



Gender & Disaster Australia

Snowy Valleys

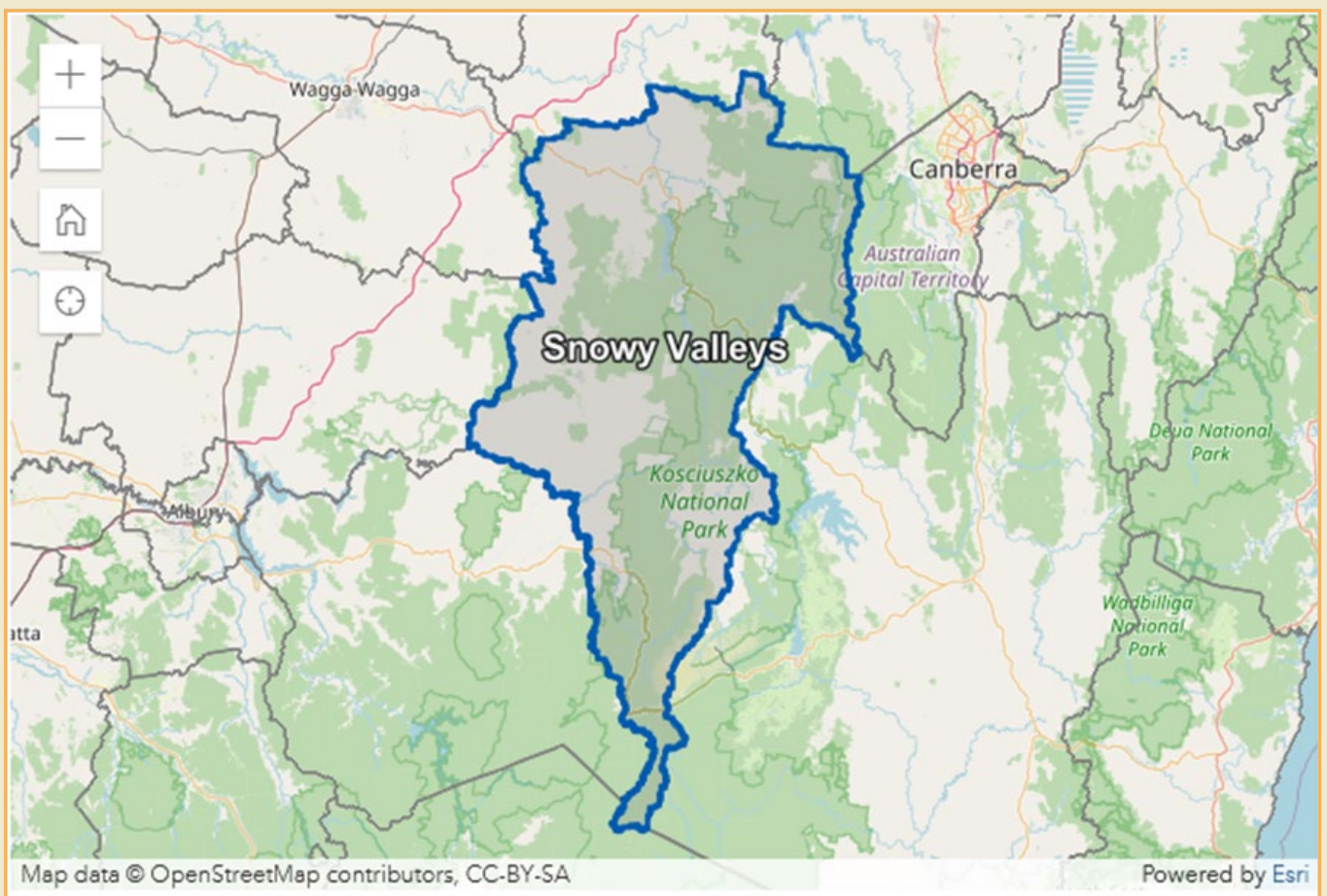
DISASTER CONTEXT

Socio-demographics from
a gendered perspective





Snowy Valleys



The LGA of Snowy Valleys. From <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/search-by-area>





