



## National Centre for Longitudinal Data

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# Strengths and problems in Indigenous children's communities

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In 2012 (Wave 5) of *Footprints in Time: The Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children (LSIC)* primary carers were asked about their level of satisfaction with various aspects of their lives including the neighbourhood in which they lived and feeling part of their community. The majority of primary carers were satisfied, with average scores of 8.1 and 7.6 out of 10 respectively. Nearly 55 per cent rated their satisfaction with their neighbourhood as nine or ten and just over 46 per cent rated their satisfaction with feeling part of the community as a nine or ten.

In 2013 (Wave 6) primary carers were re-asked whether they thought their communities were safe, had places for children to play and were good for young children. Wave 6 responses are similar to those in previous waves.

**Table 1: Characteristics of LSIC communities in Wave 6, per cent**

Response	Good community for little kids	Good places to play	Safe community
Very good / lots of places / very safe	35.2	23.0	20.2
Good / Few place that are good / quite safe	34.0	28.7	41.0
Okay / some places are good / okay	19.6	26.5	27.0
Not so good / not many / not very safe	8.6	16.2	10.5
Really bad / none / dangerous	2.6	5.6	1.2

While most primary carers were satisfied that their community was a good place for young children, fewer agreed that their community was safe and even fewer thought their community was well provided with good places to play.

Primary carers were also invited to tell us about the strengths of the neighbourhood in which they lived. Aspects commonly mentioned were family and friends, neighbours, safety and proximity to amenities such as shops, schools, parks and transport. The most commonly mentioned aspect of a carer's neighbourhood was that it was quiet. Some respondents specified that they liked being with other Indigenous people or that they were currently living in the area in which they had grown up. However, not everyone agrees about what is desirable; some like having family nearby and others prefer a bit of distance. Equally, while some people enjoyed interaction with their neighbours others preferred to be left alone. Most people said something positive about their neighbourhood but a small number (2.2 per cent) could not think of anything positive at the time or commented on the lack of a negative characteristic rather than providing a positive attribute.

In Wave 6 LSIC asked about the perceived prevalence of 19 different problems in communities. Primary carers were asked whether each was a very big problem in their community (happening all the time), a big problem (happens a lot of the time), a small problem (happens a bit of the time), or not a problem. To analyse the data, responses were grouped into two, combining the first two (very big/big problem) and second two (small/no problem) categories. Primary carers who answered that they didn't know were included in the second category on the basis that if they are unaware of a problem it is unlikely to be having an impact on their life.

Overall, the five problems of concern to the greatest number of families are dangerous driving, people drinking too much, children being out at night, children not going to school and drug taking. However, these problems were not experienced by primary carers in all communities to the same extent. Table 2 also shows how the

prevalence of each of the problems reported changes with the level of relative isolation. Many of the problems were significantly more likely to occur in remote areas.

**Table 2: Percentage of primary carers reporting problems as big or very big in their community by level of relative isolation**

Type of problem	No isolation (Urban) n=344	Low isolation n=628	Moderate, high or extreme isolation n=265	Total n=1237
Dangerous driving *	30.2	33.0	40.0	33.7
Break-ins, robbery or theft	18.9	22.1	22.6	21.3
Pollution and sewerage *	2.3	3.0	9.8	4.3
Graffiti and vandalism *	16.0	12.3	20.8	15.1
Drinking too much grog *	14.8	28.8	52.5	30.0
Drug taking *	18.0	26.0	37.4	26.2
Drug dealing	17.7	22.1	24.2	21.3
Too much sniffing *	6.1	2.4	8.7	4.8
Gangs	5.5	6.4	9.1	6.7
Racially motivated violence	5.5	5.9	2.3	5.0
Payback	4.9	8.6	6.1	7.0
Family violence *	7.0	12.9	27.2	14.3
Young people fighting *	11.3	16.4	31.7	18.3
Adults hurting kids *	2.9	4.6	14.0	6.1
Younger people hurting older people *	5.2	7.2	13.6	8.0
Pressure to support others *	4.4	8.4	26.0	11.1
Kids being out at night *	18.3	29.9	46.4	30.2
Kids not going to school *	15.1	26.9	40.8	26.6
Cyber bullying *	10.8	21.8	29.1	20.3

The number of different neighbourhood problems primary carers experience has a significant negative impact on their satisfaction with their neighbourhood<sup>1</sup>. Having one or more problems in the neighbourhood is related to significantly lower overall life satisfaction, compared to people with no perceived problems in the neighbourhood<sup>2</sup>.

## Key Statistics

- **8.1 out of 10** – the average level of satisfaction LSIC primary carers feel with the community in which they live.
- **26.6 per cent** – the proportion of primary carers who reported a problem with children not going to school in their community.
- **61.2 per cent** – the proportion of primary carers who reported feeling that their neighbourhood is very or quite safe.

<sup>1</sup> In a bivariate regression.

<sup>2</sup> In a bivariate regression.