

# Measuring disability in the National Disability Data Asset: explanatory notes

## About Measuring disability in the National Disability Data Asset

The Measuring disability in the National Disability Data Asset fact sheet includes information about the age, sex and remoteness of people using disability-related government payments and services in 2022. This group of people with disability are part of the first set of National Disability Data Asset disability indicators.

### Measuring disability

Disability indicators are types of information about disability. These indicators help us to consistently include and describe people with disability in the National Disability Data Asset.

The first set of disability indicators include people who:

- were National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants
- were assessed as eligible for or received a Centrelink Disability Support Pension
- received
  - Centrelink Mobility Allowance
  - Centrelink Youth Disability Supplement
  - a one-off Business Services Wage Assessment Tool (BSWAT) payment scheme
- had carers eligible for Centrelink Carer Allowance or Carer Payment.

This does not represent all people with disability in Australia. The indicators do not measure a broad or unified conceptual definition of disability. They describe one group of people within the wider disability community. The first set of disability indicators includes information about people who accessed these payments or services at any time during 2019 to 2023.

The capacity to identify people with disability using linked administrative data was evaluated and established during the pilot phase of the NDDA. More information is available through the 'Identification of people with disability in linked administrative data' report, which is available in [PDF](#) and [Word](#) versions.

## Data quality

### Accuracy

Administrative data includes lots of people who access government administered services, payments or programs. The data used in this fact sheet only includes people accessing the disability-related services and payments mentioned earlier. That means it does not include all people with disability, or all people in Australia.

The ABS Survey of Disability Ageing and Carers (SDAC) is considered to be the best current source of disability prevalence. The SDAC estimated in 2022 that there were 5.5 million people with disability in Australia. Around 1 in 6 people with disability estimated by the 2022 SDAC were included in the population of the first set of National Disability Data Asset disability indicators. This means that, while the first disability indicators support research into people with disability, conclusions about all Australians with disability are not recommended.

Compared to estimates from the 2022 SDAC, the indicators for people assessed as eligible for or receiving disability-related payments and services are more likely to include people if they are:

- males
- children and young people (0-24 years of age)
- people with low or no income (\$0-200 per week)
- people living in areas of most socio-economic disadvantage
- people with an educational attainment of Year 12 and below

The indicators are less likely to include people if they are:

- females
- older people (65 years of age and over)
- people earning incomes of \$201 and over per week
- people living in areas of least socio-economic disadvantage

- people with higher educational attainment (Diploma level or above)

While the first set of disability indicators do not include all Australians with disability, 4 in 5 people included in the indicators were also shown to have disability in SDAC.

Administrative data is collected periodically. The most recent complete data is supplied once a year so does not include people who received support payments in the last year (i.e. 2024 at time of publication).

The disability indicators population in this factsheet aligns with published payments and services data from the Department of Social Services and National Disability Insurance Agency.

### Limits and gaps in the data

People who use the first disability indicators should remember the indicators do not include or represent everyone with disability. Only those receiving specific government disability services and payments are included. This is around 1.4 million people.

There are a few different reasons why some people with disability may not be receiving any services and payments. For example, whether a person applies for a disability-related support or payment may change based on:

- whether a person feels comfortable to apply for services and payments
- who they need to ask to receive the services or payment
- how questions are asked when applying for the services or payment
- their view of their identity
  - some people may not identify as being a person with disability or want to identify themselves as being a person with disability. The way people express their experience with disability can also differ. Some people with disability reject person first language and prefer disability first language. For example, they will refer to themselves as “I am d/Deaf” rather than “I am a person with disability”.

At this stage we do not know how many people are in these groups and how it might affect what the disability indicators tell us.

Many other factors may affect whether someone is included in the data, for example:

- People with disability may not require or may choose not to apply for these services.
- People may not seek or be aware of these services.
- People with disability may also not be found eligible for the services.
- A person may decide to apply for disability-related supports a long time after their disability started.
- A person's experience with disability and their need for assistance may change over time. This means their information may be different across data collections.
- There is no one definition of disability applied consistently across all administrative data collections. Organisations collect information on the disability payments or supports they provide. Each organisation will collect different data depending on the eligibility criteria for their payments or supports. As a result, when data from different administrative systems is combined it will include individuals who meet different eligibility criteria.
- People with disability with low or no need for assistance, and people who privately pay for their support services will not be well represented in the data.
- Some things such as where a person lives, their education or their cultural background might influence whether they apply for specific disability supports.

To demonstrate this, in 2022, the first disability indicators included 812,000 males or 6.3% of Australia's total population and 593,400 females (4.5%). For context, there were an estimated 2.7 million males or 21.0% of the total male Australian population and 2.8 million females (21.8%) with disability in the 2022 SDAC.

In 2022, of the total Australian population, the proportion of people who received disability-related government payments and services based on the administrative data included:

- 6.7% of people aged 0 to 14 years
- 6.6% of people aged 15 to 24 years
- 3.6% of people aged 25 to 44 years
- 7.4% of people aged 45 to 64 years
- 3.3% of people aged 65 years and over.

