

Targeted Earlier Intervention Program

2021-2022 NSW Annual Report





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1 Executive Summary

Effective prevention and early intervention is the most promising strategy for changing the life trajectories for children. The Targeted Earlier Intervention (TEI) Program is one of the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) key state-wide early intervention programs.

The TEI program aims to deliver flexible support to ensure children, young people, families and communities thrive. Importantly, it seeks to prevent any risks or vulnerabilities from escalating.

This document presents quantitative data reported by the Program's funded service providers from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022.

The Report provides key information about service delivery, client cohorts, and client and community outcomes. It also identifies key data quality issues that will be addressed as the Program matures.

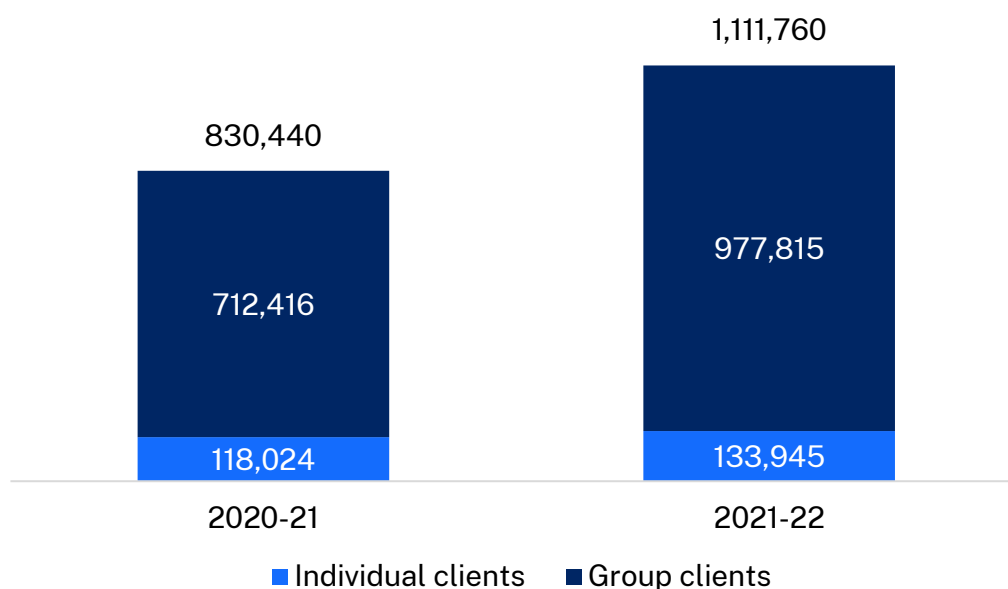
With the impact of COVID and natural disasters during 2021- 2022, the key findings show an increase in services provided to the community compared to 2020-2021. The key findings also show the flexibility and agility of the TEI program and funded services to adapt to changing needs and circumstances within communities.

2 Key findings


2.1 Service delivery

- Overall, the TEI program has delivered more services during 2021-22 than during 2020-21.
- In 2021-22, the TEI program provided services to a total of 133,945 individual clients and 977,815 unidentified group clients. This represents a 13% increase in individual clients and 37% in unidentified group clients during the year, compared to the previous year.

Figure 2.1 Number of individual clients and unidentified clients who received TEI services



- The TEI program has two streams of support – Community Strengthening stream, and Wellbeing and Safety stream.
 - Community Strengthening stream data reflects the nature of supports delivered (e.g. community events, information and advice provided by community centres), which are often provided in group settings and, compared to Wellbeing and Safety services, are more likely to be short term. There were 67,847 individual clients and 927,290 group clients in the Community Strengthening stream.
 - Wellbeing and Safety stream reflects the targeted, ongoing and often intensive nature of the supports delivered (e.g. case management, counselling, parenting programs and supported

