Ageing and Disability Commission data
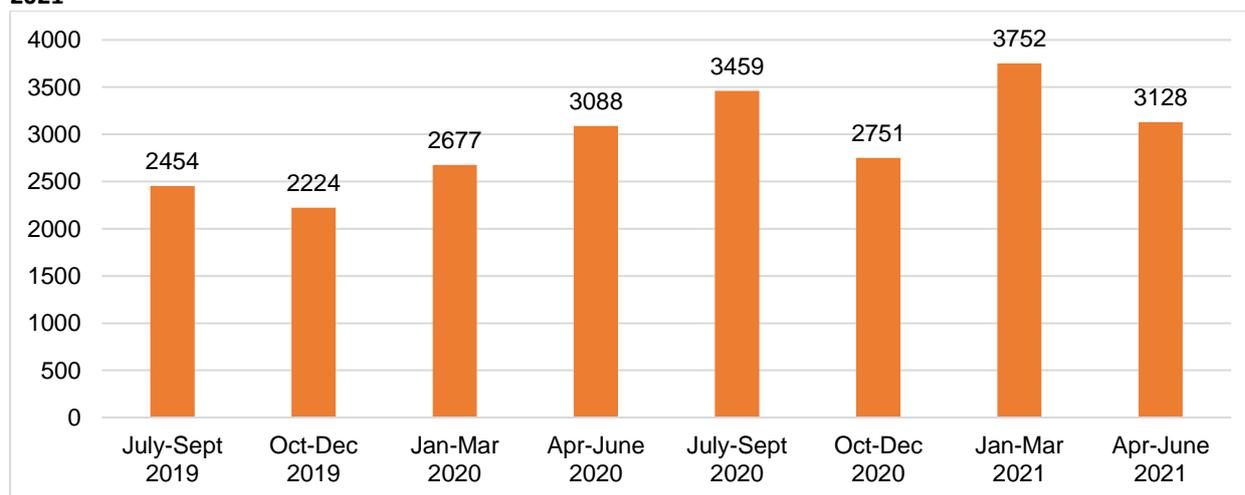
2020 – 2021

1. Number of calls, enquiries and reports

1.1 Number of calls to the Ageing and Disability Abuse Helpline

In 2020/21, the Ageing and Disability Abuse Helpline received **13,090 calls**. The number of calls to the Helpline in 2020/21 was **25% higher** than the number of calls received in 2019/20 (10,443).

Figure 1: Number of calls received by the Ageing and Disability Abuse Helpline, by quarter, July 2019 – June 2021

As indicated in Figure 2, the number of calls to the Helpline in 2020-21 was at its highest in July 2020. This was the tailend of a spike in calls in May, June and July 2020 following the easing of COVID-19 restrictions after the first lockdown in NSW. In large part, this was associated with the main reporters to the ADC (family members and service providers) regaining contact with the adult with disability or older person and identifying concerns about their situation.

It was a similar picture in January and February 2021, when the number of calls increased following the Christmas and New Year period. Among other things, the increase in calls was associated with families identifying concerns while seeing (or seeking to see) the older person or adult with disability during the holidays and subsequently contacting the Helpline; and increased family conflict and stress.

Figure 2: Number of calls received by the Ageing and Disability Abuse Helpline, by quarter, July 2019 – June 2021
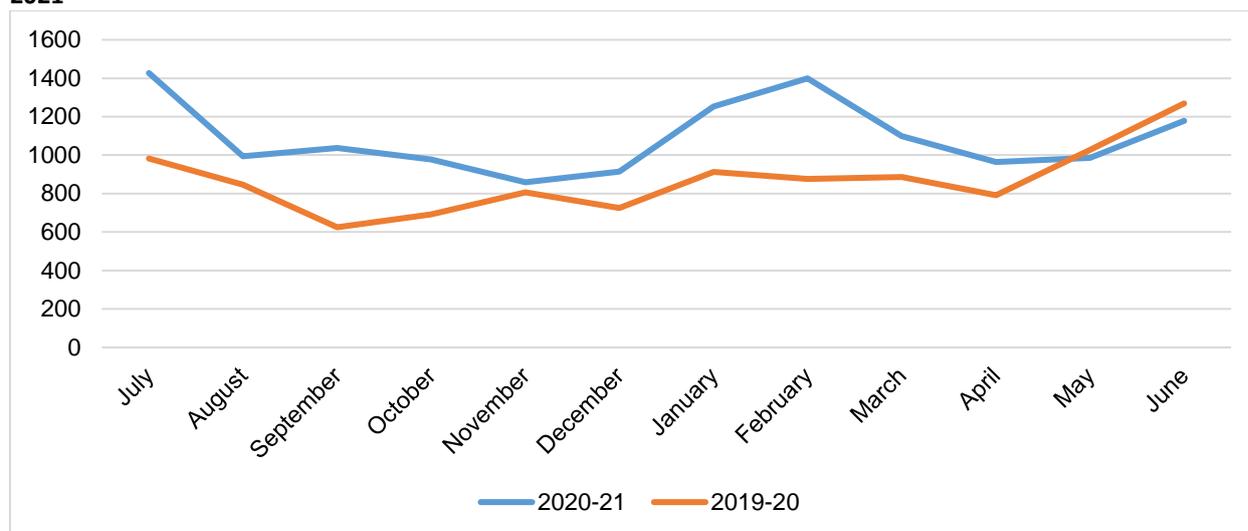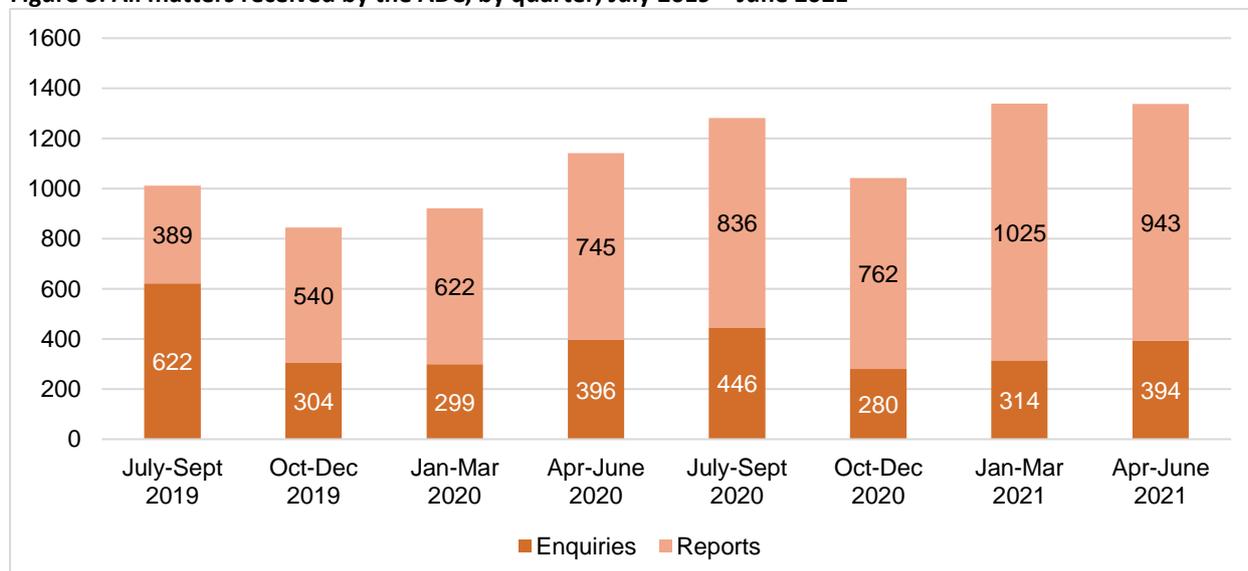

