing with was lower than previous years (36.3% for the latest entry year cohort compared to 47.9% in prior years). The percentage participating in age-appropriate community, cultural or religious activities was also lower (46.4% compared to 51.5%).

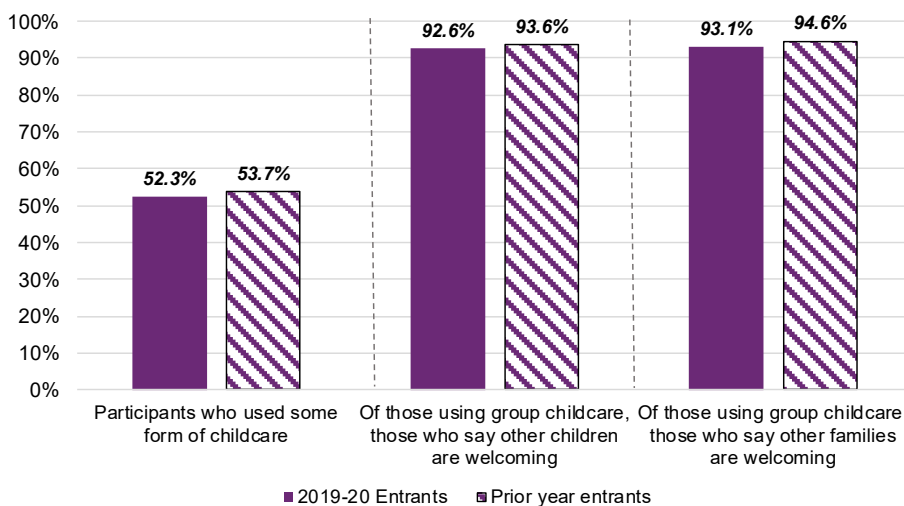
#### **Specialist services**

The percentage of participants using specialist services is lower for 2019-20 entrants (49.3%) compared to prior year entrants (71.3%). Of the participants using these services, 84.0% of parents/carers of 2019-20 entrants thought that these services helped with their child's skill development, compared to 91.0% from prior years.

**Figure 1 Parent/carer concerns about the participant's development in certain areas**



**Figure 2 Childcare**



### Results by participant characteristics

Baseline indicators for participants entering the Scheme in 2019-20 have been analysed by participant characteristics using one-way analyses and multiple regression modelling.

Across most domains, the participant's level of function, primary disability type, age, where they live, and the extent to which they make friends and participate in community are the characteristics most predictive of outcomes in the multiple regression models, which control for other factors.

Key results from the analysis include:

- Participants with a hearing impairment as their primary disability type, participants with a higher level of function and participants who are self-managing part or all of their plan tend to have better baseline outcomes across most indicators.
- However, participants with autism or global developmental delay as their primary disability type, participants from a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) or

Indigenous background and participants from an area with a higher unemployment rate tended to have worse baseline outcomes across most indicators.

- Participants who have friends they enjoy playing with, who participate in community activities and who use childcare or specialist services tend to have significantly better baseline outcomes.

## Participants from starting school to age 14

### Comparison with prior year entrants

Compared to prior year entrants, participants from starting school to age 14 who entered the Scheme in 2019-20 tend to be:

- Younger
- More likely to have developmental delay or global developmental delay and less likely to have an intellectual disability or Down syndrome
- More likely to have medium level of function and less likely to have low level of function.

### Overall results

#### ***Participant living and housing arrangements***

At baseline, 93.2% of participants in the starting school to age 14 group who entered the Scheme in 2019-20 lived with their parents, slightly higher than for entrants from earlier years (89.6%).

91.2% of 2019-20 entrants live in a private home either owned or rented from a private landlord, slightly higher than for prior year entrants (89.4%). 6.9% live in a private home rented from a public authority, slightly lower than for prior year entrants (8.3%).

#### ***Independence***

Baseline levels of independence are generally low for this cohort. For example, 37.5% think their child is becoming more independent (compared to 40.0% of prior year entrants).

However, 75.4% of children have a genuine say in at least some decisions about themselves, higher than for entrants in earlier years (65.1%).

#### ***Relationships***

Almost three quarters (72.8%) of parents/carers did not think there was enough time to meet the needs of all family members. However the majority of respondents reported that their child fits into everyday family life (87.5%, similar to 86.8% for prior year entrants) and gets along with their siblings (70.1% compared to 73.0%).

More than half (53.6%) of parents/carers never go out without their child (similar to 51.6% for prior year entrants). Of those who do go out without their child, 94.5% use informal care (the child stays with siblings, extended family, family friends or by themselves) – higher than the 89.4% for prior year entrants.

