



# What the AEDC tells us about trends in children's development

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# Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)



- National measure of children's development at school entry
- Conducted every three years since 2009 (teacher reported)
- Provides a picture of early childhood development in Australia over time



## Physical health and wellbeing

Children's physical readiness for the school day, physical independence and gross and fine motor skills.



## Social competence

Children's overall social competence, responsibility and respect, approach to learning, and readiness to explore new things.



## Emotional maturity

Children's pro-social and helping behaviours, and absence of anxious and fearful behaviour, aggressive behaviour, hyperactivity and inattention.



## Language and cognitive skills (school-based)

Children's interest and skills in literacy and numeracy, and memory.

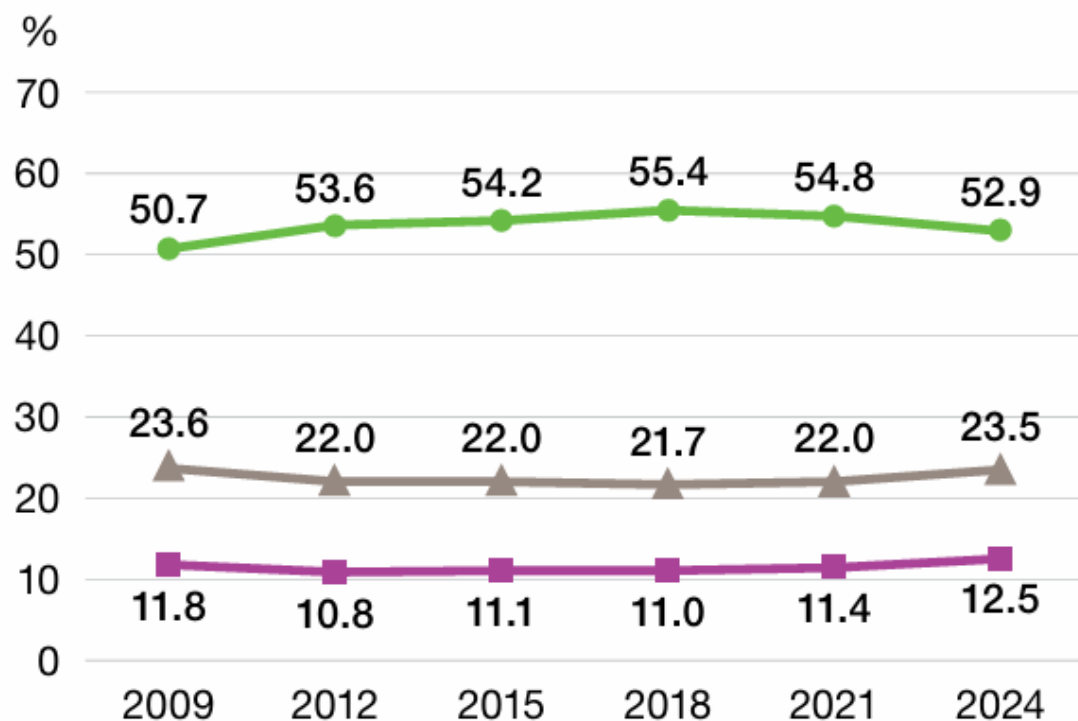


## Communication skills and general knowledge

Children's communication skills and general knowledge based on broad developmental competencies and skills.



# Trends in children's development at school entry



OT5  
DV1  
DV2

**OT5**

The percentage of children who are developmentally on track on five AEDC domains.