In the 2022 SDAC, people with disability represented:

- 11.0% of people 0-14 years of age
- 13.9% of people 15 to 24 years of age
- 10.9% of people 25 to 44 years of age
- 23.5% of people 45 to 64 years
- 52.3% of people 65 years and over.

The indicators also showed that, of the total Australian population, people who received disability-related government payments and services in 2022 included:

- 4.5% of people living in major cities
- 6.7% of people living in either inner or outer regional areas
- 5.2% of people living in remote areas of Australia
- 5.5% of people living in very remote areas.

In the 2022 SDAC, people with disability represented:

- 19.2% of people living in major cities
- 27.6% of people living in outer or inner regional areas
- 19.2% of people living in remote Australia.

Caution is recommended when using data relating to people aged 65 and over in the first disability indicators. In comparison to the SDAC as only a small proportion of older Australians with disability are included in the first National Disability Data Asset disability indicators. People 65 years of age and over are often not eligible for the payments and services included in the first disability indicators. As a result, these data are not representative of most people with disability aged 65 years and over. This means that, while this group is important to understand the people described in the first indicators, it is not recommended to use the indicators to draw conclusions about all people with disability aged 65 years and over.

### **Differences between the first disability indicators to the Survey of Disability, Ageing and carers**

When looking at results from the first disability indicators and the SDAC, it is important to note the differences in each of these data sources. The SDAC is considered to be the most detailed and comprehensive source of disability data in Australia. It is the recommended source of data for providing

accurate disability prevalence rates and is designed to measure and provide data on the entire spectrum of disability.

The SDAC is a self-reported survey conceptually underpinned by the [International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health](#) (ICF).

The ICF conceptualises functioning and disability in terms of the dynamic interaction between a person's health condition, environmental factors and personal factors. The ICF describes disability and functioning through the following domains:

- body functions,
- activities and participation,
- environmental factors, and
- body structures.

For more information, please refer to [Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings methodology, 2022 | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#).

In contrast, the data used for the first National Disability Data Asset disability indicators comes from administrative data collected as part of government delivery of disability related services and payments. These services and payments use a range of different criteria to determine eligibility that can lead to different considerations in relation to disability that may not align with the functional view of disability under the ICF as captured in the SDAC. Each data source used for the first disability indicators is described in the sections below.

## How data was collected

Administrative data is information collected by government departments, businesses and other organisations. They collect information for a range of reasons such as to deliver services or for record keeping.

For the administrative datasets referred to in this fact sheet, information was collected from people applying for disability-related government payments and services. Paper and online forms were used to collect the information.

## What data was included

The following administrative data was used in the Measuring disability in the National Disability Data Asset fact sheet. Descriptions below align with the payment eligibility criteria for specific payments.

### **National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)**

People were included in the disability indicators used in the fact sheet if they had a NDIS package for at least one day in the 2022 calendar year.

To be eligible to participate in the NDIS a person must have disability caused by an impairment:

- that is likely to be permanent
- that has substantially reduced the person's functional capacity to do one or more daily life activities such as moving around, communicating, socialising, learning, undertaking self-care, or self-management tasks
- which affects their ability to work, study or take part in social life

Additionally, to be eligible a person will likely need NDIS supports their whole life and be aged less than 65 years at the time of their application.

More information can be found in Chapter 3, Part 1, sections 21-25 in the National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013). For more information on eligibility, can be found on the [NDIS website](#).

### **Data Over Multiple Individual Occurrences (DOMINO)**

DOMINO includes Centrelink payment data. The payments described next are all included in DOMINO, these are Disability Support Pension, Youth Disability Supplement, Mobility Allowance, Carer Allowance, Carer Payment and Business Services Wage Assessment Tool payment scheme payments.

#### **Disability Support Pension**

People were included in the disability indicators used in the fact sheet if they were eligible for or received a Disability Support Pension payment for at least one day in the 2022 calendar year. This includes people who were no longer eligible to receive a payment but received a back payment owed to them from when they were eligible.

To be eligible for Disability Support Pension a person must have a permanent physical, intellectual or psychiatric impairment. The person must

also be assessed as being unable to work (or be re-skilled to work) for 15 hours or more per week, for at least the next two years, because of their impairment. The person must have been a resident in Australia for 10 years. Refugees may be eligible even if they have not resided in Australia for 10 years.

### Youth Disability Supplement

People were included in the disability indicators used in the fact sheet if they received a Youth Disability Supplement payment for at least one day in the 2022 calendar year.

To be eligible for the Youth Disability Supplement, a person must be a recipient of:

- the Disability Support Pension and aged under 21 years who have no children, or
- Youth Allowance and aged under 22 years with an assessed partial capacity to work, or
- the ABSTUDY living allowance and aged under 22 years with an assessed partial capacity to work.

More information on eligibility can be found at:

- [Who can get Youth Disability Supplement - Youth Disability Supplement - Services Australia](#)
- [Who can get Youth Allowance for students and apprentices - Youth Allowance for students and Australian Apprentices - Services Australia](#)
- [ABSTUDY - Services Australia](#)

### Mobility Allowance

People were included in the disability indicators used in the fact sheet if they received a Mobility allowance payment for at least one day in the 2022 calendar year.

