



The Longitudinal Study of
Australian Children

We are always pleased to hear from you about your experiences with the study or your ideas for the future of the study.

Please email:
growingup@abs.gov.au
with any comments.

Season's Greetings to all of our study families!

Growing Up in Australia, the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children, would like to say a big thank you to all the families who are involved in the study. With your continued support, the fourth round of home visits has been a success and we'd like to say best wishes to all the families for the festive season. This newsletter for 2010 contains information about what has happened in the study this year, what will be happening next, along with some of the things we've found out from the study children, their parents and their teachers.

Life at 5

Growing Up in Australia has been working with Heiress Films this year to produce the third series of the "Life at ..." documentary, *Life at 5*, which follows 11 children and their families by observing their ordinary routines and milestones. This series follows *Life at 1* (2006) and *Life at 3* (2008).



Life at 5 looks at the factors impacting on the children's lives such as their parents' relationship, finances, work, health and education. These documentaries are based on *Growing Up in Australia*, and the "Life at ..." families do the same activities and answer the same questions as the families in *Growing Up in Australia*. Heiress Films is now in the final stages of producing the series and it is anticipated that *Life at 5* will be shown on ABC TV in 2011.

Respondent focus groups

In September, *Growing Up in Australia* ran a number of focus groups with some study families as well as families who are not involved in the study. We heard from parents and their children aged between 11 and 13 years about how we can ensure the study continues to be interesting for participants. They also discussed how we can ensure we are collecting information about the things that are important to children and their families living in Australia today. As the study children get older they will take on a larger role as the main respondent. The focus group families have provided valuable suggestions on topics that are relevant, appropriate and interesting for families with teenage children. We will certainly take on board all of the great ideas and feedback!

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Conducted in partnership between
the Department of Families, Housing,
Community Services and Indigenous
Affairs (FaHCSIA), the Australian
Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) and
the Australian Bureau of Statistics
(ABS)

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Australian Government

Department of Families,
Housing, Community Services
and Indigenous Affairs

Australian Institute of
Family Studies

Australian Bureau of Statistics

Growing Up in Australia: the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children is designed to identify policy opportunities for improving support for children and their families and for early intervention and prevention strategies.

Since 2004, *Growing Up in Australia* has been following two nationally representative samples of children and their families (5,000 children who were 0–1 years old in 2004 and 5,000 children who were 4–5 years old in 2004). These children and their families will be followed until at least 2018.

You can visit the *Growing Up in Australia* website at any time to find the latest information on the study.

www.aifs.gov.au/growingup



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Looking ahead

As you may already know, *Growing Up in Australia* has received funding from the Australian Government to continue for another four rounds of home visits. This will take the younger group of study children to 15 years and the older group to 19 years. This is great news for the study and we have been busy planning for Wave 5 (due to take place in 2011–2012) when the older group of children (12–13 years) will be moving from late childhood into early adolescence. We have been working hard to develop the most interesting and appropriate questions to capture this important period in the study children's lives.

In Wave 5 the younger group of children will be aged 8–9 years, and we have been developing questions to capture information about these important childhood years.

All this information will greatly assist the Australian Government in identifying policy opportunities to improve the support provided for children, adolescents and their families.

Ongoing use of Medicare data

We will be continuing to access the children's Medicare records, for which consent has previously been given. As always, the data will be treated confidentially, and no information will be included in the dataset that would enable individual children to be identified. Further, only trends for groups of children will be reported using this data. Consent for your inclusion in the study and for this data access can be withdrawn at any stage, although we would like to emphasise that your participation is very valuable and important for the study.

Where do the other *Growing Up in Australia* families live?

This map shows where the *Growing Up in Australia* families live. Because we want to get a representative picture of Australian families, the states with the largest populations (NSW and Victoria) have the most families in the study.

