



WA SOCIAL RESEARCH  
NETWORK



Children's  
POLICY ADVISORY  
C O U N C I L



Life Course Centre

# Early Child Development, Disadvantage and Wellbeing in WA

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# Welcome to the Stan and Jean Perron Child Advocacy Centre

## Housekeeping

- Security at SJPCAC
- COVID-19 Safety
- In case of fire
- Facilities
- If you need help



**Early Child  
Development,  
Disadvantage and  
Wellbeing in WA:**

Rachel Siewert and  
Kim Brooklyn MCs

**Agenda**

- Welcome to Country: Sandra Harben
- Speakers
  - Professor Fiona Stanley,
  - Dr Rosemary Cahill, Chief Investigator on an evaluation of the Early Years and Principal Senior Research Fellow in the ARC Life Course Centre
  - Gail Clark, WA AEDC Coordinator, Department of Education
  - Jacqueline McGowan- Jones, The WA Commissioner for Children and Young People
- Panel Discussion

Professor Fiona Stanley: Patron,  
Telethon Kids Institute Distinguished  
Research Professor, University of  
Western Australia







Innocenti Report Card 17

# Places and Spaces

Environments  
and children's well-being



## AIMS

The report focuses on the following questions:

1. How do environmental factors affect children's well-being?
2. How are many of the world's richest countries faring in terms of providing a healthy environment in which children can live, develop and thrive?
3. What actions can these countries take to improve the environments in which children live?



The world at large

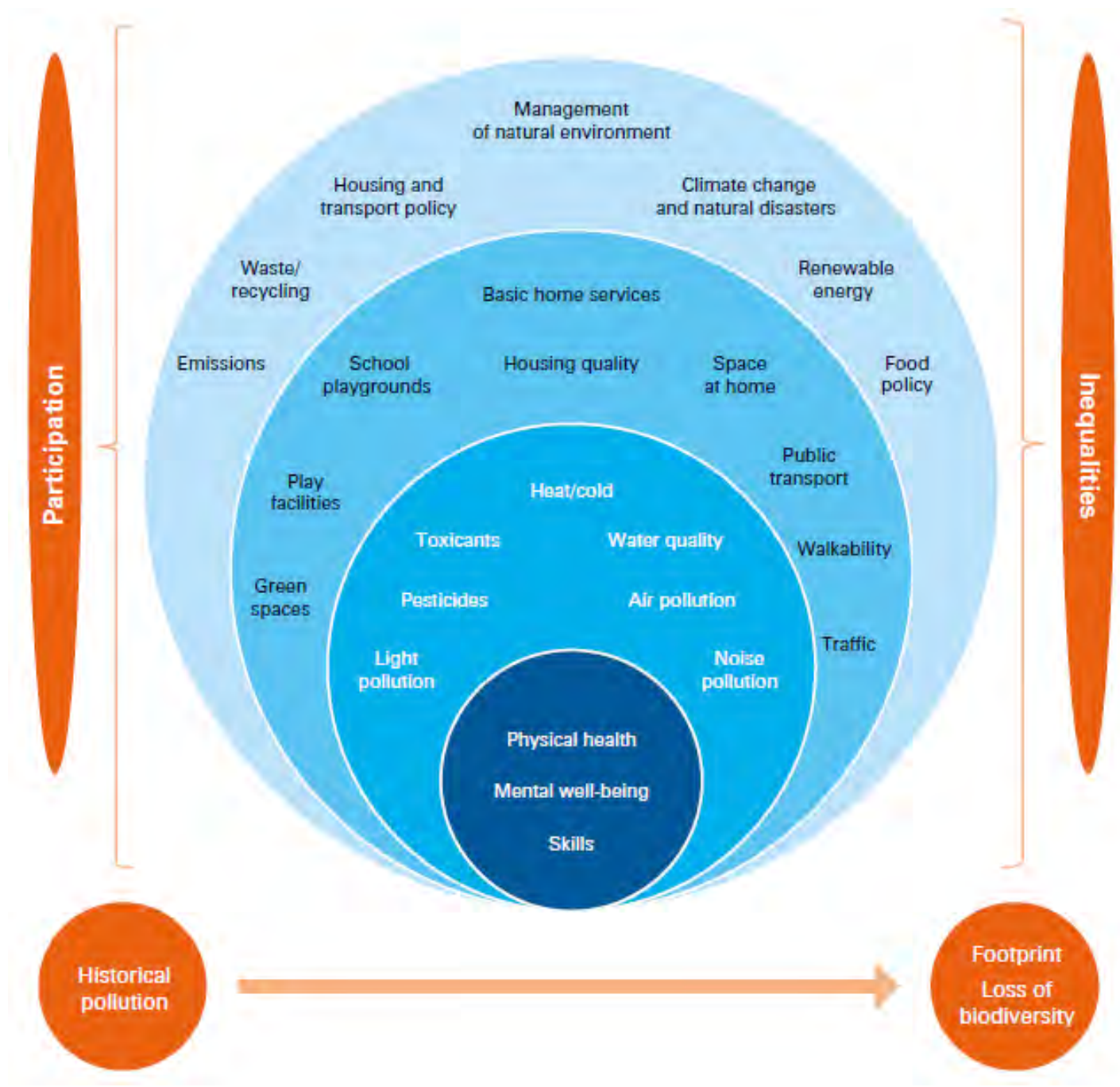
The world around the child

The world of the child

The child

The world we inherit

The world we will leave behind

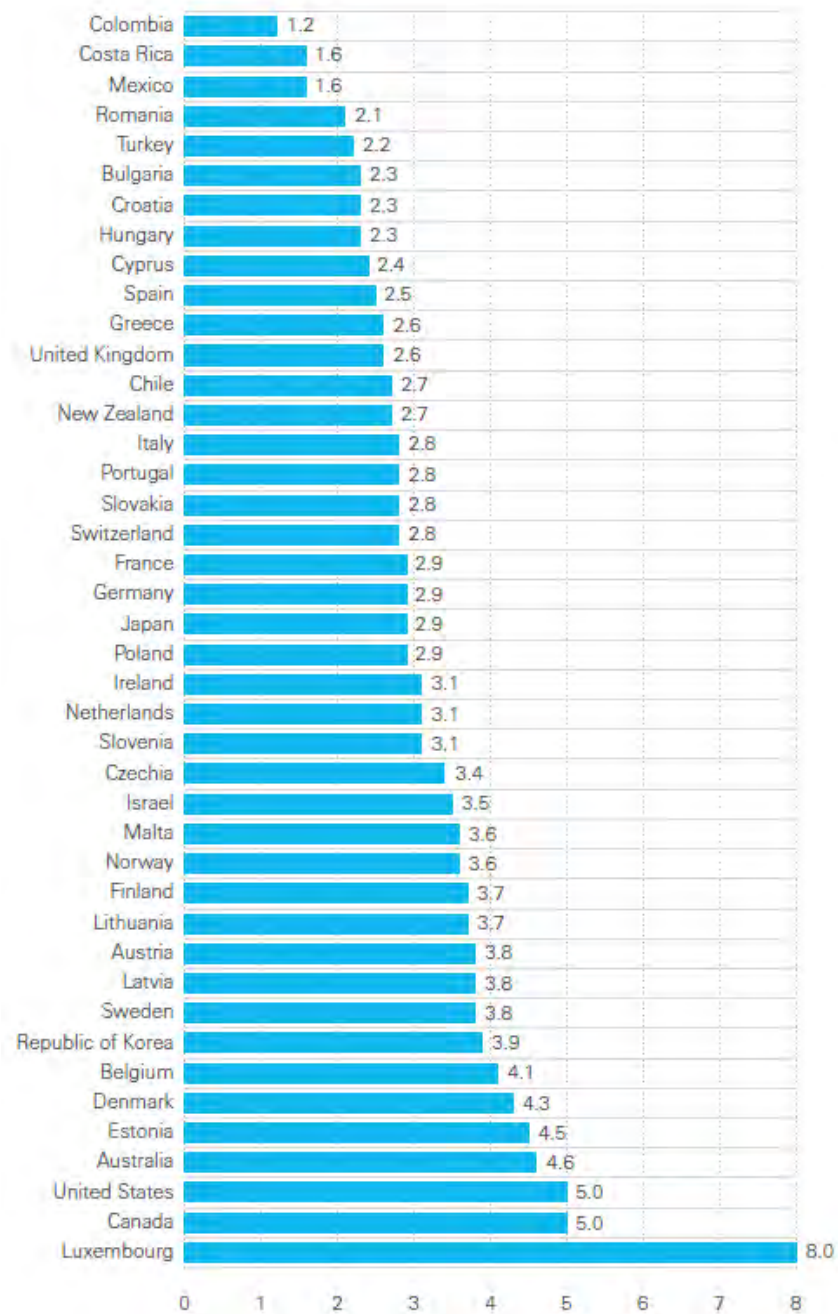




Overall ranking	Country	World of the child	World around the child	World at large
1	Spain	8	13	13
2	Ireland	6	4	20
3	Portugal	25	9	9
4	Cyprus	15	17	10
5	Finland	1	2	30
6	Italy	7	16	14
7	Iceland	3	1	32
8	Slovenia	19	14	16
9	Germany	13	6	22
10	Sweden	4	10	26
11	United Kingdom	11	12	23
12	Netherlands	12	8	27
13	Japan	2	21	25
14	Norway	5	5	35
15	New Zealand	24	15	17
16	France	14	27	18
17	Switzerland	21	3	33
18	Hungary	34	22	6
19	Austria	9	19	29
20	Czechia	26	23	21
21	Estonia	27	11	28
22	Lithuania	32	24	15
23	Croatia	29	33	5
24	Denmark	18	26	34
25	Slovakia	31	29	11
26	Greece	22	35	8
27	Poland	30	31	7
28	Canada	17	7	38
29	Malta	33	18	24
30	Australia	10	20	37
31	Latvia	36	30	12
32	Republic of Korea	16	32	31
33	Chile	35	37	3
34	Israel	23	36	19
35	Bulgaria	37	34	4
36	Belgium	28	25	36
37	United States	20	28	39
38	Costa Rica	38	38	1
39	Romania	39	39	2