INTRODUCTION

Snowy Valleys council is an LGA located in New South Wales. It is located at the foot of the Snowy Mountains to the West and includes the Western part of Kosciuszko National Park and the Murray river to the south. The region has several other waterways, including the Geehi, Goodradigbee, Swampy Plain Tumut and Yarrangobilly rivers. The LGA was formed in 2016, when the NSW government merged the Tumut Shire Council and the Tumbarumba Shire Council.¹ It covers about 8,960 square kilometres² and has a population of 14,395 people.³ It comprises many diverse communities in towns and villages such as Adelong, Batlow, Brungle, Jingellic, Khancoban, Rosewood, Talbingo, Tumbarumba and Tumut,⁴ in rural and semi-remote locations.⁵ Key industries include manufacturing (\$150 million Gross Value Added -GDA- in 2020), forestry (\$92 million GDA in 2020), tourism (\$91 million visitor spend in 2021) and agriculture (76 million GDA in 2020).⁶ The region has Australia’s largest softwood processing mill.⁷

Disasters affecting the Snowy Valley region include bushfires, floods, storms and heatwaves.

Recent disasters in the LGA include:⁸

- severe weather and flooding from 14 September 2022
- severe weather and flooding from 4 August 2022

- storms and floods from 5 January 2022
- severe weather and flooding from 9 November 2021
- largest rainfall event in a single day in 2012 in June 2021, in particularly on the Tumut plains⁹
- Snowy Valleys Storms from 3 February 2021, flash flooding in Adelong and Tumbarumba¹⁰
- storms and flash flooding from 20 October 2020 in Tumbarumba¹¹
- storms and floods from 15 January 2020
- bushfires from 31 August 2019
- Snowy Valleys Bushfires from 17 January 2019.

A number of studies have been conducted on the 2019-2020 Black Summer bushfires, which severely affected the Snowy Valleys region. Snowy Valleys and Kosciuszko National Park were severely affected by the Dunn’s Road mega-fire from late December 2019 to Mid-February 2020. The bushfires burnt 4,293 square km (48% of the region) and damaged or destroyed more than 1,050 properties, with total damage estimated at \$188 million.¹²

The 2020 Royal Commission said that the Black Summer bushfires resulted in “devastating loss of life, property and wildlife, and environmental destruction across the nation”. On a national level, the bushfires burned 24 million hectares, caused the death of 33 people and destroyed

1 <https://www.snowyvalleys.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/public/reports-amp-strategies/administrator-end-of-term-report.pdf>

2 <https://www.snowyvalleys.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/public/reports-amp-strategies/administrator-end-of-term-report.pdf>

3 <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2016/LGA17080>

4 <https://www.snowyvalleys.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/public/reports-amp-strategies/administrator-end-of-term-report.pdf>

5 <https://www.snowyvalleys.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/public/reports-amp-strategies/community-engagement-strategy-svc-rp-sty-003-01.pdf>

6 <https://www.snowyvalleys.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/public/reports-amp-strategies/snowy-valleys-reds-2023-update-final-2.pdf>

7 <https://www.snowyvalleys.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/public/reports-amp-strategies/administrator-end-of-term-report.pdf>

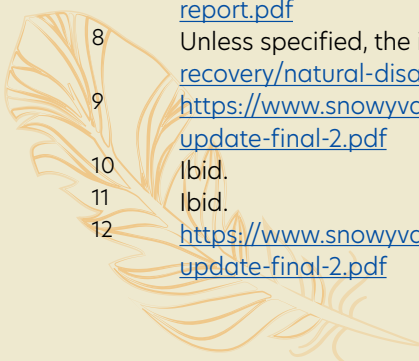
8 Unless specified, the information in this section comes from this source: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/disaster-recovery/natural-disaster-declarations>

9 <https://www.snowyvalleys.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/public/reports-amp-strategies/snowy-valleys-reds-2023-update-final-2.pdf>

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 <https://www.snowyvalleys.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/public/reports-amp-strategies/snowy-valleys-reds-2023-update-final-2.pdf>





3000 homes in Australia.¹³ The Australian national bushfire health and wellbeing survey (Heffernan et al., 2022) provides an overview of the mental health and wellbeing of people affected by the 2019-2020 bushfires, 12 to 18 months after the disaster.¹⁴ The study found very high rates of depression, anxiety, stress and PTSD in bushfire-affected people. Women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (particularly women), parents and children were especially vulnerable to mental health impacts after bushfires.

