

## 3. Participants from birth to before starting school: Has the NDIS helped?

### 3.1 Results across all participants

For participants who have been in the Scheme for approximately one, two or three years as at 30 June 2020, Figure 3.1 shows the percentage of parents/carers who reported that the NDIS has helped with outcomes related to each of the five domains, one, two and three years in the Scheme (first review, second review and third review, respectively).

**Figure 3.1 Percentage who think that the NDIS has helped with outcomes related to each domain<sup>17</sup>**

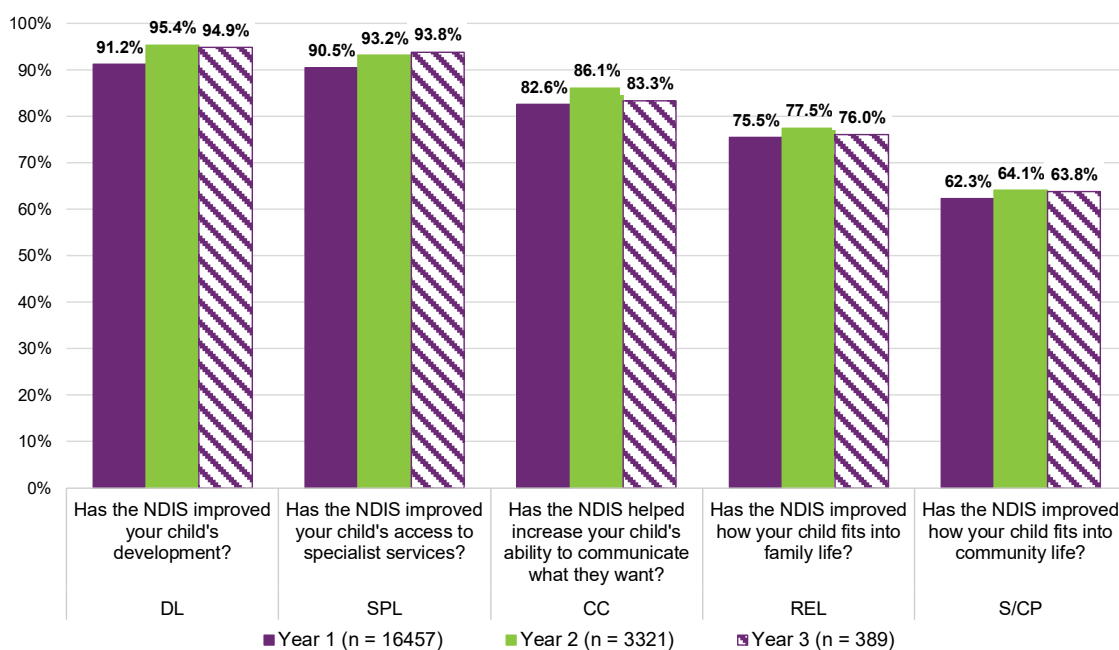


Figure 3.1 shows that opinions on whether the NDIS has helped vary considerably by domain for the youngest cohort of participants. After approximately one year in the Scheme, there is widespread agreement that the NDIS has helped in areas related to the child's development (91.2%) and access to specialist services (90.5%). A slightly smaller percentage (82.6%) feel that the NDIS has helped improve their child's ability to communicate what they want. Percentages are lower for integration into family and community, with 75.5% thinking that the NDIS has helped with how their child fits into family life, and 62.3% thinking that the NDIS has helped with fitting into community life.

Across all domains, the percentage who think the NDIS has helped is slightly higher for participants who have been in the Scheme for two years compared to those who have been in the Scheme for one year. However, opinions on whether the NDIS has helped remained relatively unchanged between the second and third review. There was a slight increase over the third year for the percentage who think the NDIS has improved their child's access to specialist services (from 93.2% to 93.8%), and slight decreases for the percentages who felt

<sup>17</sup> The graph legend shows the number of responses averaged across the five questions (since slightly different numbers respond to each question).

that the NDIS helped increase their child’s ability to communicate what they want (from 86.1% to 83.3%) and the percentage who think the NDIS has helped with how their child fits into family life (from 77.5% to 76.0%). However, for all domains, the percentage who think that the NDIS has helped is slightly higher at third review than at first review.

