

Australian Early Development Census

About the AEDC data collection

Introduction

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) is an Australian Government initiative. It is a national census of early childhood development, with a data collection taking place every three years since 2009.

Information is collected on individual children around Australia who are in their first year of full-time school. Results are reported at the local community, community, state-territory and national level to help create a snapshot of early childhood development. The AEDC is not an individual diagnostic tool and results about an individual child are not released publicly.

The census involves teachers of children in their first year of full-time school completing a research tool, the Australian version of the Early Development Instrument. On average it takes teachers approximately 20 minutes to complete each Instrument.

Participation in the AEDC is voluntary and the data is collected through the co-operation and active involvement of the government, Catholic and independent school systems. Parents have the opportunity to indicate they do not want a teacher to complete an Instrument for their child.

What information does the AEDC Instrument collect?

The Instrument includes approximately 100 questions across five domains of child development:

- physical health and wellbeing
- social competence
- emotional maturity
- language and cognitive skills (school-based)
- communication skills and general knowledge.

These five areas of development are good predictors of adult health, education and social outcomes.

How is AEDC data collected?

Instruments are completed by teachers using a secure, online data entry system. All teachers are provided with guidance, training and support materials to ensure that they have a thorough understanding of the AEDC and the data entry system.

Teachers use their knowledge about children in their class, in conjunction with data from enrolment forms, to complete the Instrument. Instruments are only completed for children that the teacher has known for at least one month.

Children are not taken out of class as it is not necessary that the child be present for Instrument completion. Parents and children do not need to provide any new or extra information to schools to support the AEDC data collection.

Collaborative Instrument completion

When teachers complete the Instrument, they may choose to consult with specialised staff, including English as a Second Language teachers; Teachers' Aides (Multicultural Education or Ethnic); Bilingual Support Officers, including Bilingual School Services Officers and/or School Learning Support Officers (Ethnic); or Community Liaison or Information Officers. For Indigenous children, if the classroom teacher is not an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person, the teacher is encouraged to draw on the support and knowledge of an Indigenous Cultural Consultant when completing the Instrument.

Where can I go for more information on data collection?

The **AEDC website**¹ has more information on how the collection is managed and provides all the relevant policies and documentation necessary for accessing and using the AEDC data. In particular, the AEDC Data User Guide outlines how the data collection can be used to support appropriate research and analysis.

How is the data used?

The AEDC data is designed to be used by various groups, including:

- communities that will gain detailed contextual and developmental information about their children to help them understand what is working well and where there are areas for improvement.
- schools that will have information on the developmental vulnerability of children as they enter school, to use in their early years planning.
- families that will be able to see how children in their community are developing prior to reaching school and gain an understanding of the importance of the early years as a time for building lifelong emotional and learning capability.
- researchers that will gain access to detailed early years development data to enhance the early years evidence base.

¹ www.aedc.gov.au

- governments, at all levels, that will gain access to comparable information over time to inform policy development and program management.

Refer to the **AEDC website**² for more information .

How is the data stored?

Several levels of physical and procedural protection provide maximum security in the storage of all AEDC information.

The AEDC Data Guidelines outline the principles required for storing and using the AEDC data, including maintaining a separation principle to prevent any unauthorised identification of AEDC data elements.

How can the data be accessed?

The AEDC data can be accessed in two ways:

- **Published or publicly available data:** AEDC results are available on the **AEDC website**² and include National Report, Community Profiles and Online Community Maps and Tables.
- **Unpublished data:** AEDC de-identified unit record files are available to researchers through the **AEDC Data Management team**². Access to unpublished data is subject to approval by the Department of Education and Training, and the AEDC National Committee, and will be provided for any legitimate research or analysis purpose. Researchers using AEDC data are bound by specific deeds of confidentiality to comply with all principles and procedures outlined in the AEDC Data Guidelines. Schools are also provided with their results, where they meet the reporting criteria (schools with results for six or more children) but these profiles are not publicly available.