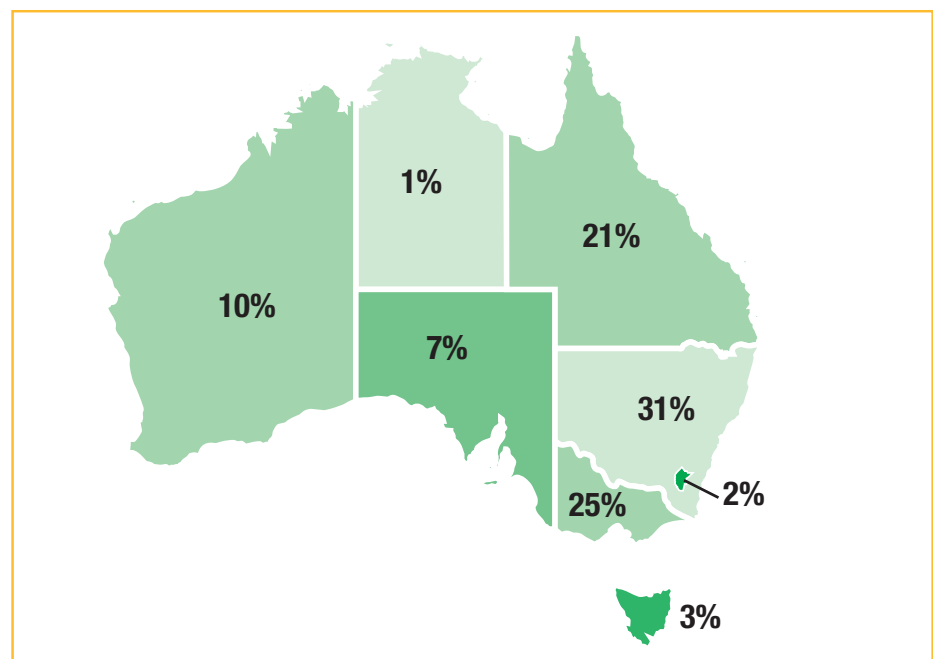


Figure 1: Percentages of *Growing Up in Australia* families in each Australian state/territory

Families with parents living in two households

Almost 1,500 of the children in *Growing Up in Australia* have parents who don't live together.

With the involvement of all parents in *Growing Up in Australia*, we are able to gain a richer picture of the children's experiences and development by gathering information from all the people who are important in their lives. The information provided by both parents helps governments to make decisions on how best to support families after separation.

Growing Up in Australia collects information about the relationship between children's separated parents, the involvement that separated parents have in their children's lives, some details of the financial arrangements between parents, and other details about separated parents and their current family arrangements.

This graph shows that many separated parents maintain regular contact with their children. Over 50% of separated parents see their children once a week or more.

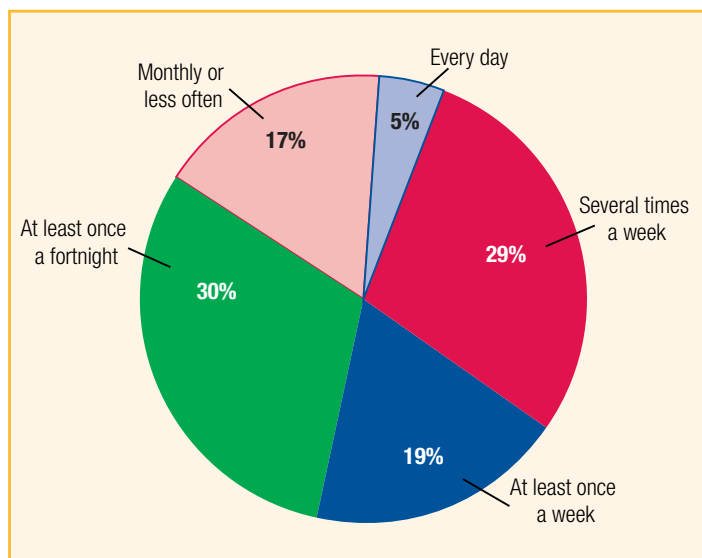


Figure 2: How often do separated parents usually see their child? (Results from children aged 8–9 years)

Are you moving?

Please help us keep in touch by updating your address and contact details. You can do this in a number of ways:

- Phone free-call **1800 005 508**
- Email **growingup@abs.gov.au**
- Complete and send the change of contact details form in your *Growing Up in Australia* calendar.

In the news!

Growing Up In Australia had extensive media coverage in 2010. Below are a few excerpts from Australian newspapers.

Mothers' working hours and children's health – *The Age*, 28 February 2010

New research has revealed that mothers who work part-time raise healthier children than stay-at-home mums or those with full-time jobs.

A study of more than 4500 Australian preschoolers found kids of part-time mums eat less junk food, watch less television and are less likely to be overweight or obese, News Ltd says.

The researchers conducted face-to-face interviews with mothers and measured their children's height and weight at ages four to five, and again two years later at ages six to seven.

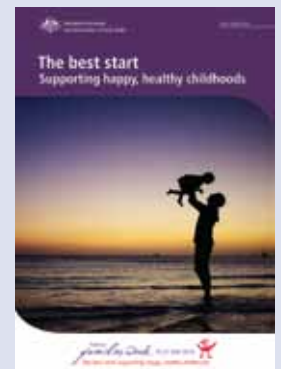
The discovery has renewed calls for more flexible and family-friendly work programs as a means to promoting healthier lifestyles and early childhood wellbeing.

Parents and the time they spend with their kids – *The Australian*, 20 May 2010

AIFS research fellow and author of *The Best Start: Supporting Happy, Healthy Childhoods*

Jennifer Baxter says when fathers were asked whether they enjoyed spending time with their children, 28 per cent said they "always or almost always" did, compared with 40 per cent of mothers. As well, 21 per cent of dads said they "sometimes or less often" enjoyed the time spent with their kids, compared with just 11 per

cent for mums. "Dads often have that added pressure of long work hours. They're there in the mornings when time is so rushed and at dinner when there's so much going on, so that stress of combining work with the hard parts of the family day may be spilling over into their level of enjoyment," Dr Baxter told *The Australian*.