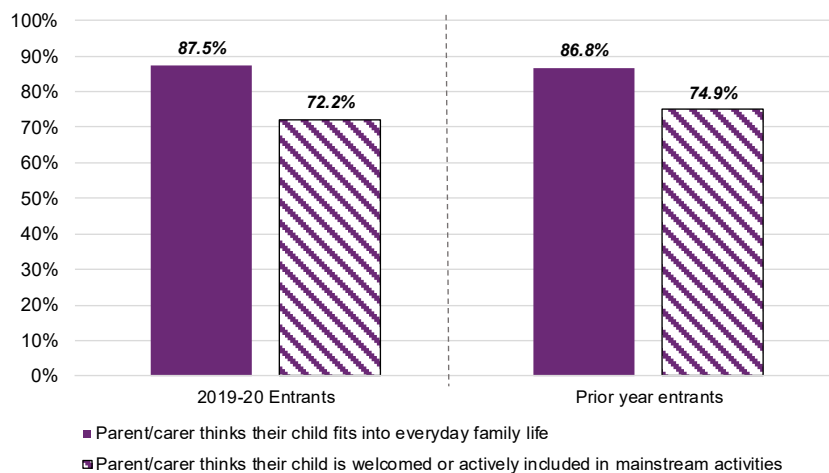
#### ***Participation***

Overall, baseline participation in mainstream activities tends to be low for this cohort. Only 11.2% of parents/carers of 2019-20 entrants use a mainstream school holiday program, and only about half of children (50.2%) spend time after school and on weekends with friends or in mainstream group activities, however this is higher than for prior year entrants (36.6%). The majority (72.2%) of parents/carers thought that their child was welcomed or actively included in these activities (compared to 74.9% of prior year entrants).

For 2019-20 entrants, 66.8% of parents/carers said they would like their child to have more opportunity to be involved in activities with other children, lower than for entrants in earlier years (81.4%), and 87.9% of these perceived their child's disability as a barrier to being more involved (84.4% for prior years).



**Figure 3 Relationships and participation**



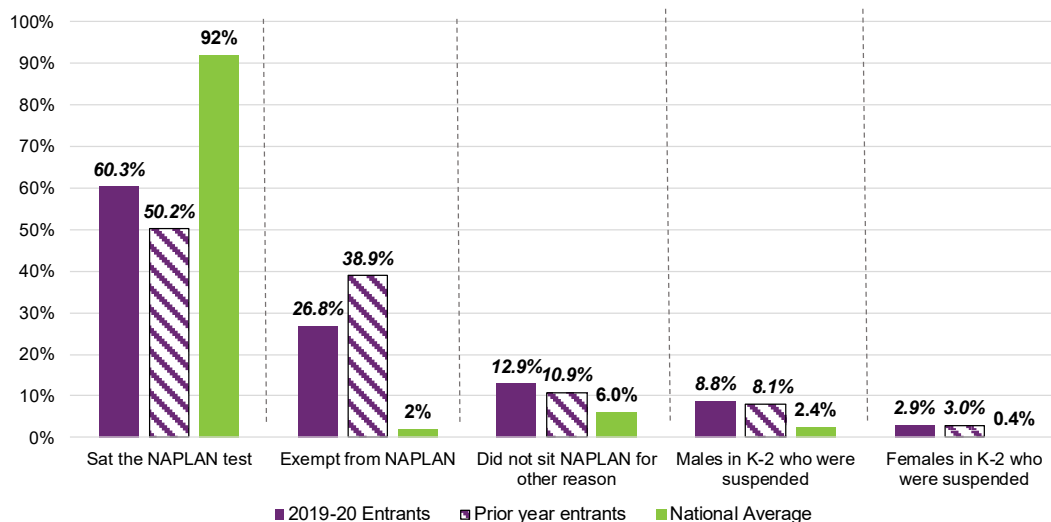
**School**

The proportion of participants attending school in a mainstream class has been increasing over time. For participants entering the Scheme in 2019-20, 78.5% of children attended school in a mainstream class, compared to 60.5% of those in earlier years.

Of 2019-20 entrants who had the opportunity to sit a NAPLAN test, 60.3% had sat one and 26.8% were exempt. For prior year entrants, the percentage sitting was lower, at 50.2%, and the percentage exempt was higher, at 38.9%. The nationwide exemption rate in 2019 was 1.8% (disability being one of the two reasons for exemption). The percentage missing the tests for reasons other than exemption appears higher than the national average (12.9% compared to 5%-10%).

