

## 6. SECURE

### 6.1 Introduction

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The NSW Government is building a better New South Wales, and a more secure society where people of all ages live peacefully and are safe at home and in their broader community. This also means communities are resilient to natural disasters and emergencies.

Outcomes associated with the Secure theme are:

- Communities are safe
- People have access to justice and protection under the law
- Children and families are safe and supported
- Communities are prepared for and resilient to disasters and emergencies.

### 6.2 Feeling of safety in New South Wales

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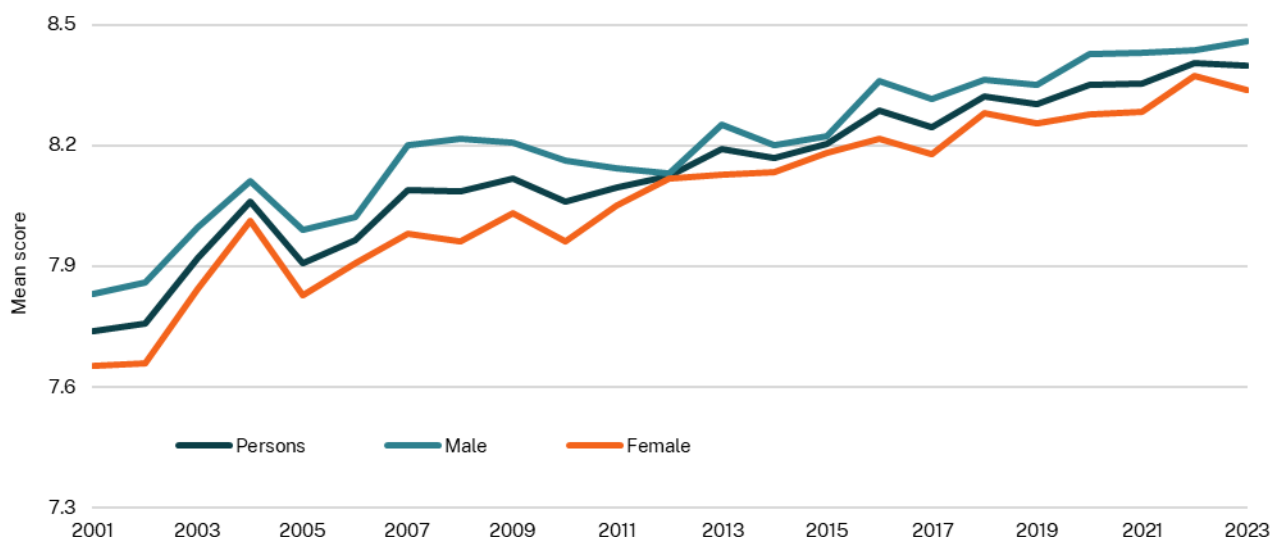
#### Satisfaction with safety

Wellbeing is affected by people's perception of safety. When people live peacefully and safely at home and in their broader community, they experience lower levels of stress, anxiety and vulnerability.

Satisfaction with safety has increased from an average of 7.7 out of 10 (with 10 being 'Totally satisfied') in 2001 to 8.4 in 2023 (Chart 6.1). One aspect of feeling safe relates to people's perceived or actual risk of harm from crimes, physical violence, and theft. As discussed in section 6.4, incidences of robberies, break and enters, and motor vehicle theft fell from 2006 to 2024. This may have contributed to the improved feelings of safety by individuals.

Males on average tend to be more satisfied with their safety compared to females. Males are inclined to feel more prepared for disasters near their homes, and this may contribute to males feeling safer about their homes and home security. Males also feel safer in public areas and alone at night (Transport for NSW, 2023). The rate of domestic violence is higher for females than males (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Males may thus feel safer overall on several dimensions due to differing gender perceptions of vulnerability and risk.

Chart 6.1: Satisfaction with safety, NSW



Source: Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia survey, 2024

## 6.3 Child protection

The Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) provides child protection services for families and children in New South Wales. This includes family preservation and early intervention services, and child protection services.