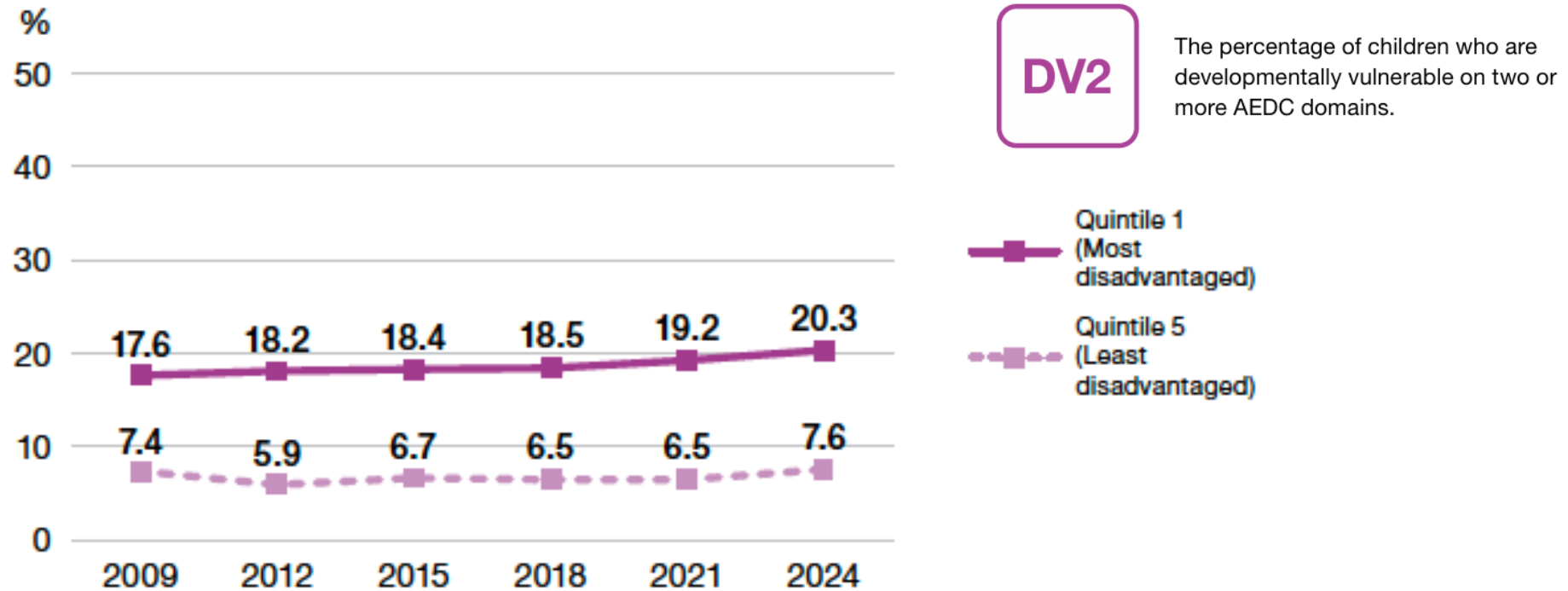
**DV1**

The percentage of children who are developmentally vulnerable on one or more AEDC domains.

**DV2**

The percentage of children who are developmentally vulnerable on two or more AEDC domains.

# Persistent inequities in early child development



**National trends in children experiencing greater developmental vulnerability by SEIFA, 2009-2024**

SOURCE: AEDC National Report 2024 (<https://www.aedc.gov.au/resources/detail/2024-aedc-national-report>)



# Children with Additional Health and Developmental Needs

“Children who have, or are at increased risk of having, a chronic physical, developmental, behavioural or emotional condition which requires more medical, allied health, education or related services than their peers”<sup>1</sup>

| Measures                        | Definition                                                                                                                                                                        |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Children with established needs | Children requiring special assistance in the classroom due to a medically diagnosed chronic medical, physical or intellectually disabling condition                               |
| Children with emerging needs    | Children without diagnosed needs who had a condition that affected their learning and/or whose teachers indicated they were currently being assessed or needed further assessment |