1.2   Number of reports and enquiries

In 2020-21, the ADC received **5,000 matters**, comprising:

- **3,566 reports** under section 13 of the *Ageing and Disability Commissioner Act 2019*

- **1,434 enquiries** – involving 782 general enquiries, and 652 abuse-related enquiries.

The number of matters received in 2020-21 was **27.6% higher** than 2019-20 (3,917).

**Figure 3: All matters received by the ADC, by quarter, July 2019 – June 2021**

Compared to 2019-20, the number of **reports increased by 55.3%**, and the number of **enquiries decreased by 11.5%**. The increase in reports and reduction in enquiries reflects:
- increased demand
- a better understanding by reporters of the role of the ADC
- better classification of cases by the ADC (more accurate data capture).

Figure 4: Enquiries and reports received by the ADC, by month, 2019-20 and 2020-21
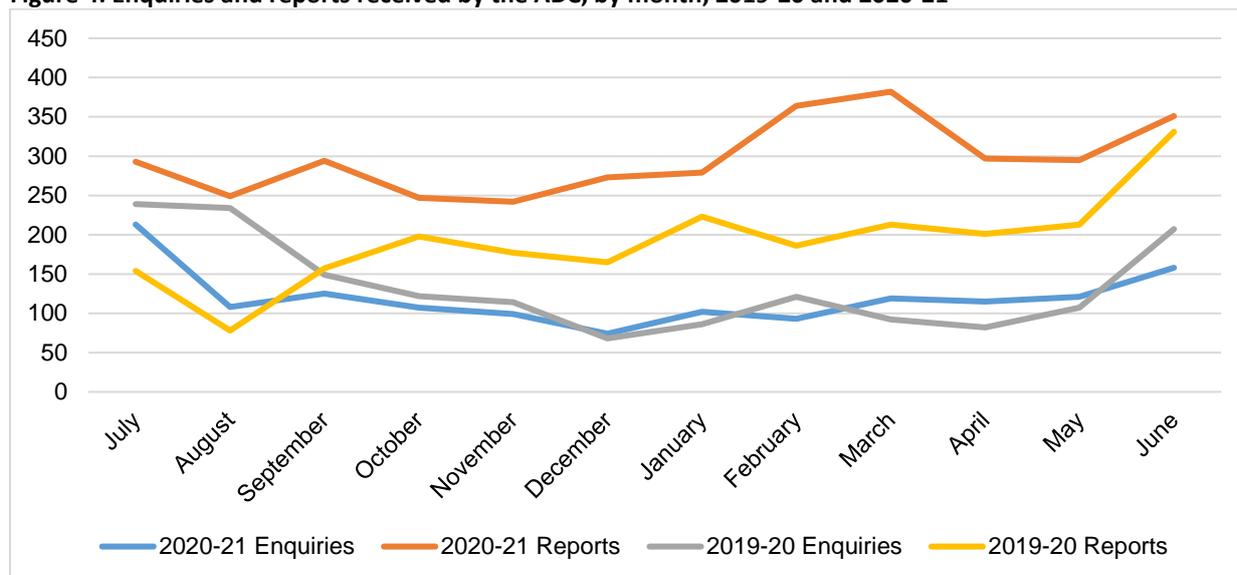

2. Person status and demographics

2.1 Person status

Of the 3,566 reports received by the ADC in 2020-21:

- **2,777 reports (77.9%) related to older people**[1], including 1,030 reports about older people with disability

- **789 reports (22.1%) related to adults with disability**[2] who were not older people.

This is highly consistent with the previous year, where 77.4% of reports were about older people (1,776), and 22.6% of reports were about adults with disability (520).

Figure 5: All reports received by the ADC, by person status, 2020-21

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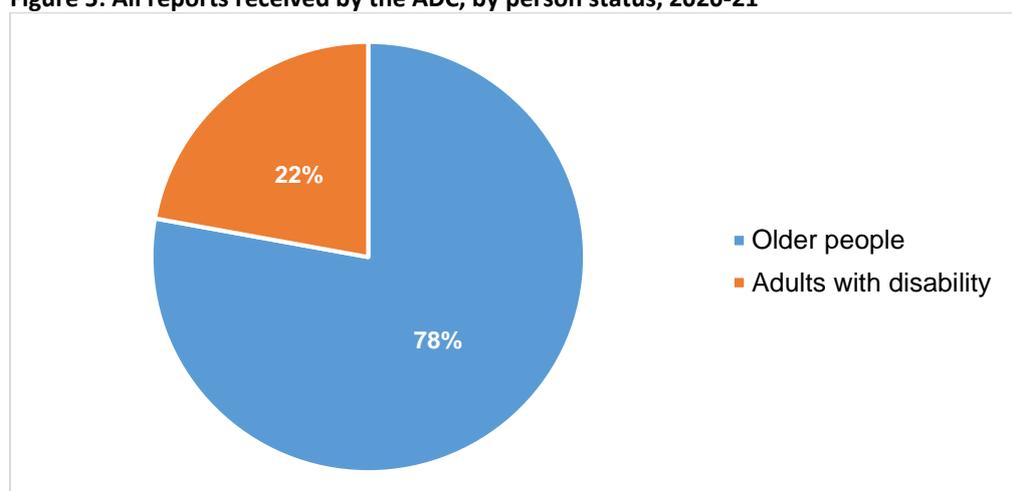
[1] Adults aged 65 years and older, and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander adults aged 50 years and older.
[2] Adults aged 18 years and older with a disability as defined in the *Disability Inclusion Act 2014*.