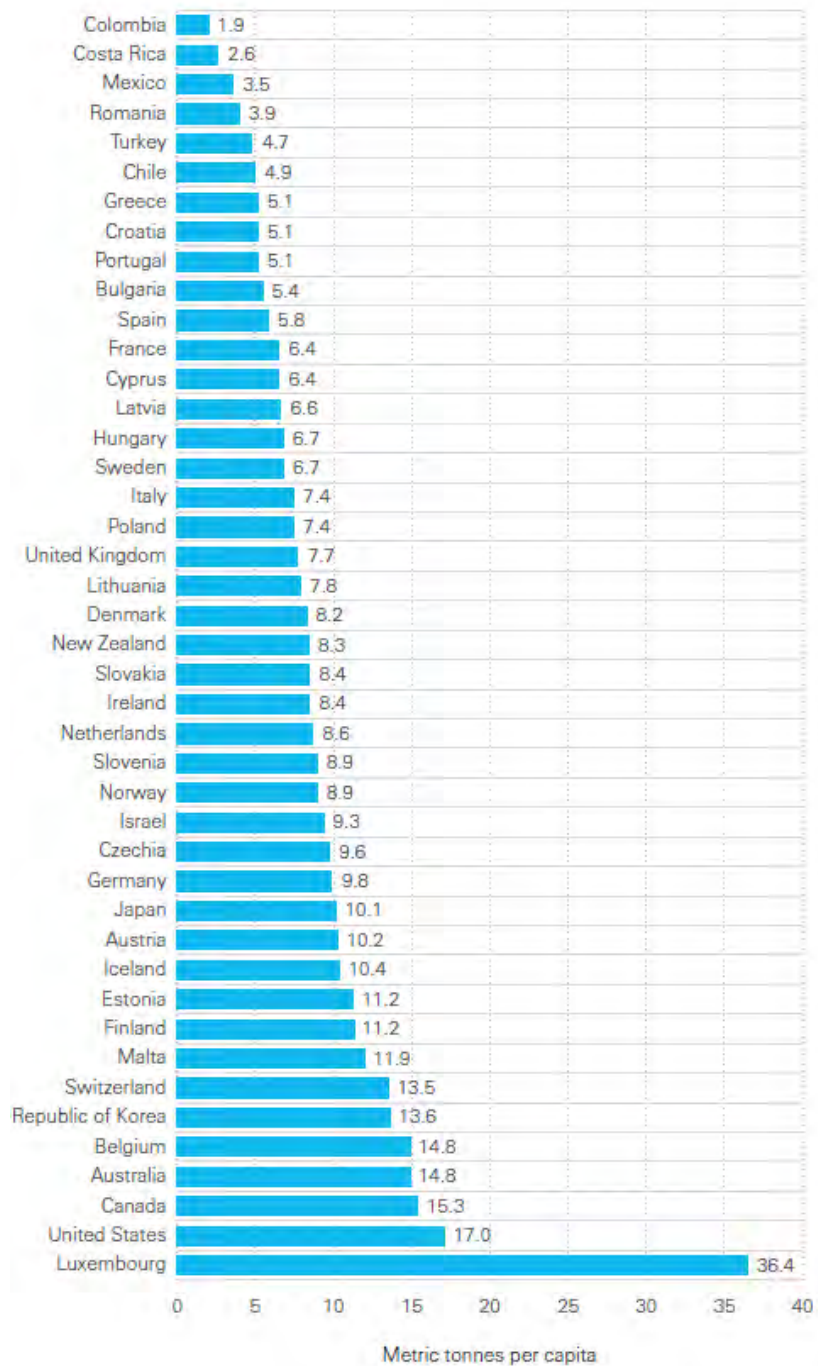


# Number of Earths Required\*

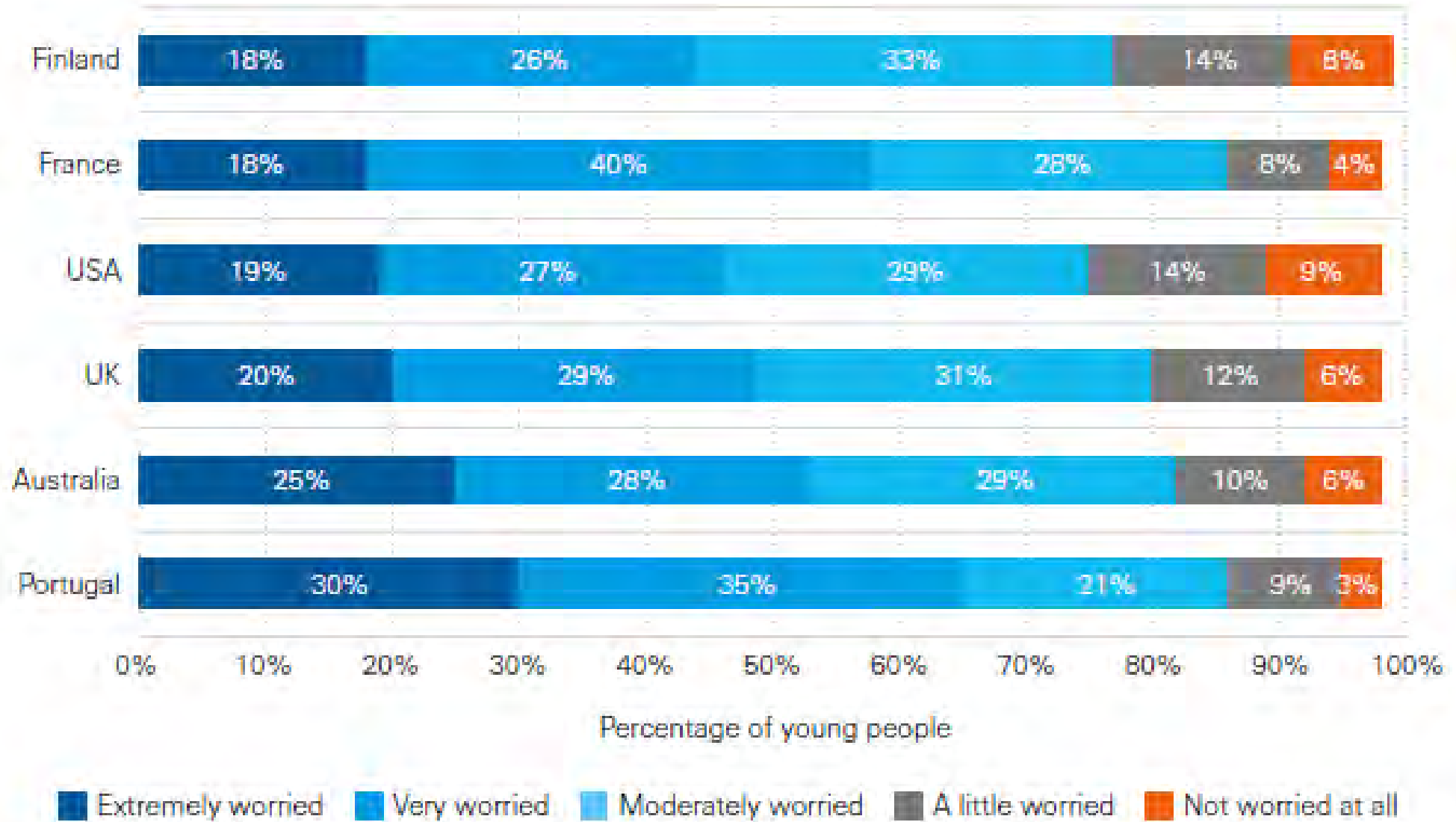


\* ...if we all consumed resources at the same rate as the USA

# Consumption-based CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions

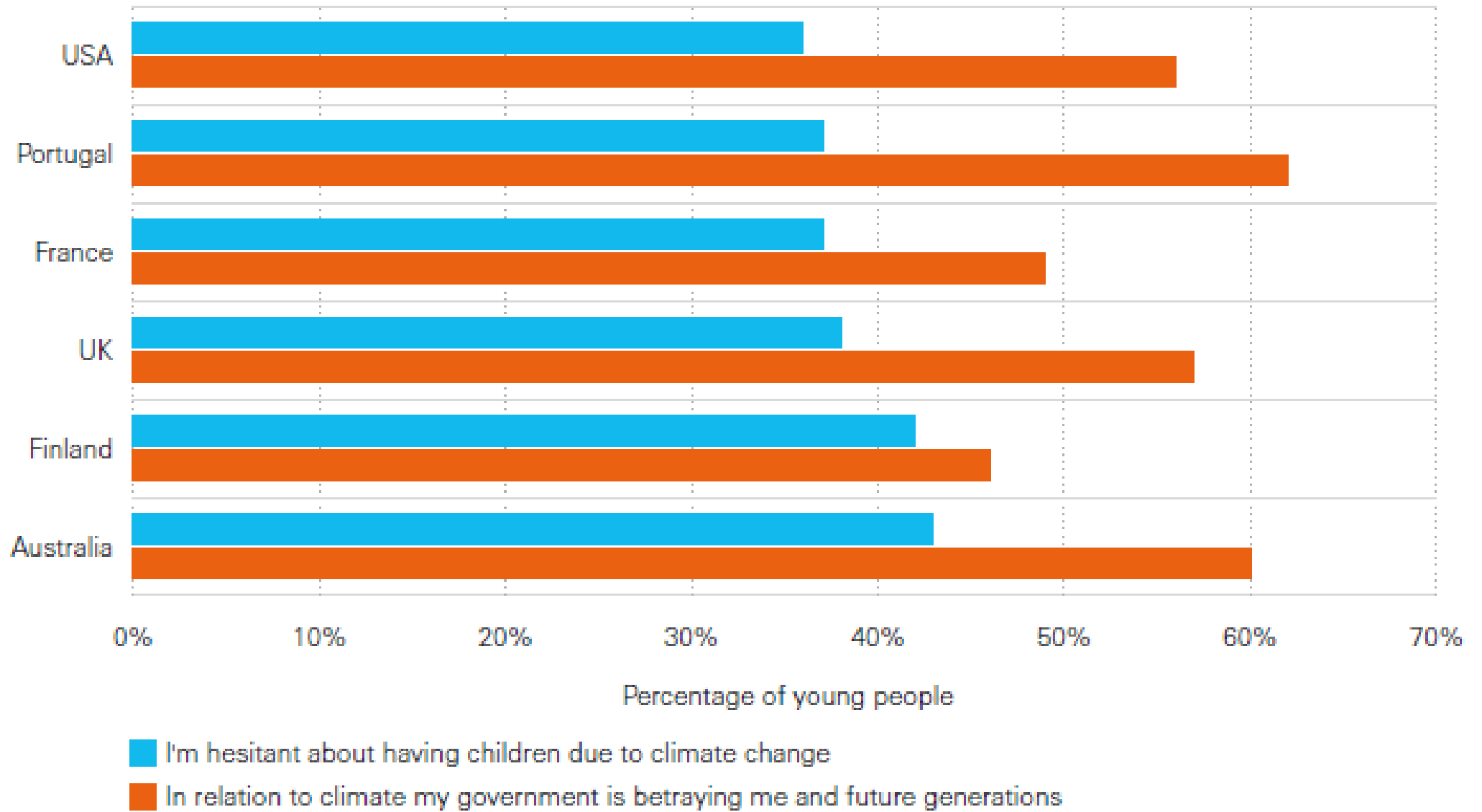


# Worry about climate change





# Hesitant to have children, feel betrayed by their government



# The world we inherit and the world we leave behind...

**Figure 35: The United States, Australia and Canada emitted most CO<sub>2</sub> since the Kyoto Protocol**  
CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per capita in last 25 years vs. league table score



Source: Historical emissions – CO<sub>2</sub> emissions since 1995 (metric tonnes per capita) (x-axis) are sourced from the World Bank Databank. For league table ranks (y-axis), see Figure 3.