12.7% of NDIS participants had ever been suspended from school (13.3% of prior year entrants), and this rate varies considerably by school year and gender, with boys being more likely to be suspended than girls. Although not directly comparable with State/Territory published figures, suspensions do seem more prevalent amongst NDIS participants than amongst New South Wales (NSW) public school students. For NDIS participants in K-2, 8.8% of males and 2.9% of females had ever been suspended, compared to yearly suspension rates of 2.4% for males and 0.4% for females for K-2 students attending NSW public schools.

**Figure 4 School: NAPLAN participation and suspensions**



## Results by participant characteristics

Baseline indicators for participants entering the Scheme in 2019-20 have been analysed by participant characteristics using one-way analyses and multiple regression modelling.

Across most domains, the participant's level of function, primary disability type, age, and where they live are the characteristics most predictive of outcomes in the multiple regression models, which control for other factors.

Key results from the analysis include:

- Participants with a hearing impairment tend to have better baseline outcomes, and participants with autism or global developmental delay tend to have worse baseline outcomes. Participants with a physical disability or visual impairment were the most likely to be attending school in a mainstream class, and those with Down syndrome, intellectual disability, or global developmental delay were the least likely.
- Almost all baseline outcomes vary significantly with participant level of function and annualised plan budget. Participants with higher level of function / lower annualised plan budget tend to have better baseline outcomes than those with lower level of function / higher annualised plan budget. In particular, participants with higher level of function are more likely to attend school in a mainstream class.
- Older children exhibit more independence and have a greater say in decisions, as would be expected due to normal age-related development. The percentage attending school in a mainstream class declines with age.
- Females are more likely than males to have a genuine say in decisions about themselves, to make friends with people outside the family, and to attend school in a mainstream class.
- Indigenous children are less likely to be becoming more independent, to be developing functional, learning and coping skills, and to attend school in a mainstream class.
- In general, CALD participants tend to have more positive baseline outcomes than non-CALD participants in the area of family life, but less positive outcomes in the areas of community participation and friendships.
- In general, baseline outcomes are more positive for participants living in small regional towns and remote/very remote areas compared to those for participants living in major cities and larger regional centres.
- Participants with self-managed baseline plans are more likely to show evidence of growing independence, and more likely to attend school in a mainstream class.

## Participants aged 15 to 24

### Comparison with prior year entrants

Compared to prior year entrants, participants aged 15 to 24 who entered the Scheme in 2019-20 tend to be:

- Younger
- More likely to have autism, a hearing or visual impairment, or a psychosocial disability and less likely to have intellectual disability or Down syndrome
- More likely to have high or medium level of function, and less likely to have low level of function.

### Overall results

#### ***Participant living and housing arrangements***

Most 2019-20 entrants live with parents (77.1%, compared to 75.8% of prior year entrants). Most participants (83.0%) are in a private home either owned or rented from a private landlord. 8.4% of participants live in a private home rented from a public authority, slightly lower than entrants in earlier years (11.1%). 77.8% say they are happy with their home (compared to 80.4% of prior year entrants).

#### ***Choice and control***

Almost all participants say they choose what they do each day (91.5%) and how they spend their free time (92.2%), however 70.6% say they were not happy with the level of independence and control they are currently experiencing (higher than 64.5% for prior year entrants).

#### ***Daily living***

Support with domestic tasks (78.6%) and communicating with other people (78.0%) are the areas of highest need in daily living. For each area of daily living except communication, the percentage needing support was lower for 2019-20 entrants compared to prior year entrants, possibly reflecting the higher level of function for 2019-20 entrants on average. Where support was needed, it was most often received for domestic tasks (79.2%), personal care (77.9%) and finances/money (73.0%). These percentages for 2019-20 entrants were lower than for prior year entrants, by 3.7% to 9.9%.

#### ***Relationships***

Baseline relationship outcomes for 2019-20 entrants tend to be less favourable than the general population. 17.3% of the participants have no one outside their home to call for help, 25.7% have no one to call on for emotional assistance, and 23.7% have no-one to call on in a crisis, compared to only 2.8% of the general population age 15 to 24.

However, these baseline percentages were slightly more favourable for 2019-20 entrants compared to prior year entrants (for example, 20.6% of prior year entrants had no one outside their home to call for help compared to 17.3% of 2019-20 entrants).

