Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study

The artist is a young person who grew up in care.

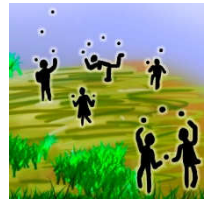
"The banner shows many pathways through the care system with a carer or caseworker acting as a guide, ultimately leading to independence for every young person. Whether we live with family or strangers, study, work, or just try our best, the paths we choose and are guided through in our youth are what we use to prepare ourselves for the happiest adulthood we can achieve" Billy Black

Study overview and the wellbeing of children & young people in OOHC

Australian Social Policy Conference 2019

NSW GOVERNMENT | Family & Community Services

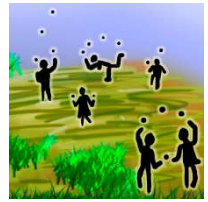
Acknowledgement



We acknowledge Aboriginal nations as the first people of Australia and pay our respects to their Elders past and present. And we extend our respect to Aboriginal children and young people who are the future Elders.

We remember the Stolen Generations – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children forcibly removed from their families, communities and culture under past government practices.

Ethics approval



Human Research Ethics Committee

University of New South Wales HREC (HC10335 & HC16542).

Aboriginal Ethics Committee

Approval from Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council (AH&MRC) of NSW Ethics Committee (766/10).

NSW Department of Education

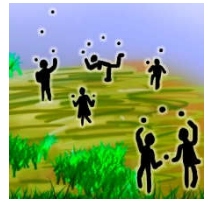
State Education Research Applications Process (SERAP) (2012260).

NSW Population & Health Services Research Ethics Committee

Cancer Institute New South Wales (HREC/14/CIPHS/74).

NSW GOVERNMENT | Family & Community Services

Outline

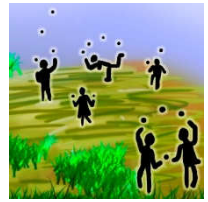


1. Study design & data sources

2. Children's development and wellbeing at Wave 4

- Physical health
- Behaviour problems
- Verbal ability
- Non-verbal ability

OOHC in NSW at 30 June 2018



Total number of children in OOHC in NSW

17,837 of which 39% Aboriginal children.

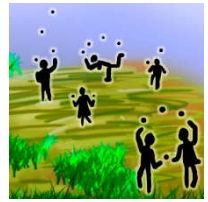
Placement type

52% relative/kinship; 44% foster care and 3% residential care

Case management in statutory care only

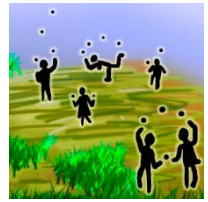
Transition to NGOs began in 2012. As at June 2018, 56% of the 13,935 children in statutory care were with accredited and FACS funded OOHC agencies.

OOHC reforms in NSW



- **Keep Them Safe**
- **Safe Home for Life**
- **Their Futures Matter**
- **Permanency Support Program**

Aims of the study



To describe children's pathways

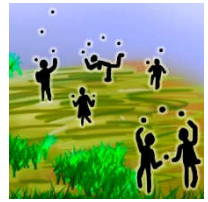
- **into care:** characteristics, child protection history, early intervention
- **through care:** eg access to services, placements, development, family contact, casework, friends and school
- **out of care:** eg restoration, guardianship, adoption, leaving care at 18 years

To understand factors influencing child outcomes

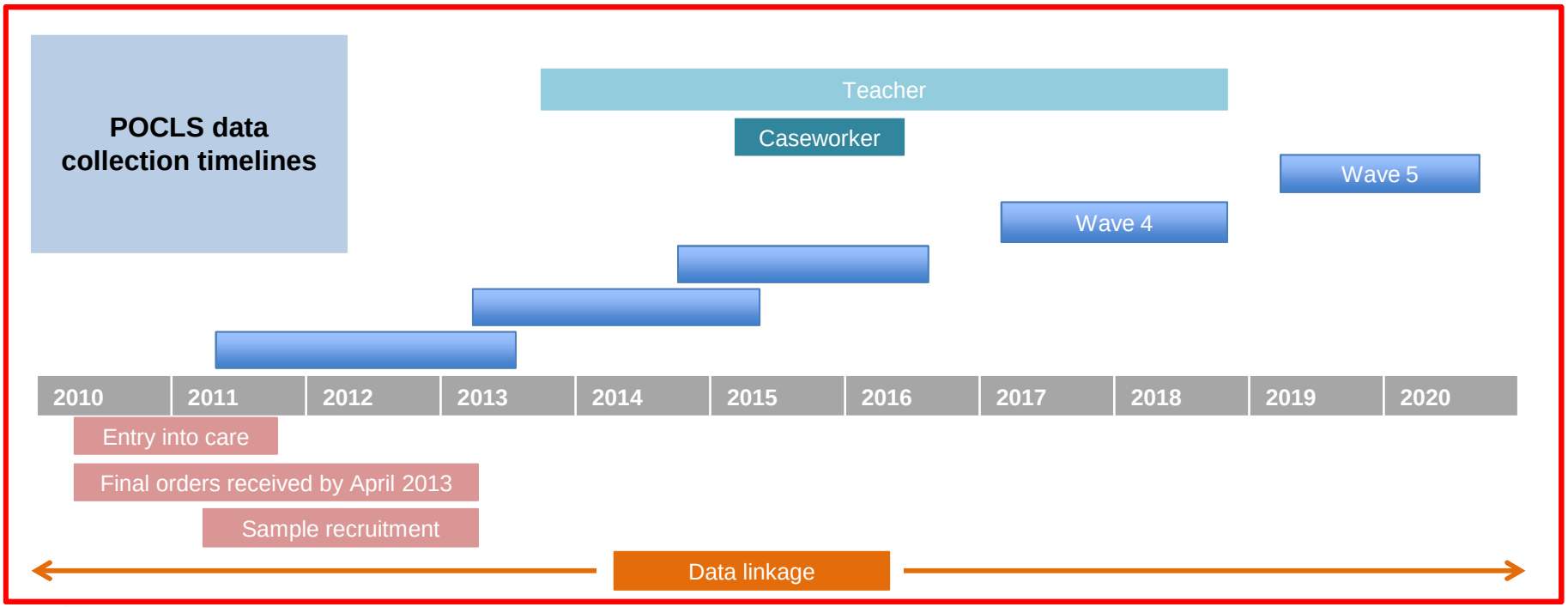
- physical health, socio-emotional wellbeing, cognitive/learning ability