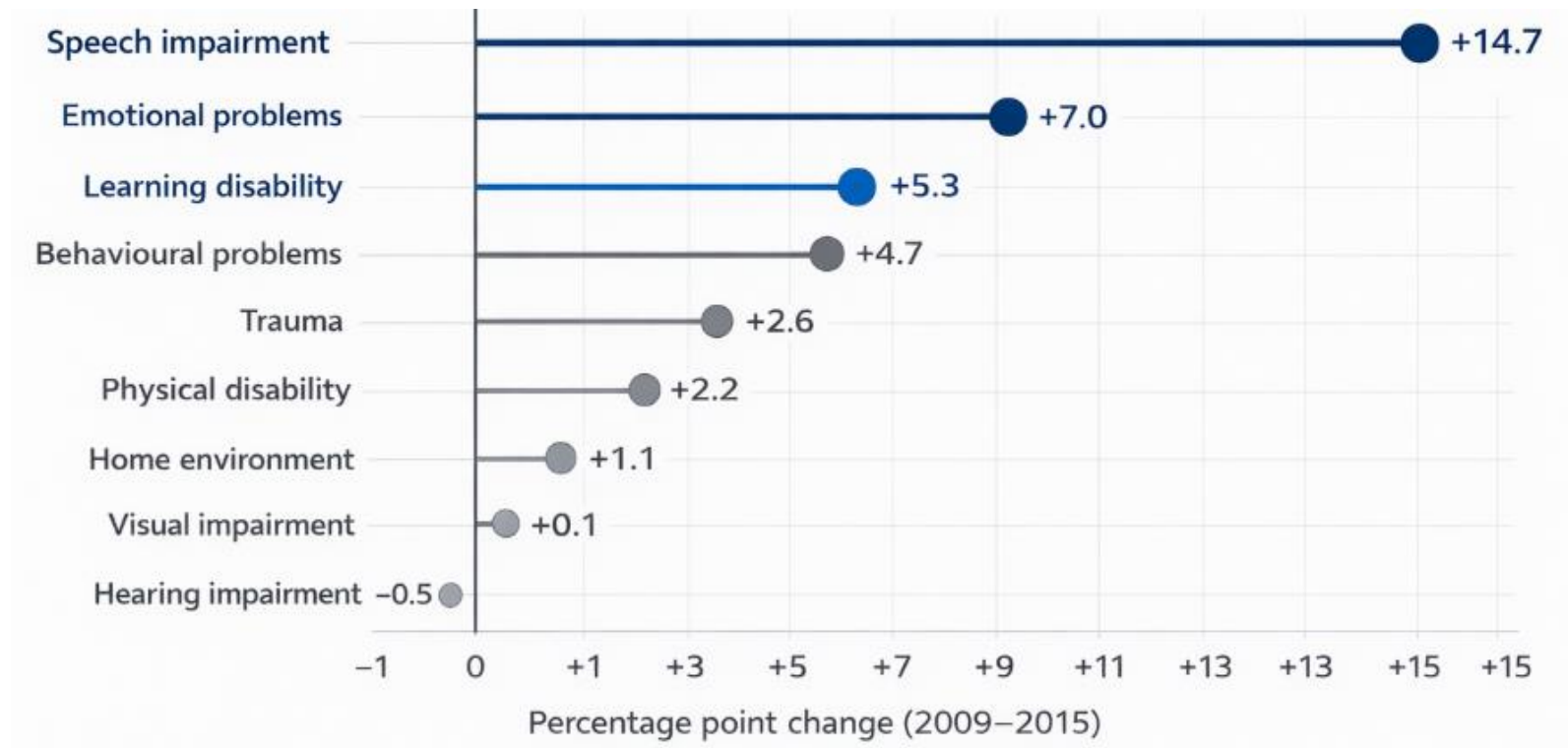
<sup>1</sup> O'Connor M, O'Connor E, Quach J, Vashishtha R, Goldfeld S. Trends in the prevalence and distribution of teacher-identified special health-care needs across three successive population cohorts. *Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health*. 2019;55:312–319. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/jpc.14192>

# Children with Additional Health and Developmental Needs



- Almost **1 in 20** children start school with **established needs**<sup>1</sup>
- Almost **1 in 5** start school with **emerging needs**<sup>1</sup>
- Emerging needs at school entry associated with lower reading and numeracy outcomes by Grade 3 (~9 months learning difference)<sup>2</sup>

Change in teacher-reported impairments among children with emerging needs (AEDC 2009-2015)<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> O'Connor M et al. Trends in the prevalence and distribution of teacher-identified special health-care needs across three successive population cohorts. *J Paediatr Child Health*. 2019;55:312–319.