#### ***Health and wellbeing***

Baseline health outcomes for 2019-20 entrants also tend to be poorer compared to the general population. A lower percentage of participants rate their health as good, very good or excellent (67.0% compared to 91.9% for the general population), and a higher percentage have been to hospital in the last 12 months (29.0% versus 6.8%). Almost one-third of participants (31.2%) had experienced difficulties in getting health services.

Similar results on these indicators were observed for prior year entrants, with 68.4% rating their health as good, very good or excellent, 28.6% having been to hospital in the last 12 months, and 31.0% having experienced difficulties in getting health services.

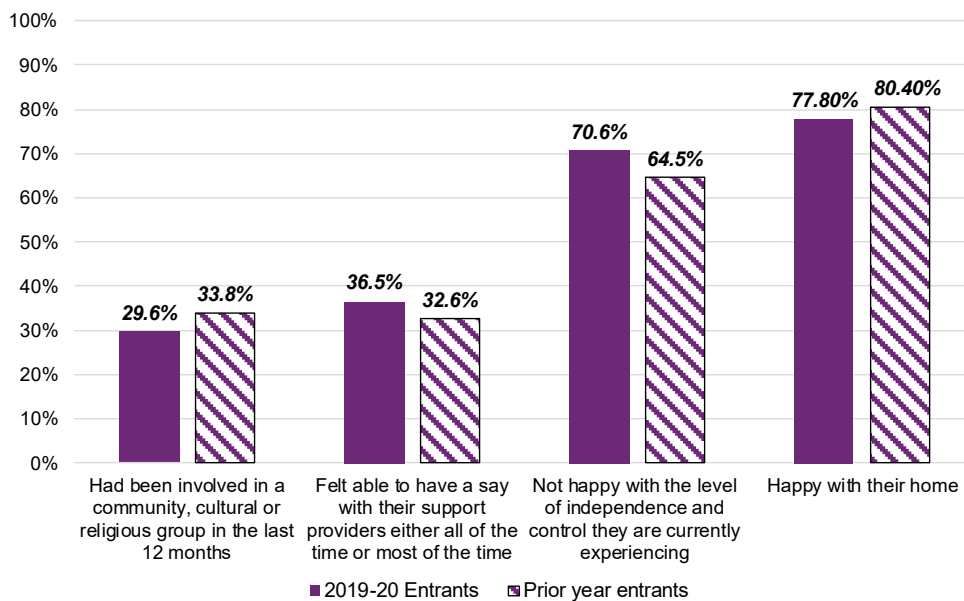
### Lifelong learning

55.2% of participants who entered the Scheme in 2019-20 said that they currently or previously attended school in a mainstream class, whilst 16.7% said they were currently or previously in a special school. For prior year entrants, a much lower percentage said they were currently or previously in a mainstream class (28.4%), and a much higher percentage said they were currently or previously in a special school (37.8%).

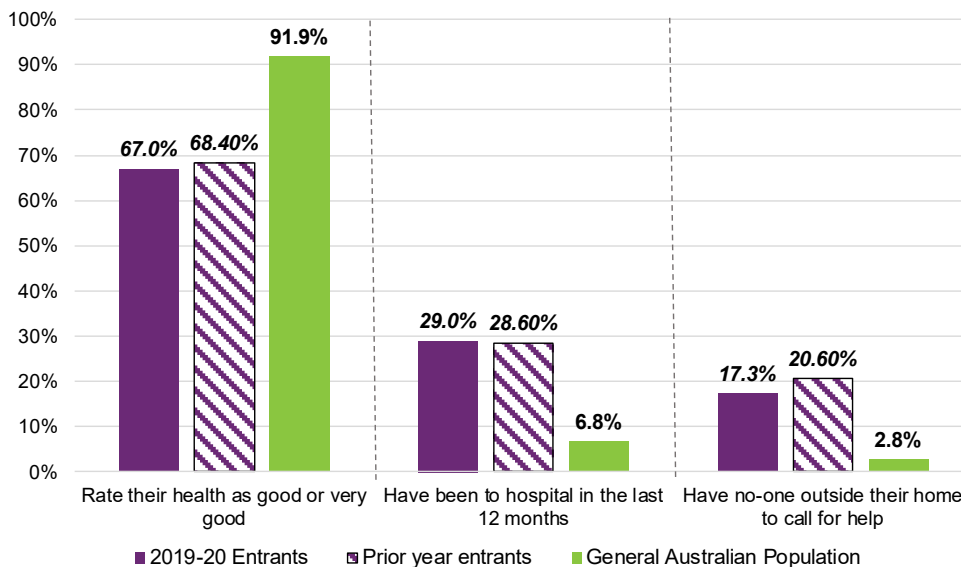
### Participation

9.8% of participants said they currently volunteered (compared to 12.5% of prior year entrants), and 29.6% had been involved in a community, cultural or religious group in the last 12 months (33.8% of prior year entrants). 36.5% of participants felt able to have a say with their support providers either all of the time or most of the time (compared to 32.6% for prior year entrants). 70.6% of participants felt able to have a say with their support providers either all of the time or most of the time (compared to 32.6% for prior year entrants).