## 3.2 Results by participant characteristics

### 3.2.1 Year 1 ‘Has the NDIS Helped?’ indicators – participant characteristics

Year 1 (first review) indicators have been analysed by participant characteristics using one-way analyses and multiple regression modelling.

Table 3.1 summarises the results of the regression modelling, showing the relationship of different participant characteristics with the likelihood of the child’s parent/carer saying that the NDIS has helped after one year in the Scheme. The arrow symbols have the same interpretation as for Section 2, defined in Table 2.6.

**Table 3.1 Relationship of participant characteristics with the likelihood of a positive response<sup>18</sup>**

Reference Category	Characteristic	Relationship with:				
		Has NDIS helped improve participant s				
		Develop ment	Access to specialist services	Ability to communic ate what they want	Fit into family life	Fit into community life
Doesn't use child care	Uses child care	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
Doesn't use specialist services	Uses specialist services	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
Doesn't have friends	Participant has friends	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
Doesn't participate in the community	Participant participates in the community	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
Participant entered the Scheme for early intervention	Participant entered the Scheme due to disability	↓			↓	↓
N/A	Higher annualised plan budget	↓				
Non-CALD	Participant is CALD					↑

<sup>18</sup> The reference category for categorical variables in the models is shown in the leftmost column of the table, and the arrows are interpreted relative to participants belonging to the reference category. For example, a green “up” arrow means more likely to respond positively than participants in the reference category. For continuous variables, the arrows are interpreted relative to either increasing or decreasing values of the variable, as described in the second column of the table (for example, “Higher annualised plan budget” or “Lower level of function”), and the reference category is shown as N/A.

Reference Category	Characteristic	Relationship with:				
		Has NDIS helped improve participant s				
		Develop ment	Access to specialist services	Ability to communic ate what they want	Fit into family life	Fit into community life
N/A	General time trend	↑		↑	↑	↑
Developmental delay	Disability is cerebral palsy		↓	↓	↓	
	Disability is Down syndrome			↓		
	Disability is global developmental delay	↓	↓	↓		
	Disability is hearing impairment	↓	↓		↓	
	Disability is intellectual disability		↓	↓		
	Disability is another neurological disability		↓	↓	↓	
	Disability is another sensory or speech disability					↑
	Disability is spinal cord injury or another physical disability	↓		↓	↓	
	Disability is visual impairment	↓		↓	↓	↓
	Disability is "Other"	↓	↓	↓		
N/A	Participant is older			↑		↑
2016/17	Participant entered the scheme in 2017/18		↑			
	Participant entered the scheme in 2018/19		↑			
Major cities	Participant lives in regional area	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
	Participant lives in remote/very remote area	↓	↓			
95-100% capacity building supports	0-95% of supports are capacity building supports	↓		↓	↓	↓

Reference Category	Characteristic	Relationship with:				
		Has NDIS helped improve participant s				
		Develop ment	Access to specialist services	Ability to communic ate what they want	Fit into family life	Fit into community life
	5-100% of supports are capital supports			↓	↓	↓
Agency-managed	Plan is managed by a plan manager				↓	↓
	Plan is fully self-managed	↑		↑	↑	↑
Did not receive services from Commonwealth or State/Territory programs before joining NDIS	Participant received services from Commonwealth programs before joining NDIS		↓			
	Participant received services from State/Territory programs before joining NDIS	↓	↓			
N/A	Lower level of function	↓		↓	↓	↓
NSW	Participant lives in NT		↑		↓	
	Participant lives in QLD	↑	↑	↑		↑
	Participant lives in SA		↑	↑	↑	
	Participant lives in VIC		↑	↑		↑
	Participant lives in WA				↓	
Lower level of NDIA support	Higher level of NDIA support		↓			
N/A	Participant lives in an area with a higher average unemployment rate			↓		
N/A	Higher baseline plan utilisation	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑

Key findings from Table 3.1 are discussed below.