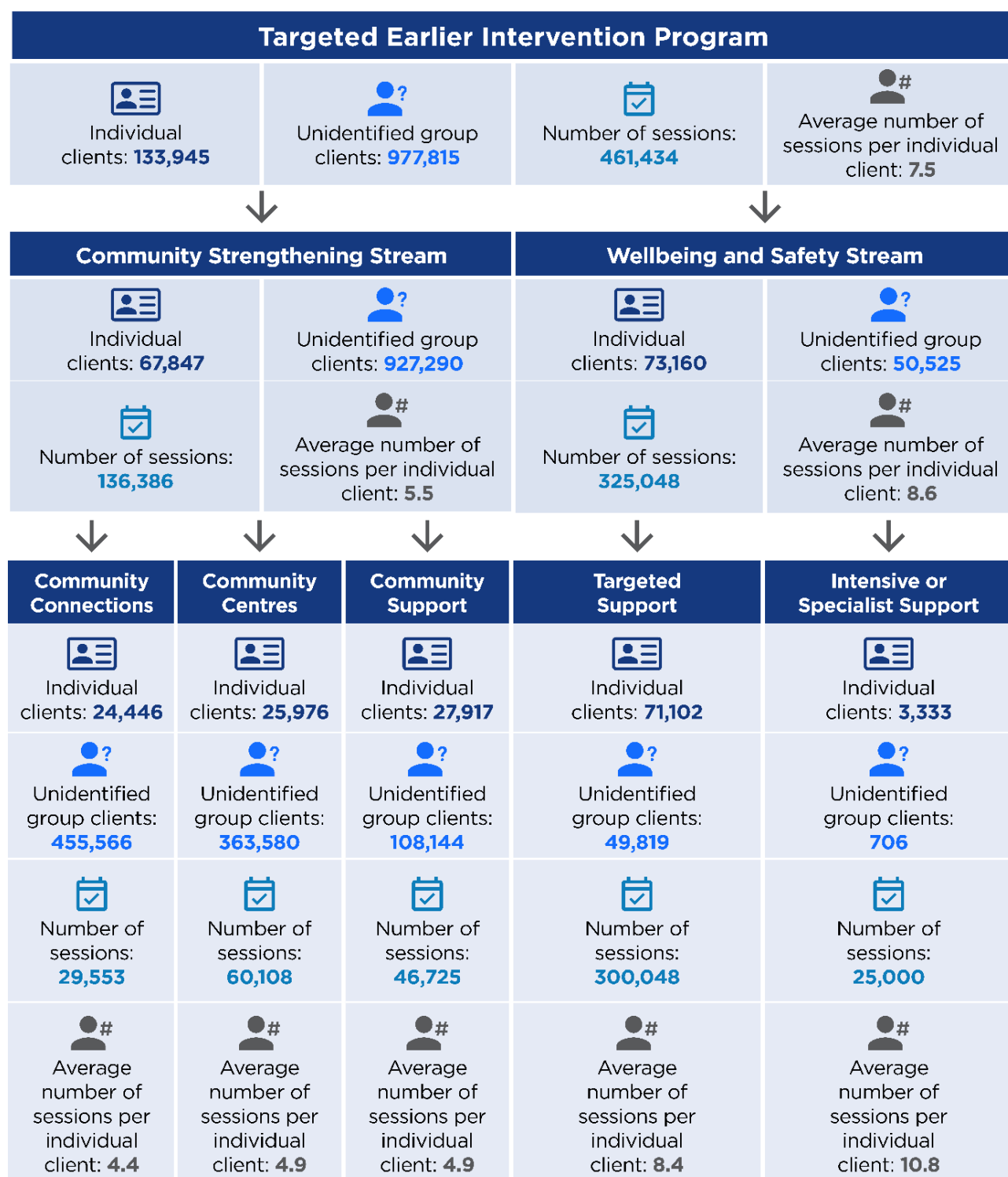


playgroups). There were 73,160 individual clients and 50,525 group clients in the Wellbeing and Safety stream.