Innocenti Report Card 17

# Places and Spaces

Environments  
and children's well-being

unicef  | for every child

unicef   
Office of Research – Innocenti

Dr Rosemary Cahill, Principal  
Senior Research Fellow,  
Telethon Kids Institute and Life  
Course Centre

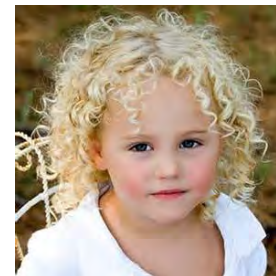
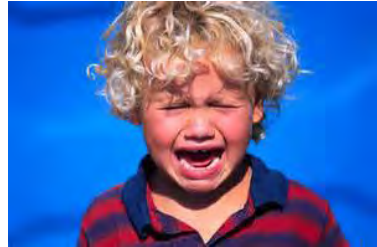




... more on the  
**World of the Child in Western Australia**  
circa 2022

Presentation to the WACOSS Children's Policy Advisory Council  
and WA Social Research Network  
**25 July 2022**

- Glimpses at research and data from Western Australia, Australia and beyond
- Draw key threads together
- Make an argument for:
  - further research to address fundamental gaps
  - evidence-informed policy that takes time to look **sideways** as well as **straight ahead**



## Beyond our shores:

### **Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) in the United Kingdom**

- home learning environment
- high quality early childhood education (especially in mixed groups)
- primary caregiver's education

*(Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I. & Taggart, B., 2004)*

### **'Heckman Curve'**

- optimise return on investment by investing in early childhood health and education.

*(Heckman, J, 2008)*

### **Neurons to Neighbourhoods**

- 'brain wiring' and how kids learn to speak, think, and regulate their behavior.
- effect of the child's immediate world - family, child-care, community

*(Shonkoff, JP, 2000)*



**Life Course Centre**

ARC Centre of Excellence for Children  
and Families over the Life Course

Proudly supported by the people of Western  
Australia through Channel 7's Telethon





# Australia

## Australian Early Development Census

- remarkable national asset – significant credit to pilots in WA in/around 2004
- communities *fascinated* by their own data – but need support to decide upon and mobilise actions

## Social and Family Functioning

- five family/community domains predictive of child health and well-being outcomes:
  - time
  - income
  - human capital – parental/family education
  - psychological capital – family cohesion, parental efficacy
  - social capital - trust, cooperation, civic engagement, and reciprocity

*(Zubrick et al, 2000)*

## Impact and influence of Playgroups across Australia

- Children who attended playgroup are 1.73 times less to be vulnerable on the AEDC  
*(Gregory, T., Harman-Smith, Y., Sincovich, A., Wilson, A., & Brinkman, S., 2016).*

## Effective Early Educational Experiences (E4Kids)

- Process quality (relationships with children) strongest predictor of outcome

*(Tayler et al, 2012)*

## Participation by 'equity' groups for 0-5 year olds in CCS-approved ECEC services in Western Australia and Australia

	Western Australia		Australia		Comment
	0-5yo in the community	Attending CCS approved ECEC	0-5yo in the community	Attending CCS approved ECEC	
Aboriginal	6.8%	3.7%	6.3%	4.3%	under-represented
Regional	14%	13.6%	24.6%	23.2%	small gap
Remote	6.9%	4%	2.3%	1.1%	under-represented
Low-income	18%	21.1%	14.5%	24%	over-represented

Source: Productivity Commission, RoGS 2022

# Participation by 'equity' groups in 4 year-old Kindergarten in Western Australia and Australia

	Western Australia		Australia		Comment
	in community	Attending 4yo Kindergarten	in community	Attending 4yo Kindergarten	
Aboriginal	6.4%	7.1%	6.4%	5.8%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• over-represented in WA</li> <li>• under-represented in Australia</li> </ul>
Regional	15%	14.6%	25%	26.3%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• negligible difference</li> </ul>
Remote	6.8%	6.5%	2.3%	2.1%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• negligible difference</li> </ul>
Disability	9.2%	3.8%	7.6%	6%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• under-represented, with larger gap in WA than all Australia</li> </ul>
Low-income	12.8%	12.5%	18.7%	16.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• negligible gap in WA</li> <li>• slightly bigger gap in Australia</li> </ul>

Source: Productivity Commission, RoGS 2022



## Western Australian

### **Child Development Atlas**

- geo-mapping of place-based services, programs and data about child outcomes

*Glauert et al, 2019*

### **Core Story for Early Childhood Development and Learning**

- strategies to ‘frame’ messages in persuasive ways that make early childhood a priority

*(Frameworks and CoLab, 2019)*

### **Family Friendly Environments – scoping ‘built environment’ associations with early child development**

*(Christian, Nathan, Rohti, Brinkman et al, current)*

### **Other important research**

- *100 Families Project* – lived experience (WACOSS and Anglicare)
- *Origins Project* (Telethon Kids Institute and Dept of Health)
- *Early Years Initiative* (State Government and Minderoo, evaluated by Telethon Kids Institute)
- Evaluations of KindiLink, Child and Parent Centres (Dept. of Education)



## Key threads ...

**Home learning environment** has a powerful and pervasive impact on children's learning and development

1. Learning activities (home reading, sorting activities, nursery rhymes ...)
2. Educational 'mindset' that recognises/believes the value of education
3. Parental efficacy – a self-belief that parents can make a difference to their children's learning/education

**Reassurance** – there are lots of right ways ... parenting characterised as responsibility, anxiety and guilt

**Connectedness** - initiatives designed to build social capital and social/cultural infrastructure ... to honour what is (not to seek to change it to fit)

**Suite of complementary options** that families can choose from according to THEIR needs and preferences

*If parents do not believe they can influence their children's learning, or do not think that education is very important, they are unlikely to undertake learning activities at home*

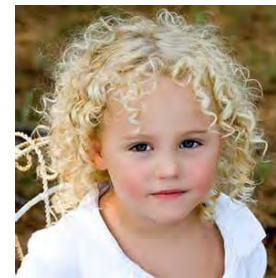
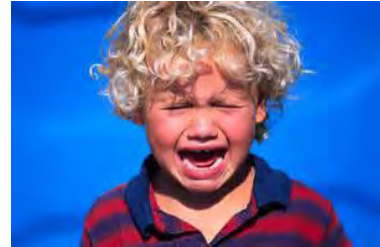
## Gaps ...

### **Family and Social functioning Indicators** – especially

- social and psychological capital
- prominence attributed to cultural and linguistic knowledge alongside ‘western’ knowledge within measures of human capital

### **More complete account of children’s learning experiences prior to school entry**

**Home learning environment – characteristics**, especially in ‘non-Western’ households to understand alternative manifestations of rich and productive home environments (beyond counting books)



# Thank you!

Feel free to contact me ...

**e: [rosemary.cahill@telethonkids.org.au](mailto:rosemary.cahill@telethonkids.org.au)**



Gail Clark: WA AEDC  
Coordinator. Statewide  
Services – Early Childhood  
Education, Department of  
Education



# Australian Early Development Census

## Western Australia 2021 results overview

Prepared by Gail Clark  
WA AEDC Coordinator

# Australian Early Development Census

## Western Australia 2021 results overview

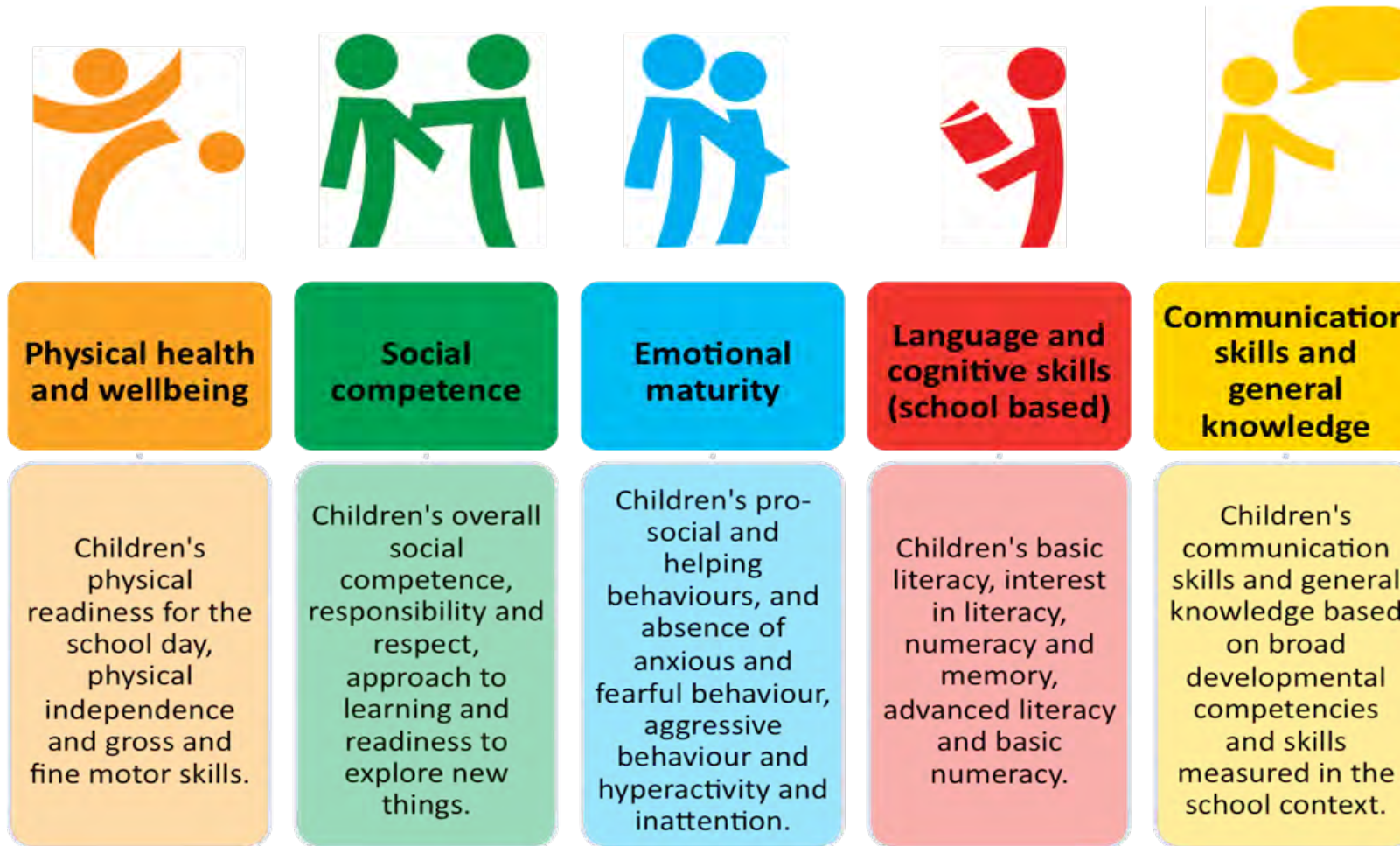
Prepared by Gail Clark  
WA AEDC Coordinator

# Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)

- Nationwide census with data collected every 3 years since 2009
- Holistic measure of child development
- Teacher completed
- Children enrolled in their 1<sup>st</sup> year of full-time school – pre-primary.
- Snapshot of children's development
- Valid and reliable measure



# A measure of child development across 5 domains



Vuln  
1

Vuln  
2

Measures the proportion of children developmentally on track, at risk and developmentally vulnerable