## Baseline plan utilisation

Parents and carers of participants who used a higher percentage of the supports in their baseline plan are more likely to say that the NDIS has improved their child's outcomes across all five domains of interest.

## Remoteness

The percentage of positive responses tended to be lower for participants living in regional and remote areas, relative to major cities, and to decrease with increasing remoteness. This trend was most pronounced for access to specialist services. On a one-way basis, 92.2% of those living in major cities thought that the NDIS had improved their child's access to specialist services, decreasing to 74.5% for those living in remote/very remote areas.

## Disability type

Compared to participants with developmental delay:

- Responses in respect of participants with autism were not significantly different for any of the five domains. Generally speaking, responses for participants with developmental delay or autism tended to be better or not significantly worse than those for participants with other disabilities. The one exception was for fitting into community life, where participants with other sensory or speech disabilities were significantly more likely to respond positively.
- Parents and carers of participants with global developmental delay, hearing impairment, spinal cord injury / other physical disabilities, visual impairment, and disabilities in the "Other" category were less likely to say the NDIS improved their child's development.
- Parents and carers of participants with cerebral palsy, global developmental delay, hearing impairment, intellectual disability, other neurological and "other" disabilities were less likely to say that the NDIS improved their child's access to specialist services.
- Parents and carers of participants with all other disabilities apart from hearing impairment or another sensory/speech disability were significantly less likely to think that the NDIS had improved their child's ability to communicate what they want.
- Parents and carers of participants with cerebral palsy, hearing impairment, other neurological disabilities, spinal cord injury, other physical disabilities and visual impairment were less likely to think that the NDIS helped their child fit into family life.
- Parents and carers of participants with other sensory/speech disabilities were more likely to say the NDIS helped their child fit into community life, whereas parents/carers of participants with a visual impairment were less likely to say this.

## Plan management type

Parents and carers of participants with fully self-managed plans were significantly more likely to think that the NDIS has helped than those of participants with Agency-managed plans, across all domains where plan management type was a significant predictor. The one area for which plan management type was not a significant predictor was access to specialist services.

Parents and carers of participants who use a plan manager are significantly less likely to say that the NDIS helped with how their child fits into either family or community life, compared to those with Agency-managed plans.

## Support categories within plans

Parents and carers of participants whose plans include 0-95% capacity building support are less likely to say the NDIS helped than those whose plans have 95-100% of capacity

building supports, for all domains except access to specialist services (where support category was not a significant predictor).

Those with 5-100% of capital supports are also less likely than parents and carers of participants with 95-100% capacity building supports to say that the NDIS improved their child's ability to communicate what they want, as well as how they fit into family and community life.

### **State/Territory**

In comparison to parents/carers of participants living in NSW, parents/carers of participants living in:

- The Northern Territory are more likely to say the NDIS improved their child's access to specialist services but are less likely to say the NDIS helped their child fit into family life.
- Queensland are more likely to say that the NDIS helped across all domains with the exception of fitting into family life (where there was no significant difference).
- South Australia are more likely to say that the NDIS has improved their child's access to specialist services, their ability to communicate what they want, and how they fit into family life.
- Victoria are more likely to say that the NDIS improved their child's access to specialist services, increased their ability to communicate what they want, and fit into community life.
- Western Australia are less likely to say that the NDIS helped their child fit into family life.

### **Level of function**

Parents and carers of participants with lower levels of function are less likely to say that the NDIS has helped across all domains except access to specialist services, where level of function was not a significant predictor of a positive response at first review.

### **Annualised plan budget**

Parents/carers of participants with higher annualised plan budget are less likely to say that the NDIS has improved their child's development.

### **Level of NDIA Support<sup>19</sup>**

Parents and carers of participants receiving a higher level of support with planning from the NDIA are less likely than those with a lower level of NDIA support to say that the NDIS improved their children's access to specialist services.

### **Participant age**

Parents/carers of older participants are more likely to say that the NDIS has helped improve their ability to communicate what they want, and how they fit into community life.