- Despite the decrease in number of overall clients (individual and group clients) in the Wellbeing and Safety stream (-8.8%) from 2020-21 to 2021-22, the number of individual clients increased by 2.9%. This shift may reflect an improvement in data quality, as service providers start to enter more clients into the system as individuals when they access Wellbeing and Safety services, rather than as unidentified group clients.
- In 2021-22, there were 472 service providers in 1,440 outlet locations delivering TEI services across NSW, slightly lower than in 2020-21 (481 service providers and 1,469 outlet locations). Of this, 34 were Aboriginal service providers.
- There were 461,434 sessions of service delivery conducted with TEI clients. On average, the TEI program provided 7.5 sessions per individual client in 2021-22, slightly higher than in 2020-21 (7.2 sessions per client).
- Aboriginal clients tended to attend more sessions (9.4 sessions per client) when compared to all individual clients. This pattern was also recognised in 2020-21 (8.7 sessions per client).

Note: In 2020-21, data collection was only mandatory for the six months from 1 January 2021 to 30 June 2021 which may have led to smaller number of clients being recorded. Comparison and conclusion drawn from 2020-21 data should be treated with care and in context of this limitation.

Figure 2.2 Number of TEI clients per service stream and program activity¹



¹ For more information, refer to pages 6 and 7 in the 2021-22 Measure Description and Supplementary Guidelines document

2.2 Referral pathways for individual clients

- 133,945 individual clients were referred into TEI services in 2021-22. The main sources for referral into TEI services were self-referrals and internal (to the service provider), which together accounted for 52% of referrals where the referral source was known. These results may reflect the Program as a soft-entry point into the service system, and that TEI services are known providers in their local communities.
- Individual clients were most likely to seek support from TEI services for issues relating to 'Community participation and networks', 'Family functioning', and 'Mental health, wellbeing and self-care', which remained similar to 2020-21.
- TEI funded services made 22,206 referrals on behalf of clients in 2021-22, 34% more referrals than in the previous year.
- The majority of outbound referrals continued to be external referrals (55%) while 45% were internal². The large number of external referrals reflects the role TEI services play in supporting clients to navigate the service system. The two most common reasons for external referrals were mental health, wellbeing and self-care (17%) and family functioning (14%).
- The two most common reasons for internal referrals in 2021-22 were 'material wellbeing and basic necessities' (31%), and 'community participation and networks' (15%). While these were also the main reasons in 2020-21, material wellbeing and basic necessities accounted for a significantly higher proportion of clients than in the previous year (31% in 2021-22 compared to 12%). This means that higher proportion of individual clients, who were internally referred to another activity offered within the same organisation, required further supports in meeting basic material resources underpinning independence, participation and wellbeing. The impacts of COVID including mandatory isolation and high unemployment resulted in increased needs from families particularly for food and other basic necessities.

² For more information, refer to pages 7 and 8 in the 2021-22 Measure Description and Supplementary Guidelines document

2.3 Client demographics for individual clients³

- The 0–5 year age group remained the largest age group in the TEI program, representing 14% (19,279) of all individual clients.
- The 0-18 year age group made up 39% (51,897) of individual clients.
- There were 20,212 (15%) individual clients who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, a 20% increase from 16,775 individual clients in 2020-21. While there was an increase in the number Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in the program, the overall increase in total client numbers across the entire program means that the proportion of individual clients who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander only increased by 0.9 percentage point.
- The percentage of individual clients with ‘not stated’ Aboriginal status declined by 2.5 percentage points. Part of the increase in the number and proportion of Aboriginal clients could be due to efforts to improve data quality and identification by the TEI program and TEI service providers.
- 9.6% (12,799) of individual clients identified as living with disability, impairment or condition, which was comparable to 2020-21 (9.5%).
- There were 21,843 (16%) individual clients who identified as culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)⁴, while (80%) were not CALD and 3.5% had unknown CALD status.
- 2,815 (2.1%) of individual clients reported they were homeless and a further 4,398 (3.3%) reported they were at risk of homelessness in 2021-22. This is a slight increase from the previous year, where 1.8% and 3.2% of individual clients reported they were homeless and at risk of homelessness, respectively.