**EARLY  
CHILDHOOD**

**“How well  
did we do?”**

LAG



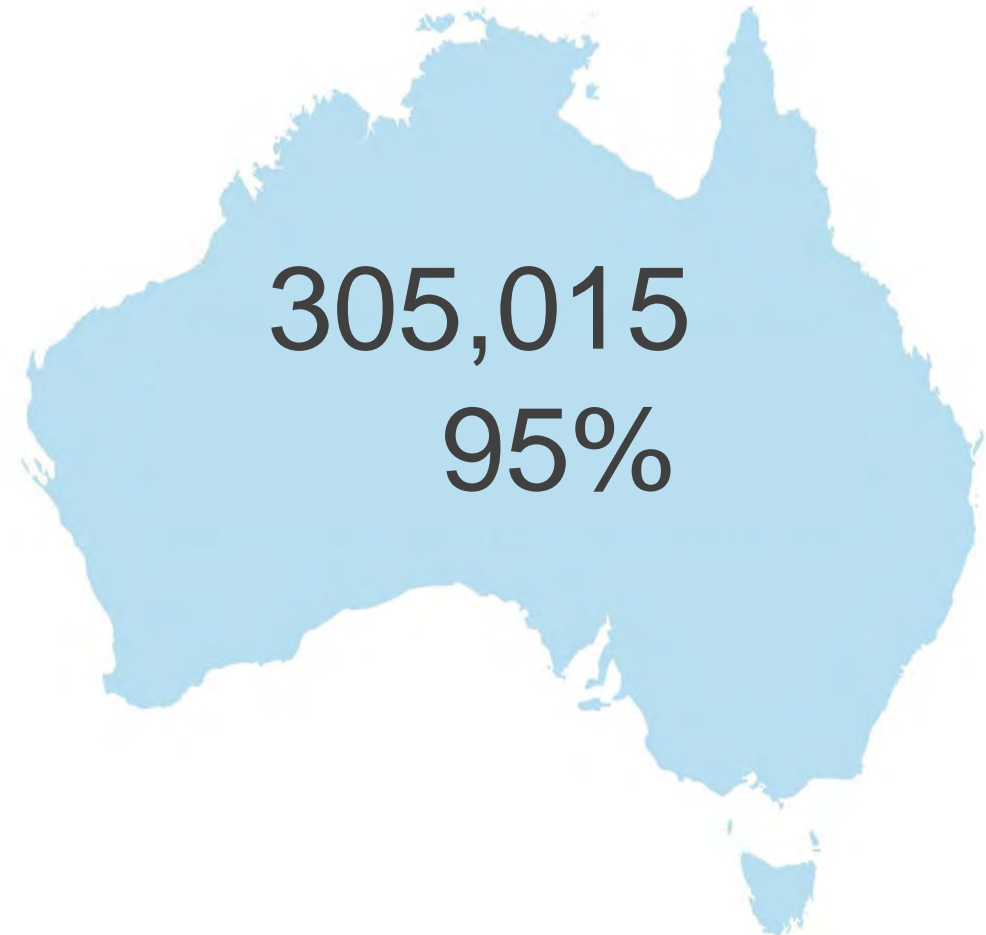
**HUMAN  
CAPITAL**

**“What does it  
tell us about  
the future?”**

LEAD

# The AEDC - a nationwide census

Western Australia		
2009	27,565	99%
2012	32,158	99%
2015	33,819	99%
2018	34,638	99%
2021	35 440	99%



932 (100%)



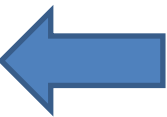
1880

# Demographic profile of children

Demographics	2009	2012	2015	2018	2021
Sex – Male	51.5	51.3	51.4	51.0	51.6
Sex – Female	48.5	48.7	48.6	49.0	48.4
Aboriginal and Torres Islander children	6.5	6.9	6.6	6.9	7.2
Children born in another country	9.9	11.1	10.4	7.8	5.9
Children with English as a second language	10.6	11.2	13.8	16.0	17.6

# Language diversity of children

	2009	2012	2015	2018	2021
LBOTE – Total	14.8	15.6	19.4	23.8	25.9
English Only - Total	85.2	84.4	80.6	76.2	74.1

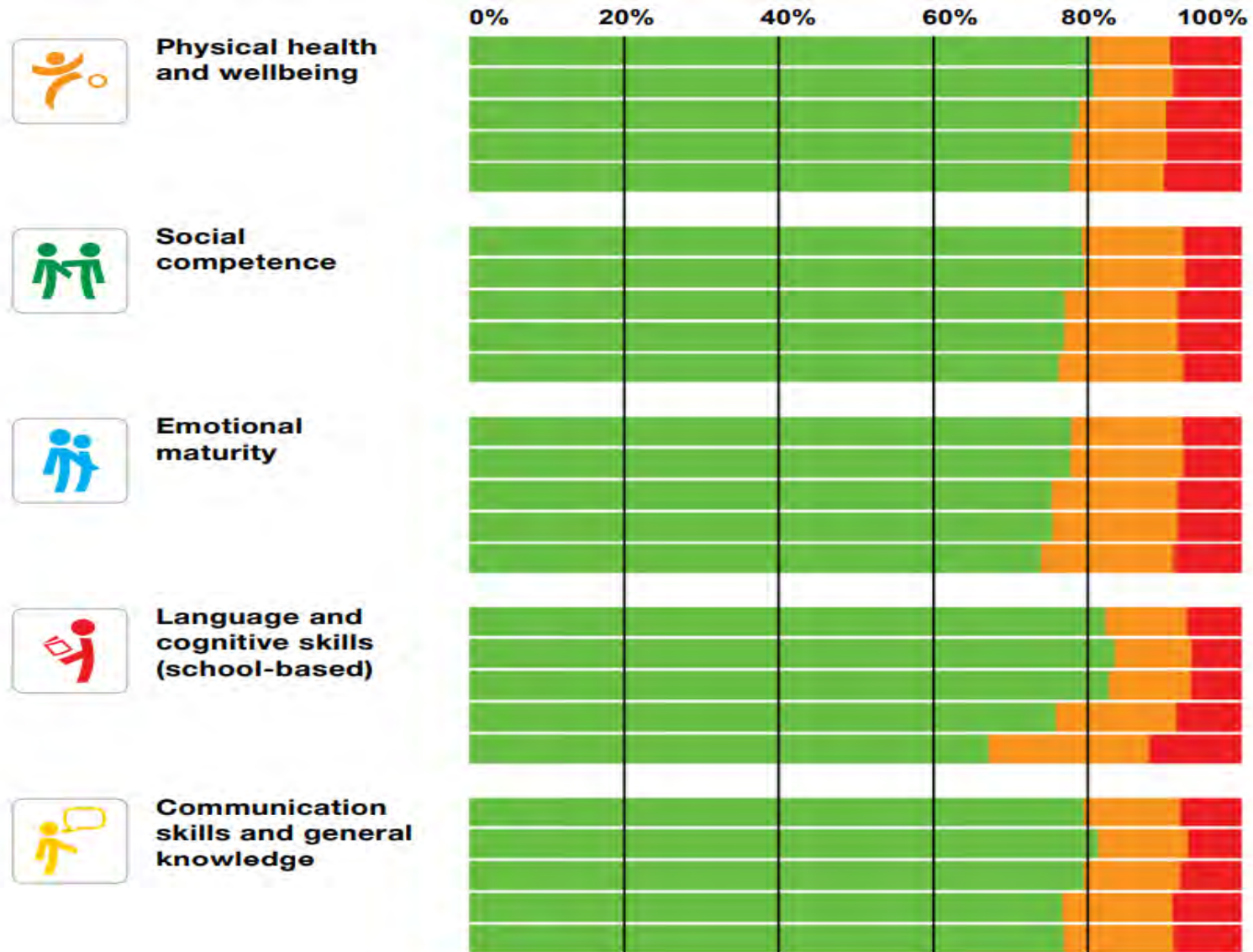






After 5 data collections  
what have we  
learned?

# Western Australia



# Western Australia



20.3%  
(6,852)

# One in five

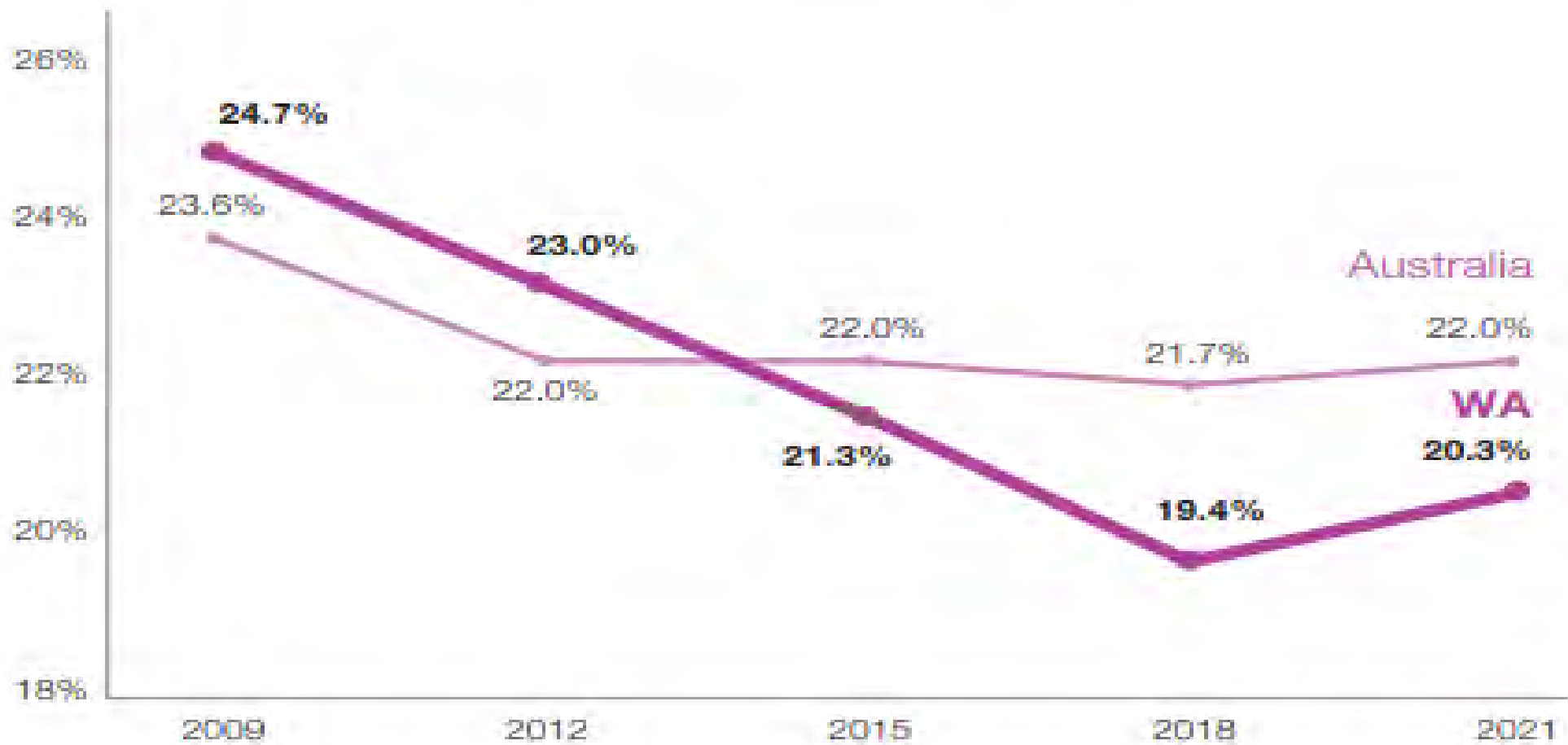
- What are the implications?
- Whose responsibility is it?
- If we do nothing, what are the risks?
- Who are we leaving behind?