2.2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status

In 2.9% of reports to the ADC in 2020-21, the adult with disability or older person was identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. This proportion was largely unchanged from the previous year (2.6%).

The proportion of adults with disability who were identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (3.8%) was higher than the proportion of older people (2.6%).

Table 1: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status of person the subject of a report to the ADC, 2020-21

	Older people (n=2,777)	% of reports about older people	Adults with disability (n=789)	% of reports about adults with disability	All reports (n=3,566)	% of all reports
Person identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	73	2.6	29	3.8	**102**	**2.9**

2.3 Culturally and linguistically diverse background status

In 8.1% of reports to the ADC in 2020-21, the adult with disability or older person was identified as having a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background. This proportion was unchanged from 2019-20.

Table 2: CALD background status of person the subject of a report to the ADC, 2020-21

	Older people (n=2,777)	% of reports about older people	Adults with disability (n=789)	% of reports about adults with disability	All reports (n=3,566)	% of all reports
Person identified as having a CALD background	244	8.8	44	5.6	**288**	**8.1**

Greek and Arabic were the most common culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds of both older people and adults with disability who were the subject of a report to the ADC in 2020-21.

Table 3: Top 5 CALD backgrounds of people the subject of a report to the ADC, 2020-21

Older people (n=2777)		Adults with disability (n=789)	
Greek	41	Arabic	11
Arabic	23	Greek	4
Italian	22	Vietnamese	4
Croatian	15	Turkish	3
Serbian	15	Samoan	3

2.4 Gender

From the start of the ADC, most reports have been about alleged abuse, neglect and exploitation of women. In 2020-21, the adults in 63.3% of the 3,566 reports to the ADC were female, including 65.7% of reports about older people (1,824), and 55% of reports about adults with disability (434).

Figure 6: Gender of adults with disability and older people the subject of a report to the ADC, 2020-21
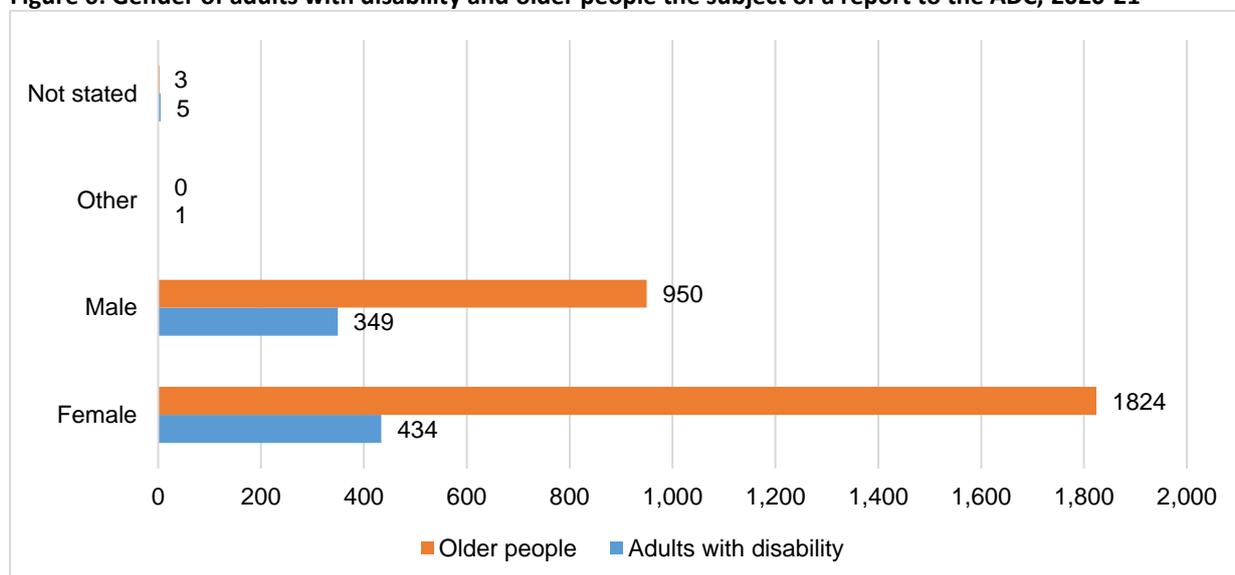
2.5 Age

The largest proportion of the 2,777 reports about older people in 2020-21 related to people aged 80-84 years (16.7%). The largest proportion of the 789 reports about adults with disability related to people aged 18-24 years (17%). These results are consistent with 2019-20.