**Figure 5 Participation, choice and control and home**



**Figure 6 Health and relationships**



## Results by participant characteristics

Baseline indicators for participants entering the Scheme in 2019-20 have been analysed by participant characteristics using one-way analyses and multiple regression modelling.

Across most domains, the participant's level of function, primary disability type, age, cultural background, where they live, plan management type and LGA unemployment rates were most predictive of outcomes in the multiple regression models, which control for other factors.

Key results from the analysis include:

- Similar to participants who entered in prior years, better baseline outcomes have been observed from 2019-20 entrants with primary disability of hearing impairment, participants who are self-managing part or all of their plan, and participants with higher level of function.
- Less favourable baseline outcomes have been observed from 2019-20 entrants whose primary disability is a psychosocial disability, particularly in the areas of home, health and wellbeing, community participation, and work. Indigenous participants also showed poorer baseline outcomes across multiple domains, particularly in home, health and wellbeing, lifelong learning, work and community participation.

## Participants aged 25 and over

### Comparison with prior year entrants

Compared to prior year entrants, participants aged 25 and over who entered the Scheme in 2019-20 tend to be:

- Older
- Much more likely to have a psychosocial disability and much less likely to have intellectual disability or Down syndrome
- Have a similar distribution by level of function.

### Overall results

#### ***Participant living and housing arrangements***

By comparison with the younger adult cohort, participants aged 25 and over are more likely to live alone (28.8%, higher than 24.2% of prior year entrants), with a spouse/partner and/or children (34.0%, also higher than 25.0% of prior year entrants), or with people not related to them (12.2%, lower than 19.8% of prior year entrants). However, 14.6% live with their parents (lower than 21.6% of prior year entrants) and 5.1% live with other family members (similar to 5.0% of prior year entrants).

64.6% of 2019-20 entrants live in a private home owned or rented from a private landlord, slightly higher than 59.8% of prior year entrants. 18.5% live in a private home rented from a public authority (16.7% of prior year entrants). The proportion in supported accommodation is lower for 2019-20 entrants compared to prior year entrants (3.7% compared to 12.2%).

#### ***Choice and control***

The majority of 2019-20 entrants (71.6%, higher than 58.6% for prior year entrants) said they made most of the decisions about their lives, and would like more choice and control in their life (75.5% compared to 77.1% of prior year entrants).

#### ***Daily living***

For participants entering the Scheme in 2019-20, support for daily living was most needed for domestic tasks (87.8%) and travel and transport (76.8%).

Where support was needed, it was most often received for problem solving (91.1%) and finances/money (62.8%). For those receiving support, the percentage of participants who felt it met their needs was also highest for problem solving (92.7%), followed by finances/money (51.1%).

17.2% of participants needed support in all of the eight areas surveyed at baseline, lower than the 24.0% of participants entering in prior years.

#### ***Relationships***

20.2% of participants said they had no-one outside their home to call on for practical support, 23.4% had no-one to call on for emotional support, and 22.1% had no-one to call on in a crisis. These percentages are much higher than a national figure of 6.4% for being unable to get support in times of crisis from someone outside the home (ABS General Social Survey (GSS) 2019).

Compared to prior year entrants, the percentages with no-one outside their home to call on for practical support or in a crisis were slightly higher (20.2% and 22.1% of 2019-20 entrants, respectively, compared to 17.2% and 20.8% of prior year entrants), but the percentage with no-one to call on for emotional support was the same (23.4%).

37.6% of 2019-20 entrants said they did not have any friends apart from family or paid staff, higher than prior year entrants (29.4%). For those who are currently receiving services, 91.0% said they were happy with their relationships with staff, higher than 78.9% of prior year entrants. 26.5% said they often feel lonely, slightly higher than 21.2% of prior year entrants.

### **Home**

64.2% of participants were happy with their current home, lower than 73.6% of prior year entrants. 33.8% cited lack of support as a barrier to living in a home of their choice, with 32.2% citing lack of affordable housing.

60.6% felt safe or very safe in their home, lower than 74.1% of prior year entrants.