2.4 Client and community outcomes

Client Outcomes

- Overall, the TEI program’s data quality has improved from 2020-21, which was a major goal of the collaboration between TEI service providers and the TEI program. There was a higher number and proportion of individual

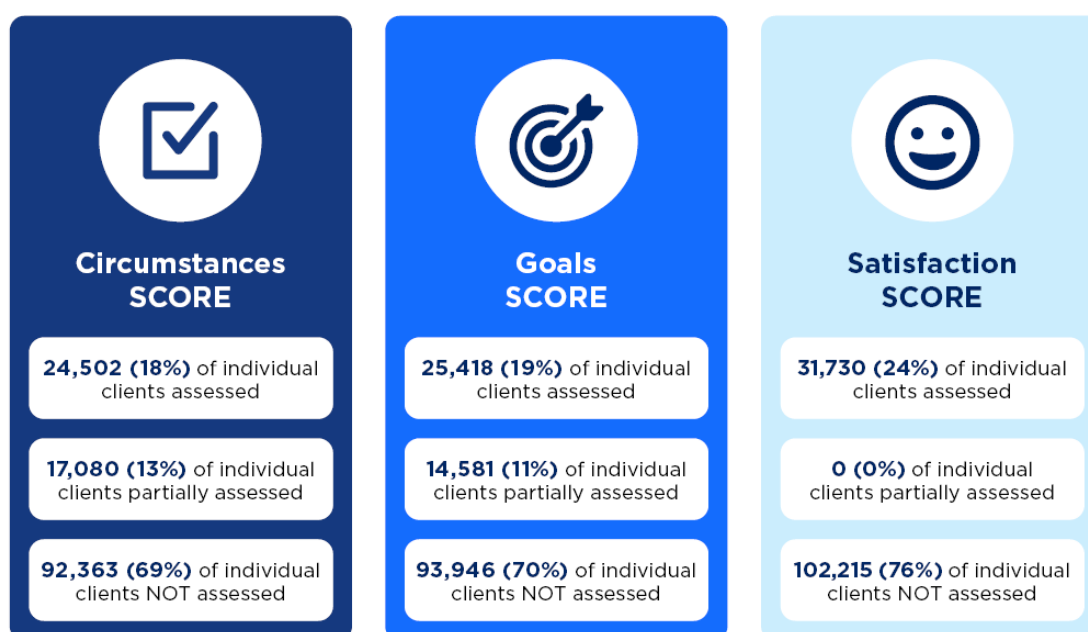
³ For more information, refer to page 8 in the 2021-22 Measure Description and Supplementary Guidelines document

⁴ For more information, refer to page 9 in the 2021-22 Measure Description and Supplementary Guidelines document

clients who were fully assessed across all types of SCOREs in 2021-22 (18% compared to 14% for Circumstances SCOREs, 19% compared to 14% for Goals SCOREs, and 24% compared to 20% Satisfaction SCOREs). However, both Circumstances and Goals SCOREs are still below the 50% requirement as per the TEI Data Collection and Reporting guide. Satisfaction SCOREs continued to exceed the 10% threshold in 2021-22.

- The proportion of individual clients who were partially assessed slightly increased across for both Circumstances and Goals SCOREs in 2021-22 (13% compared to 12% for Circumstances SCOREs, 11% compared to 10% for Goals SCOREs).

Figure 2.3 Number of TEI individual clients with SCORE recorded



- Out of 16,530 clients who were fully assessed in the Safety and Wellbeing stream, 12,188 (74%)⁵ of individual clients had positive shifts in outcome⁶.
- The outcome data that was recorded reflects positive impacts of the TEI program on client outcomes. All service types in 2021-22 showed an overall positive net shift in outcomes⁷. Net shifts in outcome are shown in Table 2.1.