In an article about architectural responses to the 2019-2020 bushfires, managing director of Acorn Creative Group Vanessa Keenan explains that Snowy Valleys communities have experienced personal and material losses, while dealing with the impact of the loss of their landscapes. She uses the term “Sostalgia” to describes the distress people experience when it is caused by changes to the environment, as the bushfires severely impacted the region’s environment. She also mentions that during and after the fires, community infrastructure became an important point for information, food distribution and shelter.¹⁵

Atkinson and Lee (2023) used quantitative methods to look at how people engaged with different content on facebook during the 2019-2020 bushfires in the Orroral Valley, in the Namadgi National Park (ACT); this area borders the northeast part of the Snowy Valleys. During a bushfire crisis, traditional media remain an important source of information, but social media is increasingly being used by government organisations as it is a fast way to create and transmit information, and as it is being used more and more by citizens. Analysing the data of the facebook posts of two agencies, ACT ESA and NSW RFS, the study found that many comments on the posts were questions to clarify information or about specific services and advice, that images were more effective and inclusive, and that people engaged more with community-based information or non-fire information.¹⁶

The most recent major disaster was severe weather and floods that started in September 2022, which severely affected the Snowy valleys. The region was affected by the wider flood events experienced across regional NSW, but Adelong and Tumut also experienced flash flooding in October and November due to heavy rain and storms.¹⁷

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- 13 Atkinson, S., & Lee, J. Y. (2023). Social media: Connecting and sharing in a bushfire crisis. Media International Australia, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X231163367>
- 14 Heffernan, T., Macleod, E., Greenwood, L-M., Walker, I., Lane, J., Stanley, S. K., Evans, O., Cleave, A. L. & Cruwys, T. (2022). Mental health, wellbeing and resilience after the 2019-20 bushfires: The Australian national bushfire health and wellbeing survey – A preliminary report. Australian National University, Canberra. <https://dx.doi.org/10.25911/AG7D-7574>
- 15 Keenan, V., (2021) “A creative recovery project for the communities of the Snowy Valleys”, *Architecture Bulletin*, Vol. 78 / No.2 <https://www.architecture.com.au/archives/reading-architecture/the-importance-of-place-in-bushfire-recovery>
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 <https://www.snowyvalleys.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/public/reports-amp-strategies/snowy-valleys-reds-2023-update-final-2.pdf>



DISASTER BACKGROUND

Kind of disasters affecting this region/town: floods, bushfires, droughts and storms.

Recent major disaster: September 2022 to January 2023 floods

- Fatalities: 0
- People displaced:
 - The heavy rains started in September (133 mm of rain)¹⁸ and continued in October (123mm of rain).¹⁹
 - On October 7, the Bureau of Meteorology informed that minor flooding might occur along the Tumut River, impacting low lying areas, areas near rivers, creeks and streams and possibly impacting properties in Dowells Lane, Bombowlee and Lacmalac-Goobarragandra Road. The SES advised people living in these areas to raise their assets, including waste and chemicals, above expected flood levels and to stock up on essential items.²⁰
 - On October 31, the region was affected by lightning, wind and heavy rain, causing flash flooding. NSW SES issued five Emergency Warnings ordering residents to evacuate immediately in several NSW locations, including in Adelong and Tumut Caravan Park.²¹
 - On November 1 2022, an “order to evacuate now” was given to people living at Willow Bend due to flash flooding.²²
 - In 24 hours from October 31 to November 1, NSW SES responded to 48 flood rescues, and received 759 requests for assistance in total.²³
 - An evacuation centre was established at the Adelong Fire Station²⁴ and a Recovery assistance point opened at Adelong Showground.²⁵
- Properties and infrastructure affected:
 - The October 31 flash flood destroyed infrastructures and properties in Tumut, including swept away cars, fencing, sheds,²⁶ properties and business equipment.²⁷
 - Several properties were affected in Batlow and in Wondalga.²⁸
 - Optus and Telstra phone customers in Batlow and Tumut reported outages during the storms. Residents in Wondalga reported problems with Telstra connectivity during the storms, after the line had been down for five days the previous week.²⁹
 - Roads were closed across Snowy Valleys due to water on the roads and debris. Some areas were isolated.³⁰