To inform policy and practice to improve the service system

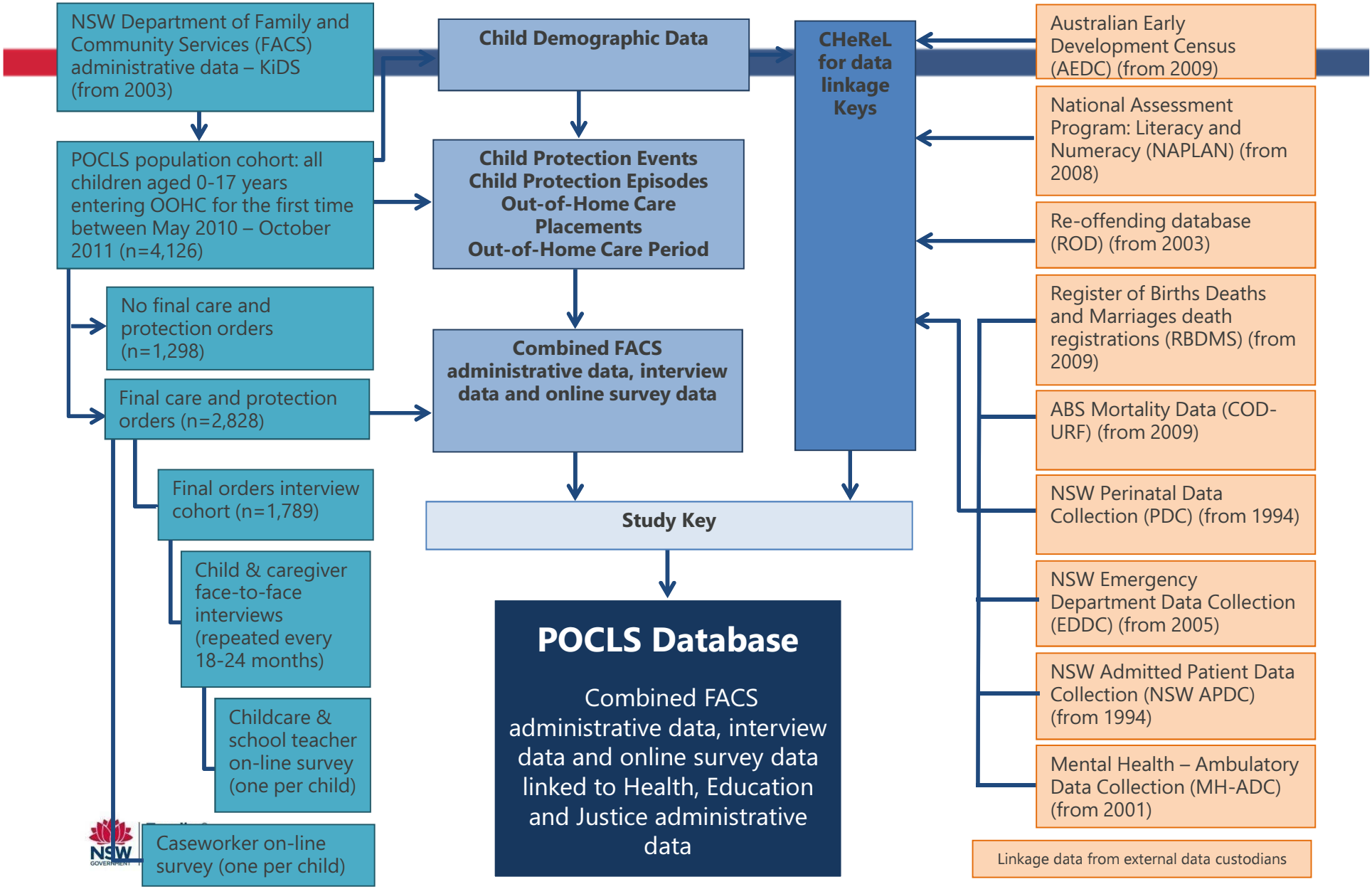
POCLS data collection timelines



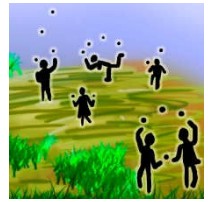
- To date, 4 waves of data collection have been undertaken at 18-24 month intervals.
- By the end of Wave 5 (currently being collected) the POCLS will have 10 years of in-depth data on children's OOHC experiences (including exits and re-entries) and developmental outcomes.



POCLS data asset

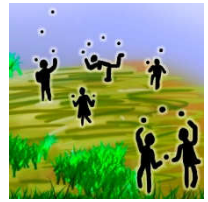


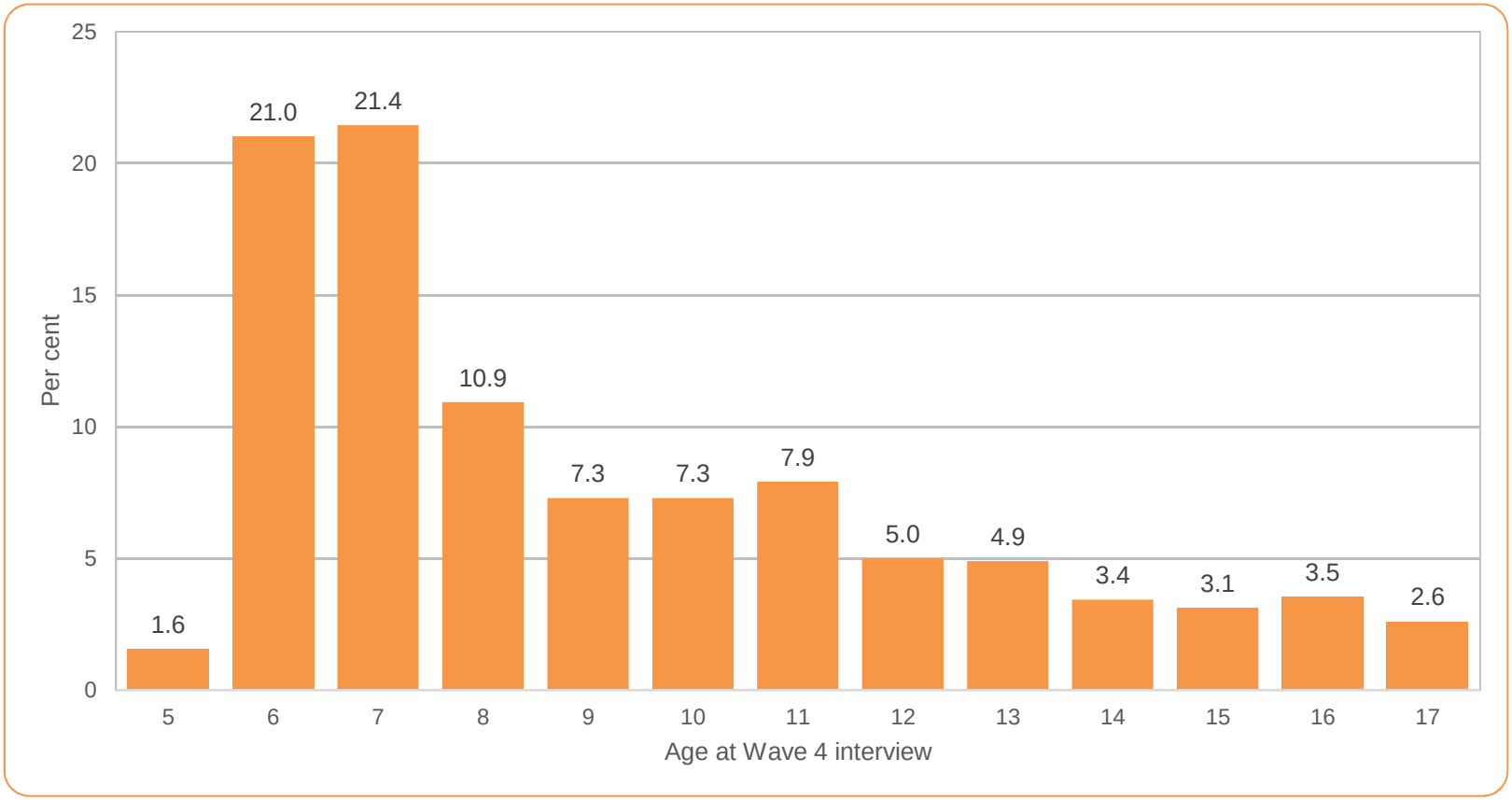
Participation in POCLS interviews is high