⁵ Figures have been updated to 12,188 (74%) from 9,805 (59%) quoted in the December 2022 report.

⁶ For more information, refer to page 12 in the 2021-22 Measure Description and Supplementary Guidelines document

⁷ The net shift in SCOREs have been calculated by using average latest SCOREs minus average earliest SCOREs under the same service types. This does not take outcome domain into consideration.

- In the Community Strengthening stream, community members are supported to connect with their community and build informal and formal support networks. Community engagement activities are supporting clients to improve their knowledge of services in their local community and their ability to engage with these services. Clients are also improving their knowledge and skills as a result of relevant education and skills training.
 - Under this stream, Community Engagement service type under the Community Connections program activity showed the overall highest shift in outcome (+2.2) with 1,893 fully assessed individual clients. This service type includes community events or festivals that aim to enhance social cohesion and bring community members together which are in line with TEI outcomes.
- In the Wellbeing and Safety stream, parents and families improve their knowledge and skills through supported playgroups, parenting programs and family capacity building. Counselling services support clients to improve their mental health, empower clients and build their capacity to deal with challenges they face.
 - Under this stream, Mentoring/Peer Support service type under the Targeted Support program activity showed the overall highest shift in outcome (+1.5) with 521 fully assessed individual clients. This service type includes facilitating self-help/peer support groups for parents experiencing particular issues e.g. post-natal depression groups.
 - Parenting Program service type under the Targeted Support program activity also showed a similar positive shift of +1.3, with 2,696 fully assessed individual clients. This service type provides support specifically targeted at parent and child relationships and/or practical skill building for parents.
- Other than the small number of fully assessed individual clients, another area of concern in interpreting the outcome data is when some service types have SCOREs recorded in all seventeen outcome domains. This is problematic as TEI service types are not designed to improve every outcome domain. For example, it is highly unlikely that supported playgroup services are improving clients' employment and housing outcomes. Caution should be exercised when interpreting these results. This issue is expected to improve in the 2022-23 reporting year, as a result of implementing the August 2022 TEI Data Quality Strategy, which aims to streamline outcomes being reported against each service type.



Community Outcomes

- Community SCOREs are used to report collective outcomes for groups of clients.
- In 2021-22, average single Community SCOREs ranged from 1.9 to 5.0 for all service types. This means that clients experienced small positive changes up to significant changes after they have engaged with the TEI service.
- In cases where Community SCOREs are paired, every service type showed increases in the latest average SCOREs compared to earliest average SCOREs.

Table 2.1 Recorded outcomes SCORES and net shift in outcomes⁸

Community Strengthening Stream

| Program activity | Service type | Outcomes domain | Fully assessed individual clients | Average earliest SCORE | Average latest SCORE | Net shift in outcomes ⁹ |
|-----------------------|----------------------|---|-----------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| Community Connections | Community Engagement | Community participation & networks | 1,384 | 1.6 | 3.8 | +2.2 |
| | | Engagement with relevant support services | 886 | 1.6 | 3.6 | +2.0 |
| | | Changed knowledge and access to information | 653 | 1.7 | 4.4 | +2.7 |
| | Social participation | Community participation & networks | 1,223 | 2.2 | 3.5 | +1.4 |

⁸ Service types and outcome domains being shown in this table had the highest number of fully assessed individual clients (top 2 service types per program activity and top 3 outcome domains under the selected service types)

