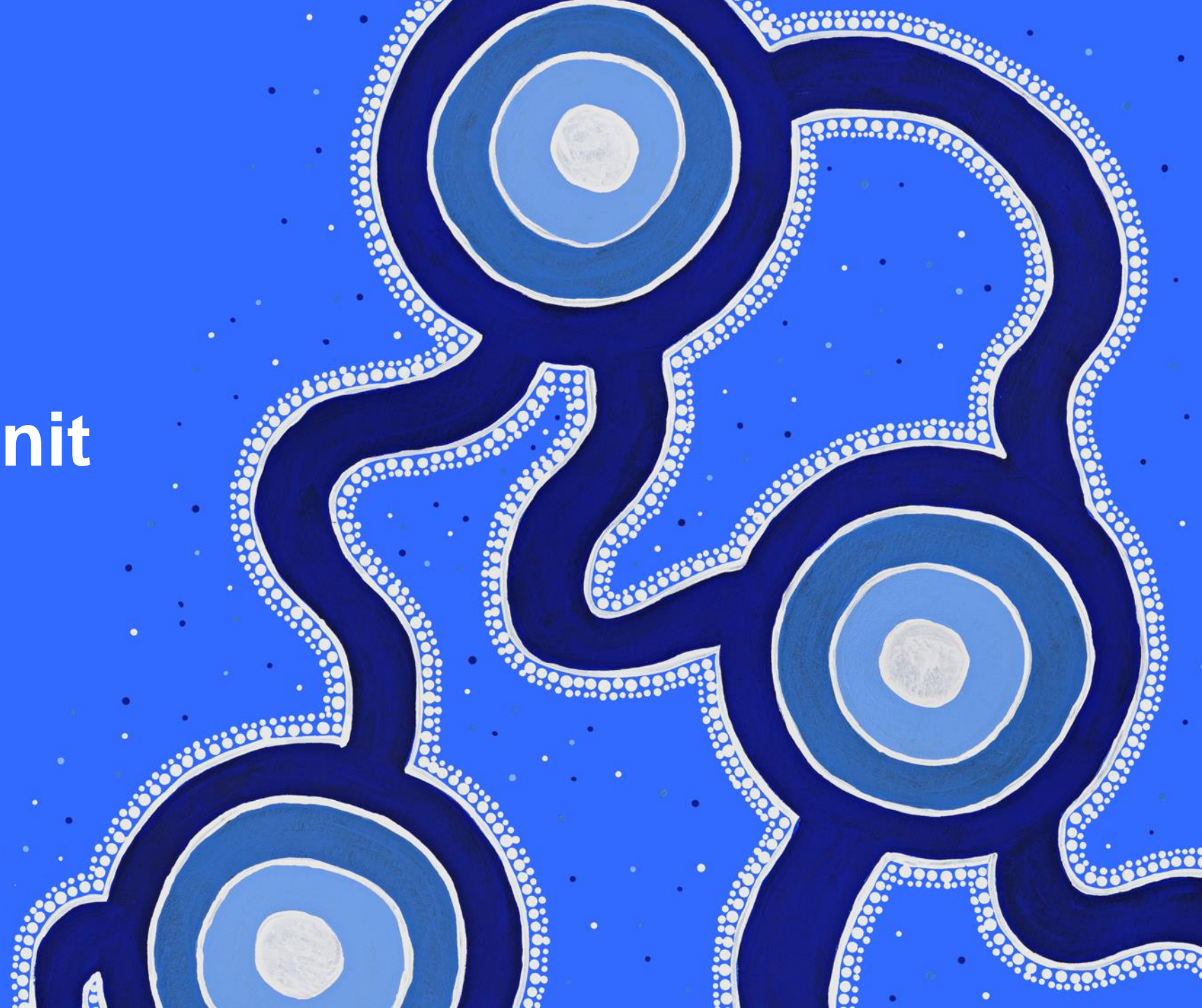


# First Nations Unit and HAPEE



# Abstract- for your reference as you review

Serious ear and hearing difficulties adversely affect one in three Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Australia. The Hearing Assessment Program Early Ears (HAPEE) is a national program which aims to increase awareness of ear and hearing health, increase the capability of health workers to manage ear disease, and provides diagnostic hearing assessments for children aged 0 to 6 years old. Through the program, the First Nations Unit of Hearing Australia established partnerships with outreach sites in 240 towns, remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and metropolitan suburbs. Over 300 upskilling sessions were delivered to more than 350 primary health workers, early educators, and teachers. Despite COVID-19 restrictions, Community Engagement Officers collaborated with local services and held approximately 240 awareness activities reaching over 5,000 young children in the community over a 10-month period.

Between June 2019 and December 2021, HAPEE assessed approximately 16,500 young children across Australia with a focus on regional, rural and remote communities. One in two children presented with otitis media and one in four children presented with identifiable hearing loss. Ear health and hearing improved in over 50% of the children. Children living in regional and remote communities experienced a higher rate of otitis media while children living in urban communities had a higher rate of eustachian tube dysfunction. One in three children living in regional and remote communities had a hearing loss compared with only one in three young children living in urban communities. HAPEE continues to work in partnership throughout Australia to address the communities' needs and address the ear and hearing health disadvantage experienced by children living in regional and remote Australia.



# Acknowledgement of Country

I wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on today, whose cultures and customs have nurtured and continue to nurture this land, since the Dreamtime. I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging and acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People meeting with us today





# Outline

- What is HAPEE?
- What is the ear health of children seen through HAPEE?
- What is the hearing status of children seen through HAPEE?
- Is there a difference in ear health and hearing status between children living in regional, remote, and urban areas?



# What is Hearing Assessment Program Early Ears?





# What about ear and hearing health in Australia?

- Australia has some of the highest rates of middle ear disease
- Hearing loss and OM are more common in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population
  - One and a half to two times more likely to fail newborn hearing screening
  - Twice as likely to suffer long-term ear and hearing health problems
  - Three times more likely to have OM than non-Indigenous children

# How do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children experience OM?

- At a younger age at first episode
- With a higher frequency of infection
- With greater severity
- With greater persistence than in non-Indigenous children



# HAPEE is

- A program within the First Nations Service Unit at Hearing Australia
- Provides safe and simple ear and hearing checks
- Children aged 0-6 years who do not yet attend full time school
- Provides on-going advice and support to parents and carers