Wave	n
Wave 1	1,285
Wave 2	1,200
Wave 3	1,033
Wave 4	962
All Waves	734
At least one wave	1,507

Age of children at Wave 4

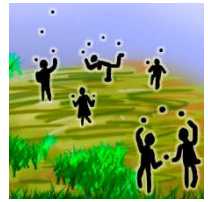




All Wave 4 participants, n=962

NSW GOVERNMENT Family & Community Services

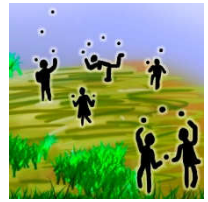
Cultural background of Wave 4 participants



Cultural background	n	%
Aboriginal	**382**	**39.8**
CALD	**147**	**15.2**
Aboriginal and CALD	51	5.3
Other Australian	**484**	**50.4**
Total	**962**	**100.0**

Note: children may appear in both the Aboriginal and CALD count

Living arrangement at Wave 4



Living arrangement	n	%
Foster care	416	43.1
Relative/kinship care	277	28.8
Residential care	19	2.0
Birth parents	64	6.8
Adoptive parents	27	2.8
Guardianship	159	16.5
Total	**962**	**100.0**

Note: this is preliminary data for guardianships

NSW GOVERNMENT Family & Community Services

Children's development and wellbeing at Wave 4

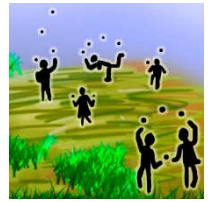
- Physical health
- Behaviour problems
- Verbal ability
- Non-verbal ability

Note: the sample frame is first time entries to OOHC between May 2010 and October 2011. The cohort mostly entered care at younger ages. Those entering care as a teenagers had a longer exposure to risk of harm.

The results presented are descriptive statistics and exploratory in nature based on the unweighted data.

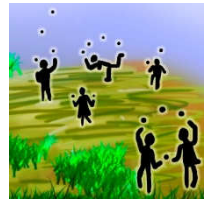
NSW GOVERNMENT | Family & Community Services

Almost all children were in 'good' to 'excellent' physical health



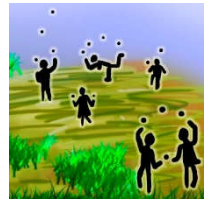
- General rating of study child's current physical health by carer (9 months to 17 years) even though some children had conditions diagnosed by a professional last 6 months or more; and disabilities.
- 6-point rating with 1=Excellent and 6=Very poor
- The vast majority (97%) were reported to be in 'good' to 'excellent' health and this remained consistent over time.
- Results were similar across cultural backgrounds.

Standardised measures



- POCLS has included standardised measures at baseline and at each subsequent wave.
- The standardised developmental outcome measures for the POCLS study were selected on the basis of:
    - strength of their psychometric properties
    - wide use in other studies
    - ability to draw comparisons with the general population and other groups
- Different measures were used depending on the age group.