⁹ For more information, refer to page 11 in the 2021-22 Measure Description and Supplementary Guidelines document

| Program activity | Service type | Outcomes domain | Fully assessed individual clients | Average earliest SCORE | Average latest SCORE | Net shift in outcomes ⁹ |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| | | Engagement with relevant support services | 1,102 | 1.7 | 3.3 | +1.5 |
| | | Changed knowledge and access to information | 853 | 1.9 | 3.3 | +1.4 |
| Community Centres | Information/advice/referral | Changed knowledge and access to information | 2,291 | 1.3 | 2.8 | +1.4 |
| | | Engagement with relevant support services | 2,210 | 1.3 | 2.7 | +1.5 |
| | | Community participation & networks | 550 | 1.5 | 2.5 | +1.0 |
| | Social participation | Community participation & networks | 868 | 2.4 | 4.0 | +1.6 |

| Program activity | Service type | Outcomes domain | Fully assessed individual clients | Average earliest SCORE | Average latest SCORE | Net shift in outcomes ⁹ |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| | | Changed skills | 796 | 2.1 | 4.1 | +2.0 |
| | | Engagement with relevant support services | 707 | 2.0 | 3.4 | +1.5 |
| Community Support | Education and Skills training | Changed knowledge and access to information | 1,403 | 2.3 | 4.2 | +1.9 |
| | | Changed skills | 1,396 | 2.5 | 4.1 | +1.7 |
| | | Education and skills training | 1,207 | 2.4 | 4.2 | +1.8 |
| | Advocacy/Support | Material wellbeing and basic necessities | 947 | 1.7 | 2.8 | +1.1 |
| | | Changed knowledge and access to information | 814 | 2.1 | 3.3 | +1.1 |


| Program activity | Service type | Outcomes domain | Fully assessed individual clients | Average earliest SCORE | Average latest SCORE | Net shift in outcomes ⁹ |
|------------------|--------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| | | Changed impact of immediate crisis | 676 | 1.9 | 2.9 | +1.1 |

Wellbeing and Safety Stream

| Program activity | Service type | Outcomes domain | Fully assessed individual clients | Average earliest SCORE | Average latest SCORE | Net shift in outcomes ¹⁰ |
|------------------|----------------------|---|-----------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Targeted Support | Supported playgroups | Age-appropriate development | 2,772 | 2.8 | 3.9 | +1.2 |
| | | Community participation & networks | 2,586 | 2.7 | 3.9 | +1.3 |
| | | Changed knowledge and access to information | 2,073 | 2.6 | 4.0 | +1.4 |

¹⁰ For more information, refer to page 11 in the 2021-22 Measure Description and Supplementary Guidelines document

| Program activity | Service type | Outcomes domain | Fully assessed individual clients | Average earliest SCORE | Average latest SCORE | Net shift in outcomes ¹⁰ |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | Family Capacity Building | Family functioning | 2,149 | 2.7 | 3.5 | +0.8 |
| | | Engagement with relevant support services | 2,120 | 2.7 | 3.6 | +0.9 |
| | | Empowerment, choice and control to make own decisions | 1,942 | 2.7 | 3.6 | +1.0 |
| Intensive or Specialist Support | Family Capacity Building | Family functioning | 167 | 2.2 | 3.2 | +0.9 |
| | | Mental health, wellbeing and self-care | 167 | 2.1 | 2.9 | +0.8 |
| | | Personal and family safety | 161 | 2.7 | 3.3 | +0.7 |



| Program activity | Service type | Outcomes domain | Fully assessed individual clients | Average earliest SCORE | Average latest SCORE | Net shift in outcomes ¹⁰ |
|------------------|--------------|---|-----------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | Counselling | Mental health, wellbeing and self-care | 107 | 2.5 | 3.1 | 0.6 |
| | | Empowerment, choice and control to make own decisions | 77 | 3.0 | 3.5 | 0.5 |
| | | Community participation & networks | 73 | 2.8 | 3.2 | 0.4 |

2.5 Client satisfaction

Data collected on client satisfaction indicates that a majority of TEI clients were satisfied with the services they received. There were 37,779 satisfaction surveys¹¹ completed in 2021-22, a 34% increase from 2020-21. 70% (26,291) of the 2021-22 satisfaction surveys show that individual clients ‘agreed’ that they were satisfied with the TEI service they received.

Despite having higher number of satisfaction surveys completed in 2021-22, the proportion of surveys where individual clients ‘agreed’ that they were satisfied with the TEI service decreased by around 6 percentage points in 2021-22.