### **Health and wellbeing**

Compared to the Australian population aged 25 to 64 overall, NDIS participants generally rated their health as poorer (34.7% of participants rated their health as good, very good or excellent, compared to 86.6% in the population), expressed lower overall life satisfaction (39.9% of participants expressed a positive view compared to 76.9% in the population) and were more likely to go to hospital (51.9% of participants had been to hospital in the last 12 months, compared to 11.4% of the population).

These indicators for 2019-20 entrants were generally less favourable than for prior year entrants: 46.8% of prior year entrants rated their health as good, very good or excellent, 44.2% had positive overall life satisfaction, and 42.0% had been to hospital in the last 12 months.

23.2% of adult participants said they currently smoked, and this is higher than a 2017-18 population figure for 25 to 64 year olds of 17.2%. It is also higher than for prior year entrants (18.7%).

### **Lifelong learning**

Only 28.4% of participants said they get opportunities to learn new things, lower than 40.3% of prior year entrants.

Only 6.6% of participants currently participate in education, training or skill development, also lower than 11.8% of prior year entrants. Educational settings were different for 2019-20 entrants compared to prior year entrants. For example, 6.0% of 2019-20 entrants said they participated at a disability education facility (lower than 25.7% for prior year entrants), 25.0% at TAFE (higher than 14.5% of prior year entrants), and 20.0% at university (higher than 9.1% of prior year entrants).

### **Work**

18.7% of 2019-20 entrants were currently working in a paid job, lower than 23.7% of prior year entrants at baseline. 11.2% of participants who do not have a job said they were being assisted to get a job, slightly lower than 14.6% of prior year entrants.

Only 18.2% said they had started planning for retirement (similar to 17.2% of prior year entrants), and regarding retirement planning, most of these said they made all of the decisions or made the important decisions with help from others (similar to prior year entrants).

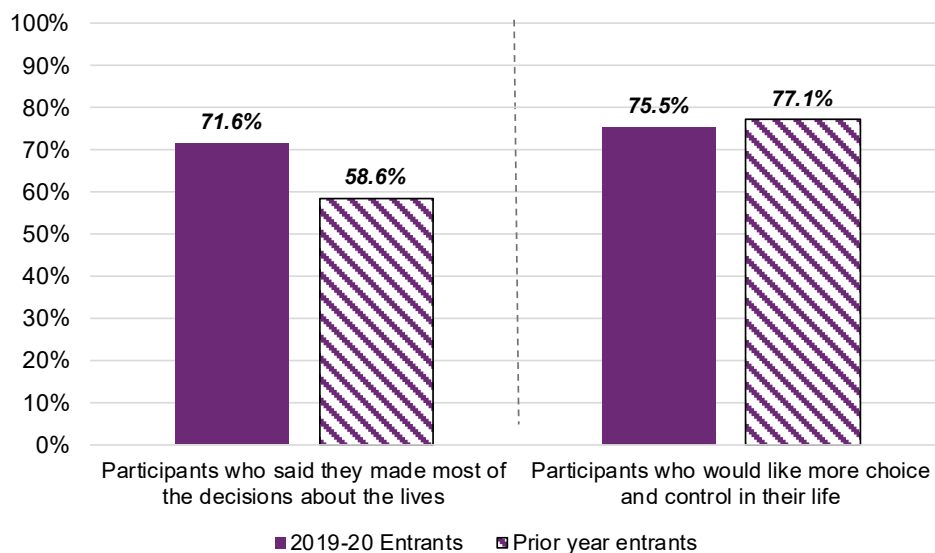
### **Social, civic and community participation**

29.1% of 2019-20 entrants had been involved in a community, cultural or religious group in the last 12 months, lower than 37.3% for prior year entrants, with 89.4% feeling a sense of belonging to the group. 30.4% said they had negative experiences in their community in the past 12 months.