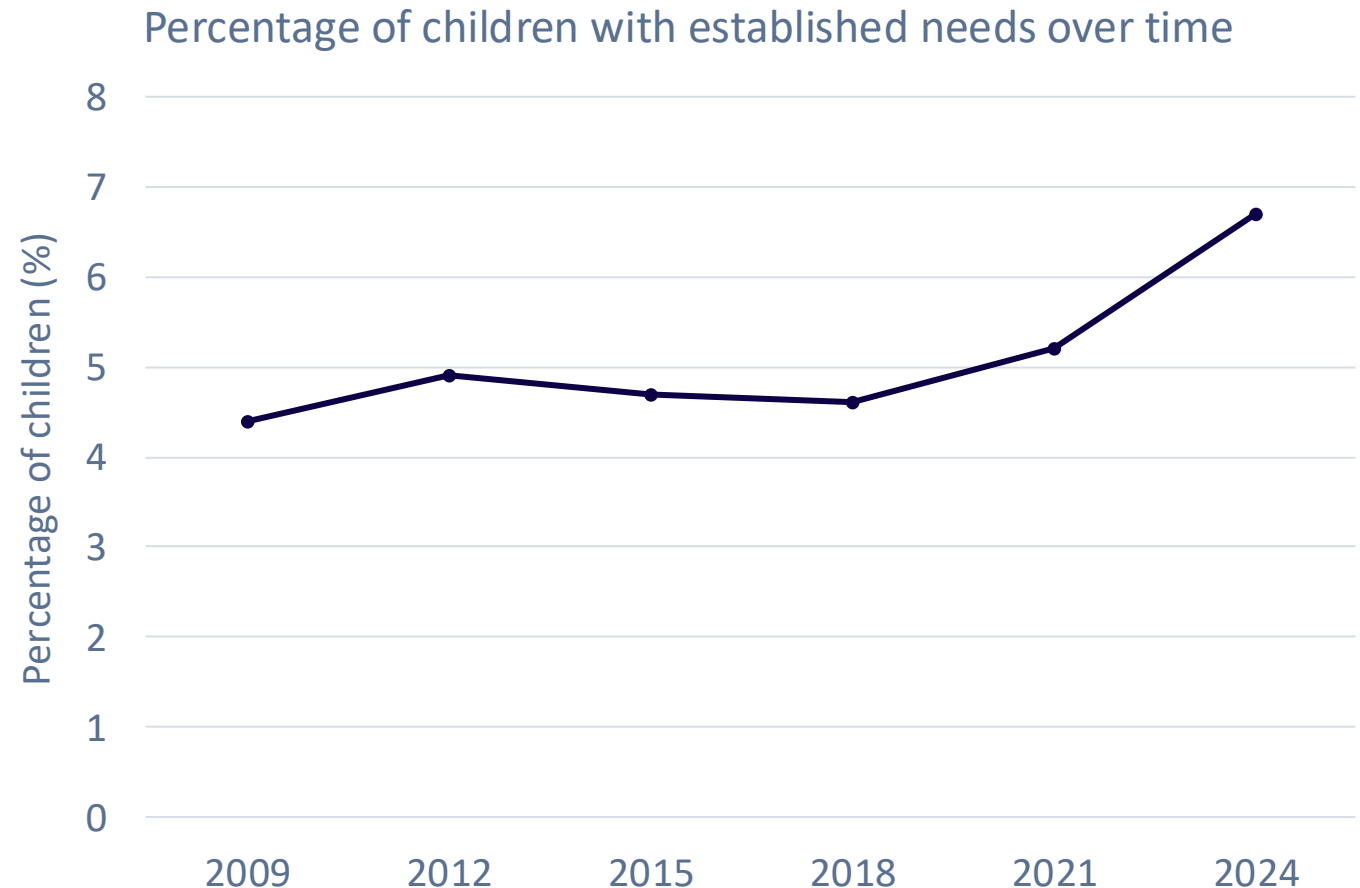
<sup>2</sup> O'Connor M et al. Learning outcomes of children with teacher-identified emerging health and developmental needs. *Child Care Health Dev*. 2020;1–9.