In 2021-22, the counting rule has been modified to show the results of every satisfaction survey conducted.¹²

When the new counting rule is applied to 2020-21 data, 76% (21,313 survey responses) of the total surveys completed showed that individual clients ‘agreed’ that they were satisfied with the TEI service. This is 3 percentage points higher compared to the previous counting rule applied in 2020-21 Annual report (73%, 17,079 individual clients).

¹¹ For more information, refer to page 12 in the 2021-22 Measure Description and Supplementary Guidelines document

¹² Many individual clients have completed more than one satisfaction surveys throughout the financial year, however, the 2020-21 annual report only captured some instances of client’s satisfaction e.g. clients who have given different responses (they will be counted multiple times across ‘1-5’ responses) while other clients who have given a single response for all of their completed satisfaction surveys will only be counted once. This counting rule can create a potential bias and can underestimate the satisfaction survey results.

3 Data Quality Strategy

A new TEI Data Quality Strategy was introduced in mid-2022 (August), which was outside the 2021-22 reporting period, therefore it is anticipated that data quality will continue to further improve in future years.

The key areas of focus for the Data Quality Strategy include:

- Supporting Districts to build capacity and confidence using DEX and enable them to support funded services with DEX.
- Improving the level of DEX experience across TEI service providers.
- Exploring options for tailored DEX training and support for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.
- Increasing the number of TEI funded services that select the Partnership Approach Agreement on DEX.
- Improving quality statistical linkage keys (SLKs).
- Increasing the levels of individual demographic data reported.
- Providing clearer advice regarding minimum percentage of 'individual clients' to be reported for each Program Activity.
- Improving alignment needed between TEI contracts, Program Logics and DEX reporting.
- Improving reporting of SCORE outcomes.
- Exploring the option of developing a naming convention for Outlets to help Districts and service providers manage contracts.

Concurrent to the TEI Data Quality Strategy is the [Community Strengthening Data Project](#)¹³ which is being rolled out after a successful pilot, to better understand how TEI services contribute to community wellbeing and help tell the story behind DEX data.

¹³ <https://www.lcsansw.org.au/Public/Public/Our-Work/Projects/Community-Strengthening-Data-Project.aspx>

4 Conclusions

Data for activities in the Community Strengthening stream reflect the nature of supports delivered, which are often provided in group settings, and compared to Wellbeing and Safety services, are more likely to be short term. These services are designed to strengthen communities, to build community cohesion and belonging, and to act as a soft-entry point into the service system. Client outcome data demonstrate that positive outcomes are being achieved in this space.

Data for activities in the Wellbeing and Safety stream reflect the targeted, ongoing and often intensive nature of the supports delivered. These services are designed to build on the strengths of families and support them to address key risk factors which may result in children and young people being unsafe. Client outcome data show these services are supporting parents and families to build their parenting skills and knowledge, and to foster positive parent-child relationships crucial to creating a safe and nurturing home environment.

Data quality remains an area for improvement, to enable robust conclusions about the impact of the program to be drawn from the data. However, improvements since 2020-21 are evident already, and implementation of the August 2022 [TEI Data Quality Strategy](#)¹⁴ is expected to result in further improvements to data quality for the 2022-23 reporting period.

Importantly, DCJ recognises that the quantitative routine data collected and reported through DEX is only one part of the story and doesn't provide the rich narrative that highlights the impact and outcomes the TEI program has on communities and families' lives.

Given this, an independent evaluation team has been identified to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the TEI program. The TEI evaluation will commence in January 2023 with the final evaluation report due in June 2024.

It is envisaged that this evaluation will collect and provide rich qualitative data and information that highlights the overall impact of the TEI program, alongside the quantitative DEX data. The evaluation will provide an independent mechanism to capture the voices of clients and practitioners in understanding the impacts of TEI services on the lives of children, young people, families and local communities.

¹⁴ <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=837469>