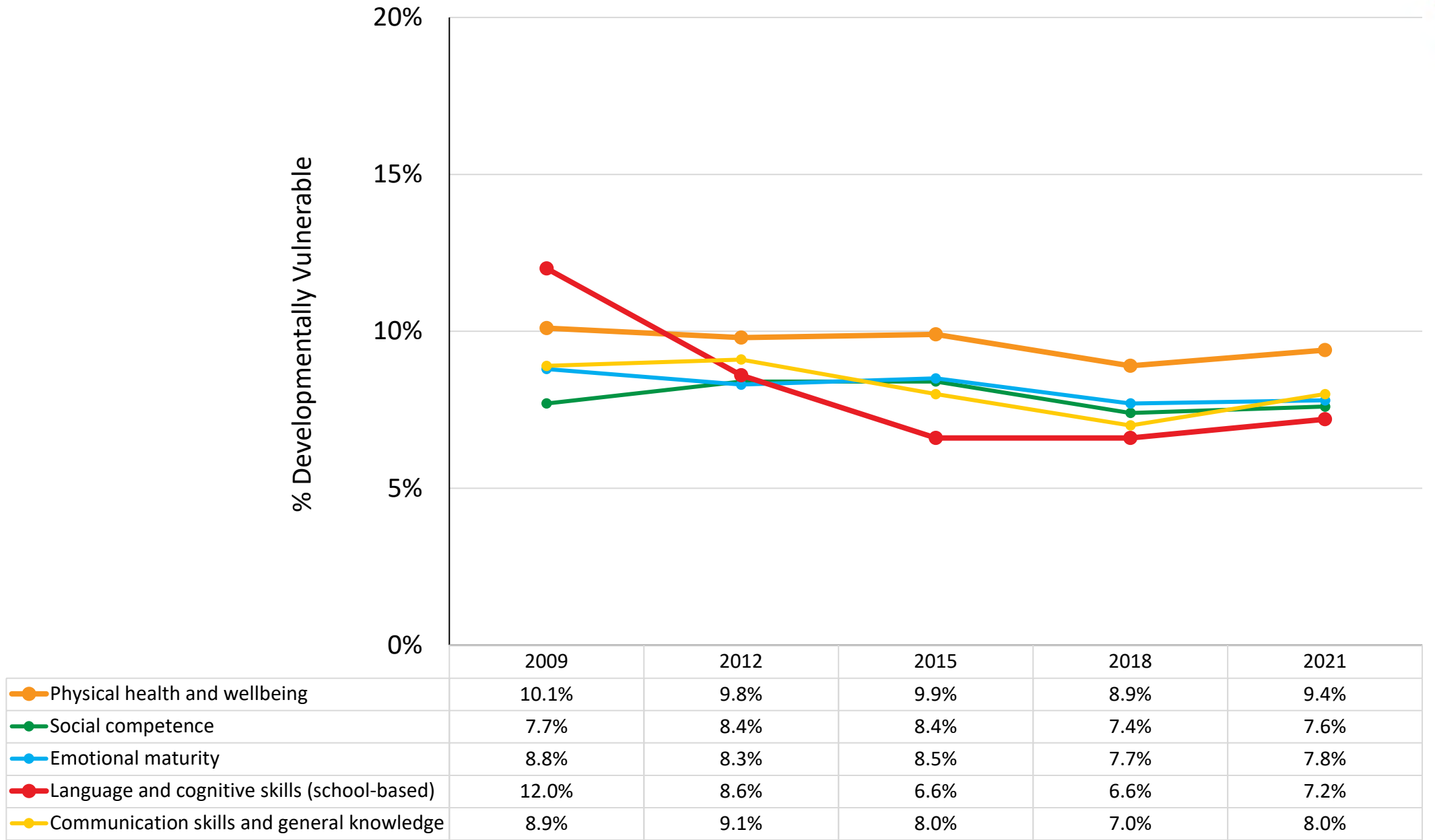


## Developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains

The percentage of children developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains declined between 2009 and 2018. There was a small increase in 2021.



# Trends for each domain





What else have we  
learned?

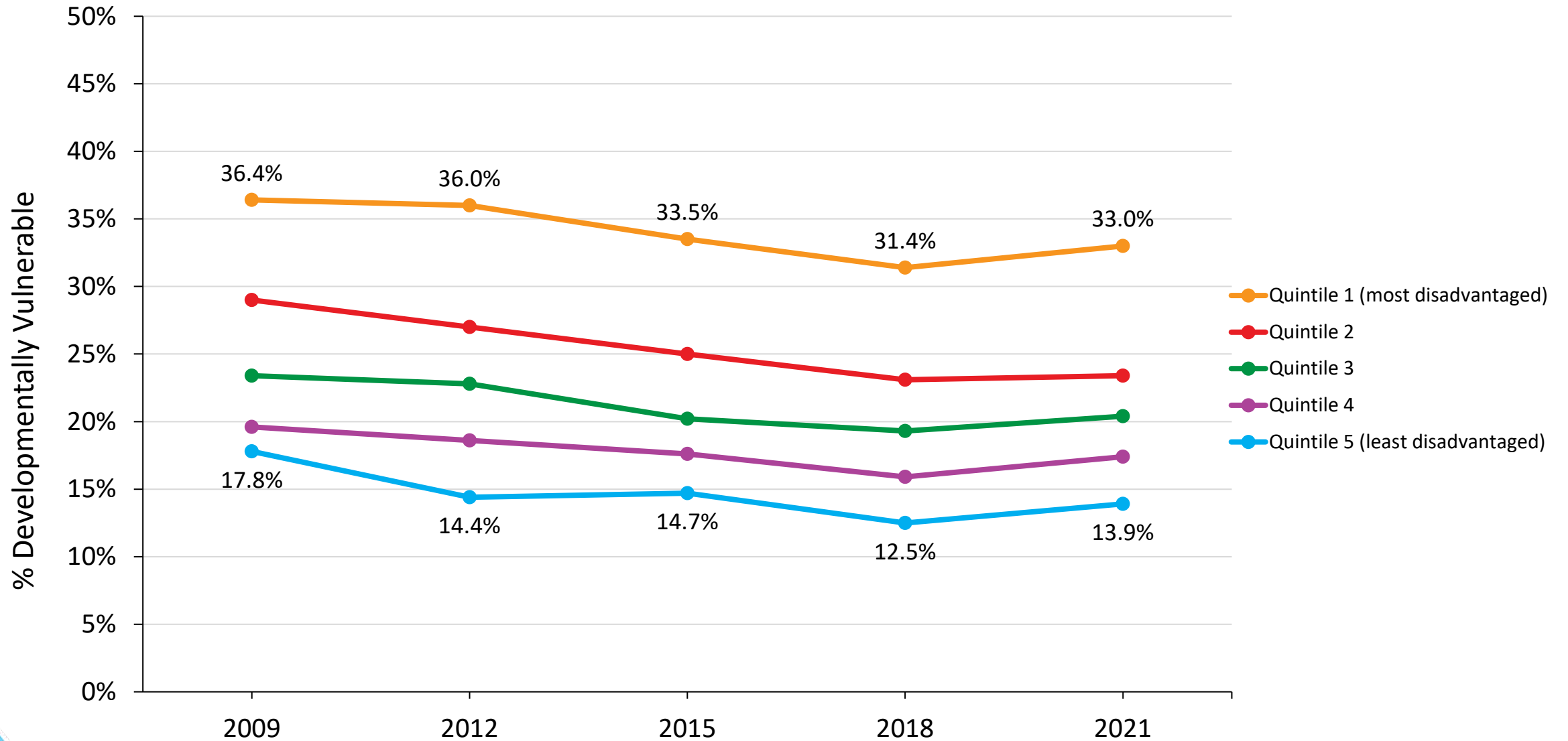


Where children live has a significant impact on the development of children.

