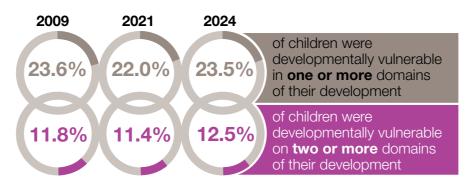
The AEDC is Australia's national progress measure of children's early development

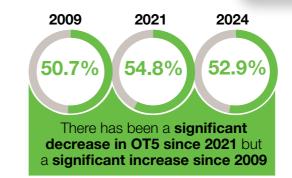


1,755,574 children have been included over six collections (2009, 2012, 2015, 2018, 2021, 2024)

288,483 children were included in the 2024 collection

That's **94.6%** of children who started school in 2024





In 2024, the greatest increases in developmental vulnerability were for:



Social competence

1.1 percentage points

Emotional maturity

1.5 percentage points

THE AEDC IN RESEARCH: WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

Access to high-quality early childhood education and care, including playgroups and preschool is positively related to children's development at school entry

(A)

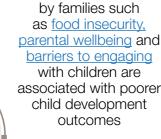


To thrive children need mental health competency and an absence of mental health difficulties

^



Modifiable neighbourhood characteristics, such as access to services and supports, affordable housing and access to public open spaces are associated with better child development outcomes



Adversities faced

^

A child's
development when
they enter school
is strongly linked
with their academic
and wellbeing
outcomes



Maternal health and
exposures in pregnancy
(smoking, environmental heat
stress, gestational diabetes,
preeclampsia) and perinatal
factors are associated with child
development at school entry





Children exposed to abuse and neglect have substantially higher risk of developmental vulnerability. Placement into out-of-home care reduces risk for some domains but increases risk for children's social and emotional wellbeing



Children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have higher rates of developmental vulnerability in communication,

literacy and numeracy. While many dual language learners have slower early language acquisition, they also have strengths in self-regulation and executive functioning



Developmental
vulnerability at school
entry is associated
with the onset of later
mental health disorders
throughout childhood
and adolescence



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WHAT ARE THE KEY GAPS?



More Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander children grow up
in communities facing adversity.
This is reflected in persistent
inequalities in child
development.

WHAT IS NEEDED:

Increase Indigenous led research in early childhood and fund research to explore local solutions informed by community.



In 2024, 20.5% of children started school with undiagnosed health and development needs, up from 10.7% in 2009. Research has shown this is associated with poorer school outcomes.

WHAT IS NEEDED:

Investigate increasing trends to better inform screening and early intervention prior to school.

RESEARCH



quality and amount of early childhood education affect children's social and emotional development is

Understanding how the

critical for informing policy and investment.

WHAT IS NEEDED:

Fund research to measure dose, quality and pedagogy for promoting child development.



Challenges facing families and communities living with socio-economic adversity are reflected in developmental inequities for their children, with no narrowing of this gap over the past decade.

WHAT IS NEEDED:

Polices need to be shaped to <u>reduce</u> <u>inequalities</u> while providing the right mix of universal and targeted services to support all families.



Children who started school in 2024 experienced the full effects of the pandemic and economic pressures facing families, and developmental outcomes for this cohort are poorer than for any cohort since 2009.

WHAT IS NEEDED:

Supports for families during children's early life are crucial to protect children at the local and global level.

-POLICY-

Since 2002, the Australian Government has worked in partnership with eminent child health research institutes, the Centre for Community Child Health at The Royal Children's Hospital and the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, and The Kids Research Institute Australia to deliver the Australian Early Development Census program to communities nationwide.

The Australian Government continues to work with its partners, and with state and territory governments to implement the AEDC.