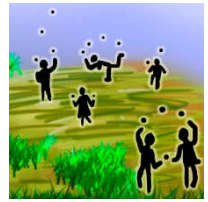
Behaviour problems

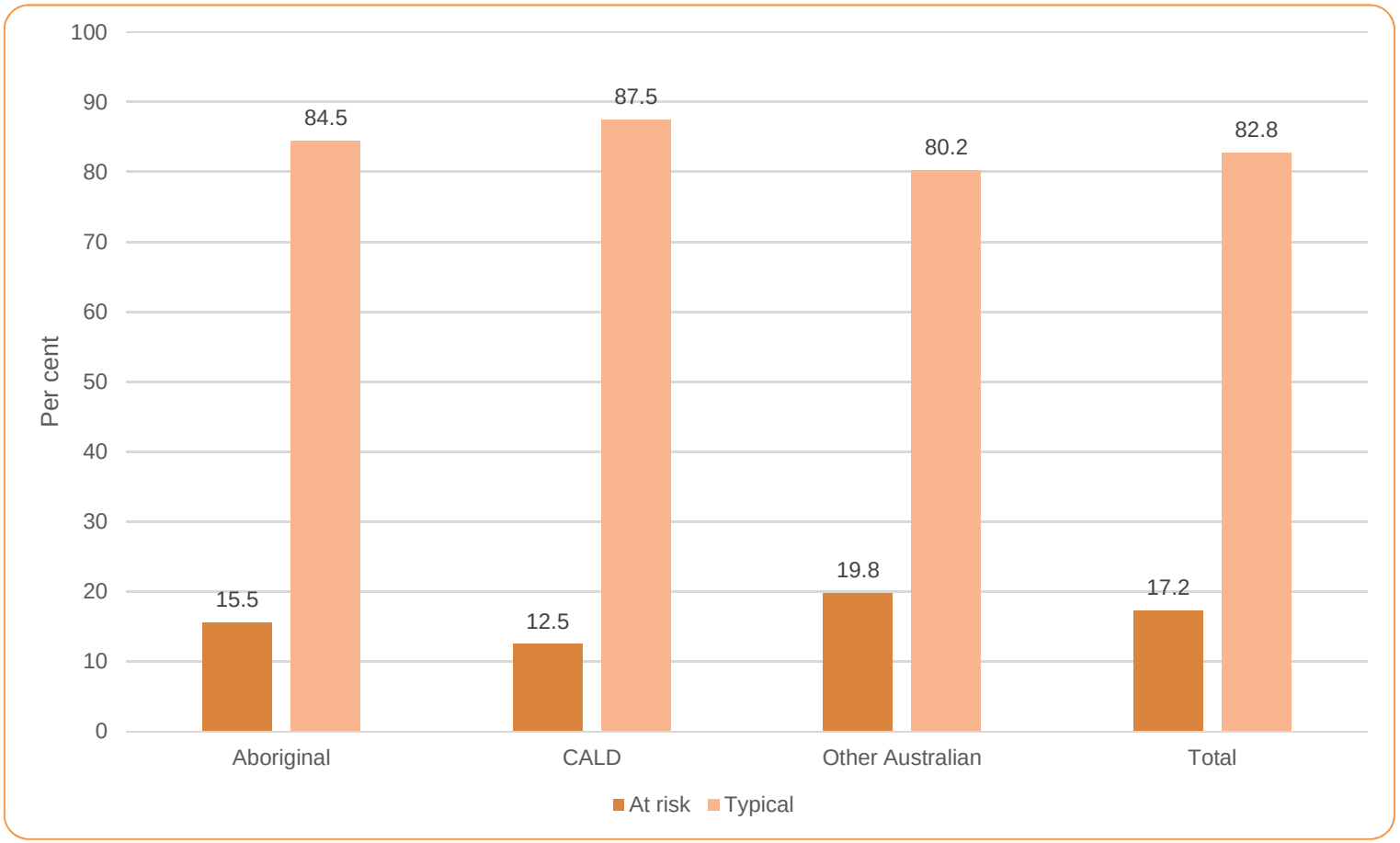


- The Brief Infant Toddler Social Emotional Assessment (BITSEA) was used to measure socio-emotional problems for children aged 12 to 36 months in Wave 1.
- The Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL) was used for children aged 3 to 17 years at Wave 1 and for all ages from Wave 2.

OUTCOME DOMAINS	9-35 mths	3-5 yrs	6-11 yrs	12-17 yrs
Socio emotional development	BITSEA (W1) CBCL (W2) (Behaviour Problem Scale)	CBCL	CBCL	CBCL

Most children who completed the BITSEA at Wave 1 were 'typical'

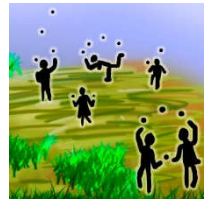


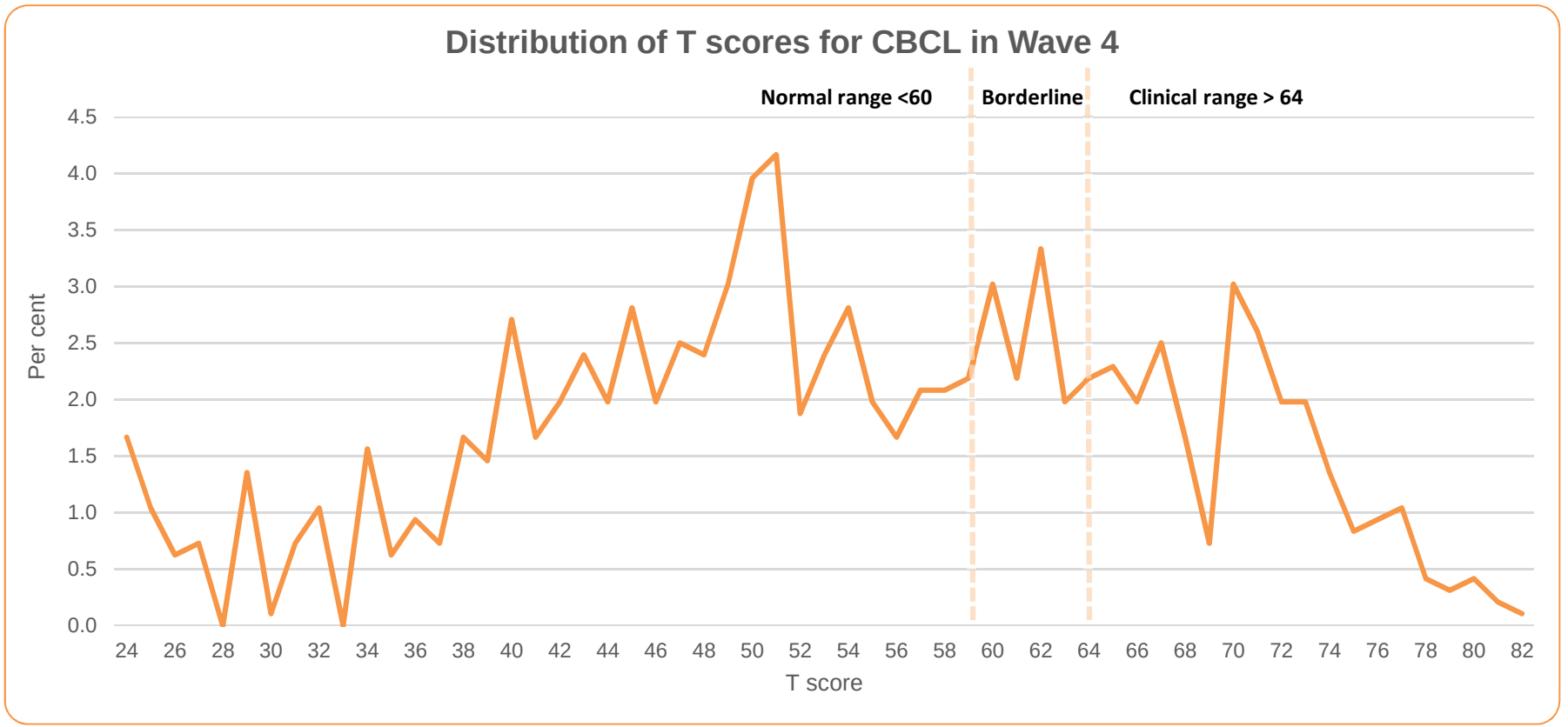


All children 9-35 months who participated in the BITSEA in Wave 1
Aboriginal children n=148 CALD children n= 56
Other Australian n=177 Total n=476

NSW GOVERNMENT Family & Community Services

Wave 4 average CBCL total problems score slightly higher than for the general population