18 <https://tatimes.com.au/minor-flood-warning-for-tumut-river/>

19 <https://tatimes.com.au/rivers-in-flood/>

20 <https://tatimes.com.au/minor-flood-warning-for-tumut-river/>

21 <https://tatimes.com.au/flooding-rains-course-through-snowy-valleys/>

22 <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=421407946834513&set=a.113289200979724>

23 <https://tatimes.com.au/flooding-rains-course-through-snowy-valleys/>

24 <https://www.bordermail.com.au/story/7964159/riverina-communities-told-to-evacuate-ses-receives-330-calls-for-help/>

25 <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=8719700271404163&set=gm.865831524590465&idortvanity=247307263109564>

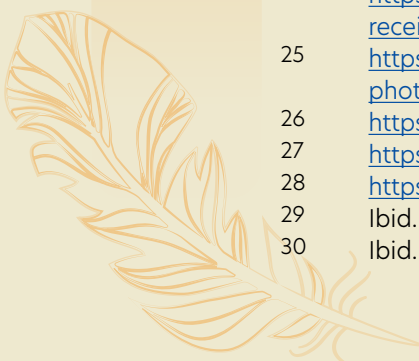
26 <https://tatimes.com.au/adelong-inundated/>

27 <https://tatimes.com.au/adelong-counts-the-cost/>

28 <https://tatimes.com.au/flooding-rains-course-through-snowy-valleys/>

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.





- o Several grants were announced for the LGA, including:
 - the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment (AGDRP) : grants of \$1000 per adult and \$400 per child for people who had suffered a significant loss due to the floods³¹
 - the Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA): grants of up to \$75,000 for primary producers affected by the floods.³²
 - \$182 million worth of funding announced by the Australian Prime Minister, to support people to get back into their damaged homes, including a \$20,000 Back Home grant (for urgent repairs, replacing essential goods and restoring the home so that it is liveable) and up to 16 weeks of rental support payments.³³



ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE

- Snowy Valleys LGA is ranked: ³⁴
 - o 180 out of 544 LGAs in Australia (where 544 is most advantaged)
 - o in the 4th decile (out of 10, where 10 is most advantaged)
 - o in the 34th percentile (out of 100, where 100 is most advantaged)



HOUSING AFFORDABILITY AND HOMELESSNESS

- Housing affordability
 - o Median rent: 230\$/week (NSW: 420\$/week | Aus: \$375)³⁵
 - o Renter households where rent payments are greater than 30% of household income: 24.7 % (NSW: 35.5 % | Aus: 32.3%)³⁶
 - o For a household on the median income for the Snowy Valleys (around \$70,000³⁷), rental accommodation is classed “acceptable” for postcodes 2720 (Tumut) and 2653 (Tumbarumba).³⁸
- Homelessness:
 - o In 2021-22, 167 people accessed Specialist Homelessness Services in Snowy Valleys,³⁹ equating to 1.12% of the population, or 112 per 10,000.⁴⁰
 - o 47 of these were men (63 per 10,000) and 120 were women (162 per 10,000)

³¹ <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=441736401464245&set=a.115956974042191>

³² <https://www.raa.nsw.gov.au/disaster-assistance/storm-and-flood-programs/sdg-aug-sep-2022>