## HAPEE's aims:

- Service delivery
- Capability training
- Awareness raising



# Where does HAPEE deliver services?



240 Outreach  
partnerships

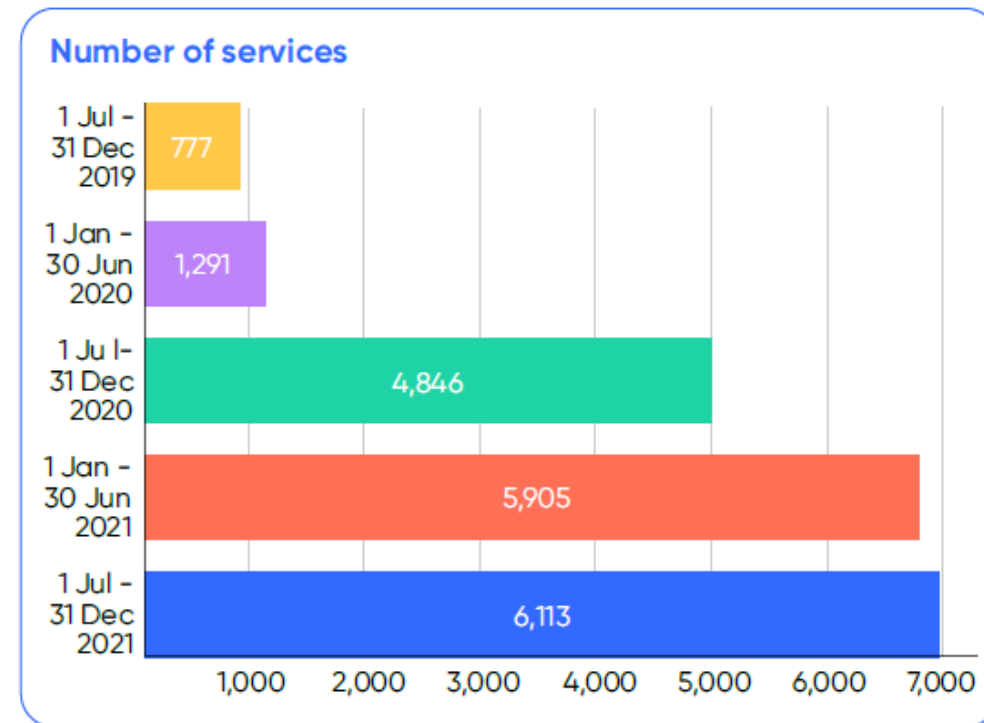
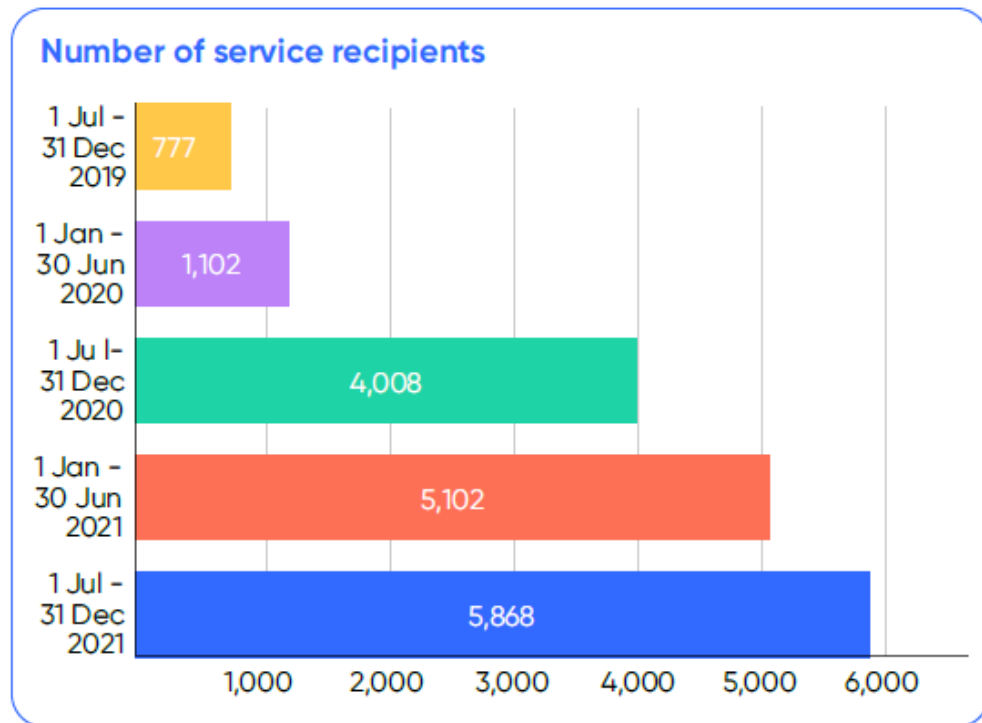


104 Hearing  
Centres

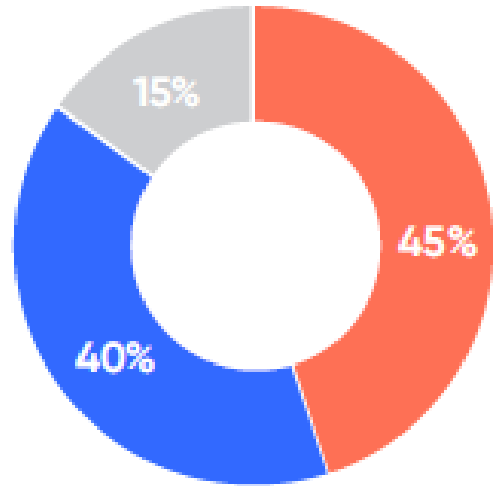




# Growth in services



## Which children does HAPEE see?



0-3 yrs



4-6 yrs



>6 yrs





# How does HAPEE increase capability?

From August 2019 to December 2021, 312 upskilling sessions were delivered to 369 primary health workers, early educators, and teachers by HAPEE Audiologists