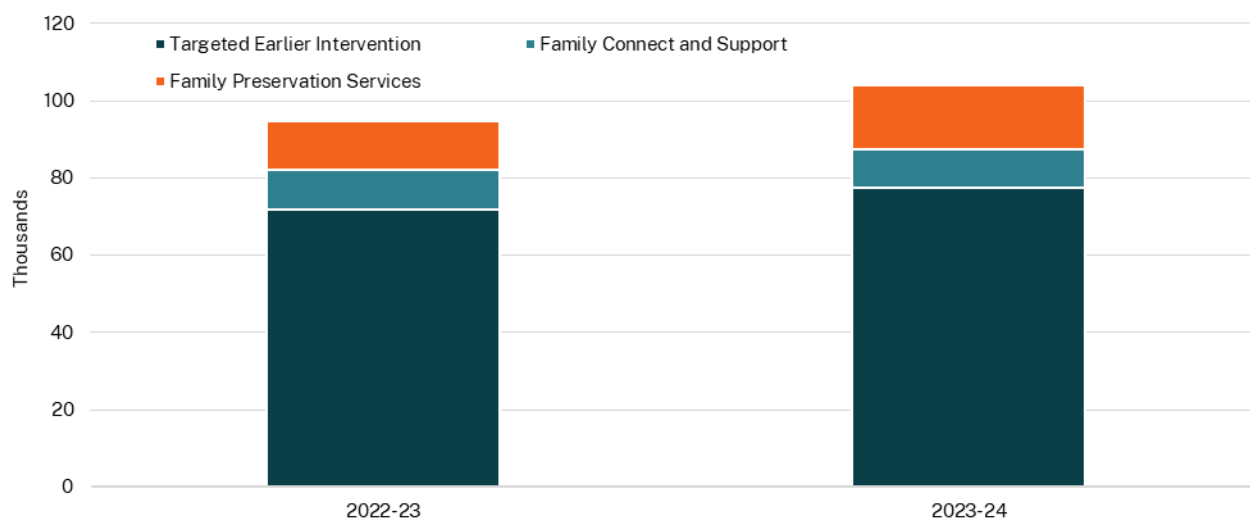
### Early intervention support

There are three early intervention programs for children and families at risk of entering the out-of-home care (OOHC) system. These include:

- Targeted Earlier Intervention (TEI) which aims to deliver flexible support to vulnerable children, young people, families and communities
- Family Connect and Support services which assist and connect families with local community resources
- Family Preservation services which support families to keep children safely at home and to prevent them entering OOHC through a range of intensive supports that promote parenting skills, family functioning, and child development.

The total number of children and young people who received support in 2023-24 was 104,004, up from 94,711 in 2022-23 (Chart 6.2). The majority of this support is provided through the TEI program, 75.7 per cent and 74.4 per cent of the total in 2022-23 and 2023-24, respectively. Additionally, TEI increased to 77,373 children and young people receiving support in 2023-24 from 71,738 in 2022-23. Factors that may be associated with the increase in demand for TEI could include constraints in wider human services and mental health systems, increased cost-of-living pressures on families, increased housing constraints, occurrence of natural disasters and population growth (DCJ, 2025).