Figure 7: Age of older people the subject of a report to the ADC, 2020-21
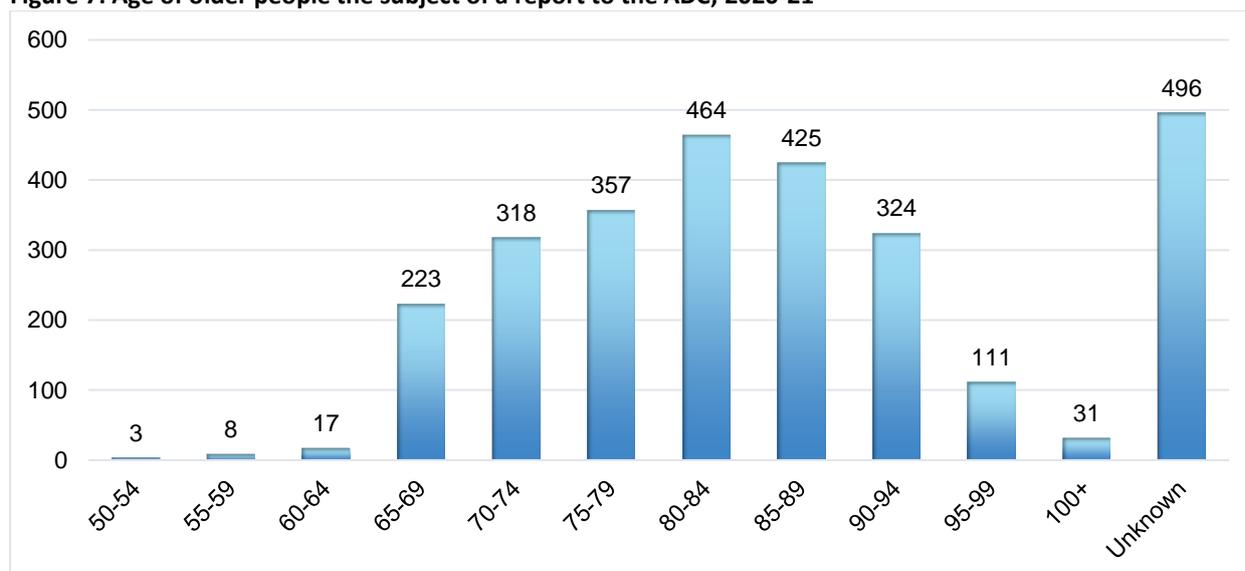
Figure 8: Age of adults with disability the subject of a report to the ADC, 2020-21
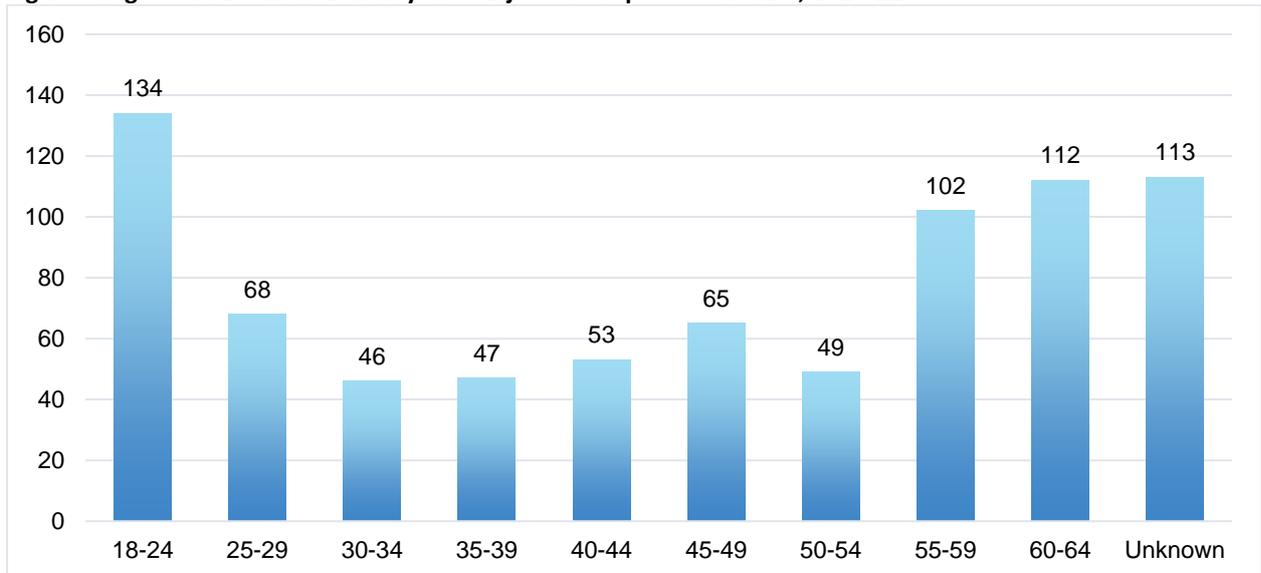
2.6 Location of person

Of the 2,769 reports to the ADC in 2020-21 in which the location of the person was known, regional NSW accounted for just over half of the reports (1,492; 54%). Of the regional areas, Hunter, Illawarra Shoalhaven, and Central Coast featured most often. This is consistent with the previous year.

Figure 9: Location of person the subject of a report to the ADC by NSW region, 2020-21
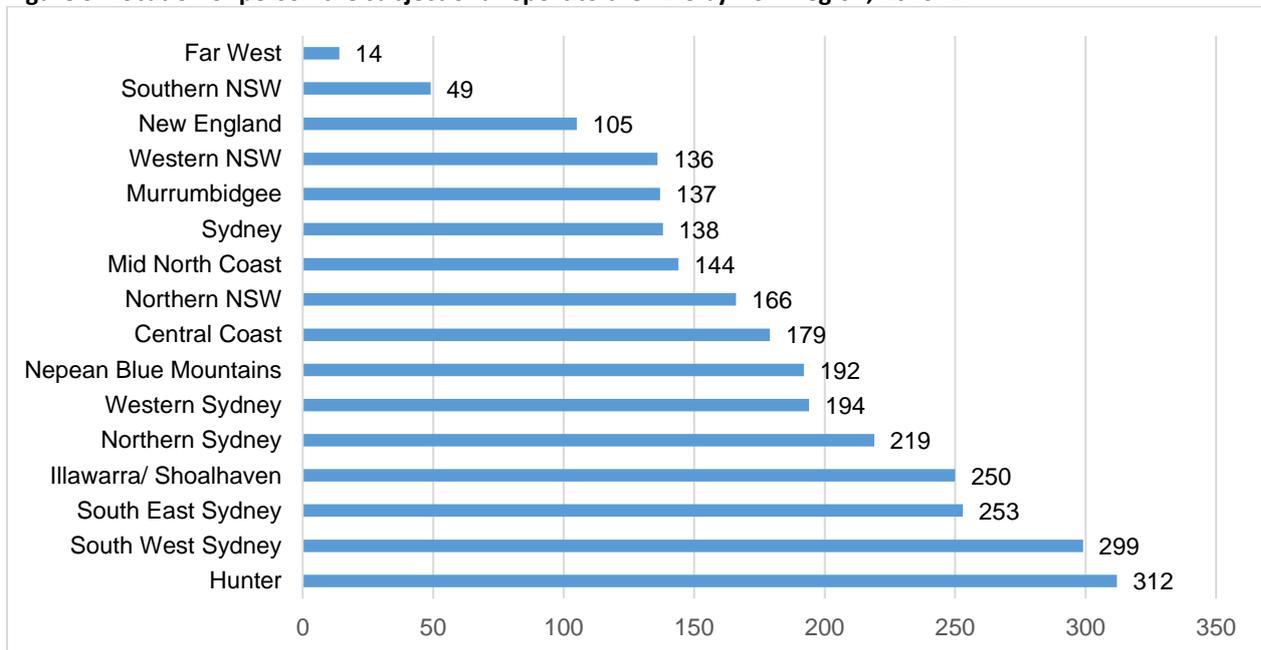
At a Local Government Area (LGA) level, the adults who were the subjects of a report to the ADC in 2020-21 most commonly lived in the Central Coast, Canterbury-Bankstown and Blacktown LGAs.