# How does HAPEE raise awareness of ear and hearing health?

Despite COVID-19 restrictions, the Community Engagement Officers continued to collaborate with local services and held 239 awareness activities reaching 5,371 individuals in the community, between March 2021 and December 2021.





# What is the ear health of children seen by HAPEE?



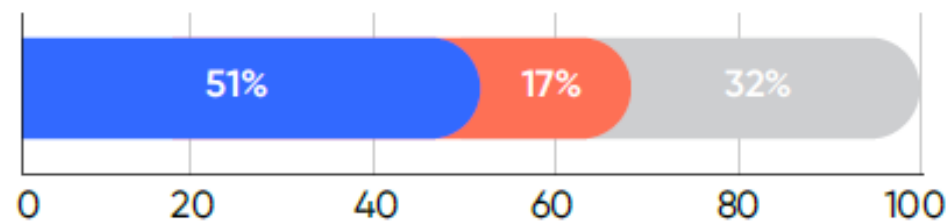
1 in 2 children have OM in at least one ear





# Ear health

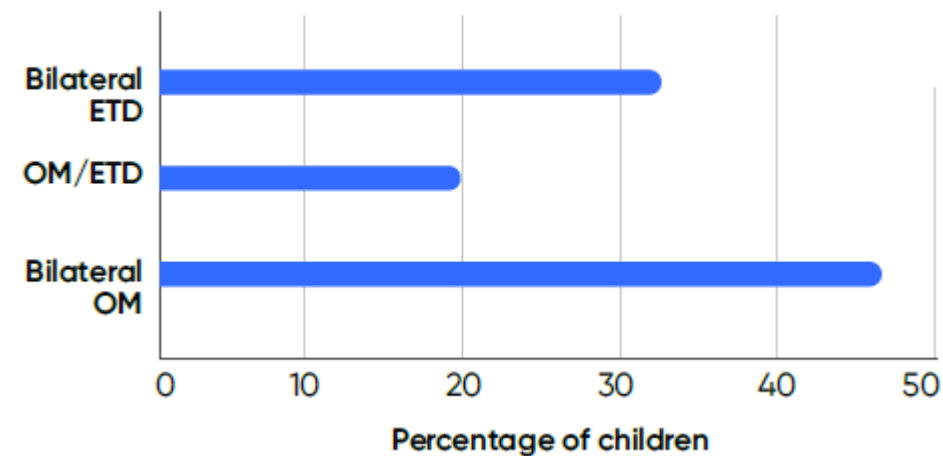
Ear health



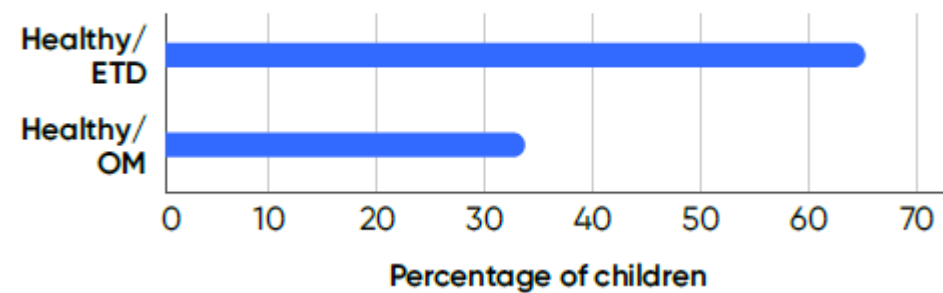
- Bilateral healthy ears
- Unilateral healthy ear
- Bilateral ear conditions