Chart 6.2: Children who receive early intervention support, NSW



Source: DCJ, 2025

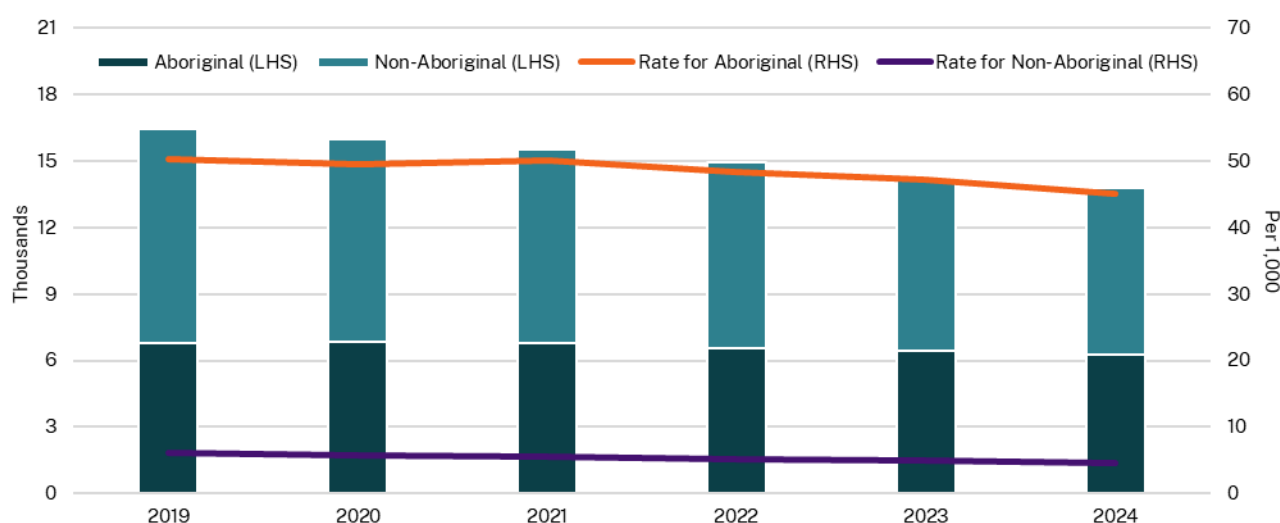
## Out-of-home care

Out-of-home care (OOHC) provides alternative care for children and young people who are unable to live safely with their parents. Children and young people remain in OOHC unless a permanent arrangement can be organised such as being safely restored to their family, guardianship or adoption.

The number of children and young people in OOHC has trended downwards since 2019. As at 31 December 2024, there were 13,780 children and young people in OOHC compared to 16,448 children at the end of 2019 (Chart 6.3). For the first time in 20 years, there are no children in unaccredited emergency accommodation, as of April 2025.

The number of Aboriginal children in OOHC has decreased at a much slower rate than non-Aboriginal children from 2019 to 2024. As at 30 June 2024, the rate per 1,000 population of Aboriginal children in OOHC was 45.1 per 1,000 population, compared to non-Aboriginal children at 4.6 per 1,000 population, reflecting a substantial and persistent overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in the OOHC system.

Chart 6.3: Children in OOHC, NSW



Source: DCJ, 2025; NSW Treasury, 2025

Note: The number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children is based on December quarter data for each calendar year, while the rate for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children is based on June quarter data for that year. Non-Aboriginal children include children where Aboriginality was not stated.

The 2025-26 Budget provides a \$1.2 billion child protection package to increase support and protection for children and young people in OOHC by investing:

- \$797.6 million boost to OOHC funding and implementation of on-going reforms
- \$191.5 million to support the recruitment of more than 200 new and retention of 2,126 case workers with higher pay and more specialised training, including 100 new leading caseworker roles
- \$143.9 million to provide a major increase of 20 per cent to the Foster Care Allowance for the first time in two decades
- \$49.2 million for government-owned, purpose built or upgraded residential OOHC housing that will deliver safe and stable housing for children over 12 years of age with high and complex needs
- \$10 million to support the Office of the Children's Guardian continue to oversee organisations and uphold children's rights to be safe.

## 6.4 Public order and justice

The NSW Government provides a range of programs, services and policies to ensure and promote the safety and security of the community. Efficient and effective access to justice and legal services are critical to maintaining community confidence in the justice system.

### Recorded crime rates

From 2006 to 2024, recorded crime rates have decreased for murder, non-domestic violence related assault, robbery, break and enter, and motor vehicle theft, while they have increased for domestic violence related assault, sexual assault and other sexual offences (Chart 6.4). During this period, recorded rates of domestic violence related assault, sexual assault and other sexual offences increased by 18.7 per cent, 124.7 per cent and 31.0 per cent, respectively.