Table 4: Main LGAs of people who were the subject of a report to the ADC, 2020-21

	Local Government Area	Number of cases
1.	Central Coast	139
2.	Canterbury-Bankstown	122
3.	Blacktown	116
4.	Lake Macquarie	98
5.	Wollongong	95
6.	Campbelltown	85
7.	Cumberland	76
8.	Fairfield	69
9.	Shoalhaven	68
10.	Mid-Coast	66
11.	Newcastle	63
12.	Tweed	63
13.	Liverpool	57
14.	Sutherland Shire	55
15.	Sydney	52
16.	Northern Beaches	51
17.	Port Macquarie-Hastings	48
18.	Parramatta	47
19.	Penrith	47
20.	Bayside	45

3. Reporters

3.1 Relationship of reporter to the adult

Older people

Adult children were the main source of reports to the ADC about older people in 2020-21, accounting for 29.3% of the 2,777 reports. All up, family members were the reporters in 41.9% of reports about older people. Paid workers made over a quarter (26.4%) of the reports about older people, and the older person ('person experiencing abuse') was the reporter to the ADC in 16.6% of cases.

In comparison to the previous year, in 2020-21 the ADC received a slightly higher proportion of reports by paid staff (previously 23.5%) and older people themselves (previously 14.1%).

Figure 10: Relationship of reporter to the older person in reports to the ADC, 2020-21

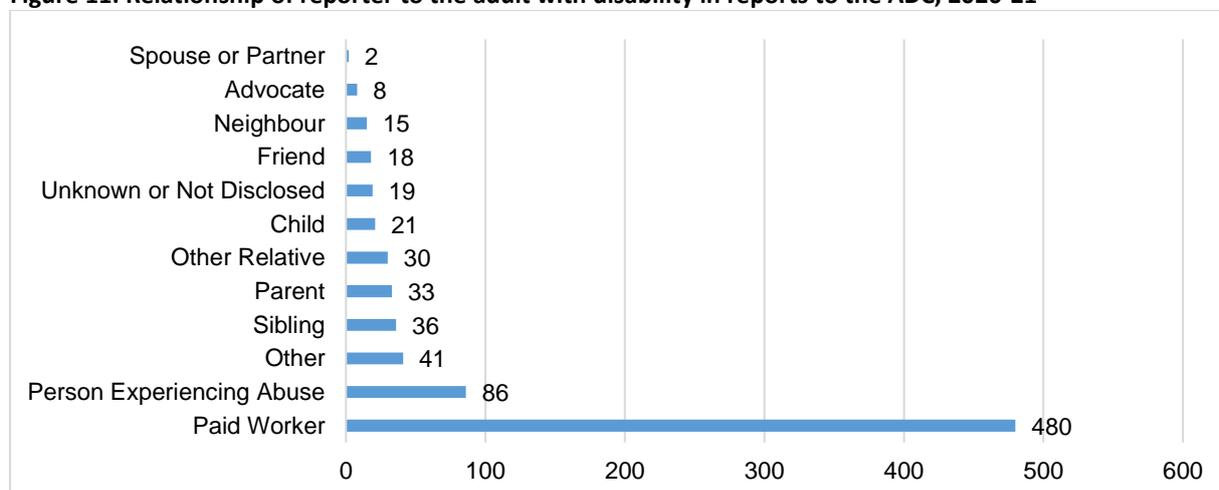| Relationship	Count
Primary Carer	1
Parent	2
Advocate	10
Spouse or Partner	34
Unknown or Not Disclosed	39
Other	50
Sibling	66
Grandchild	102
Neighbour	118
Friend	166
Other Relative	179
Person Experiencing Abuse	462
Paid Worker	734
Child	814
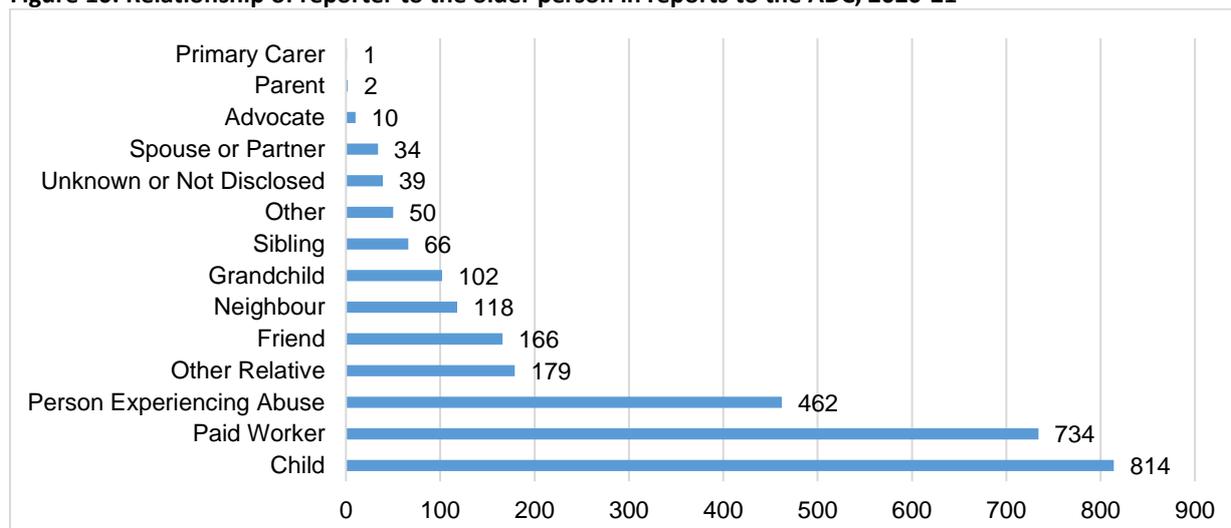
Adults with disability

Paid workers were the main source of reports to the ADC about adults with disability in 2020-21, accounting for over half (60.8%) of the 789 reports about adults with disability in that period. Family members were the reporters in 15.2% of reports about adults with disability, and the adult with disability ('person experiencing abuse') was the reporter in 10.9% of cases.