N= 13,726

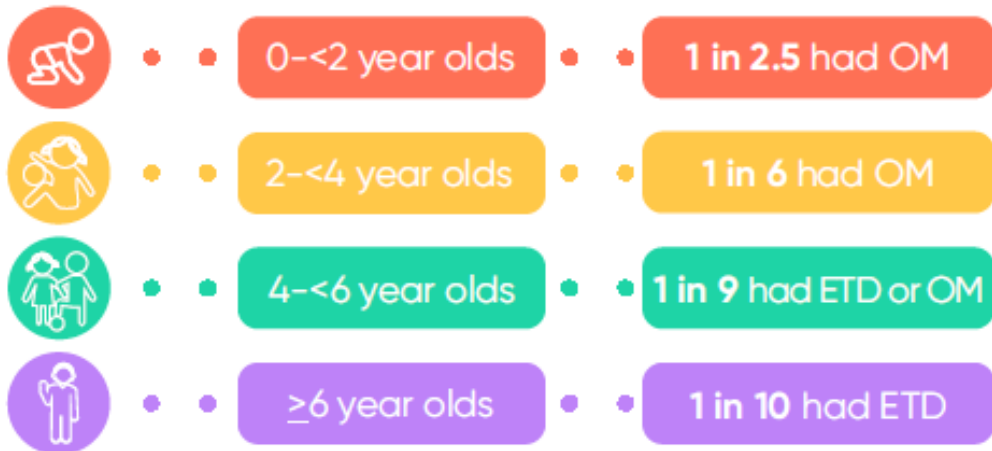
Bilateral ear health



Unilateral ear health



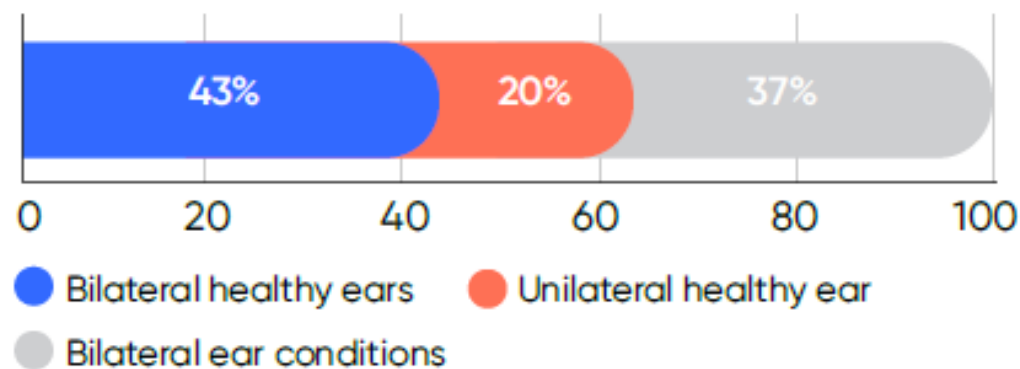
# OM and ETD by age





# What changes happen over time?

Ear health at first visit



N=2,455

Ear conditions included OM and ETD

- First visit: 907 (37%) children had bilateral ear condition
- Second visit: 330 (36%) children had bilateral healthy ears and 176 (19%) children had unilateral health ears at most recent visit
- First visit: 500 (20%) children had unilateral healthy ear
- Second visit: 251 (50%) children had bilateral health ears at most recent visit