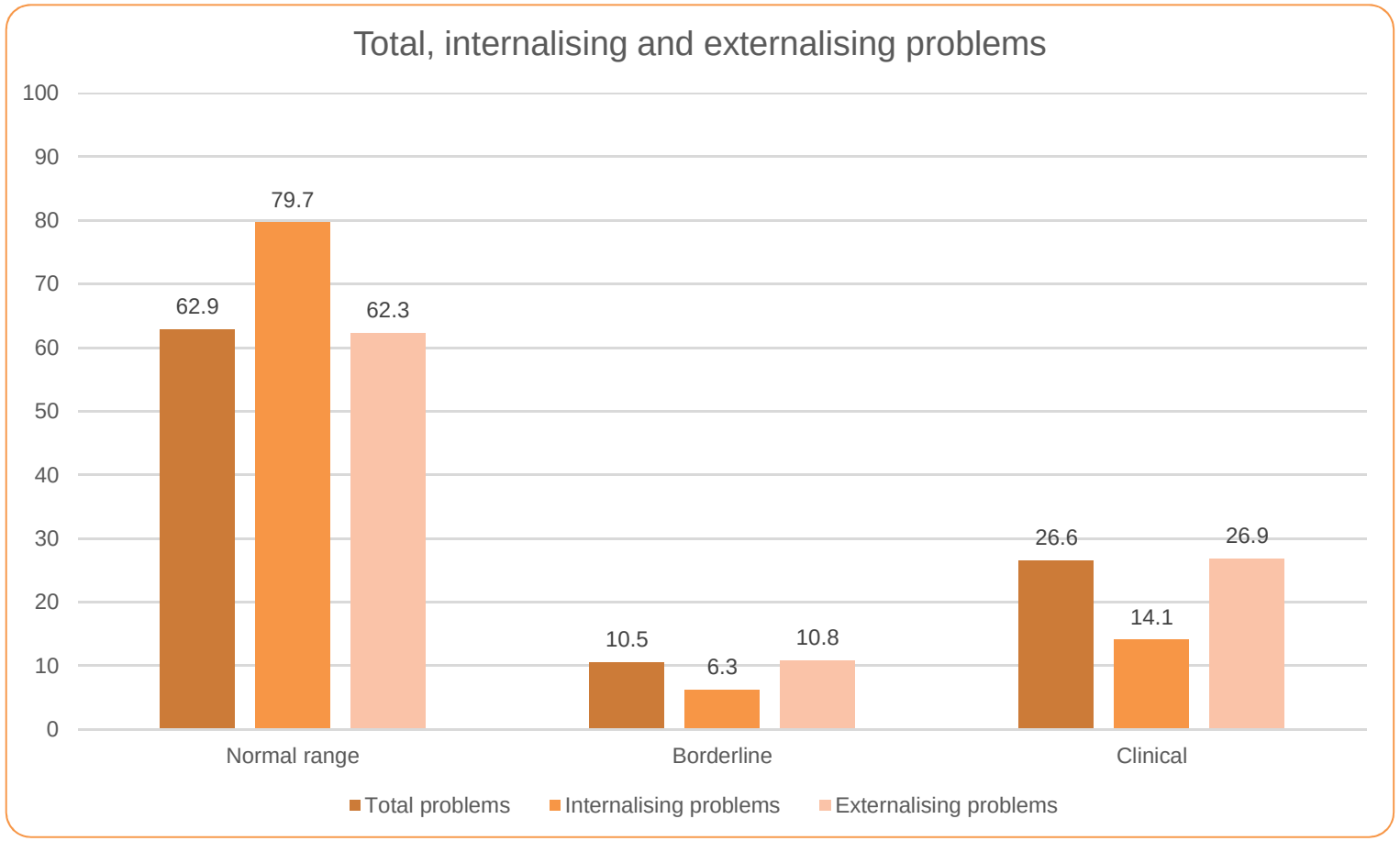
All children who participated in the CBCL in Wave 4, n=960

Average CBCL total problems scale T score

Wave 4 participants	**53.7**
General population	**50.0**

NSW GOVERNMENT Family & Community Services

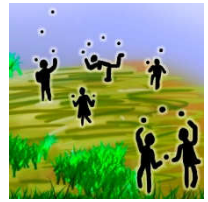
A quarter of children were in the clinical range for total behavior problems at Wave 4

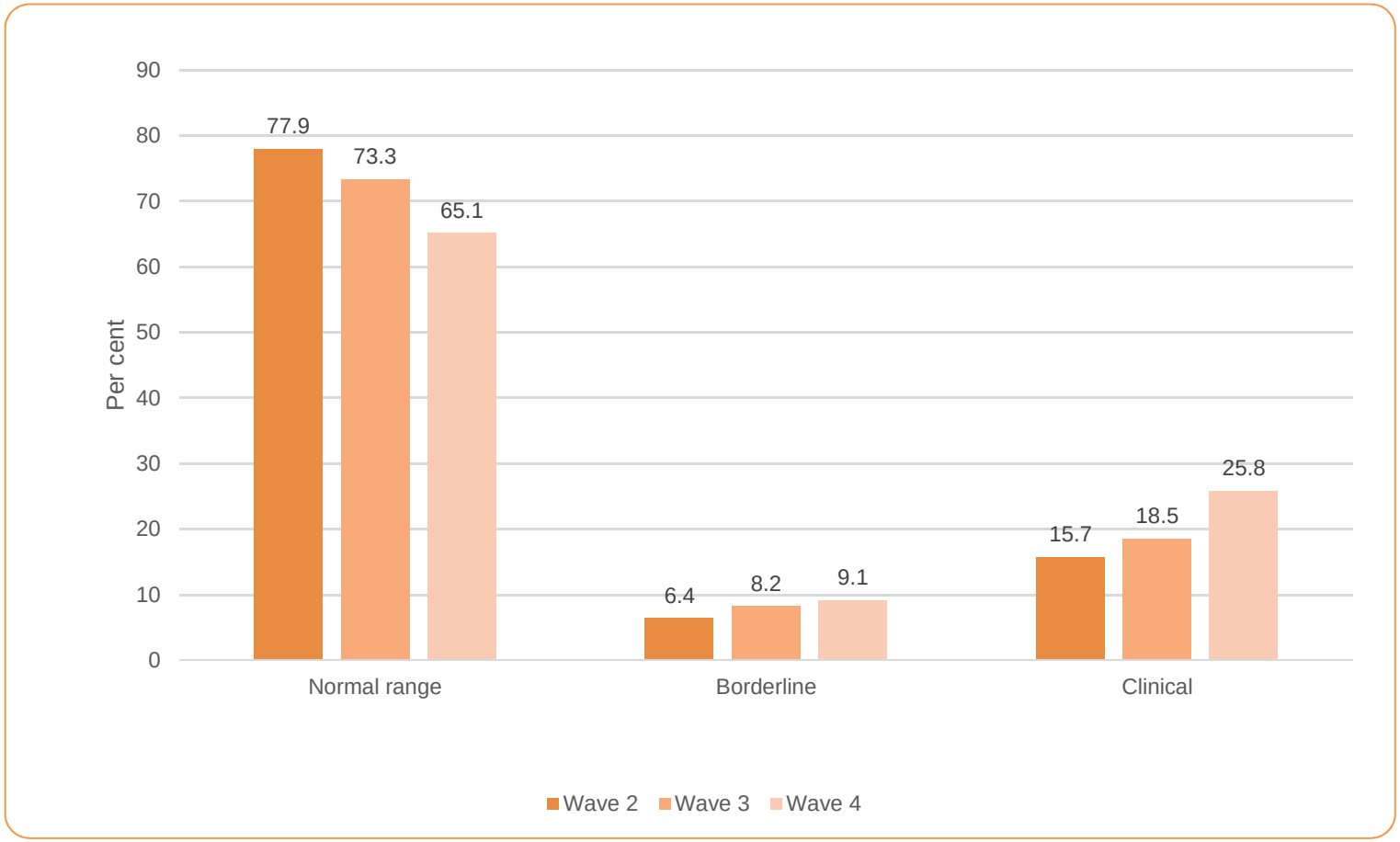


All participants in the CBCL in Wave 4, n=960

NSW GOVERNMENT Family & Community Services

Increase in the proportion of children in the clinical range for total behaviour problems