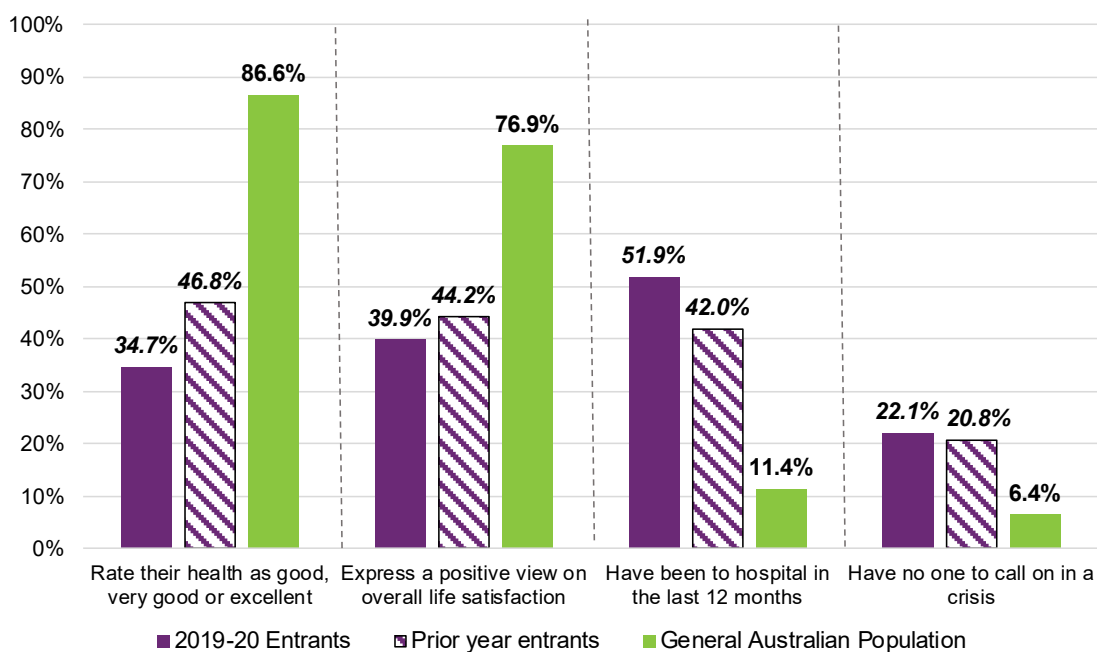
Regarding safety, 62.8% of respondents said that they never go out alone. Of those who do go out alone, 56.1% said they felt safe or very safe whereas 27.2% said they felt unsafe or very unsafe, which is generally more negative than the population.

NDIS participants were also less likely to feel able to have a say within the community on important issues. 61.3% felt able to have a say only a little of the time or none of the time compared to 42.0% among the population aged between 25 and 64.

**Figure 7 Choice and control**



**Figure 8 Health and relationships**





## Results by participant characteristics

Baseline indicators for participants entering the Scheme in 2019-20 have been analysed by participant characteristics using one-way analyses and multiple regression modelling.

Across most domains, the participant's level of function, primary disability type, age, cultural background, where they live, plan management type, LGA unemployment rate, and whether they are in supported independent living (SIL) were most predictive of outcomes in the multiple regression models, which control for other factors.

Key results from the analysis include:

- The impact of disability type on outcomes varies by domain. At baseline, participants with Down syndrome or an intellectual disability have the lowest levels of choice and control, however those with Down syndrome tend to have better outcomes in the home, health and wellbeing, and community participation domains. Controlling for other factors, participants with spinal cord injury tend to have the most positive baseline outcomes, whereas those with a visual impairment have less positive outcomes. Participants with a hearing impairment also tend to have more positive baseline outcomes, and those with a psychosocial disability have less positive outcomes. Participants with autism had less positive outcomes in the relationships and participation domains, but more positive outcomes for some indicators in the home and health domains.
- Baseline outcomes also vary with participant level of function and/or annualised plan budget. Participants with a higher level of function / lower annualised plan budget tend to have better baseline outcomes and exhibit higher rates of improvement than those with a lower level of function / higher annualised plan budget.
- Older participants experienced more positive outcomes related to choice and control, home, and social, community and civic participation. However, older participants had more negative baseline outcomes in the domains of relationships, health, lifelong learning, and work.
- Female participants had better outcomes for indicators relating to choice and control, and relationships, but worse baseline outcomes in the domains of home, health and wellbeing, and work, compared to male participants.
- At baseline, Indigenous participants tend to have slightly worse outcomes than non-Indigenous participants on a number of indicators. Indigenous participants were less happy with their home, less likely to feel safe at home, and had poorer health outcomes. The one indicator for which Indigenous participants had a more positive outcome than non-Indigenous participants was knowing people in their community.
- In general, CALD participants tend to have poorer baseline outcomes related to choice and control, relationships, and work, but are more likely to have been involved in a community, cultural or religious group in the last 12 months.
- Results by remoteness were mixed, with a number of baseline outcomes being more positive for participants living in regional and remote areas.
- Participants with self-managed plans had consistently better baseline outcomes than those with agency managed plans.
- Participants located in a LGA with a higher unemployment rate were less likely to experience positive baseline outcomes in the domains of work, lifelong learning, and community participation, but tended to have positive outcomes in the home domain.
- Participants who receive supported independent living supports were less likely to experience positive baseline outcomes in the choice and control domain. However, they tended to have positive outcomes in the domains of home, health and wellbeing, work and lifelong learning. Outcomes for the participation domain were mixed.