In comparison to the previous year, a slightly higher proportion of reports about adults with disability in 2020-21 were made by paid staff (previously 56.2%).

Figure 11: Relationship of reporter to the adult with disability in reports to the ADC, 2020-21

Relationship	Count
Spouse or Partner	2
Advocate	8
Neighbour	15
Friend	18
Unknown or Not Disclosed	19
Child	21
Other Relative	30
Parent	33
Sibling	36
Other	41
Person Experiencing Abuse	86
Paid Worker	480

4. Subjects of allegation

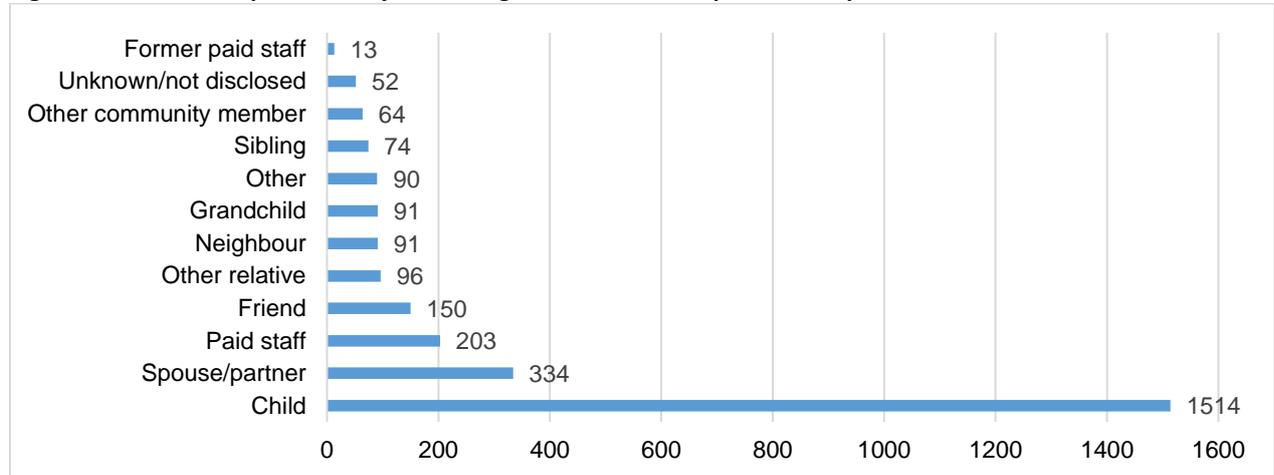## 4.1 Relationship of the subject of allegation to the adult

Older people

The subjects of allegation in over half (54.5%) of the 2,777 reports to the ADC about older people in 2020-21 were the person's adult children. All up, relatives were the subjects of allegation in almost two-thirds (64%) of the reports about older people. Allegations against a spouse or partner (or ex-

spouse/ partner) featured in 12% of the reports about older people.

In comparison to the previous year, the proportion of reports in 2020-21 involving allegations against paid staff (7.8%) increased by 2%.

Figure 12: Relationship of the subject of allegation to the older person in reports to the ADC, 2020-21


Adults with disability

In 28.3% of the 789 reports to the ADC about adults with disability in 2020-21, the allegations pertained to the adult's parent(s). All up, relatives were the subjects of allegation in over half (52.1%) of the reports about adults with disability. In 11.7% of matters, the adult's spouse or partner (or ex-spouse/partner) was the subject of the allegations.

In comparison with the previous year, the proportion of reports in 2020-21 involving allegations against paid staff (15.3%) increased by 6%.

Figure 13: Relationship of the subject of allegation to the adult with disability in reports to the ADC, 2020-21
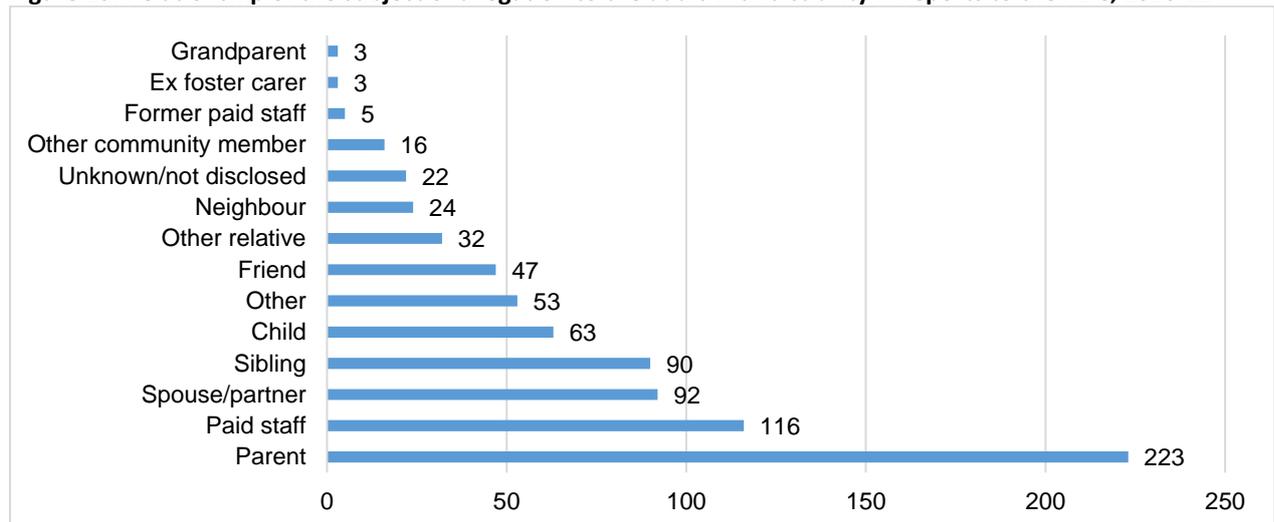
5. Type of alleged abuse

Older people
The most commonly reported types of alleged abuse in relation to older people in 2020-21 were

psychological abuse and financial abuse. The results for 2020-21 were highly consistent with 2019-20.

