

Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study of Children in Out-of-Home Care (POCLS)

Dashboard 1 – Characteristics of the POCLS Cohorts

What is included in Dashboard 1?

This POCLS dashboard provides a summary of demographic characteristics and geographic locations of children and young people in out-of-home care (OOHC) in three key study cohorts in the POCLS. This includes:

1. Children and young people entering OOHC for the first time ever between May 2010 and October 2011 who subsequently received final care and protection orders by 30 April 2013, referred to as the **final orders cohort**,
2. Children and young people in the study who completed interviews at each wave, referred to as the **interview cohort**, and
3. Children and young people in the study who completed each of the first three or first four waves of POCLS interviews, referred to as the **tracked samples**.

Dashboard 1 includes data from the first four waves of the POCLS broken down by gender, age, Aboriginal status, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) status, OOHC placement type and district.

Why is Dashboard 1 needed?

Dashboard 1 provides an overview of the demographic characteristics of the different cohorts of children in the POCLS.

Summary of Dashboard 1 findings for the Final Orders cohort

- The total number of children and young people in the final orders cohort was 2,828.
- Almost equal proportions of males (51.4%) and females (48.6%) were in the final orders cohort.
- Almost half (48.4%) of the final orders cohort entered OOHC when they were aged 9-35 months, while almost a quarter (24.0%) were aged 3-6 years and almost a fifth (19.1%) were aged 7-11 years. Less than one in ten (8.5%) were aged 12-17 years.
- There were 987 Aboriginal children and young people in the final orders cohort, this represents 34.9% of the 2,828 children and young people in this cohort.
- Only about one in ten children and young people in the final orders cohort came from a CALD background (13.6%) with the majority (86.4%) being from a non-CALD background.
- Almost half of the final orders cohort were placed in foster care at their first OOHC entry (n=1,368). There were 1,078 children and young people in relative/kinship care and 53 in residential care, representing 38.1% and 1.9% of the final orders cohort respectively.

- At 30 June 2019, the number of children and young people in the final orders cohort who were still in OOHC decreased to 1,242, which represent 43.9% of the final orders cohort. The remainder of children and young people had exited OOHC to restoration, guardianship, adoption or aged out of OOHC at 18 years of age.
- In terms of district groups, there were 672 children and young people in the final orders cohort from the Hunter New England and Central Coast districts (23.8%), 256 from Illawarra Shoalhaven and Southern NSW districts (9.1%), 285 from the Mid North Coast and Northern NSW districts (10.1%), 421 from Murrumbidgee, Far West and Western NSW districts (14.9%), 314 from the South Eastern Sydney, Northern Sydney and Sydney districts (11.1%), 379 from the South Western Sydney district (13.4%) and 493 from the Western Sydney and Nepean Blue Mountains districts (17.4%).

Summary of Dashboard 1 findings for the Interview cohort

- 1,285 children and young people participated in an interview in Wave 1. This reduced to 1,200 at Wave 2, 1,033 at Wave 3 and 962 at Wave 4.
- The interview cohort was evenly divided between females and males in each wave.
- As POCLS follows a cohort of children and young people their ages increase at each wave.
 - The proportion of children aged 9-35 months at their interview decreased from 44.1% at Wave 1 to 18.8% at Wave 2 as children moved into the older age groups. By Wave 3, there were no children in this age group.
 - There was an increase in the proportion of children in the 3-6 years age group from 26.5% at Wave 1 to 42.6% at Wave 2 and 54.0% at Wave 3 followed by a decline to 22.6% at Wave 4 as some children move into the older age group.
 - The proportion of children aged 7-11 years has increased steadily with each wave from 19.7% at Wave 1 to 25.2% at Wave 2, 29.0% at Wave 3 and 54.9% at Wave 4.
 - The proportion of children aged 12-17 years at interview has also increased at each wave from 9.6% at Wave 1 to 13.4% at Wave 2, 16.9% at Wave 3 and 22.6% at Wave 4.
- The proportion of Aboriginal children interviewed at each wave has remained consistent at around 40%.
- CALD children have comprised 14-16% of children and young people participating in an interview at each wave.
- Children who were restored to their birth parents were included in the study from Wave 2 onwards. Guardianship orders were introduced on 29 October 2014 so are only included from Wave 3 onwards. The percentage of children in foster care ranged from 51.4% in Wave 1 to 43.2% in Wave 4 while the percentage in relative/kinship care ranged from 46.5% to 28.8%.
- At Wave 4, there were 197 children and young people from the Hunter and Central Coast districts (20.5%), 84 from Illawarra Shoalhaven and Southern NSW districts (8.7%), 155 from the Mid North Coast, New England and Northern NSW districts (16.1%), 174 from Murrumbidgee, Far West and Western NSW districts (18.1%), 83 from the South Eastern Sydney, Northern Sydney and Sydney districts (8.6%), 111 from the South Western Sydney district (11.5%) and 158 from the Western Sydney and Nepean Blue Mountains districts (16.4%).