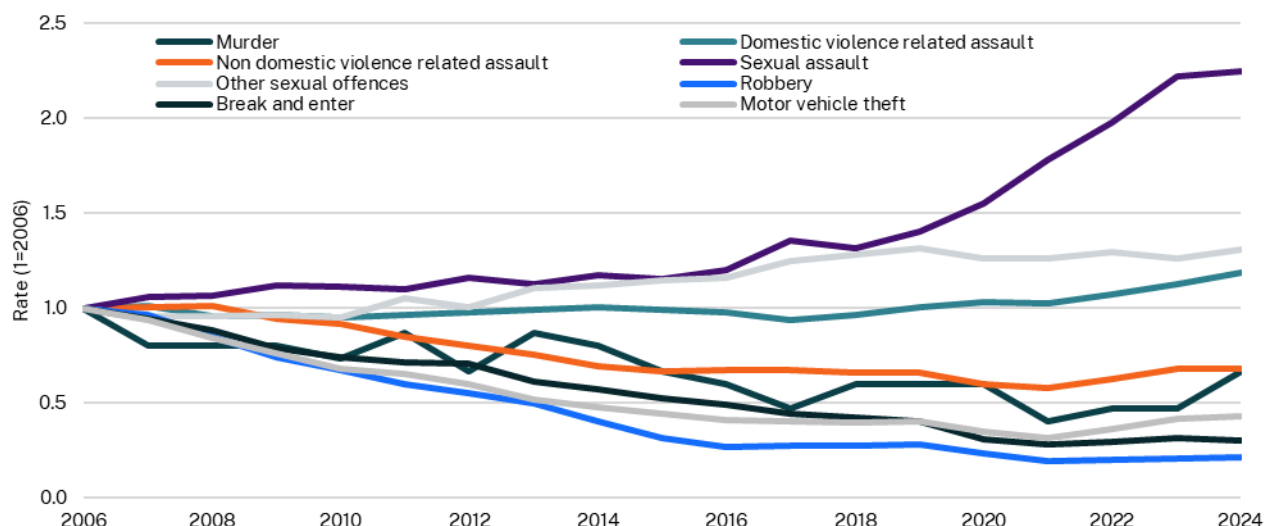
The increase in both sexual assaults and other sexual offences is in part driven by the mandatory reporting requirements established in the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*, and the launch of an online Sexual Assault Reporting Option platform in January 2023 that can be used to report sexual assaults anonymously. Higher reported sexual violence is associated with an increase in victims and third parties reporting to authorities due to progress in destigmatisation of reporting and the establishment of alternative avenues to report. Increases in recorded domestic violence related crimes may be partly attributed to increased education, community awareness and discussion of what constitutes these crimes.

In 2024, the reported rate for domestic violence related assault was almost twice as high for females compared with males. For sexual assault, the reported rate for females was 202.8 per 100,000, whilst it was 56.5 per 100,000 for males, indicating females were more than 3.5 times more likely to be victims of sexual assault than males (Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR), 2025).

The 2025-26 Budget will invest \$272.7 million in measures that aim to reduce domestic, family and sexual violence, and which support victim-survivors.

The long-term fall in property crime is due to a range of factors, including a decline in criminal involvement by young people; reduced use of cash which reduces the financial rewards for these crimes; improvements in security such as the use of electronic locks, engine immobilisers and CCTV; and an increase in the risk of detection and prosecution. In 2024, recorded rates of motor vehicle theft returned to pre-pandemic levels, while rates of robbery and break and enter remained lower than in 2019.

Chart 6.4: Recorded crime rates, NSW



Source: BOCSAR, 2025; NSW Treasury, 2025

Note: The recorded crimes are indexed to 2006 levels for incidents per 100,000 people for all categories except for murder, which is indexed for victims per 10,000 people.