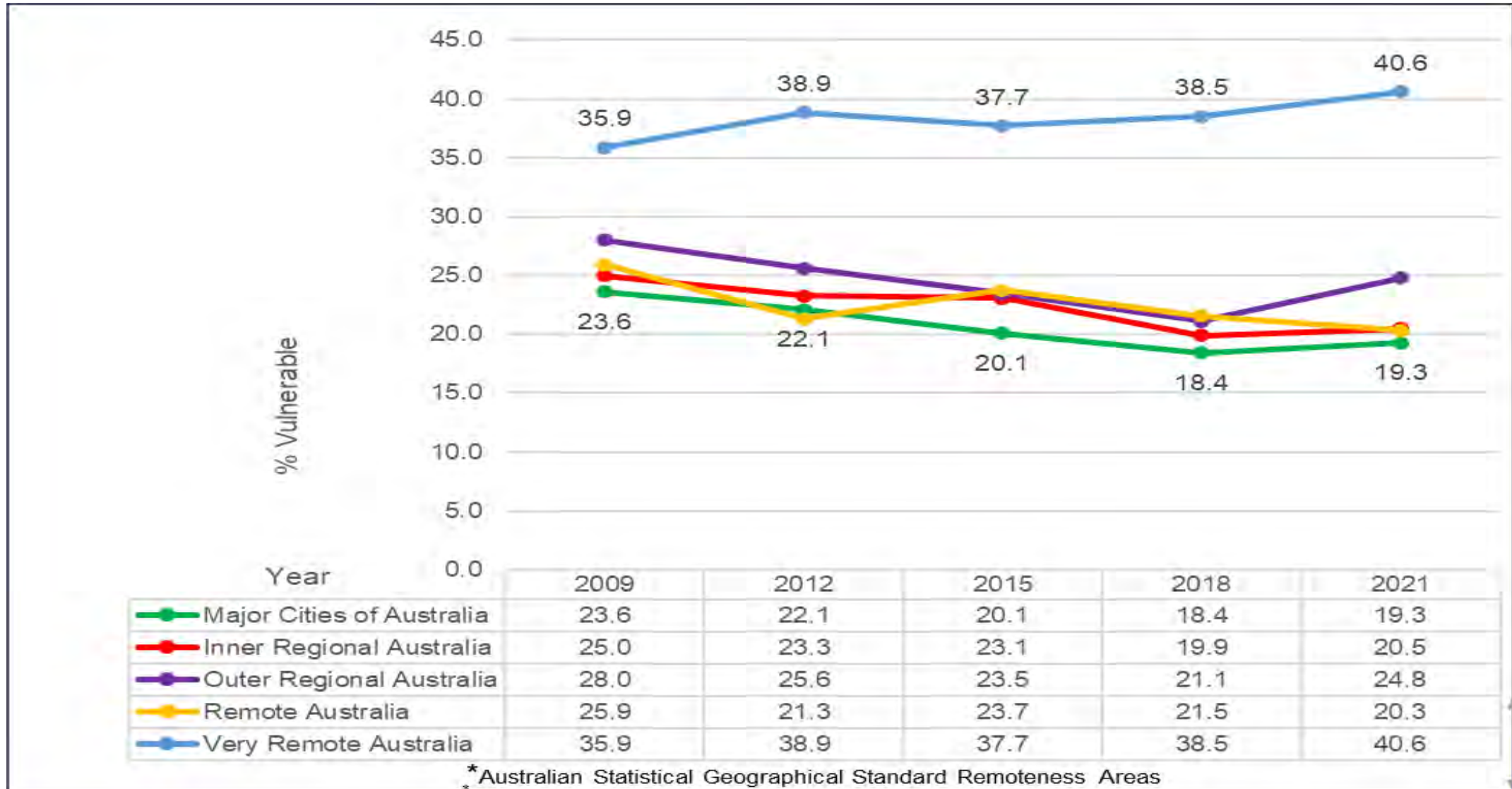


# Socio-economic status

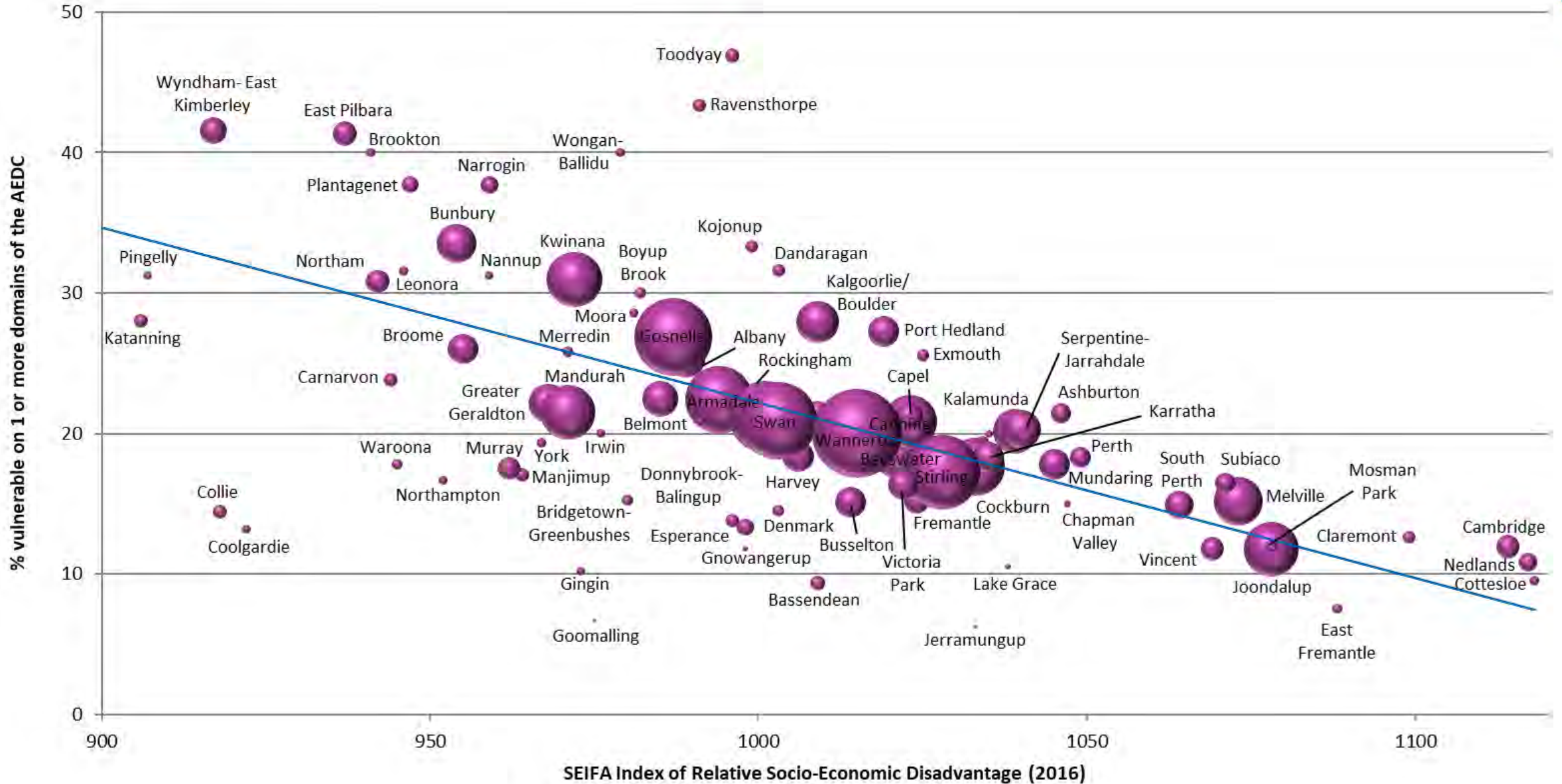
DV1 by SEIFA quintile




# Remoteness



# Western Australia - results by local government area

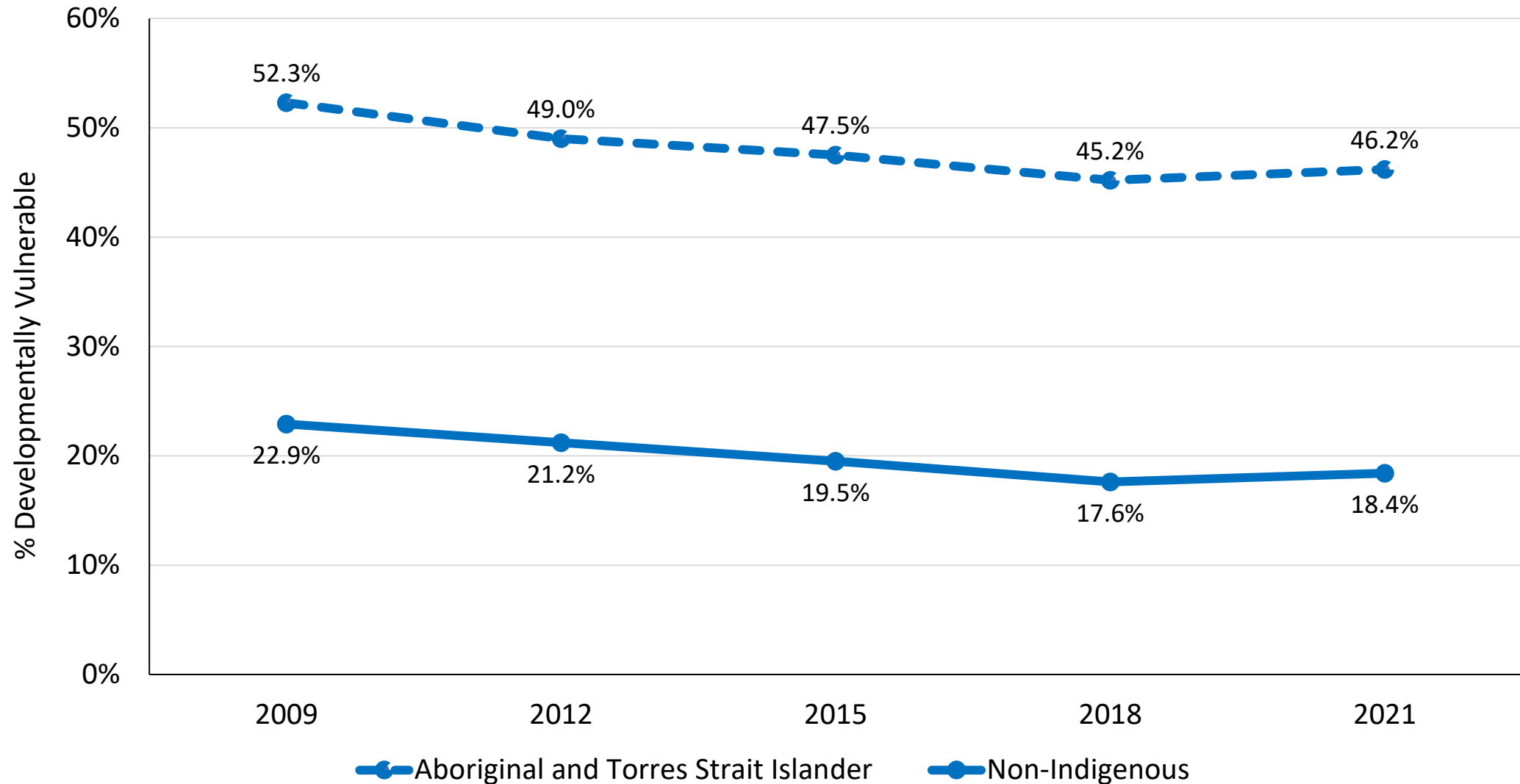




The AEDC is letting us know the magnitude of difference in child development between population groups

# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status

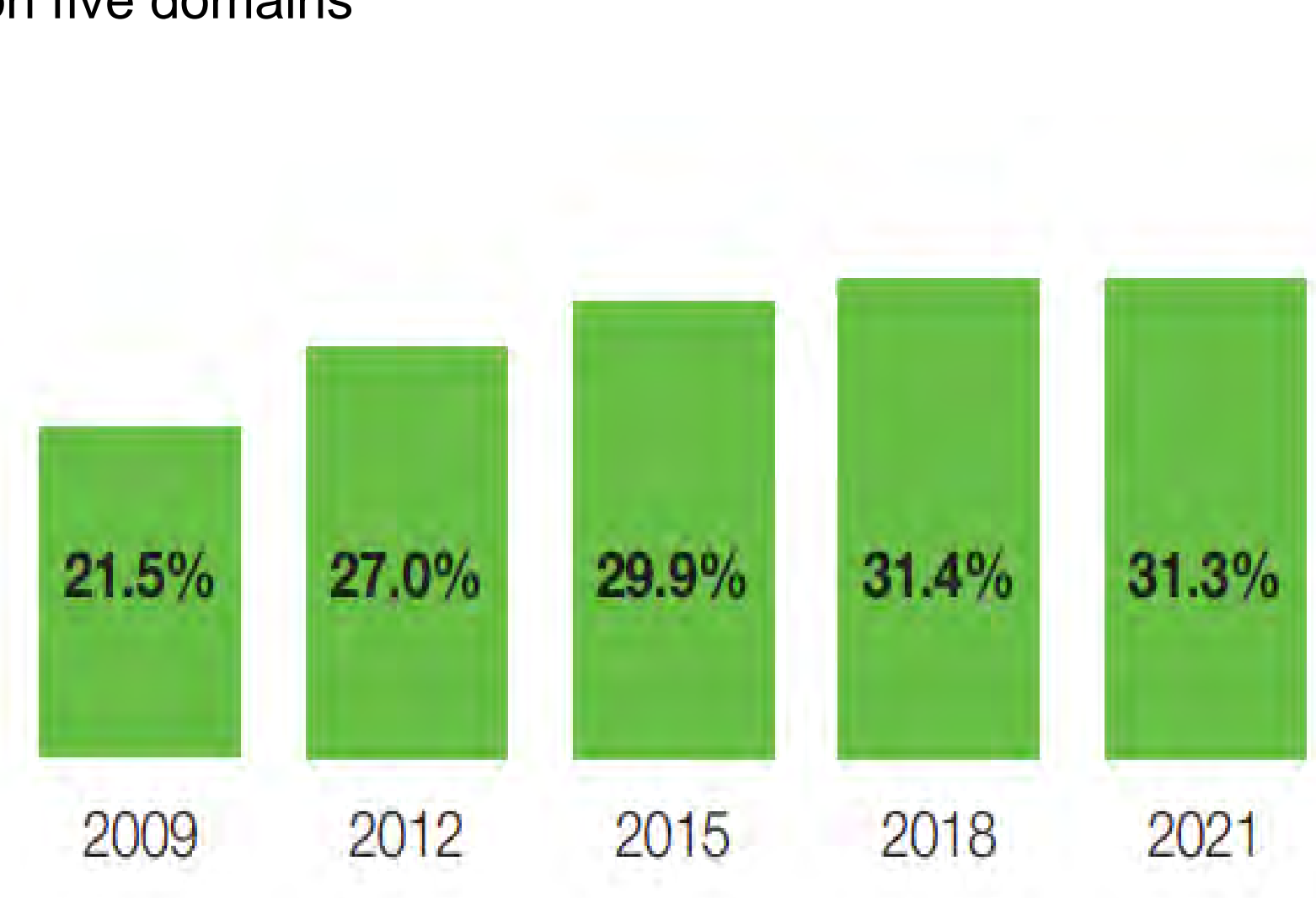
DV1 by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status





# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status

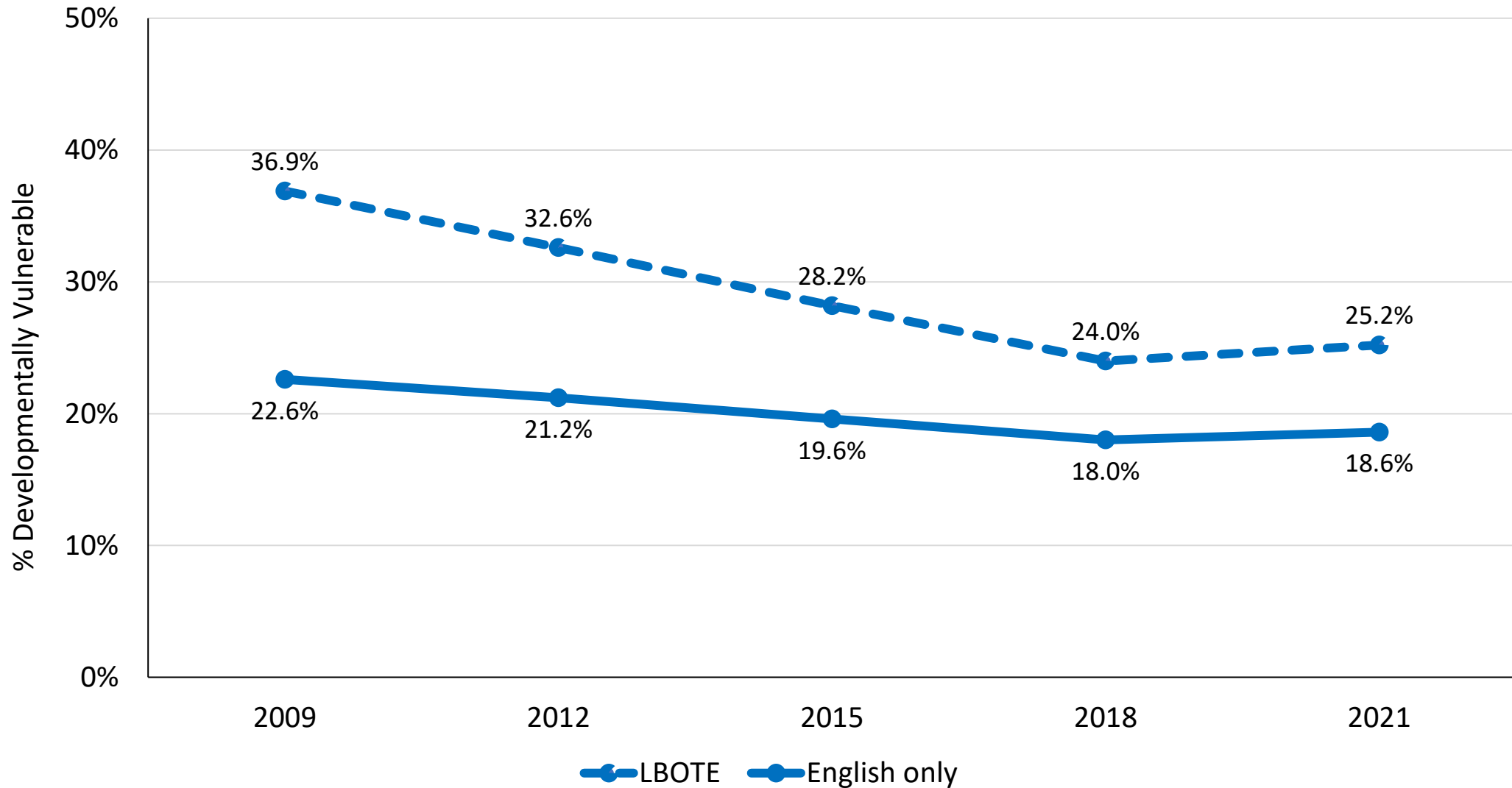
On track on five domains



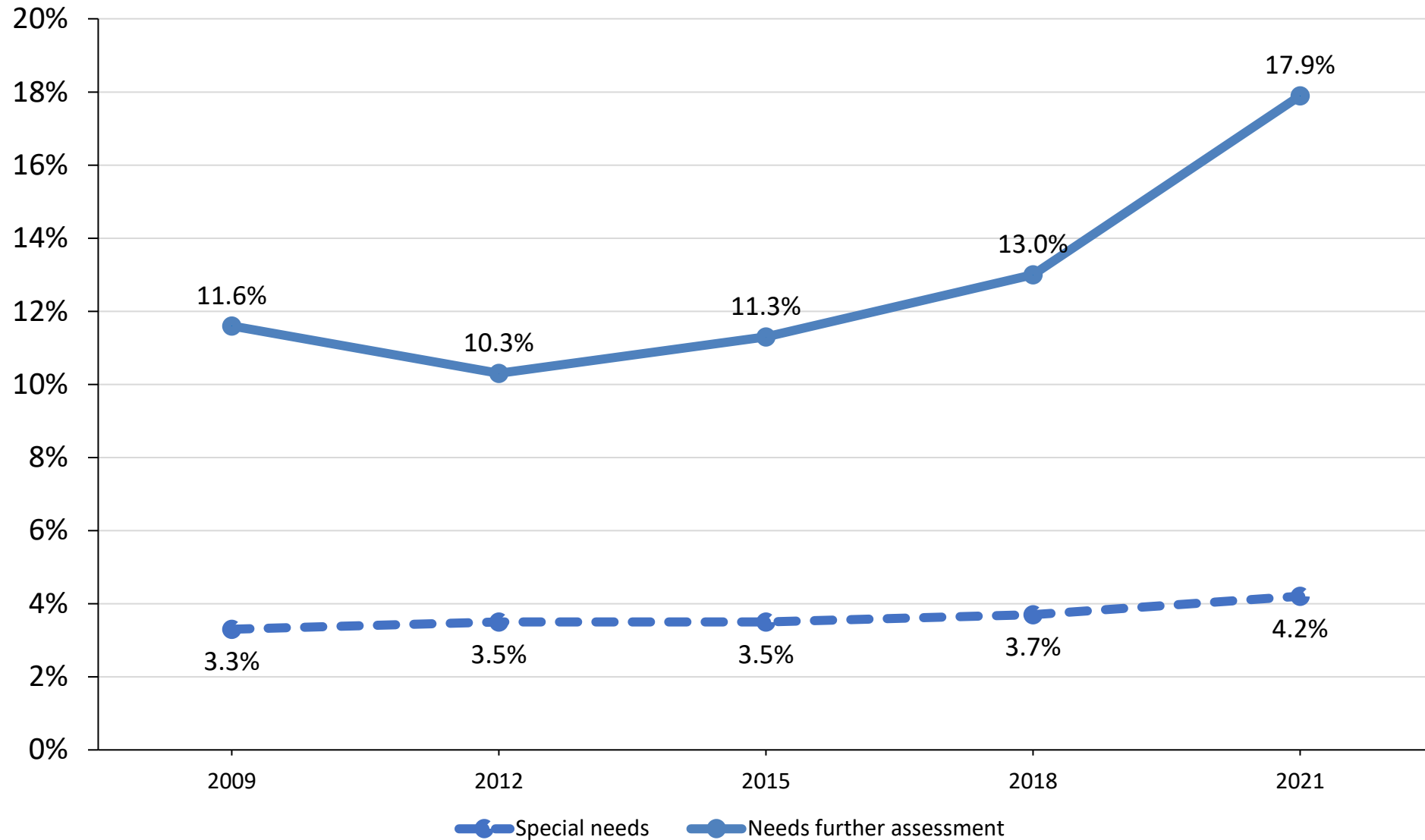
Target  
55% by 2030

# Language Background other than English

DV1 by LBOTE status

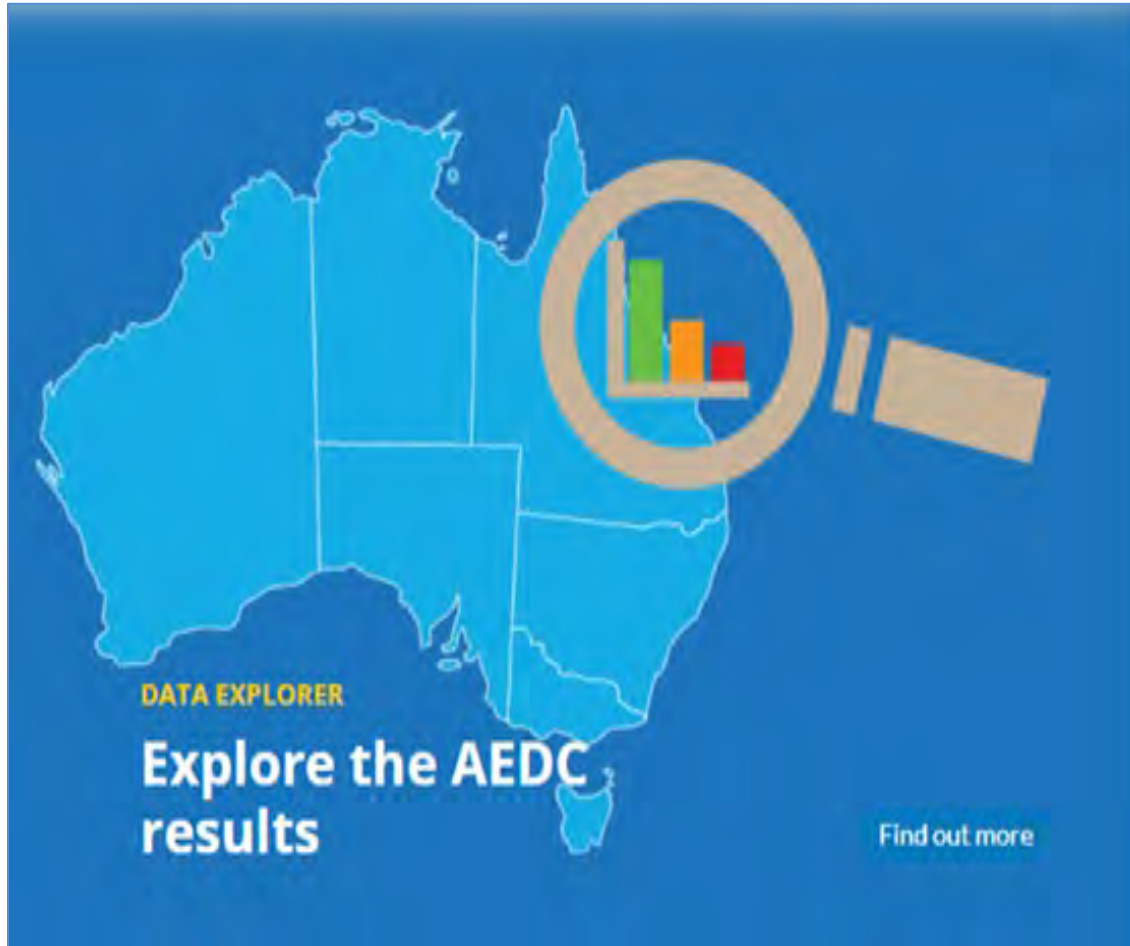


# Special needs and needs further assessment



# Where can you access AEDC community data?

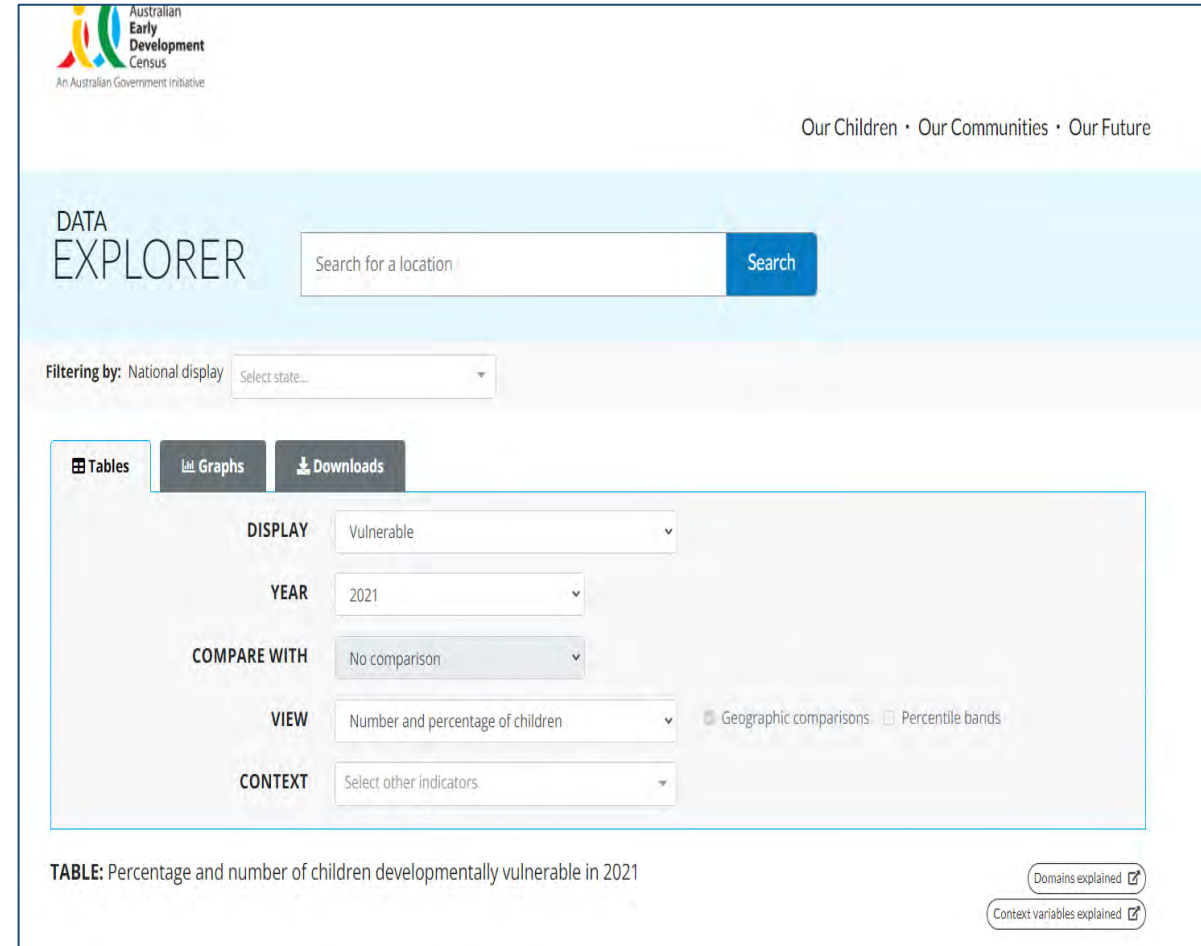
[www.aedc.gov.au](http://www.aedc.gov.au)



**DATA EXPLORER**  
**Explore the AEDC results**

Find out more

The banner features a blue background with a white outline of Australia. A magnifying glass is positioned over the map, focusing on a small bar chart with three bars in green, orange, and red. The text 'DATA EXPLORER' is in yellow, 'Explore the AEDC results' is in white, and 'Find out more' is in white at the bottom right.



Australian Early Development Census  
An Australian Government Initiative

Our Children · Our Communities · Our Future

## DATA EXPLORER

Search for a location

Filtering by: National display

DISPLAY:

YEAR:

COMPARE WITH:

VIEW:   Geographic comparisons  Percentile bands

CONTEXT:

**TABLE:** Percentage and number of children developmentally vulnerable in 2021

[Domains explained](#) [Context variables explained](#)

The screenshot shows the AEDC Data Explorer interface. It includes a search bar, a filtering dropdown, and several configuration options for data display. The 'Tables' tab is selected, and the current table is 'Percentage and number of children developmentally vulnerable in 2021'. There are links for 'Domains explained' and 'Context variables explained' at the bottom right.

Thank you

[gail.clark@education.wa.edu.au](mailto:gail.clark@education.wa.edu.au)



Jacqueline McGowan-Jones  
Commissioner for Children  
and Young People WA



# A Child Wellbeing Strategy for Western Australia

Presentation to the WACOSS  
Children's Policy Advisory Council

Monday 25 July 2022



Commissioner for Children and Young People  
Western Australia







Commissioner for Children and Young People  
Western Australia

## Our vision

That all children and young people are **heard**, are **healthy and safe**, reach their **potential** and are welcomed as **valued members** of the community and in doing so we build a brighter future for the whole community.





Commissioner for Children and Young People  
Western Australia

## Commissioner's role

- Promoting the rights, voices and contributions of children and young people
- Monitoring and advocacy to strengthen the wellbeing of all WA children and young people
- Prioritising the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people.







Commissioner for Children and Young People  
Western Australia

## Why child wellbeing matters

- Up to 17% of children and young people in WA are experiencing poverty. (Sources: ACOSS and NATSEM)
- 15% of students in Years 4-12 rate their health 'fair' or 'poor', 25% have a long-term health problem. (Source: SOS21)
- 25% of female high school students rate their life satisfaction as poor (0 - 4 out of 10). (Source: SOS21)
- Self-harm hospitalisations (rate) for Australians aged 15-19 have increased significantly since 2008/09 (girls: 48% increase, boys: 33% increase). (Source: AIHW)
- Aboriginal young people are more than twice as likely to be hospitalised due to self-harm. (Source: AIHW)

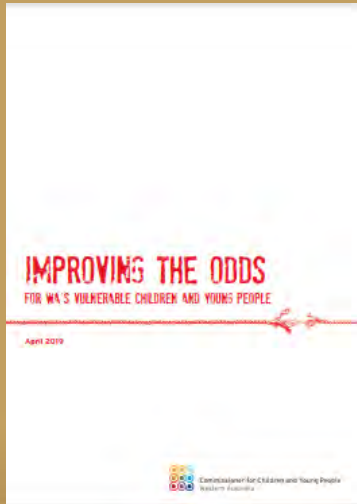






# Child Wellbeing Strategy

- 2019: Improving the odds for WA's vulnerable children and young people



- **Key recommendation:**

“Establish a whole-of-government Child Wellbeing Strategy for WA.”





## Purpose of a Child Wellbeing Strategy

- A whole-of-government Child Wellbeing Strategy could drive improvements in a number of child wellbeing outcomes.
