



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Social Services**



The Longitudinal Study  
of Australian Children

# Longitudinal Studies

## *Growing Up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children*



**LONGITUDINAL  
STUDIES**

### Overview

The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC) tracks children's development and life course trajectories over time in today's economic, social and political environment. It is conducted through a partnership between the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS). A group of leading researchers from universities around Australia provide content and methodology advice.

The study 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.

### Purpose of the study

LSAC examines the impact of Australia's unique social and cultural environment on the next generation. A major aim of the study is to identify policy opportunities for early intervention to improve support for children and their families.

### Study Participants

LSAC commenced in 2004 with two cohorts of around 5,000 children each, aged 0 - 1 and 4 - 5 years. Participants are a representative sample of children of these ages across Australia at that time, except for those living in 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 management

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).

All information collected from and about study participants is held in strict confidence. Interviewers, researchers and others involved in the study comply with the *Privacy Act 1988* which dictates how we collect and hold study data. Access to data is limited to authorised data users for use in approved research and analysis.

### Use of LSAC

LSAC data have been used in over 300 academic research publications and over 200 reports. 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.

More information is available on the website:

[GrowingupinAustralia.gov.au](http://GrowingupinAustralia.gov.au)

**More information** about DSS longitudinal surveys is available at: [www.dss.gov.au/longitudinal-studies](http://www.dss.gov.au/longitudinal-studies)

**Data access** - you can apply via the Australian Data Archive - [dataverse.ada.edu.au/dataverse/lisac](http://dataverse.ada.edu.au/dataverse/lisac)  
Releases include a data user guide, a data dictionary and questionnaires with data labels.

**Ad hoc data requests** are available for small requirements. Please email your request to: [LongitudinalStudies@dss.gov.au](mailto:LongitudinalStudies@dss.gov.au)

**Bibliographic research repository** for longitudinal analysis using DSS datasets: see [flosse.dss.gov.au](http://flosse.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