³³ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-12-22/eugowra-nsw-flood-victims-get-extra-funding-to-return-home/101802024>

³⁴ <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/2033.0.55.0012016?OpenDocument> (third data cube LGA Indexes, SEIFA 2016)

³⁵ <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA17080>

³⁶ <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA17080>

³⁷ Weekly income X 52; weekly income data available at: <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA17080>

³⁸ <https://sgsep.com.au/projects/rental-affordability-index>, using postcodes 2720 and 2653 (only data available)

³⁹ <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/shsc-data-cubes/contents/specialist-homelessness-services-collection-shsc-data-cubes>

⁴⁰ Calculation: Number of people divided by the population of the LGA of Snowy Valleys (available here: <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA17080>), multiplied by 100 for the percentage and 10,000 for the rate.



MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health conditions (any): 8.3 % (NSW: 8.0 % | Aus: 8.8%)⁴¹

In Statistical Area 3 Tumut-Tumbarumba, there were 15 deaths between 2017 and 2021.⁴²

Suicide rate for Statistical Area 4 (SA4)⁴³ Riverina in which Snowy Valleys sits, the state of New South Wales, and Australia as a whole.⁴⁴

Area	SA4 Riverina	New South Wales	Australia
Age-standardised suicide rate per 100,000 population	17.1	11.2	12.6
Rate for males	27.2	17.1	19.2
Rate for females	7.1	5.4	6.1



GENDER EQUALITY

*Lone parent status*⁴⁵

- One-parent families (Snowy Valleys LGA): 15.8 % (NSW: 15.8% | Aus:15.9%) - 79.9 % female-led (NSW: 81.0% | Aus: 80.4%)

*Mothers' index*⁴⁶

- Note: Snowy Valleys LGA was formed in 2016 merging the Tumut and the Tumbarumba shires. As the Mother's index data collection is prior to the creation of the LGA, the data is for Tumut and Tumbarumba.
- Tumut is ranked 81 and Tumbarumba 94 out of 152 LGAs in NSW where 1 is the 'best place for a mother to live'.

*Unpaid care*⁴⁷

- Unpaid domestic work
 - o 2295 men did more than 5 hours of unpaid domestic work per week compared to 3552 women
- Unpaid assistance to a person with a disability
 - o 593 men compared to 902 women provided unpaid assistance
- Unpaid childcare
 - o 1199 men compared to 1785 women provided childcare (whether for their own child or other children)

⁴¹ <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA17080>

⁴² Data table: 2021 National Mortality Database - Suicide, available at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring/data/data-downloads>

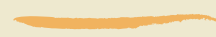
⁴³ SA3 and SA4 areas can be found here: <https://sosearch.com.au/australian-sa-printable-maps/>

⁴⁴ Data table: 2021 National Mortality Database - Suicide (table 10 for SA4 and 11 for SA3), available at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring/data/data-downloads>

⁴⁵ <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA17080>

⁴⁶ The mothers' index consists of composite scores from five different indicators relating to maternal wellbeing (maternal health, children's wellbeing, educational status, economic status and socio-economic disadvantage), with each indicator given equal weighting. Scores were sorted from low to high and ranked from 1 to 152 (1 being the best place for a mother to live) to give the overall Mothers Index rank for each LGA in NSW. <https://apo.org.au/node/63692>

⁴⁷ ABS General Community Profile for LGA Snowy Valleys, Tables G24-G26, available here: <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/community-profiles/2021/LGA17080>

*Violence against women*⁴⁸

- Domestic violence-related assault (Jan-Dec 2022, rate per 100,000 population): 582.8 (NSW: 409.1)
 - o 2022 LGA rank: 41 (out of 120), where 1 has the highest rate of crime
- Sexual assault (Jan-Dec 2022, rate per 100,000 population): 152.7 (NSW: 95.1; (the national rate of 121 per 100,000 in 2021 is indicative only as it is drawn from different data)⁴⁹
 - o 2022 LGA rank: 54 (out of 120), where 1 has the highest rate of crime

**DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FOR SNOWY VALLEYS LGA COMPARED TO NEW SOUTH WALES AND AUSTRALIA**⁵⁰

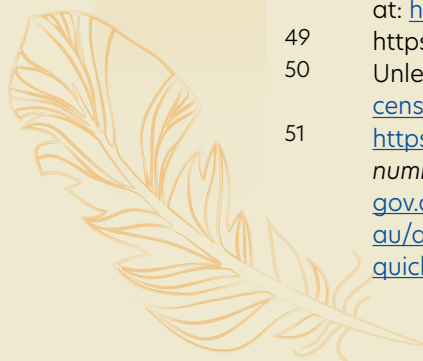
	Snowy Valleys LGA	New South Wales	Australia
Median age	45	39	38
Indigenous status	6.3%	3.4%	3.2%
Both parents born in Australia	73.4%	43.7%	45.9%
Non-English language used in household	6.0%	29.5%	24.8%
With university education	12.0%	27.8%	26.3%
Year 10 as highest qualification	17.8%	10.6%	10.0%
Part-time workers	31.2%	29.7%	31.2%
Unemployed	4.2%	4.9%	5.1%
Personal income	\$685/week	\$813/week	\$805/week
Household income	\$1,306/week	\$1,829/week	\$1,746/week
Rate of people on Disability Support Pension per 10,000 population ⁵¹	379	294	296

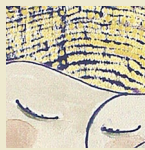
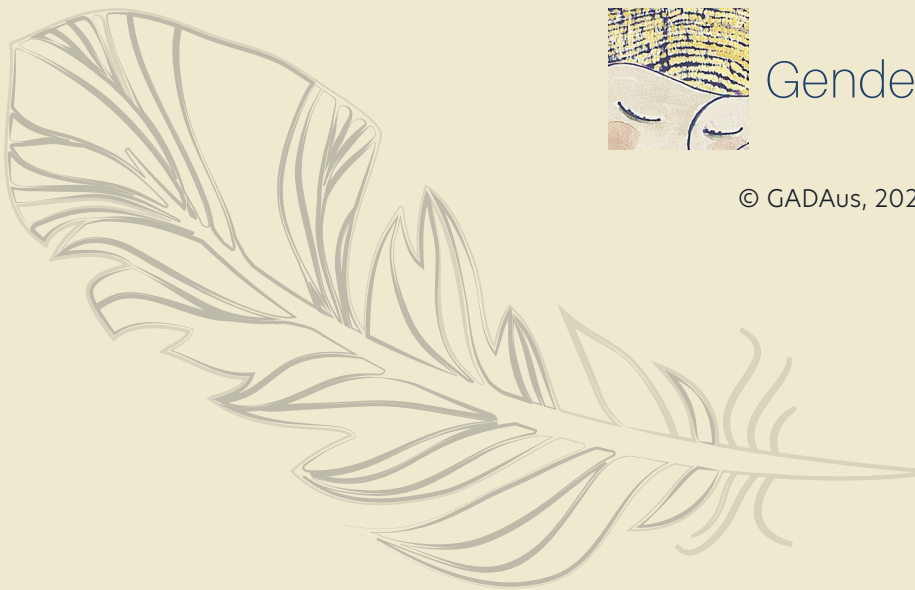
⁴⁸ Data tables: New South Wales excel crime table and Snowy Valleys excel crime table, available at: https://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/Pages/bocsar_crime_stats/bocsar_lgaexceltables.aspx

⁴⁹ <https://www.abs.gov.au/media-centre/media-releases/sexual-assaults-increase-tenth-year-row>

⁵⁰ Unless otherwise indicated data from this table comes from: <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA17080>

⁵¹ <https://data.gov.au/data/dataset/dss-payment-demographic-data>; calculated by dividing number of DSP recipients listed in spreadsheet in footnote by population of LGA (<https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA17080>), state (<https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/snapshot-nsw-2021>), and country (<https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/AUS>) multiplied by 10,000





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