Recorded crime rates can underrepresent the true extent of crime in the community where some crimes are underreported, such as sexual assault and domestic violence. Victim experience surveys are more representative of community experiences as they are less impacted by people's willingness to report, and the approach taken to record reported crimes.

### Timely access to justice

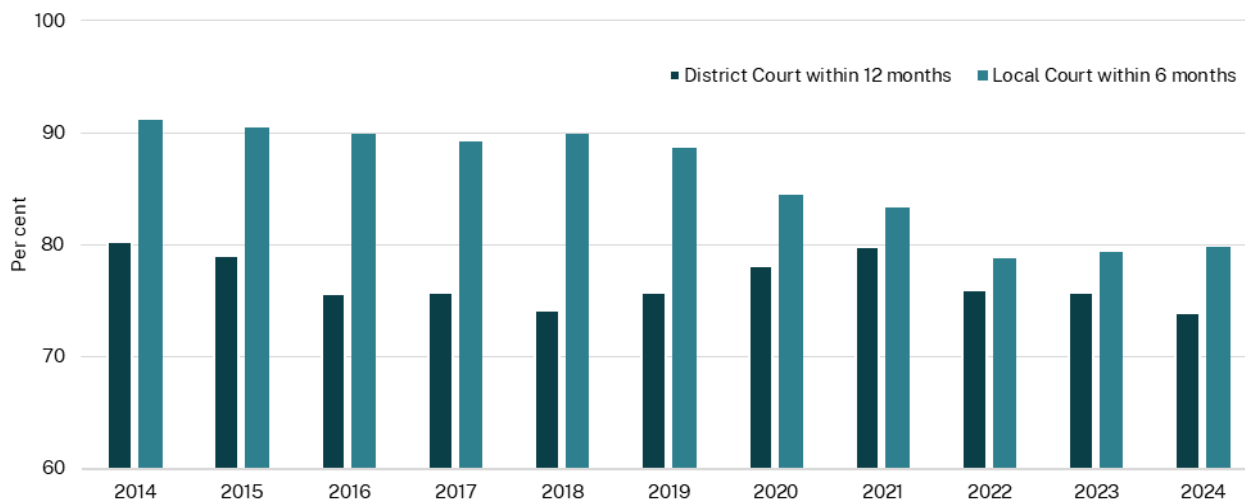
On-time processing in the criminal courts measures the effectiveness of caseload management and delivery of timely justice. All adult criminal cases and more than 90 per cent of civil cases begin in Local Courts. Local Courts deal with civil claims up to \$100,000 and most criminal matters including summary offences, which are crimes such as stealing, assault and possession of drugs. The District Court handles certain indictable criminal offences, motor accidents and civil claims between \$100,001 and \$1.25 million (DCJ, 2025).

The proportion of Local Court cases finalised within six months of first appearance fell from the pre-pandemic level of 88.6 per cent in 2019 to 79.8 per cent in 2024 (Chart 6.5). Local Courts were at capacity prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and have been processing a backlog of cases since the pandemic. A key driver of demand for Local Court services is growth in the number and complexity of criminal cases such as increased prosecution of family and domestic violence matters.

The rate of District Court cases finalised within 12 months of committal in 2024 is broadly similar to the pre-pandemic levels. The proportion of cases finalised within 12 months increased during the COVID-19 pandemic due to fewer serious crimes being committed during lockdown periods and the encouragement of appropriate early guilty pleas. Since 2022, the on-time processing performance of the District Courts has been relatively stable.

The NSW Government is investing \$49.4 million for a new hub to support victim-survivors to participate in legal proceedings in a trauma-safe environment, allowing witnesses to give evidence remotely via video link without having to re-encounter their perpetrators. In addition, the NSW Government is investing \$34.5 million for upgrades to the Downing Centre and John Maddison Tower, allowing for the creation of 10 new courtrooms to facilitate centralised bail hearings and five courtrooms for non-custodial matters, which will improve time to justice for victims and their families.

