Australian Government

Department of Social Services

Footprints in Time

The Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children

Longitudinal Studies

Footprints in Time: The Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children

LONGITUDINAL STUDIES

Overview

The Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children (LSIC) follows the development of around 1,700 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families across urban, regional and remote Australia. The study provides a data resource that can be drawn on by government, researchers, service providers, parents and communities.

LSIC is funded by the Australian Government, led by an Indigenous majority Steering Committee, and managed by the Department of Social Services (DSS). It is one of the largest longitudinal studies of Indigenous people worldwide.

Purpose of the study

LSIC aims to improve the understanding of what helps Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people grow up strong.

Survey methodology

Planning for the study started in 2003, and data collection started in 2008, building on two years of consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and two years of trials and pilot tests.

Information is collected annually from two groups of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children who were aged 6 to 24 months (B cohort) and 3½ - 5 years (K cohort) when the study began. LSIC also follows their parents, carers and school teachers. Interviews are conducted by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interviewers.

Quantitative and qualitative responses are collected about a range of aspects of the child's life including study children's aspirations, role models and cultural strengths.

Data management

Data is linked with the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and My School data.

Ethical clearance is sought from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Ethics Committee as the primary Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) for the study.

Key research questions

The key research questions, formulated under the guidance of the LSIC Steering Committee, are:

- What do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people need to grow up strong?
- What helps Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people to stay on track or become healthier, more positive and strong?
- What is the importance of family, extended family and community in adolescence and emerging adulthood?
- How can services and other types of support make a difference to the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people?
- How do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people transition into and through adulthood?
- What does it mean to be a young Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander growing up in the 21st century?

Footprints in Time locations

The LSIC sample is not nationally representative. However, it does broadly reflect the distribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged between 0 and 5 years at the study's commencement in 2008 across urban, regional and remote areas.

More information about DSS longitudinal surveys is available at: www.dss.gov.au/longitudinal-studies

Data access - you can apply via the Australian Data Archive - dataverse.ada.edu.au/dataverse/lsic
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

Bibliographic research repository for longitudinal analysis using DSS datasets: see flosse.dss.gov.au

Study content overview

Household

- Age
- Sex
- Indigenous status
- Relationships within family

Child's physical development

- Global physical health
- Physical measurement
- Puberty

Social & emotional outcomes

- Behaviour
- Emotional development
- Social development
- Temperament
- Social skills

Learning & cognition outcomes

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

Culture, identity

- Indigenous cultural events, practices, arts
- Connection to country, and tribe, language group or clan
- Family history, stolen generations
- Importance of aspects of culture to Study Youth

Infant health & development

- Maternal health & care
- Alcohol, tobacco & substance use in pregnancy
- Birth & birth weight
- Post-natal depression
- Early diet & feeding

Child health status

- Global health
- Disability
- Medical conditions
- Oral health
- Injuries
- Hospital stays & health visits
- Sleeping problems
- Nutrition, bush tucker

Parental health

- Ongoing health conditions
- Personal, social & cultural resilience
- Social & emotional wellbeing
- Smoking / alcoholic habits & child exposure

Relationships

- Closeness of relationships
- Contact with family
- Social support
- Couple relationships
- Family violence

Major life events

- Pregnancy
- Illness
- Funerals
- Housing stress
- Humbugged
- Alcohol or drug problems
- Family split up
- Contact with justice system

Racism, discrimination

- Experience at family, parental and child level
- Personal, institutional and macro levels

Risk behaviours

- Alcohol consumption
- Smoking
- Substance use
- Self-harming & suicidal behaviours

Community

- Liveability / facilities
- Neighbourhood safety
- Trust

Housing & homelessness

- Dwelling type & street traffic
- Number of bedrooms
- Housing quality
- Relocation
- Experiences of homelessness

Finances

- Financial stress
- Government benefits
- Income
- Income management
- Money management

Parent & partner education & employment

- Highest school year & qualification
- Labour force status
- Job duties & responsibilities
- Hours & conditions of work
- Job security
- Cultural leave entitlement

Parenting

- Parental warmth, monitoring, discipline
- Parental self- efficiency

Parent living elsewhere

- Child support
- Contact with child
- Quality of relationship with other parent

Education

- Early education and care
- School type
- School liking & avoidance, belonging
- School subjects chosen
- Homework
- Absenteeism
- Teacher relationship
- School facilities
- Parent engagement
- Living away from home for school
- Cultural safety at school

Language

- Parent, child & household language & proficiency
- Learning language at school
- Household Aboriginal English use

Child's home environment

- Activities & with whom
- Education expectations
- Extra-curricular activities
- TV, computer & electronic games use
- Internet use
- Cyber safety

Adolescence into adulthood

- Boyfriends / girlfriends
- Pregnancy / baby
- Paid / unpaid work
- Cultural identity
- Inspirations & aspirations
- Caring responsibilities

Education (teacher & principal questionnaires)

- Child characteristics
- Class characteristics
- Teacher characteristics: including Indigenous status, Indigenous education, training & experience
- School characteristics: including Indigenous cultural approach

Other & future topics

- Life satisfaction
- Caring responsibilities
- Parental hopes for children
- Learning to drive
- Post-secondary education
- COVID-19 and effect on Study Youth, family and community
- Volunteering