

Australian Early Development Census

Understanding the results

About the AEDC

The AEDC is a national measure of children's development as they enter their first year of full-time school. The data for the AEDC is collected every three years using the Australian version of the Early Development Instrument (EDI), adapted from Canada. Participation is voluntary with data collected through the cooperation of parents and the active involvement of the government, Catholic and independent school sectors across Australia.

The AEDC measures five areas, or domains, of early childhood development that form the foundations for later good health, education and social outcomes. These domains are:

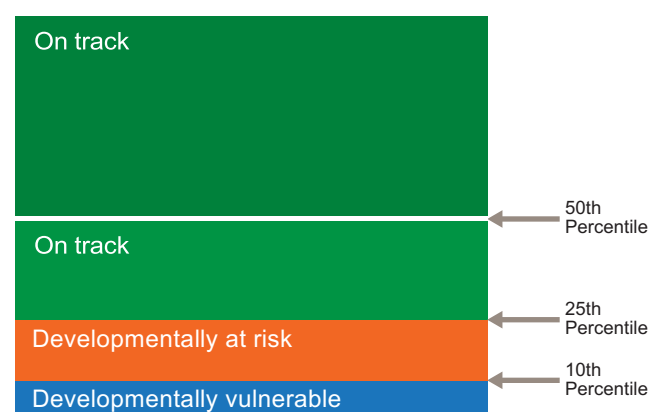
- physical health and wellbeing
- social competence
- emotional maturity
- language and cognitive skills (school-based)
- communication and general knowledge

In 2009, Australia became the first country in the world to collect national data on the developmental health and wellbeing of all children as they start their first year of full-time school. The success of the collection laid the foundation for the Australian Government's commitment to ongoing AEDC data collection cycles. Since then, the collection has occurred every three years with the most recent collection in 2021.

The AEDC highlights what is working well and what needs to be improved or developed to support children and their families, and helps communities know how their children

Figure 1 – How the baseline was established.

For the 2012 data collection, and onwards, comparisons of increased or decreased developmental vulnerability are measured against the score established in 2009.



are progressing. As a population-based measure, the AEDC is not designed to be an individual diagnostic tool. As such, results are reported publicly at a community level, acknowledging Australia's diverse cultural context.

The AEDC provides evidence to guide planning and service-provision to ensure children are supported through their early years, school years and beyond.

How the results are reported

AEDC results are presented as the number and proportion of children who are, 'on track', 'developmentally at risk' and 'developmentally vulnerable'.

About the result benchmarks

For each of the five AEDC domains, children receive a score between 0 and 10 where 0 is most developmentally vulnerable.

The cut off scores set in 2009 provide a reference point against which later AEDC results can be compared. These have remained the same across the three collection cycles. For example, using the cut off scores established in 2009, in the 2015 AEDC only 6.5 per cent of children were considered developmentally vulnerable on the Language and Cognitive Development domain, a decrease from 8.9 per cent in 2009.

Developmentally on track

The cut-off for an AEDC score to represent developmentally on track uses the baseline cut-offs from the 2009 AEDC data collection. In 2009 children who scored above the 25th percentile (in the top 75 per cent) of the national population were classified as developmentally on track.

Developmentally at risk

The cut-off for an AEDC score to represent developmentally at risk uses the baseline cut-offs from the 2009 AEDC data collection. In 2009 children who scored between the 10th and the 25th percentile of the national population were classified as developmentally at risk.

Developmentally vulnerable

The cut-off for an AEDC score to represent developmentally vulnerable is based on the results from the 2009 AEDC data collection. In 2009 children who scored below the 10th percentile (in the lowest 10 per cent) of the national population were classified as developmentally vulnerable.

What are AEDC communities?

AEDC Communities are a geographic area, usually equivalent to a Local Government Area (LGA), made up of AEDC local communities.