Chart 6.5: Court finalisations, NSW



Source: BOCSAR, 2025

## 6.5 Reoffending

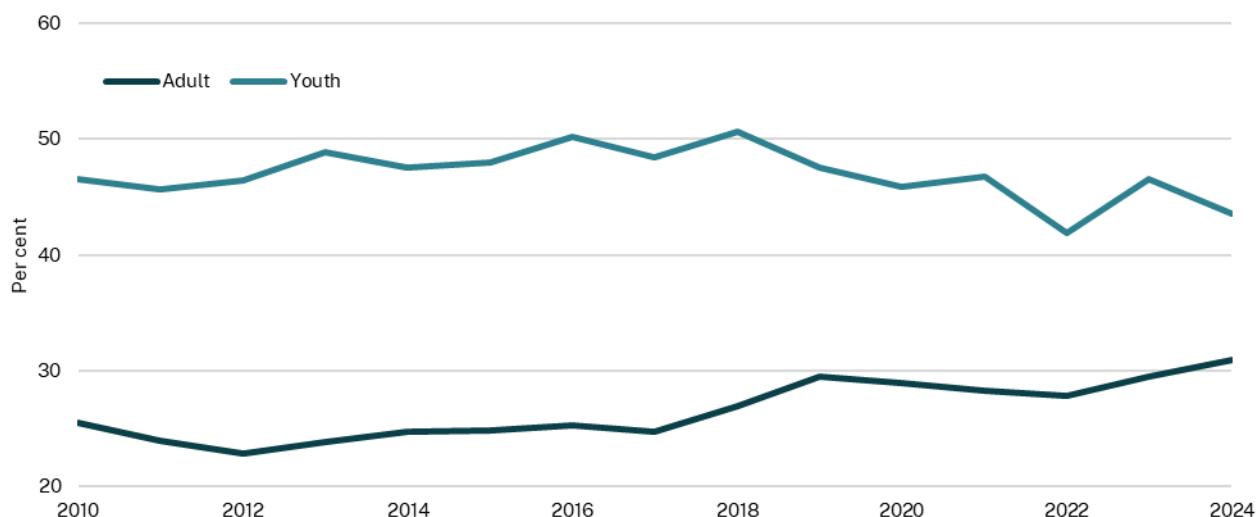
Reoffending rates provide insights on the extent of recidivism and effectiveness of crime prevention and reduction programs. Rehabilitation in prison can help reduce reoffending and contribute to a safer and more secure New South Wales.

The adult reoffending rate is the annual average reoffending rate for a proven personal, property or serious drug offence within 12 months of release from sentenced custody. The rate increased to 30.9 per cent in 2024 from 25.5 per cent in 2010, despite remaining relatively steady between 2019 and 2023 (Chart 6.6). The adult reoffending rate increased in 2024 across retail theft, and across personal violent offences, particularly intimidation. There was also an increase in the number of people exiting custody recently who are at a higher risk of reoffending – namely an increased proportion of people leaving custody with prior court appearances. Evidence has shown that education and vocational training opportunities designed to provide employment stability can reduce reoffending rates.<sup>1</sup>

The youth reoffending rate is the reoffending rate within 12 months of participation in a Youth Justice Conference or completion of a custodial order or sentence to a supervision order. The youth reoffending rate has fluctuated since 2010, increasing from 46.6 per cent to a high of 50.7 per cent in 2018, before decreasing to 43.6 per cent in 2024. The custodial reforms initiated at the end of 2020 to provide greater focus on therapeutic service delivery models which emphasise rehabilitation such as with the provision of psychology services, especially for those in medium and high-risk cohorts, have played an important role in reducing youth reoffending.

<sup>1</sup> Ooi 2021, [Vocational training in NSW prisons: Exploring the relationship between traineeships and recidivism](#), NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research

Chart 6.6: Reoffending rates, NSW



Source: BOCSAR, 2025

## 6.6 Fire and emergency services

NSW Emergency Service Organisations aim to build preparedness and resilience within communities as well as reduce the impact of disasters and emergencies on the community (including people, property, infrastructure, the economy, and the environment).