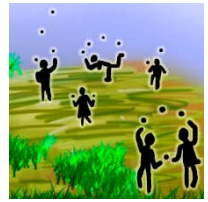


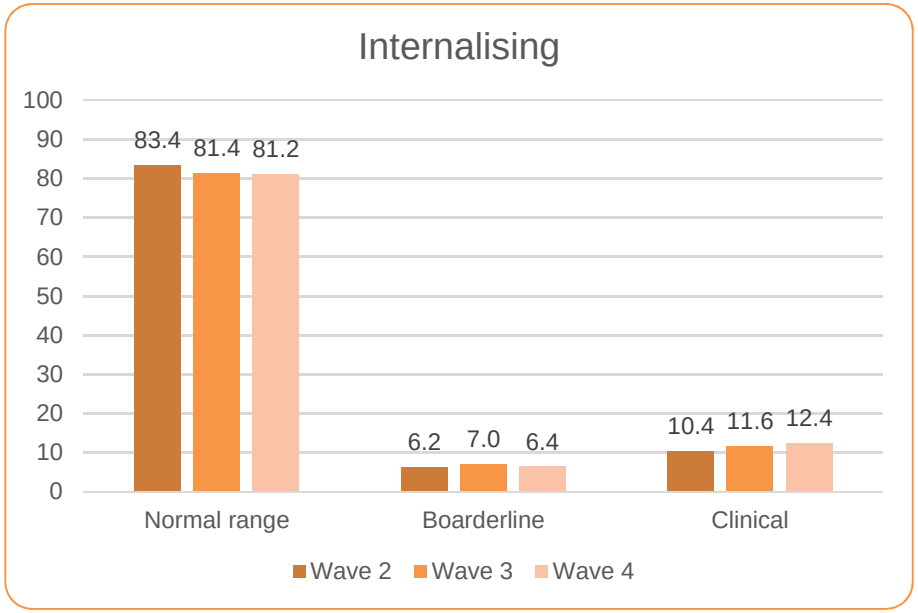
Children who participated in CBCL in all waves from Wave 2 to 4, n=791

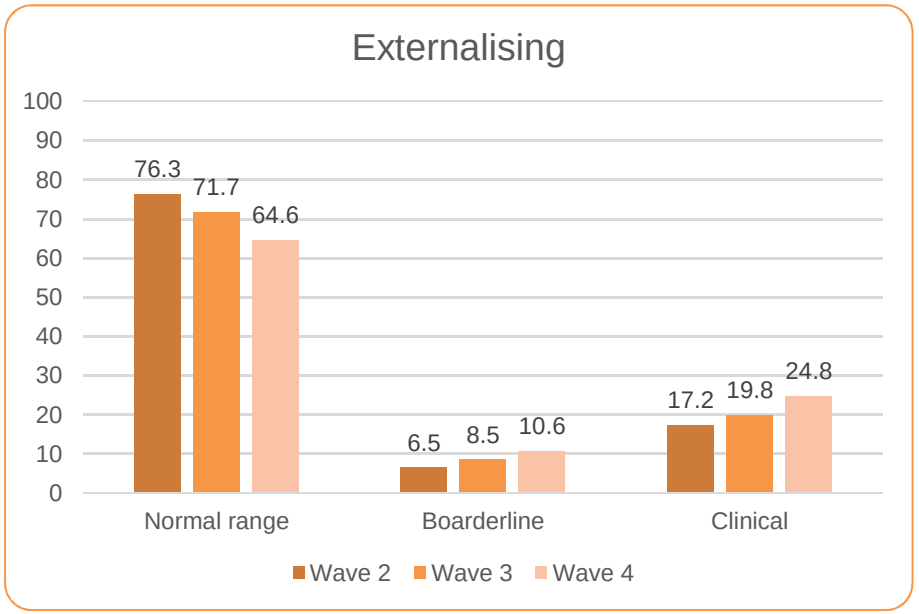
In Waves 2 to 4, the CBCL was used for all children.

NSW GOVERNMENT Family & Community Services

Increase in the proportion of children in the clinical range for externalising behaviour problems





