



Growing Up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC)



Overview

The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC) tracks children's development and life course trajectories in today's economic, social and political environment.

Content covers multiple aspects of individual, family, community and society characteristics for each individual. It has a broad multi-disciplinary base, and examines policy-relevant questions about development and lifetime wellbeing.

By tracking study participants over time, researchers will be able to determine the factors associated with consistency and change in life course pathways.

Purpose of the study

A major aim of the study is to identify policy opportunities for improving support for children and their families, and identifying opportunities for early intervention.

Study participants

LSAC commenced in 2004 with two cohorts of around 5,000 children each, aged 4 - 5 and 0 - 1 years. Participants are a representative sample of children of these ages across Australia at that time, except for remote or very remote locations. Data is collected every two years. Study participants include the child (when of an appropriate age) and parents (both resident and non-resident), carers, teachers, and the interviewer's own observations.

Data linkage

LSAC data is linked to the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC), and sources of administrative data including the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS), and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Schedule (PBS).

Governance

LSAC is conducted through a partnership between the Department of Social Services (DSS), the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS), and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). A group of leading researchers from universities around Australia provide content and methodology advice.

Physical health

In 2014-15, a special one-off physical health assessment of the younger cohort was undertaken. This assessment provides rich information about the health of young people as they grow from children to teenagers, through tests of vital organ functions, bone health, fitness, strength, vision, hearing, diet, activity and more.

This information helps to inform how a child's first decade determines their health, as they approach teenage years. A subset of measures was also conducted on parents to enable intergenerational health analysis.

More information

<http://growingupinaustralia.gov.au/>
www.dss.gov.au/nclcd/

LSAC data has been used in over 200 academic research publications and over 400 conference presentations. Analyses using LSAC data have made major contributions to policy development, including:

- modelling the impacts of paid parental leave
- informing family law reforms
- the development of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)
- Australian Human Rights Commission Children's Rights report
- research into childhood obesity
- various reports by the Productivity Commission, Australian Communications and Media Authority, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, and the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

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<http://thesource.dss.gov.au>

Study Content Overview

Family demographics

- Sex
- Age
- Relationships within family
- Relationship history
- Ethnicity
- Arrival in Australia
- Country of birth
- Indigenous status
- Type of family
- Children living elsewhere
- Non-resident children
- Parental education
- Socioeconomic position
- Religion

Child's general development

- Global physical health
- Physical measurement
- Behaviour

Child's social and emotional outcomes

- Behaviour
- Emotional development
- Social development
- Temperament

Child's learning and cognition outcomes

- Language development
- Matrix reasoning
- Executive functioning
- School readiness
- Reading
- Writing
- Numeracy

Finances

- Financial stress
- Financial literacy
- Government benefits
- Income

Paid work

- Combining work and family
- Labour force status
- Job duties and responsibilities
- Leave entitlements
- Job search
- Working conditions

Housing

- Key indicator
- Current housing
- Previous housing
- Home environment
- Neighbourhood liveability/facilities

Social capital

- Attachment to family/friends
- Contact with family/friends
- Neighbourhood belonging
- Neighbourhood safety
- Social support
- Service use and unmet needs
- Volunteering
- Civic activities/social participation

Health behaviour

- Alcohol consumption
- Diet and nutrition
- Physical activity
- Sun exposure
- Smoking
- Substance use
- Help seeking behaviours
- Attitudes towards risk behaviours
- Sexual behaviours and pregnancy
- Self-harming and suicidal behaviours

Health status

- Global health
- Life satisfaction
- Disability
- Medical conditions
- Mental health
- Medical history
- Oral health
- Injuries
- Ongoing medical conditions
- Hospital stays
- Sleeping problems
- Carer activities

Parenting

- Consistent parenting
- Hostile parenting
- Parental warmth
- Inductive reasoning
- Parental monitoring
- Parental involvement
- Parental self- efficiency
- Demandingness
- Responsiveness
- Autonomy granting

Program characteristics

- Formal/informal care
- Holiday care
- Carer-child affection
- Education/care choices
- Payment for child care
- School/care enjoyment
- Time in care
- Carer qualification

Education

- Interest in subjects
- School environment
- Motivation to learn
- School belonging
- Education choice
- School type
- School facilities
- School liking and satisfaction
- Absenteeism
- Teacher qualification

Parent living elsewhere (PLE)

- Child support
- Contact with child
- PLE characteristics
- PLE household info
- Quality of relationship with child and other parent
- Type of family
- Parental involvement

Relationships

- Couple relationships
- Family cohesion
- Family violence indicators
- Gender role attitudes

Child's home environment

- Activities at home
- Activities outside the home
- Activities with family
- Expectations about education
- Parental involvement
- Extra-curricular activities
- Internet use
- TV, computer and electronic games use

Intergenerational data

- Educational qualification
- Alcohol and drug use
- Mental and physical health
- Breadwinner
- Financial difficulties
- Parental educational interest
- Puberty

Future topics

- Gambling
- Driving
- Various risk behaviours
- Education-work transition
- Higher education
- Study child's offspring