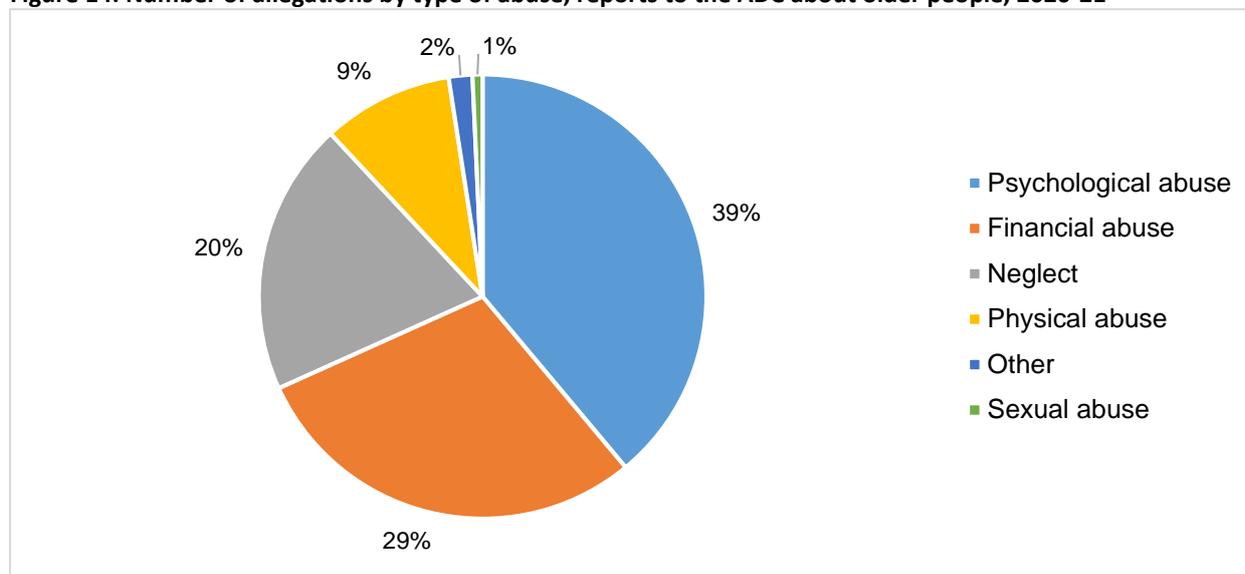**Figure 14: Number of allegations by type of abuse, reports to the ADC about older people, 2020-21**

Table 5: Type of alleged abuse of the older person in reports to the ADC, 2020-21[3]

Type of alleged abuse	Number of allegations	% of all allegations in reports about older people
Psychological abuse (Mainly verbal abuse; preventing or restricting access to family/others; and preventing or restricting access to supports/services)	1,619	39.0
Financial abuse (Mainly financial exploitation; misuse of Power of Attorney/ Enduring POA; and theft)	1,216	29.3
Neglect (Mainly failure to meet the person's support needs; medical neglect; and inadequate clothing or food)	826	19.9
Physical abuse (Mainly hitting/kicking/punching; and pushing/shoving/grabbing/shaking)	393	9.5
Sexual abuse (Mainly sexual assault and indecent assault)	30	0.7
Other	71	1.7
Total allegations in reports about older people	**4,155**	**100**

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[3] The data captures all matters in which that type of abuse has been reported; in the majority of matters, more than one type of abuse is reported.

The most common allegations reported in relation to older people related them being verbally abused; not having their support needs met; being financially exploited; and being prevented or restricted from having access to family and others.

Table 6: Leading reported allegations in relation to older people, 2020-21

	Reported allegation	Number of cases
1.	Psychological abuse – verbal abuse	725
2.	Neglect – failure to meet the adult's support needs	443
3.	Financial exploitation	357
4.	Psychological abuse – preventing or restricting access to family/others	326
5.	Financial abuse – theft	296
6.	Financial abuse – misuse of Power of Attorney or Enduring POA	243
7.	Psychological abuse – other psychological abuse	234
8.	Psychological abuse – preventing or restricting access to supports/services	168
9.	Financial abuse – other financial abuse	138
10.	Neglect – medical care	126

Adults with disability

The most commonly reported types of alleged abuse in relation to adults with disability in 2020-21 were psychological abuse, followed by neglect and physical abuse. This differs slightly to 2019-20, where financial abuse (16.8%) was the third most commonly reported type of abuse of adults with disability, slightly ahead of physical abuse (16.5%).

Figure 15: Percentage of allegations by type of abuse, reports to the ADC about adults with disability, 2020-21
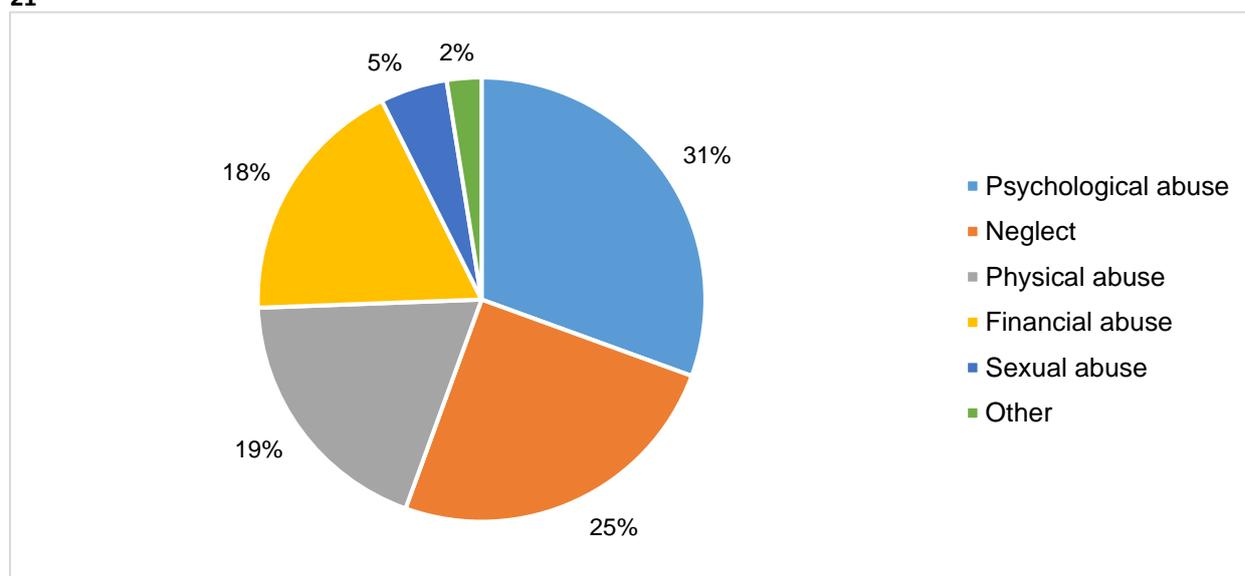
Table 7: Type of alleged abuse of the adult with disability in reports to the ADC, 2020-21[4]