### **CALD status**

Parents and carers of participants from a CALD background are more likely to say that the NDIS improved how their child fits into community life.

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<sup>19</sup> The level of NDIA support a participant requires as they move along the participant pathway, having regard to the complexity of their situation.

## Time trends

Compared to those entering in 2016-17, parents/carers of participants entering the Scheme in later years are more likely to say that the NDIS improved their child's access to specialist services.

There is also a general time trend for the other four domains, with the percentage of parents/carers responding positively tending to increase over time. (Note that this is a calendar year time trend, not time in Scheme. All participants have been in the Scheme for approximately one year when they respond at first review).

## Access type

Compared to parents/carers of participants entering the Scheme for early intervention, parents/carers of those entering due to disability are less likely to say that the NDIS has helped with their child's development, and how they fit into family and community life.

## Scheme entry type

Parents and carers of participants who previously received services from Commonwealth or State/Territory systems are less likely than those who received neither to say that the NDIS improved their access to specialist services. Parents/carers of those previously receiving State/Territory services are also less likely to say that the NDIS improved their child's development.

## Other characteristics

Parents and carers of participants who use specialist services/childcare, who participate in community activities and those who have friends are more likely to say the NDIS has helped their children improve outcomes across all five domains of interest.

### 3.2.2 Longitudinal 'Has the NDIS Helped?' indicators – participant characteristics

Analysis of longitudinal indicators by participant characteristics has been examined in two ways:

1. A simple comparison of the percentage reporting that the NDIS had helped after two and three years in the Scheme with the percentage reporting that the NDIS had helped after one year in the Scheme. The difference (percentage after two and three years minus percentage after one year) is compared for different subgroups.
2. Multiple regression analyses modelling the probability of improvement / deterioration over the participant's time in the Scheme.<sup>20</sup>

Some key features of the analyses for helped question indicators are summarised below.

### The NDIS has improved my child's development

The percentage of participants reporting that the NDIS improved their child's development increased by 4.6% from 91.2% to 95.8% between first review and second review, and by 5.2% from 90.2% to 95.4% between first review and third review. Of those who responded

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<sup>20</sup> Regression models for improvement include all participants who answered "No" at the initial time point and model the probability of answering "Yes" at the later time point. Models for deterioration include all participants who answered "Yes" at the initial time point and model the probability of answering "No" at the later time point. For some transitions, especially first review to third review, the numbers are small and the models may identify few or no predictors.

negatively at first review, 66.4% improved at second review and 78.1% at third review. Table 5.1 sets out the breakdown of the movements of responses.<sup>21</sup>

**Table 5.1 – Breakdown of net movement in longitudinal responses**

Longitudinal Period	Number of Baseline Responses in cohort <sup>1</sup>		Improvements: No to Yes		Deteriorations: Yes to No		Net Movement
	No	Yes	Number	%	Number	%	
Review 1 to Review 2	250	2,585	166	66.4%	35	1.4%	+4.6%
Review 1 to Review 3	32	294	25	78.1%	8	2.7%	+5.2%

Participant characteristics that had a statistically significant effect ( $p < 0.05$ ) on the likelihood of improvement or deterioration in the outcome are set out below.

From Review 1 to Review 2:

- Participants with higher annualised plan budget are less likely to improve.
- Participants with higher plan utilisation between first and second reviews are more likely to improve.
- Participants who entered the Scheme due to disability are more likely to deteriorate than those joining the scheme for early intervention.
- Participants who use a higher percentage of their capacity building supports are less likely to deteriorate.

From Review 1 to Review 3:

- Participants who have used a higher percentage of their capacity building supports are more likely to improve.

### **The NDIS has improved my child’s access to specialist services**

The percentage of parents/carers reporting that the NDIS improved their child’s access to specialist services increased by 4.4% (from 89.2% to 93.5%) between first review and second review, and by 6.0% (from 88.4% to 94.4%) between first review and third review. Of those who responded negatively at first review, 61.6% improved at second review and 75.7% at third review. Table 5.2 sets out the breakdown of the movements of responses.