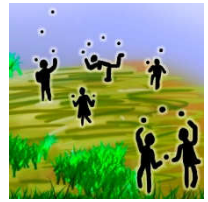


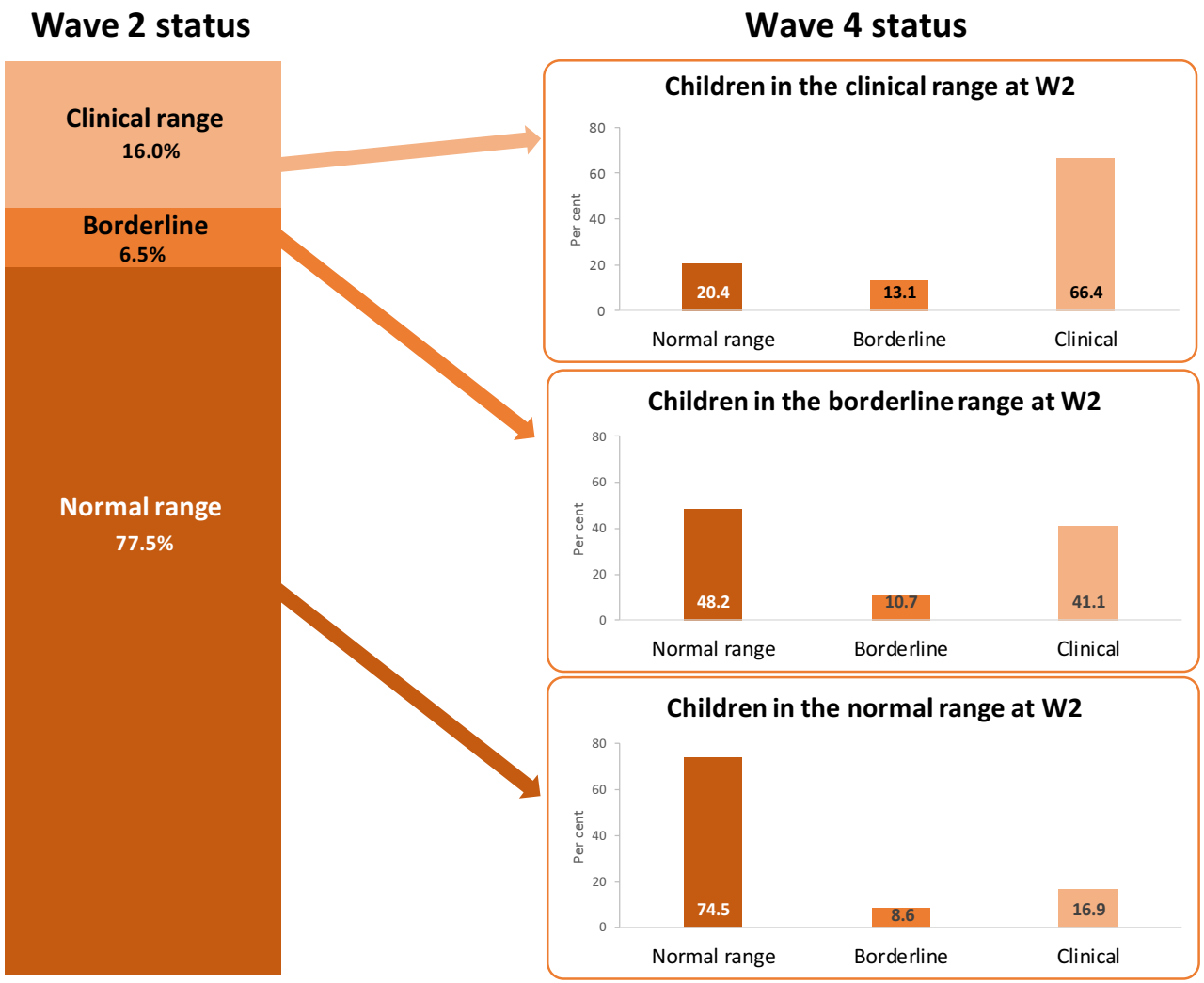
Children who participated in CBCL in all waves from Wave 2 to 4, n=791

In Waves 2 to 4, the CBCL was used for all children.

NSW GOVERNMENT Family & Community Services

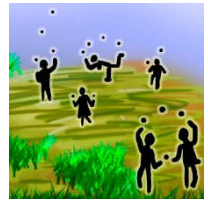
Change in total behaviour problems by status at W2

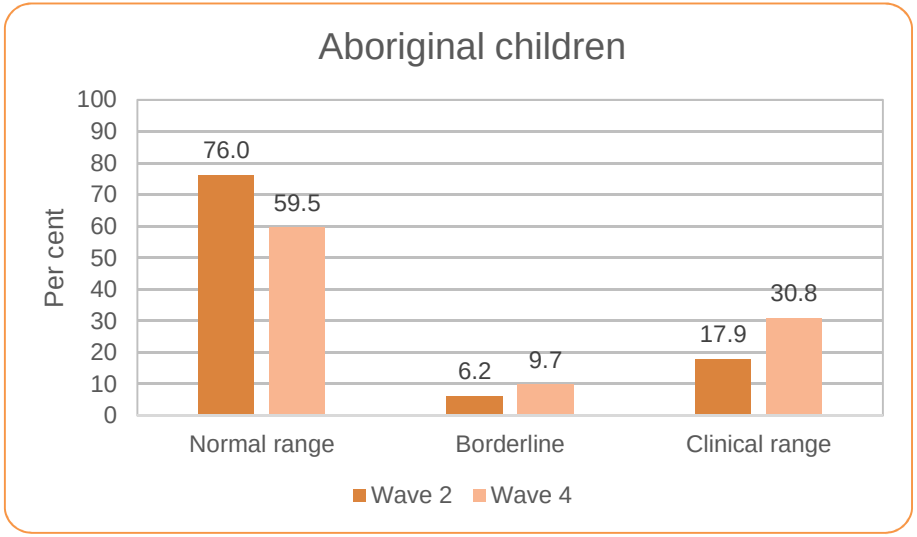


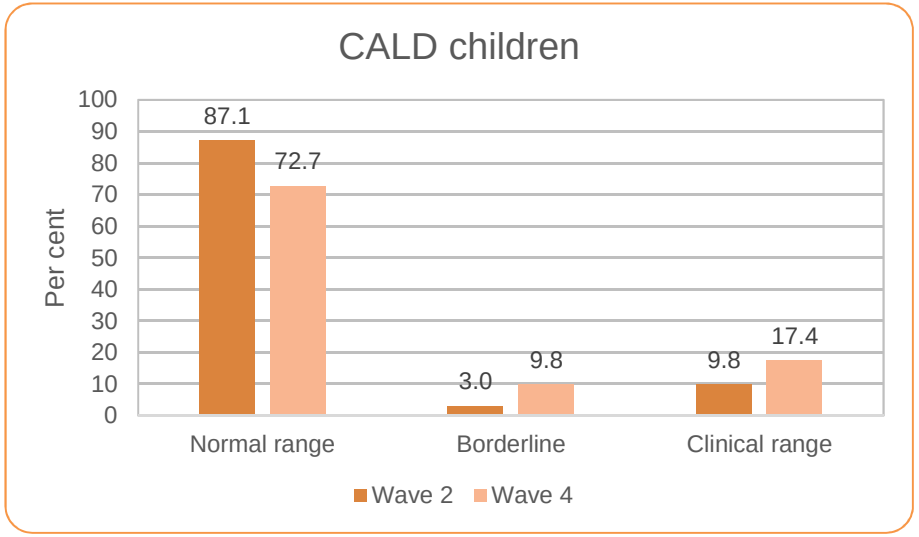


Children who participated in the CBCL in both Waves 2 and 4, n = 856

Increase in total behaviour problems for Aboriginal and other Australian children