Mobility Allowance is designed to help with travel costs for work, study or looking for work if a person has disability, an illness or injury that means they can't use public transport.



A person may be eligible for Mobility Allowance if they meet all the following conditions:

- are 16 years of age or over
- are an Australian resident living in Australia (and on the day they apply must physically be in Australia)
- need help using public transport for at least 12 months because of disability
- have a medical report from their doctor stating they cannot use public transport without substantial help
- need to travel from home for paid work, voluntary work, training, or to look for work

More information on eligibility can be found at:

- [Who can get Mobility Allowance - Mobility Allowance - Services Australia](#)

### **Carer Allowance or Carer Payment**

Recipients of care were included in the disability indicators referred to in the fact sheet if their carer received a Carer Allowance or Carer payment for at least one day in the 2022 calendar year. Recipients of care were children whose parents receive a payment, not people in carer situations where the carer is not a parent.

To receive a Centrelink Carer Payment, both the carer and the person receiving care need to be Australian residents and meet an income and assets test. The person receiving care must have disability or a medical condition likely to last at least 6 months or have a terminal illness. A medical form completed by the person's treating doctor is required. The care needs to be constant, meaning it takes up a large amount of time and prevents the carer from working full time. Care can occur in the person's home, the carer's home or in hospital.

A carer may also be eligible for Carer Payment if they care for a child younger than 16 who needs either:

- a lot of care for a short-term condition (likely to be a one off and last for at least 3 months), or
- care on an episodic basis for 3 to 6 months (likely to happen from time to time)

To receive a Carer Allowance, the carer needs to meet residence rules and provide daily care and attention to someone who needs it in their home, or the carer's home. The carer must meet an income test. The person receiving care:

- must need care for at least 12 months, or have a terminal medical condition
- is assessed as needing care by a medical professional
- must meet the residence rules

There is currently no indicator within the DOMINO dataset which identifies a person receiving care based on a carer's receipt of Carer Allowance) or Carer Payment. The relationship between the carer and the person receiving care can be approximated using family relationships, however where a family relationship does not exist between carer and the person receiving care, the data may be of poorer quality.

More information on eligibility can be found at:

- [Who can get Carer Payment - Carer Payment - Services Australia](#)
- [Who can get Carer Allowance - Carer Allowance - Services Australia](#)

### **Business Services Wage Assessment Tool payment scheme**

The Business Services Wage Assessment Tool (the 'Tool') payment scheme was set up in response to the Tool being found discriminatory and illegal. The Business Services Wage Assessment Tool one-off payment was for people:

- with intellectual impairment, including intellectual disability, autism, dementia and/or acquired brain injury
- who worked for an Australian Disability Enterprise between 1 January 2004 and 28 May 2014 that used the Tool to calculate wages and
- who received support each day to stay in their job

More information on eligibility can be found at [Business Services Wage Assessment Tool payment scheme | Australian Taxation Office \(ato.gov.au\)](#)

Although payment scheme data are included in the National Disability Data Asset disability indicators used in this fact sheet, there were no people in receipt of this payment in 2022. As such, individuals who received only this payment are not included in this fact sheet.

## How the data is accessed and released

The *Measuring disability in the National Disability Data Asset* fact sheet presents national figures of people using government-funded disability services and payments in 2022. It includes selected population characteristics. The figures were produced in the ABS Population Level Integrated Data Asset using data available in the National Disability Data Asset.

### National Disability Data Asset access

Detailed microdata, including the disability indicators used in the fact sheet, are available for use in approved National Disability Data Asset research projects. Researchers can apply to access the National Disability Data Asset through the Office of the National Data Commissioner's [Dataplace](#) website.

### Published findings

The [National Disability Data Asset Charter](#) requires researchers using National Disability Data Asset data to publish some of their findings in accessible formats on the National Disability Data Asset website. The aim of this is to improve access for people with disability to research about disability.

### Confidentiality

Researchers using either the National Disability Data Asset or the Person Level Integrated Data Asset must use them for research and statistical purposes. Information must not be published in a way that could identify a particular person or organisation. Researchers must make sure information about individual people cannot be found in published data.

## Areas in Australia that are included

Information is available about people living in urban and rural areas in all states and territories. This includes the Territory of Cocos (Keeling) Islands, the Territory of Christmas Island, Norfolk Island and Lord Howe Island.

No remoteness information was available for 6% of people who received disability-related government payments and services.

## Key terms

**Age** was calculated from DOMINO month and year of birth as of June 2022. If people did not have birth date information in DOMINO, NDIS month and year of birth was used instead.

**Sex/gender** is as supplied in DOMINO data and NDIS participant data. Non-binary and other gender data were included in totals. More work is required to understand the quality of information for people in these groups.

**Remoteness** is added to the disability indicators using the ABS Australian Statistical Geography Standard Remoteness structure. Remoteness was added using Statistical Areas Level 1 information. People were included in the remoteness area they lived in longest during 2022.