The NSW Government seeks to provide emergency services that:

- contribute to the community's management of risk and its preparedness, through the promotion of risk reduction and mitigation activities
- are accessible, responsive and sustainable.

### Deaths from fire and forces of nature

The rate of deaths per 1,000,000 population due to fire and other events provides an indication of the adverse effects and severity of emergency events on the community (including people, property, infrastructure, the economy and the environment). Deaths by fire include deaths related to smoke, fire and flames, and all structure and landscape fires. Deaths due to exposure from forces of nature include flood, earthquake and excessive natural heat or cold and storms. Annual death rates from these events can be volatile due to the influence of large and irregular events.

In 2023, the rate of deaths by fire, landscape fire and exposure to force of nature were 4.4, 0.1 and 0.4 per million people, respectively (Chart 6.7). In 2023, across all three categories, New South Wales was below the national rate and has seen a downward trend in deaths by fire since 1995. Exposure to forces of nature deaths peaked at 4.3 per million in 2022, partly due to flooding in parts of New South Wales, however, the rate in the 10 years since 2014 is lower at 1.4 per million population compared to the series average of 1.8 per million population since 1995.



**Chart 6.7: Rate of deaths, NSW**

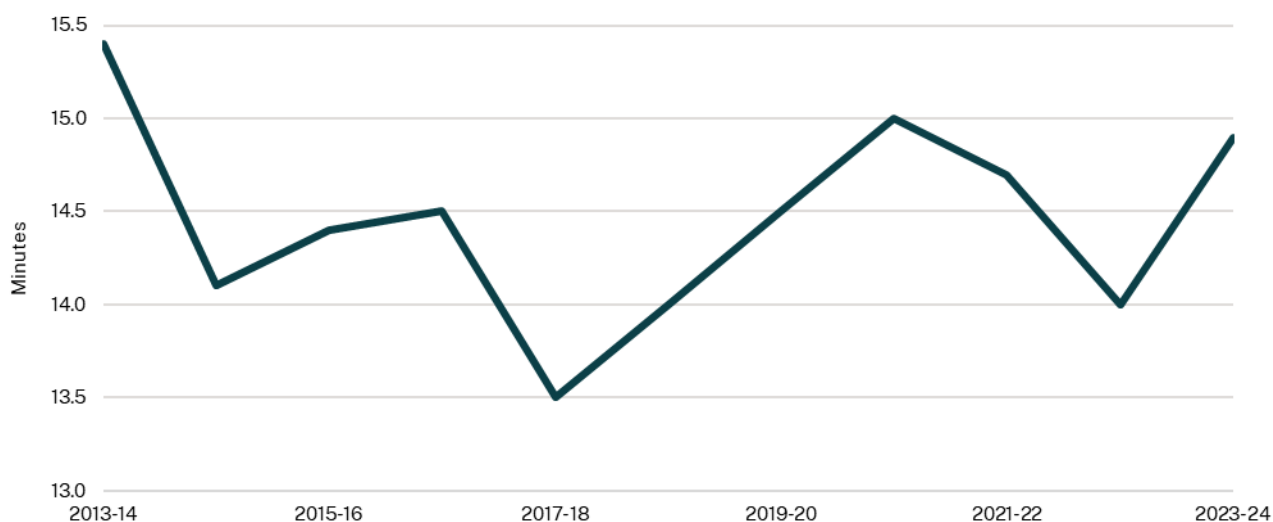
Source: Report on Government Services, 2025

Note: Data for landscape fire deaths is reported on a financial year basis but presented as calendar year, for example, data for 2023-24 is reported as 2023.