## COVID-19

The global pandemic that took hold from early 2020 is likely to have had an impact on at least some participant outcomes, such as community participation, and for older age groups, employment.

To investigate which outcomes may have been affected by the pandemic via quantitative modelling, additional time-related terms were included in the regression models.<sup>6</sup>

### Participants from birth to before starting school

There were some significant changes to participant outcomes during the pandemic, and results were mixed:

- The percentage of parents/carers who say their child participates in age appropriate community, cultural or religious activities remained relatively constant over time until the start of the pandemic, but has declined over time since then.
- The percentage of children who have friends they enjoy playing with also remained relatively constant until the start of the pandemic, but showed a slight increasing trend over the post-COVID period.
- The percentage of parents/carers who say their child fits in with the everyday life of the family rose to a higher level at the start of the pandemic, and remained at this level during the pandemic.
- The percentage of children who join their parent/carer in completing tasks outside the home dropped to a lower level at the start of the pandemic, but then increased over time at a similar rate to that observed in the pre-COVID period.
- The percentage of children who use specialist services rose to a higher level at the start of the pandemic, but then decreased over time at a similar rate to that observed in the pre-COVID period.
- The percentage of parents/carers with concerns in six or more areas of their child's development dropped to a lower level at the start of the pandemic, and then declined over time at a similar rate to that observed in the pre-COVID period.

### Participants from starting school to age 14

COVID-19 was associated with a number of changes to participant outcomes, with most changes being positive:

- The percentage of children who attend school in a mainstream class increased at a slightly greater rate over the post-COVID period.
- The percentage of children who get along with their siblings was declining slightly over time until the start of the pandemic, but since then has been increasing.
- The percentage of parents/carers who say their child fits in with the everyday life of the family, and the percentage who think there is enough time to meet the needs of all family members increased to a higher level during the pandemic.
- The percentage of children developing functional, learning and coping skills appropriate to their ability and circumstances, the percentage who manage their emotions well, and the percentage becoming more independent also increased to a higher level during the pandemic.

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<sup>6</sup> The methodology and limitations of the approach are discussed in Section 2.5. In particular, the modelling is based on only about three months of experience during the pandemic, and some of the effects detected are only slight.

- However, the percentage of children who spend time away from their parents/carers other than at school has dropped to a lower level during the pandemic.
- The percentage of parents/carers who say they would like their child to be more involved in activities with other children was declining slightly over time until the start of the pandemic. The percentage dropped after the pandemic started, but has since shown an increasing trend.

### **Participants aged 15 to 24**

COVID-19 was associated with a number of changes to participant outcomes, with most changes being positive.

Positive results indicate that during the COVID period, participants were more likely to:

- Choose who supports them, and be able to have a say with their support services most of the time or all of the time. They were also more likely to say they are able to advocate for themselves.
- Want to live in their current home in five years' time, and to feel safe or very safe in their home.
- Rate their health as excellent, very good or good, and have no difficulty accessing health services. They were also less likely to have been to hospital in the last 12 months.
- Feel safe getting out and about in their community.
- Participate in education, training or skill development, spend their free time doing activities that interest them, and know people in their community.

Negative results were observed for only two indicators, indicating that during the pandemic, participants were:

- Less likely to who have someone outside their home to call on for help when needed.
- More likely to want to see their family more often.

### **Participants aged 25 and over**

COVID-19 was associated with a number of changes to participant outcomes, with most changes being positive.

Positive results indicate that during the COVID period, participants were more likely to:

- Choose who supports them, make most decisions in their life, and be able to have a say with their support services most of the time or all of the time. They were also more likely to say they are able to advocate for themselves.
- Be happy with their current home, want to live there in five years' time, and to feel safe or very safe in their home. They were also more likely to feel safe getting out and about in their community.

Participants were also less likely to have been unable to do certain things that they wanted to do in the last 12 months.

Negative results were observed for only three indicators, indicating that during the pandemic, participants were:

- Less likely to who have someone outside their home to call on for help when needed.
- More likely to want to see their family more often.
- Less likely to currently be a volunteer.

**Figure 9 COVID-19 fitted trends: examples for each age group**