# More recent trends in Additional Health and Developmental Needs



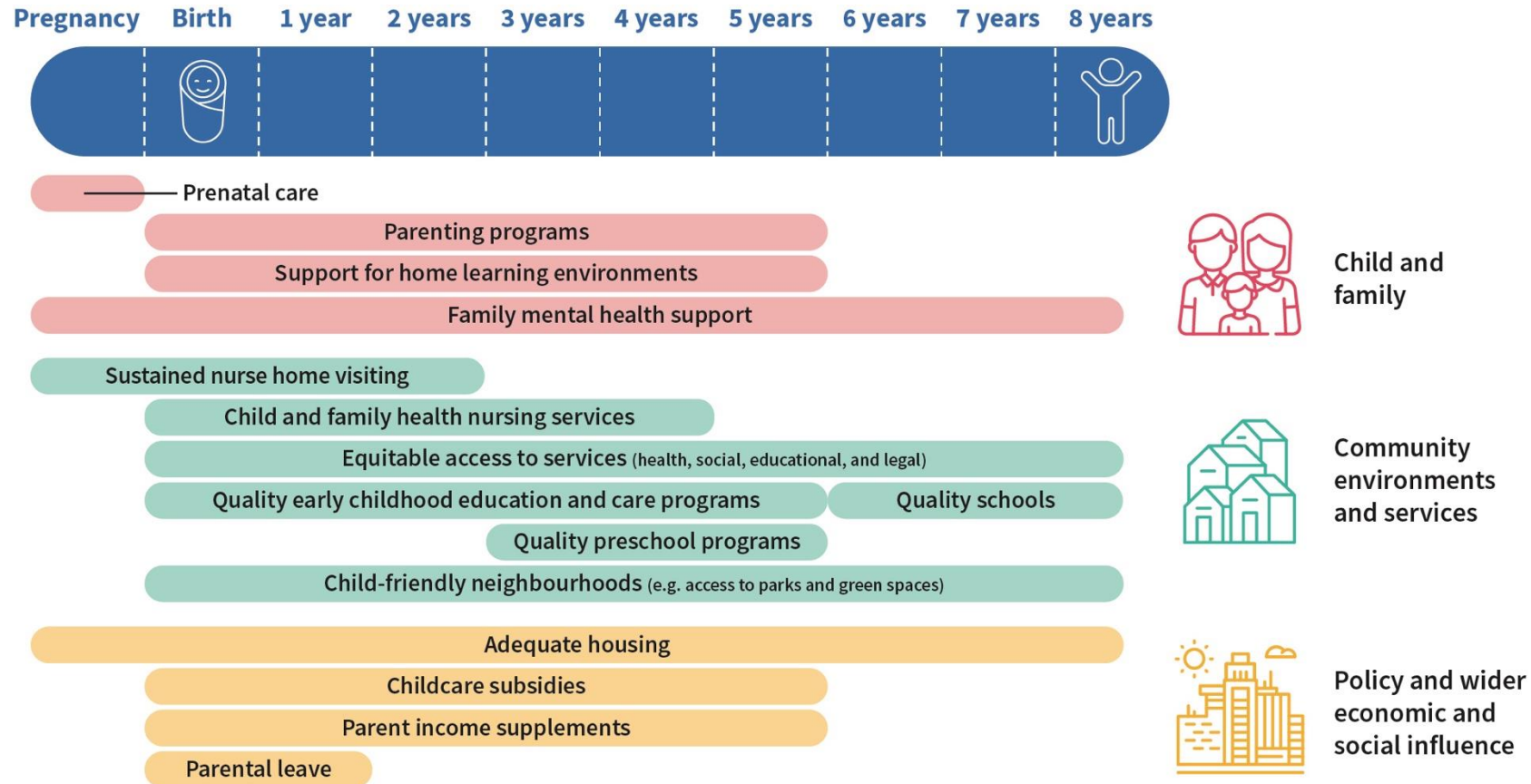
In 2024:

- **6.7%** of children had established needs
- **20.5%** of children were currently being assessed or were identified by a teacher as needing further assessment





# Changing Children's Chances



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.

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The Centre for Community Child Health is a department of The Royal Children's Hospital and a research group of the Murdoch Children's Research Institute.



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Supported by The Royal Children's Hospital Foundation