# What is the hearing status of children seen by HAPEE?





# Hearing status

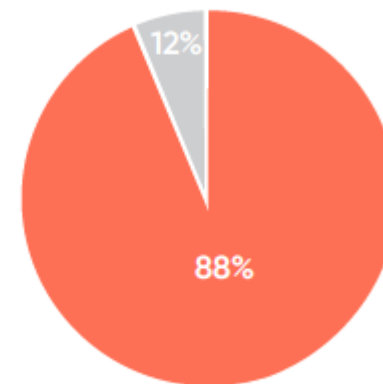
1 in 4 children have a hearing loss



N= 13,337

Normal hearing: 25 dB HL or better

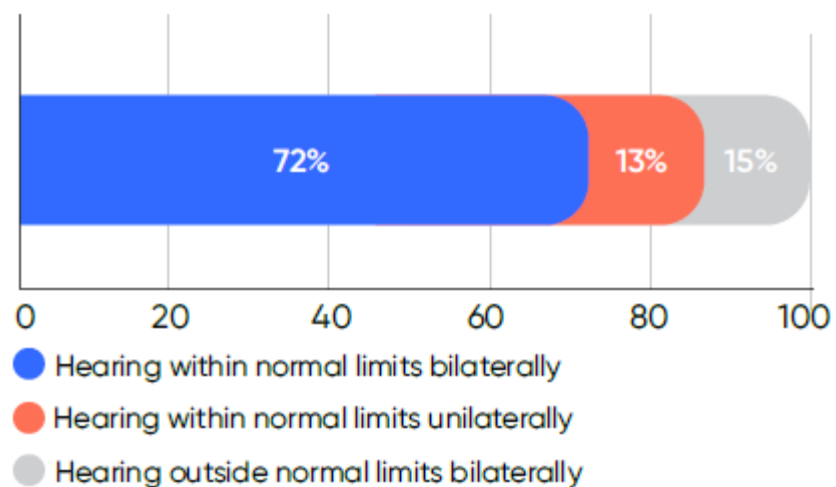
Hearing loss



● Mild ● Moderate or greater

# What changes happen over time?

Hearing status at first visit



N=2,455

Normal hearing: 0-25 dB HL

- First visit: 372 (15%) children had hearing outside normal limits bilaterally
- Second visit: 118 (32%) children had hearing with normal limits bilaterally and 107 (29%) children had hearing with normal limits unilaterally at most recent visit
- First visit: 325 (13%) children had hearing within normal limits unilaterally
- Second visit: 212 (65%) children had hearing within normal limits bilaterally at most recent visit