- It should drive governments to prioritise investment in targeted, early intervention for children, young people and families who are vulnerable.
- A Strategy and implementation framework will also enable progress to be measured and regularly reported on.
- Child impact assessments ensure children's rights and wellbeing are central to legislation and policy development.







Commissioner for Children and Young People  
Western Australia

# Measuring child wellbeing

- Measuring child wellbeing is critical.
- Our Wellbeing Monitoring Framework and Indicators of wellbeing provide a framework to monitor the wellbeing of WA's children and young people across the life course and over time.
- The Framework is based on what children and young people have told us is critical to their wellbeing.

## Learning and Participating

- ✓ Reading and play
- ✓ Access to education
- ✓ High school attendance
- ✓ Sense of belonging
- ✓ Learning support
- ✓ Developing independence

## Healthy and Connected

- ✓ Healthy pregnancy
- ✓ Early identification of issues
- ✓ Adequate exercise and diet
- ✓ Connection to the community
- ✓ Good mental health
- ✓ Healthy behaviours

## Safe and Supported

- ✓ Safe relationships
- ✓ Adequate and stable housing
- ✓ Sufficient food and clothing
- ✓ Safe in the home
- ✓ Safe in the community
- ✓ Safe behaviours



Commissioner for Children and Young People  
Western Australia

## Speaking Out Survey

- A unique and representative evidence base of the wellbeing of children and young people in WA in their own words
- 16,532 Year 4 to Year 12 students across all regions of WA (4,912 in 2019)
- 1,145 Aboriginal students (8.4% of main sample)
- Questions on physical and mental health, education and participation, relationships and safety
- Independently administered by the Commissioner's office





Commissioner for Children and Young People  
Western Australia

*I liked this survey because it  
made me feel like us students  
have a say in things and  
people care about our opinion.*

*(13-year-old)*







Commissioner for Children and Young People  
Western Australia

# Main findings

- Children and young people in WA report **generally positive outcomes**
- **Mental health** is a critical issue for many children and young people
- **Female students** rate their wellbeing less favourably than male students
- Many children and young people **do not always feel safe** at home, at school or in their community





# Children and young people's views

"[In our classroom] we learn about our rights, like being healthy, happy and safe and who to talk to if we have a problem..." (5 year-old)

"I am important – ask me what I think....I have good ideas."  
(9 year-old)

"...I want to feel safe and I'm scared about high school because of the fights, people hitting teachers and stealing laptops and bikes." (11 year-old)

"I'm worried about my wellbeing in the future, I've been dealing with a lot of stress and anxiety. I've been having a few panic attacks too..." (11 year-old)

"Ask students for feedback and the effectiveness of programmes when addressing mental health and wellbeing.."  
(17 year-old)





Commissioner for Children and Young People  
Western Australia

## Jacqueline McGowan-Jones

Commissioner for Children and Young  
People Western Australia

Please keep in touch...

[ccyp.wa.gov.au](http://ccyp.wa.gov.au)

@CCYPWA



Panel Discussion: How might we...create equity in access and outcomes for **all** children and young people in WA?





# Supporter Thank yous



**Children's**  
POLICY ADVISORY  
C O U N C I L



**WA SOCIAL RESEARCH**  
**NETWORK**



wa council of  
social service



**Life Course Centre**



And finally, a BIG THANKS must go to the amazing Parky Service Support, ICT and Facilities teams