### 90<sup>th</sup> percentile response time to structure fires (building fires)

90<sup>th</sup> percentile response times to structure fires (building fires) measure how long on average it takes to respond by arriving at the scene of a structure fire in 90 per cent of incidents. It is measured by the time taken between the initial triple zero call and the arrival of the first fire crew (fire engine, truck or other fire emergency vehicle). Shorter response times suggest that services are more accessible and responsive.

The NSW state-wide response time to structure fires at the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile was 14.9 minutes in 2023-24, meaning 90 per cent of responses to structure fires were within this time (Chart 6.8). This result is slightly more than the average of 14.4 minutes over the last decade. In 2023-24, Fire and Rescue NSW responded to 140,827 emergency incidents, of which structure fires were a portion of these incidents.

**Chart 6.8: 90<sup>th</sup> percentile response time to structure fires, NSW**

Source: Report on Government Services, 2025

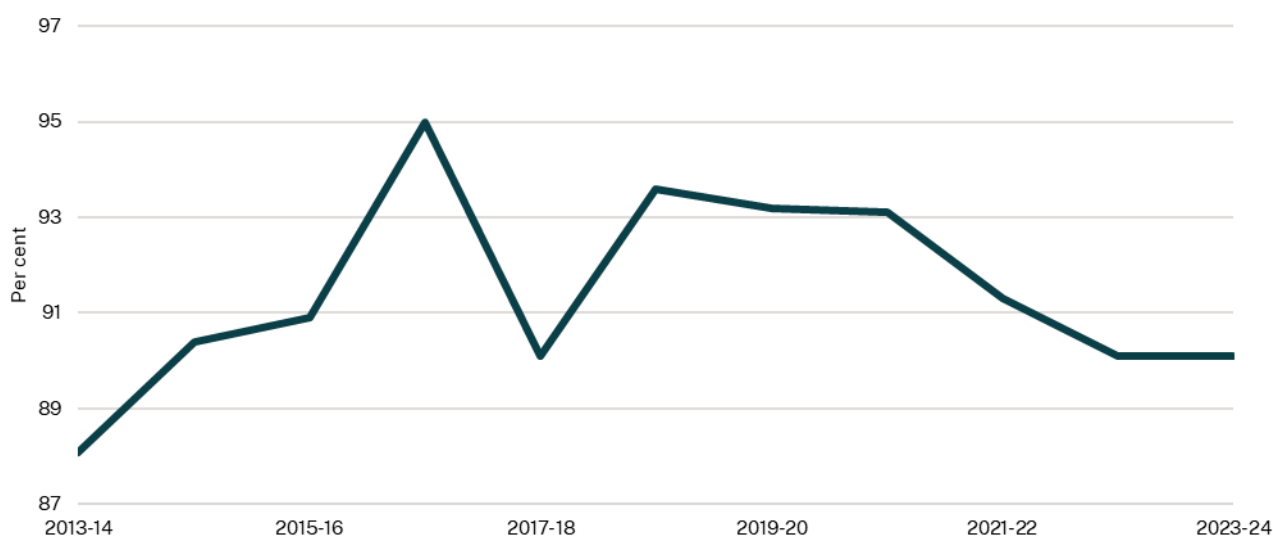


## Containment of bushfires

The containment of bushfires measures the proportion of all bushfires in New South Wales that are contained to under 10 hectares. The rate of containment reflects the ability of Emergency Service Organisations to manage fires before they escalate as well as the effectiveness of fire service emergency response and risk mitigation strategies (such as ignition management, hazard reduction, community engagement and property planning). Year-to-year climate variability is influenced by climate drivers such as El Niño, La Niña, the Indian Ocean Dipole and the Southern Annular Mode.

For the reporting period to 7 April in 2024-25, 92.4 per cent of bushfires were contained to under 10 hectares (Chart 6.9), reflecting an improvement from 2022-23 and 2023-24. The latest result is higher than the series low of 88.1 per cent in 2013-14 and slightly above the average over the last decade of 91.8 per cent.

Chart 6.9: *Bushfires contained to under 10 hectares, NSW*



Source: NSW Rural Fire Service, 2025