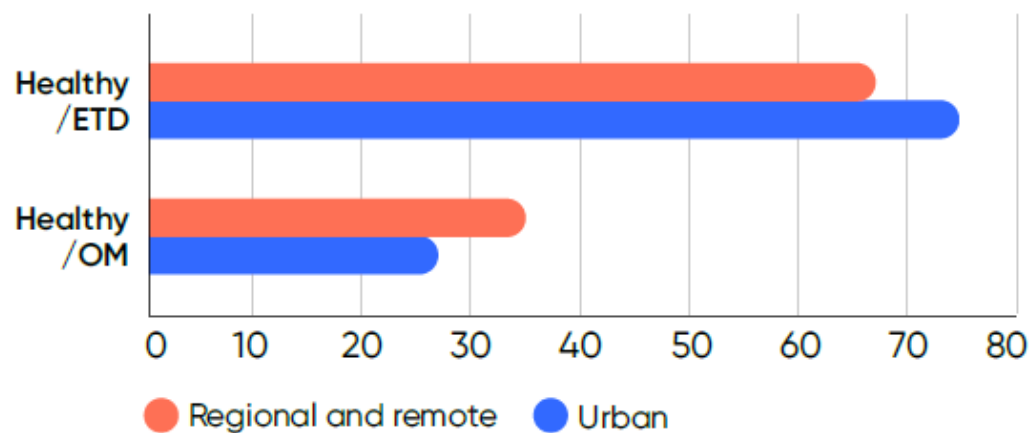


# What is the difference in ear and hearing health between children living in regional and remote communities?

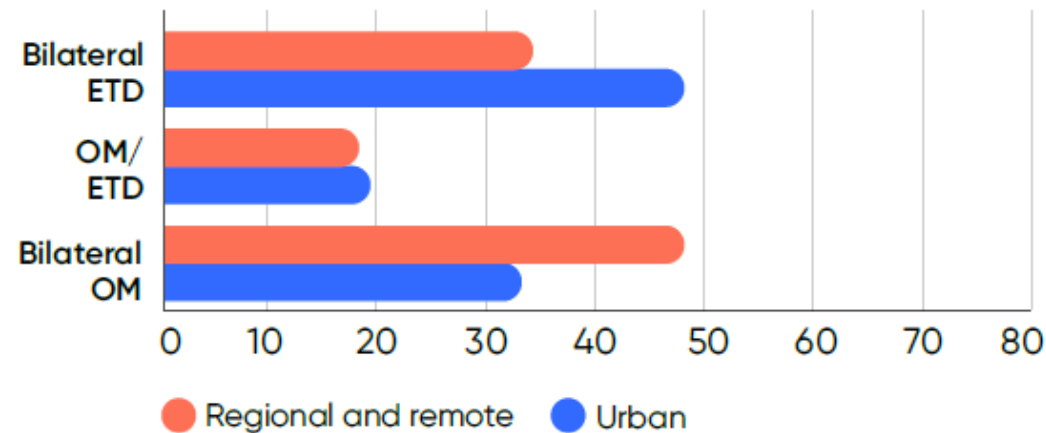


# Ear health

## Unilateral ear health



## Bilateral ear health



Percentage of children



# Hearing Status

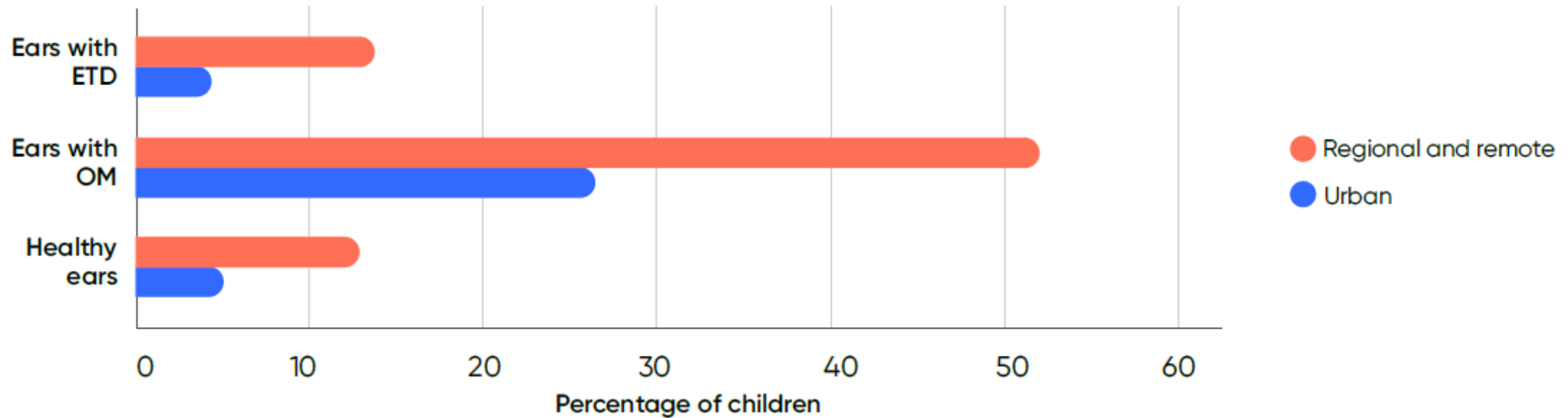


**1 in 8 children** living in urban communities had a hearing loss at the most recent visit (12%).



**1 in 3 children** living in regional and remote communities had a hearing loss at the most recent visit (31%).

# Children with hearing loss





# Thank you for listening

Please contact me at [traci.flynn@hearing.com.au](mailto:traci.flynn@hearing.com.au) with any questions.

You can also contact the First Nations Service Unit at [firstnations@hearing.com.au](mailto:firstnations@hearing.com.au)