<sup>21</sup> The net movements shown in the tables differ from the changes shown in Section 3.1 since they are longitudinal results, restricted to the same group of participants, whereas the previous results included all participants who answered at first, second and third reviews.



**Table 5.2 – Breakdown of net movement in longitudinal responses**

Longitudinal Period	Number of Baseline Responses in cohort <sup>1</sup>		Improvements: No to Yes		Deteriorations: Yes to No		Net Movement
	No	Yes	Number	%	Number	%	
Review 1 to Review 2	305	2,510	188	61.6%	65	2.6%	+4.4%
Review 1 to Review 3	37	282	28	75.7%	9	3.2%	+6.0%

Participant characteristics that had a statistically significant effect ( $p < 0.05$ ) on the likelihood of improvement or deterioration in the outcome are set out below.

From Review 1 to Review 2:

- Participants with higher utilisation of capacity building supports are more likely to improve and less likely to deteriorate.
- Participants entering the Scheme in 2017-18 are more likely to improve than those entering in 2016-17.
- Participants who entered the Scheme due to disability are more likely to deteriorate than those entering for early intervention.
- Participants with higher annualised plan budget are more likely to deteriorate.
- Parents/carers of Indigenous participants who thought the NDIS improved their access to specialist services at first review are less likely than non-Indigenous participants to maintain this opinion at second review.
- There was a significant positive time trend prior to the assumed COVID date (the likelihood of maintaining a positive response increased over time), however this switched to a negative trend post-COVID (with the likelihood of maintaining a positive response decreasing over time after the assumed COVID date).

From Review 1 to Review 3:

- Participants with higher utilisation of capacity building supports are more likely to improve.
- Participants with higher utilisation of capital supports are more likely to deteriorate.

### **The NDIS has increased my child’s ability to communicate what they want**

The percentage of parents/carers who say that the NDIS increased their child’s ability to communicate what they want increased by 6.4% from 80.7% to 87.1% between first review and second review, and by 10.4% from 75.7% to 86.1% between first review and third review. Of those who responded negatively at first review, 49.7% improved at second review and 58.4% at third review. Table 5.3 sets out the breakdown of the movements of responses.

**Table 5.3 – Breakdown of net movement in longitudinal responses**

Longitudinal Period	Number of Baseline Responses in cohort <sup>1</sup>		Improvements: No to Yes		Deteriorations: Yes to No		Net Movement
	No	Yes	Number	%	Number	%	
Review 1 to Review 2	543	2,263	270	49.7%	90	4.0%	+6.4%
Review 1 to Review 3	77	240	45	58.4%	12	5.0%	+10.4%

Participant characteristics that had a statistically significant effect ( $p < 0.05$ ) on the likelihood of improvement or deterioration in the outcome are set out below.

From Review 1 to Review 2:

- Participants with higher annualised plan budget are less likely to improve.
- Participants who have used a higher percentage of their capacity building supports are more likely to improve.
- There is a positive general time trend, with participants responding to the survey later in time being more likely to improve.
- Participants who entered the Scheme due to disability compared to those who entered for early intervention are more likely to deteriorate.
- Participants whose plans include more than 5% of capital supports are more likely to deteriorate than those with 0-75% in capacity building supports.
- Participants with higher plan utilisation are less likely to deteriorate.
- Participants who are older are less likely to deteriorate.

From Review 1 to Review 3:

- Participants who have used a higher percentage of their capacity building supports are more likely to improve.
- Participants living outside a major city are less likely to improve.
- Participants with a lower level of function are less likely to improve.
- Indigenous participants are more likely to deteriorate.

### **The NDIS has improved how my child fits into family life**

The percentage of parents/carers who say that the NDIS improved how their child fits into family life increased by 5.9% from 72.0% to 77.9% between first review and second review, and by 12.1% from 65.1% to 77.1% between first review and third review. Of those who responded negatively at first review, 38.6% improved at second review and 50.0% at third review. Table 5.4 sets out the breakdown of the movements of responses.