Type of alleged abuse	Number of allegations	% of all allegations in reports about adults with disability
Psychological abuse Mainly verbal abuse; other psychological abuse; and preventing/restricting the person's access to supports/services	416	30.6
Neglect (Mainly failure to meet the person's support needs; and medical neglect)	339	24.9
Physical abuse (Mainly hitting, kicking, punching; pushing, shoving, grabbing, shaking; and inappropriate restraint/use of force)	257	18.9
Financial abuse (Mainly financial exploitation; theft; and preventing access to/withholding the person's money)	248	18.2
Sexual abuse (Mainly sexual assault – taking advantage of cognitive impairment)	66	4.9
Other	34	2.5
Total allegations in reports about adults with disability	**1,360**	**100**

The most common allegations reported in relation to adults with disability related to them not having their support needs met; being verbally abused; being physically assaulted; being prevented or restricted from accessing supports/services; and being financially exploited.

Table 8: Leading reported allegations in relation to adults with disability, 2020-21

	Reported allegation	Number of cases
1.	Neglect – failure to meet support needs	177
2.	Psychological abuse – verbal abuse	140
3.	Physical abuse – hitting/kicking/punching	96
4.	Psychological abuse – preventing or restricting access to supports/services	94
5.	Financial exploitation	86
6.	Psychological abuse – other psychological abuse	70
7.	Neglect – medical care	57
8.	Financial abuse – preventing access to/ withholding the adult's money	56
9.	Financial abuse – theft	53
10.	Psychological abuse – preventing or restricting access to family/others	45

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[4] The data captures all matters in which that type of abuse has been reported; in the majority of matters, more than one type of abuse is reported.

6. Actions/ outcomes

6.1 Primary action by ADC (closed reports)

The ADC closed 3,502 reports in 2020-21. Two-thirds of the reports (2,335) were handled at an early point by the Ageing and Disability Abuse Helpline providing assistance and support to the caller, referring matters to other appropriate parties, and providing early case coordination to the adult.

In 30% of the reports closed in 2020-21 (1,060), the primary action taken by the ADC involved further work on the report, including making inquiries; working with the adult and other parties to address risks and improve outcomes; referring the matter to NSW Police; and/or investigating.

Table 9: Primary action taken by ADC, reports closed in 2020-21

Primary action by ADC		Number
1.	**Early intervention/resolution (Helpline only)**	**2,335**
	a) Assistance and support provided	1,992
	b) Referred externally	277
	c) Early case coordination	66
2.	**Closed after preliminary inquiries**	**392**
	a) Appropriate actions underway to address/manage risks	254
	b) No or low risk identified	81
	c) Person has capacity and refused investigation/involvement	57
3.	**Community supports**	**379**
	a) Risk identified – risk removed or managed with intervention	202
	b) No or low risk identified	128
	c) Risk identified – risk removed or managed prior to intervention	41
	d) Risk identified – risk remained	8
4.	**Declined at outset**	**107**
	a) Insufficient details to progress	93
	b) Premature/ actions underway	14
5.	**Consolidated into another matter**	**110**
6.	**Referred to Police**	**96**
7.	**Referred externally (not at Helpline)**	**68**
8.	**Investigation**	**15**
	a) Risk identified – risk removed or managed with intervention	12
	b) No/low risk identified	2
	c) Risk identified – risk managed prior to intervention	1
Total closed reports		**3,502**

6.2 Person outcomes

In relation to the 3,502 reports closed in 2020-21, key outcomes for the older people and adults with disability included that their views and wishes were ascertained and respected; actions were taken by police to check on their welfare/ look into criminal allegations; they were assisted to access and

received increased aged care supports; and they moved to alternative accommodation.

Table 10: Leading outcomes for the person the subject of a report to the ADC, reports closed 2020-21

Person outcomes	Number of cases[5]
Will and preference of Person ascertained	635
Will and preference of Person respected/upheld	570
Other police/justice action	163
Referral or help to access aged care supports	127
Aged care supports provided or increased	122
Change in accommodation	117
Review or assessment of aged care supports	108
Disability support provided or increased	87
Review or assessment of disability supports	84
Referral or help to access other supports	80
Referral or help to access legal supports	79
Referral or help to access advocacy supports	70
Referral or help to access health services	60
Referral or help to access disability supports	55
Other supports/services provided or increased	52
Review or assessment of health/medical needs	51

6.3 Subject of allegation outcomes

For reports closed in 2020-21, key outcomes in relation to the subject of allegation included that actions were taken to reduce or manage their contact with and access to the adult with disability or older person (including through an ADVO). In appropriate cases, subjects of allegation were also provided with education or advice, and linked to additional supports.

Table 11: Leading outcomes in relation to the subject of allegation in a report to the ADC, reports closed 2020-21

Subject of allegation outcomes	Number of cases[6]
Education or advice provided	105
Linked to or received more support	93
ADVO put in place	41
Removed from premises	30
Reduced or supervised access	29
Prevented from access	25
Criminal charges	20
Removal as Power of Attorney or Enduring POA	17
Removal as Enduring Guardian	9

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[5] There can be multiple outcomes for an individual.

[6] There can be multiple outcomes in relation to an individual.

Benefit removed	6
Removal of other authority	6
Removal as guardian	6
Criminal conviction	6