Reducing the impact of living in poorer suburbs – *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 May 2010

Children growing up in poorer suburbs have lower levels of concentration, and are much more likely to feel sad, worried or fearful than children in better-off neighbourhoods, new research shows. And they are also more likely to have troubles with their peers. But the research by the Australian Institute of Family Studies also shows these problems are reduced where parents in disadvantaged areas feel a sense of belonging, trust their neighbours, and believe their suburb is safe. The study of nearly 5000 children aged four and five living in 330 postcodes demonstrates that how parents feel about where they live can influence the wellbeing of their children.

About your child's school: What teachers told us

Children's teachers provide *Growing Up in Australia* with extremely valuable information about children's development, and their experiences and progress at school. When the older group of children were aged 8–9 years, we asked their teachers to complete a questionnaire that included some questions about the child's school.

Here is some of the information they gave us:

School type

- 68% of the children attended a government school
- 20% attended a Catholic school
- 12% attended an independent or private school

Class size

- Most teachers (85%) taught a class with between 21–30 students
- About 9% of teachers taught less than 20 students
- 6% of teachers taught a class of 31 students or more

Classroom characteristics

- Almost one third (29%) of the teachers reported that they had 5–15 students from a non-English speaking background in their class
- About 12% of teachers reported that they taught between 5–10 students from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background in their class
- 17% of teachers reported that they had between 5–10 students with a diagnosed disability such as an intellectual, or sensory, or physical disability, Autistic Spectrum Disorder, or developmental delay in their class

School enjoyment: What the children told us

We asked the older group of children how much they enjoy school.

- Most 8–9 year olds think they are good at their schoolwork
- 62% of children said they enjoy doing maths and number work
- 68% like reading and writing

How children spend their time

Researchers are using information collected from the Time Use Diaries completed by *Growing Up in Australia* families to provide the Australian Government with important information about how children use their time. This includes information about when children get up in the morning and when they go to bed at night, and how they spend their waking hours.

These two graphs have been produced using the time use data and show what time children get up in the morning and what time they go to bed at night, during the week. The graphs compare children who were 4–5 years old and children who were 8–9 years old. The graphs show that most children get up between 6:00am and 8:00am, regardless of their age. However, 4–5 year olds are more likely to go to bed before 8:00pm, and 8–9 year olds are more likely to go to bed at 8:00pm or later.

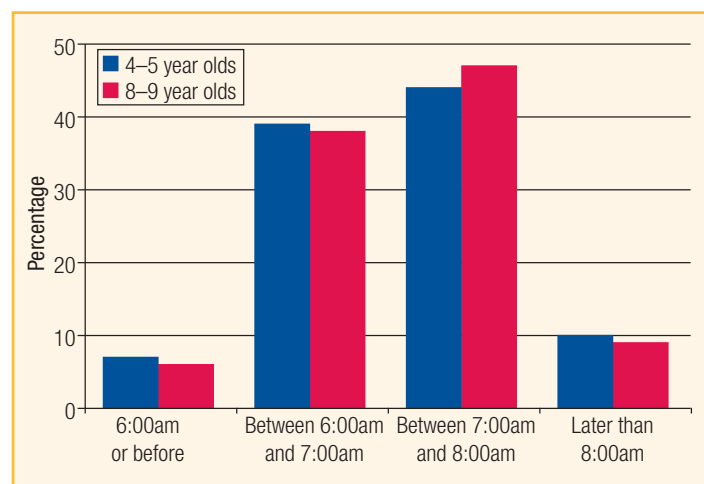


Figure 3: What time do kids get up during the week?

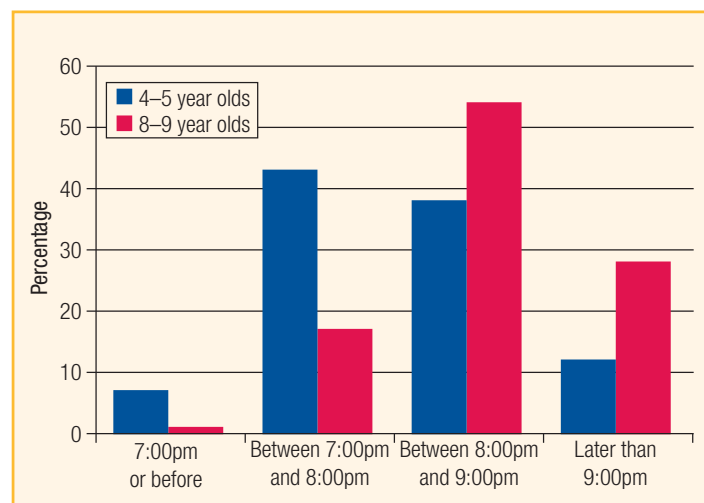


Figure 4: What time do kids go to bed during the week?