Summary of Dashboard 1 findings for the tracked samples cohorts

- A total of 882 children and young people took part in all of the first three waves of the POCLS interviews. A total of 734 children and young people took part in all of the first four waves of the POCLS interviews.
- The proportions of children and young people who participated in an interview at the first three and the first four waves were almost equally split between males and females.
- Of the children who participated in the first three waves of POCLS interviews, 60.0% were aged 9-35 months at entry into OOHC, 23.6% were aged 3-6 years and 16.4% were aged 7-17 years.
- Of the children who participated in the first four waves of POCLS interviews, 64.2% were aged 9-35 months at entry into OOHC and 35.8% were aged 3-17 years. No further breakdown is possible due to the small numbers of older children participating in all of the first four waves.
- The proportion of Aboriginal children who participated in the first three and the first four waves of interviews has remained consistent at 40.4% and 39.2% respectively.
- CALD children comprise 15.9% of children and young people participating in both the first three and the first four waves of POCLS interview.
- Children who were restored to their birth parents were included in the study from Wave 2 onwards. Guardianship orders were introduced on 29 October 2014 so are only included from Wave 3 onwards. The percentage of children in foster care and relative/kinship care has been steadily decreasing at each wave for both the children who participated in the first three and the first four waves of interviews. The percentage of children and young people exiting OOHC has been increasing over the same period.
- Of the children and young people who participated in the first three waves, there were 194 from the Hunter and Central Coast districts (22.0%), 94 from Illawarra Shoalhaven and Southern NSW districts (10.7%), 146 from the Mid North Coast, New England and Northern NSW districts (16.6%), 144 from Murrumbidgee, Far West and Western NSW districts (16.3%), 84 from the South Eastern Sydney, Northern Sydney and Sydney districts (9.5%), 105 from the South Western Sydney district (11.9%) and 115 from the Western Sydney and Nepean Blue Mountains districts (13.0%).
- Of the children and young people who participated in first four waves, there were 174 from the Hunter and Central Coast districts (23.7%), 70 from Illawarra Shoalhaven and Southern NSW districts (9.5%), 115 from the Mid North Coast, New England and Northern NSW districts (15.7%), 113 from Murrumbidgee, Far West and Western NSW districts (15.4%), 69 from the South Eastern Sydney, Northern Sydney and Sydney districts (9.4%), 83 from the South Western Sydney district (11.3%) and 110 from the Western Sydney and Nepean Blue Mountains districts (15.0%).

Explanatory Notes:

1. Aboriginal is used throughout this dashboard and is inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
2. Non-Aboriginal includes children and young people where Aboriginal status is 'not stated'.
3. CALD data should be interpreted with caution due to relatively small numbers and data quality issues.
4. The district reported in this dashboard depends on the cohort selected. For the final care and protection orders cohort, district reflects where the child or young person's case plan was held at the child's first placement. For the interview cohort, district reflects where the child or young person's case plan was held at the time of the interview. For the tracked sample, district reflects where the child or young person's case plan was held at the time of the last wave interview.
5. To maintain confidentiality and prevent identification of study participants, numbers less than 10 for Aboriginal children and young people and less than 5 for non-Aboriginal children and young people are not published. In some cases, the small numbers are replaced with "not publishable" while in other cases, categories may be combined, with the data grouped more broadly.