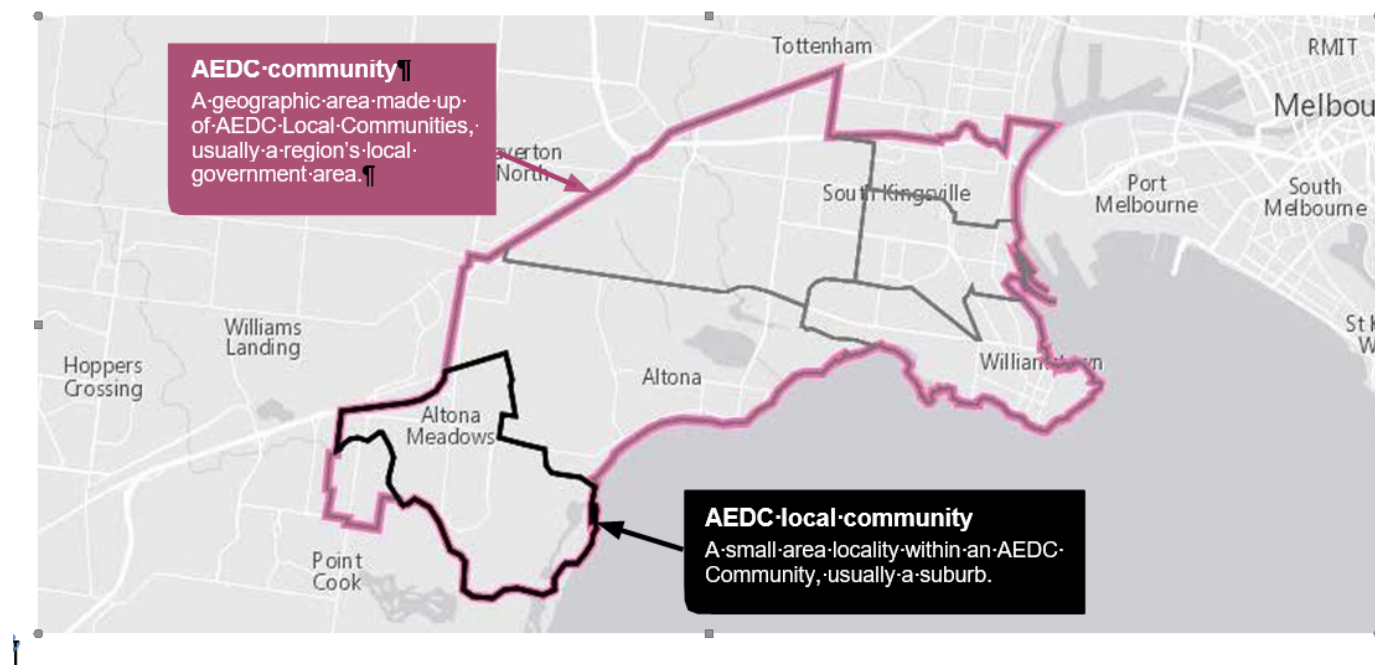
Local communities are a small area locality, usually representing a suburb or town. For its results to be reported, local communities must have a minimum of 15 children and two teachers. Results are not reported if more than 20 per cent of children were identified as children with special needs.

Results are available on the **AEDC website**¹ and consist of the following:

National Report

Australian Early Development Census National Report 2021 – Early Childhood Development in Australia² provides a unique overview of the development of children in Australia.

Figure 2 – Web site data explorer view of AEDC communities



¹ www.aedc.gov.au

² www.aedc.gov.au/natrep21

Figure 3 – Web site data explorer view of results tables

Tables

Maps

Graphs

Downloads

Community Profile

DISPLAY

Vulnerable

YEAR

2021

COMPARE WITH

No comparison

VIEW

Percentage of children

Geographic comparisons

Percentile bands

CONTEXT

Select other indicators

TABLE: Percentage of children developmentally vulnerable in 2021

Domains explained

Export selected results

Geography	Physical	Social	Emotional	Language	Communication	Vuln 1	Vuln 2
Australia	9.8	9.6	8.5	7.3	8.4	22.0	11.4
Victoria	8.1	9.0	7.7	7.2	7.4	19.9	10.2
Hobsons Bay	6.3	7.1	6.8	6.2	5.9	15.6	8.1

Community Profiles Tables and Maps

All AEDC data collected in a geographic area are collated and analysed at the suburb or small area locality (local community) of the child. This is reported back to the community through **AEDC Community Profiles**³ and **AEDC maps**⁴.

The AEDC community profiles, tables and maps report the percentage of children developmentally on track, at risk and vulnerable for each developmental domain.

Reported results

Reported results refer to the information that is made publicly available at a community level from the AEDC data collection. This includes:

- demographic data for all children included in the census
- AEDC domain scores – includes scores only from children with valid domain scores, and for those who don't have any diagnosed special need.

How are community and national results best compared?

The AEDC is a relative measure; the results show how children in the local community are doing relative to, or compared with, other children included, both in their community and across Australia.

For information about comparing results over two time points, refer to the fact sheet **Critical difference**⁵ and the **Data Explorer Tool**⁶.

Where can you get more information?

For further information on how to use the AEDC results, refer to the **AEDC User Guide**⁷ and other **resources**⁸.

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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, Melbourne, and the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, Melbourne, and the Telethon Kids Institute, Perth 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.

³ www.aedc.gov.au/resources/community-profiles
⁴ www.aedc.gov.au/resources/data
⁵ www.aedc.gov.au/resources/detail/aedc-fact-sheet-critical-difference
⁶ www.aedc.gov.au/data/data-explorer
⁷ www.aedc.gov.au/ugr
⁸ www.aedc.gov.au/resources