**Table 5.4 – Breakdown of net movement in longitudinal responses**

Longitudinal Period	Number of Baseline Responses in cohort <sup>1</sup>		Improvements: No to Yes		Deteriorations: Yes to No		Net Movement
	No	Yes	Number	%	Number	%	
Review 1 to Review 2	783	2,013	302	38.6%	137	6.8%	+5.9%
Review 1 to Review 3	110	205	55	50.0%	17	8.3%	+12.1%

Participant characteristics that had a statistically significant effect ( $p < 0.05$ ) on the likelihood of improvement or deterioration in the outcome are set out below.

From Review 1 to Review 2:

- Participants who entered the Scheme in 2017-18 are more likely to improve than 2016-17 entrants.
- Participants with higher plan utilisation are more likely to improve.
- Participants who entered the Scheme due to disability are more likely to deteriorate than those entering for early intervention.
- Participants with higher utilisation of their capacity building supports are less likely to deteriorate.
- Participants living in Victoria are less likely to deteriorate than those living in NSW.

From Review 1 to Review 3:

- Participants who are older are more likely to deteriorate.

### The NDIS has improved how my child fits into community life

The percentage of parents/carers who say that the NDIS improved how their child fits into community life increased by 7.1% from 57.8% to 64.9% between first review and second review, and by 14.7% from 50.2% to 64.9% between first review and third review. Of those who responded negatively at first review, 29.6% improved at second review and 46.2% at third review. Table 5.5 sets out the breakdown of the movements of responses.

**Table 5.5 – Breakdown of net movement in longitudinal responses**

Longitudinal Period	Number of Baseline Responses in cohort <sup>1</sup>		Improvements: No to Yes		Deteriorations: Yes to No		Net Movement
	No	Yes	Number	%	Number	%	
Review 1 to Review 2	1,167	1,596	346	29.6%	149	9.3%	+7.1%
Review 1 to Review 3	156	157	72	46.2%	26	16.6%	+14.7%

Participant characteristics that had a statistically significant effect ( $p < 0.05$ ) on the likelihood of improvement or deterioration in the outcome are set out below.

From Review 1 to Review 2:

- Participants whose plans are fully self-managed are more likely to improve than those whose plans are Agency-managed.
- Participants with lower levels of function are less likely to improve.
- Participants with higher plan utilisation are more likely to improve.
- Participants from Local Government Areas (LGAs) with higher unemployment rates are less likely to improve.
- Female participants are less likely to deteriorate.
- Participants who live in Queensland and Victoria are less likely to deteriorate than those in NSW.
- Participants with a higher level of NDIA support are more likely to deteriorate than those with a lower level of NDIA support.

From Review 1 to Review 3:

- Participants with higher plan utilisation are less likely to deteriorate.

Box 3.1 summarises the results of this section.

### **Box 3.1: Has the NDIS helped? – by participant characteristics**

After one year in the Scheme:

- Higher plan utilisation is strongly associated with a positive response after one year in the Scheme, across all five areas surveyed. Higher utilisation of total plan budget, and higher utilisation of capacity building supports, were also associated with a higher likelihood of improvement, and a lower likelihood of deterioration, between first review and later reviews.
- Parents/carers of participants living in regional or remote areas are less likely to think that the NDIS has helped after one year in the Scheme than those living in major cities.
- Parents/carers of participants whose plans are fully self-managed were significantly more likely to think that the NDIS has helped after one year in the Scheme than those of participants with Agency-managed plans, across all domains except access to specialist services (where there was no significant difference).

Changes between one and three years in the Scheme:

- Participants who entered the Scheme due to disability (s24) are more likely to deteriorate between first and second review than those entering for early intervention (s25).
- Participants who have used a higher percentage of their total supports, and in particular of their capacity building supports, are generally more likely to improve and less likely to deteriorate between first review and later reviews.
- Participants with higher annualised plan budget are less likely to improve in thinking the NDIS has helped with their child's development, and with increasing their child's ability to communicate what they want.
- Parents/carers of Indigenous participants are more likely to deteriorate in thinking the NDIS has improved their child's access to specialist services.