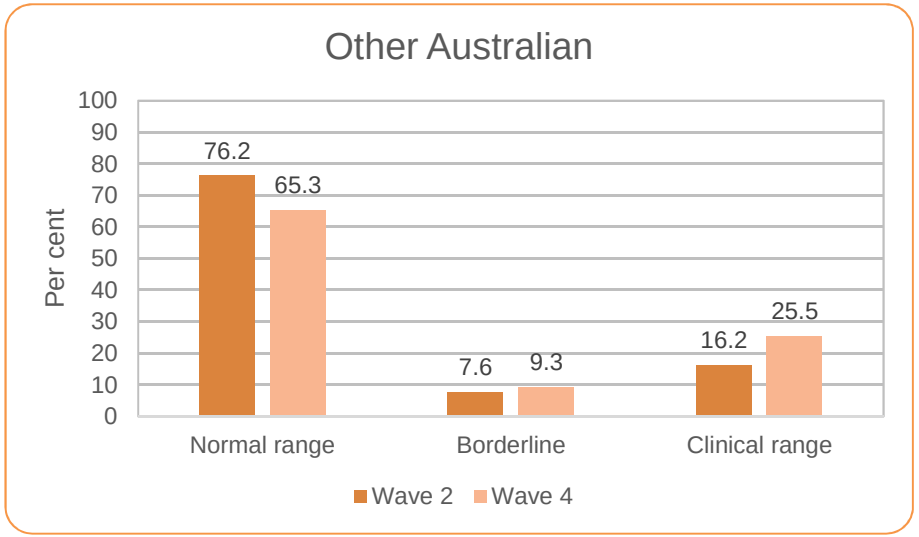




Participants in the CBCL in both Wave 2 and Wave 4

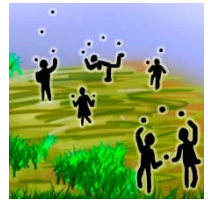
Aboriginal children n=341
CALD children n= 132
Other Australian n=432

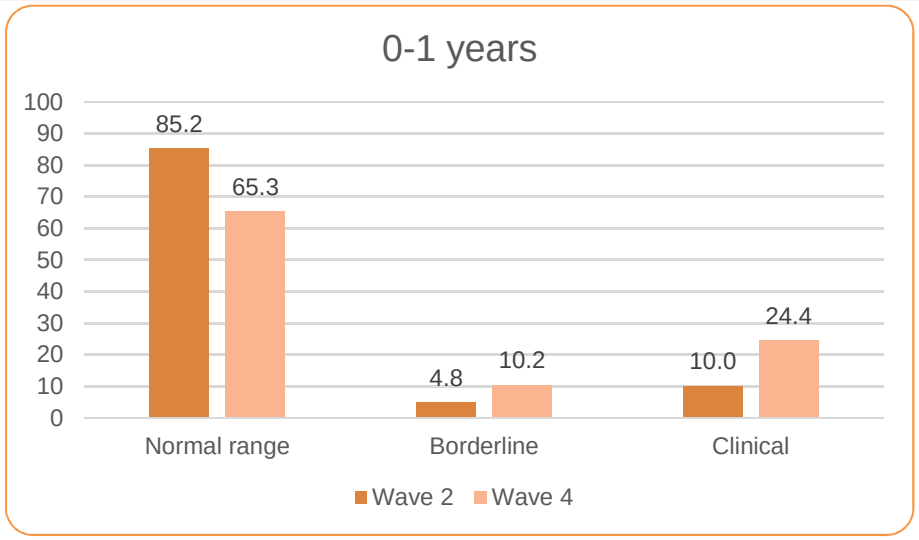
Note: children can be in both Aboriginal and CALD graphs.

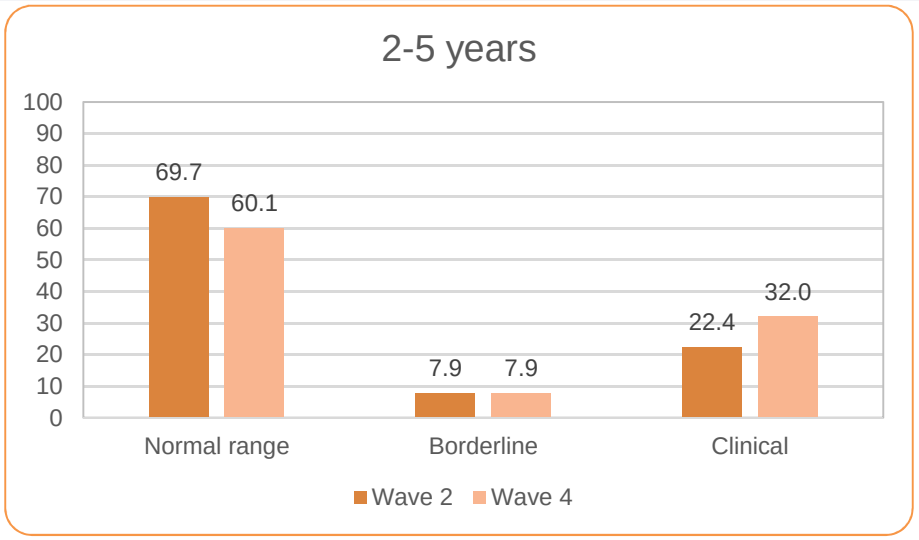


NSW GOVERNMENT Family & Community Services

Increase in total behaviour problems for children aged 0-1 and 2-5 years at entry into OOHC

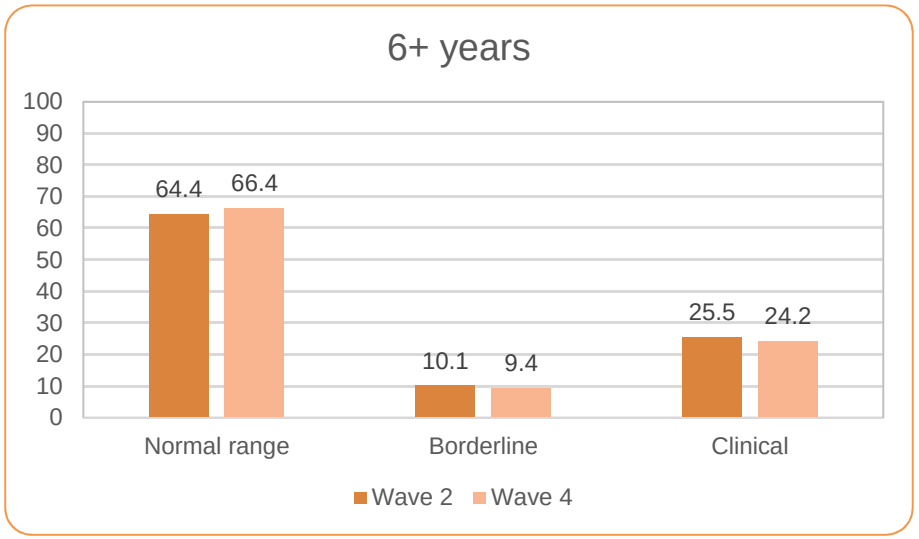






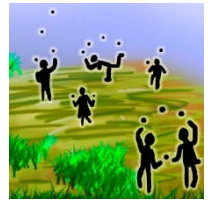
Participants in CBCL in both Wave 2 and Wave 4

0-1 years n=479
2-5 years n=228
6+ years n=149



NSW GOVERNMENT Family & Community Services

Cognitive development: verbal ability

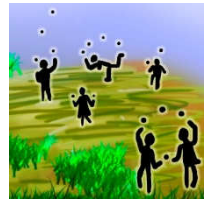


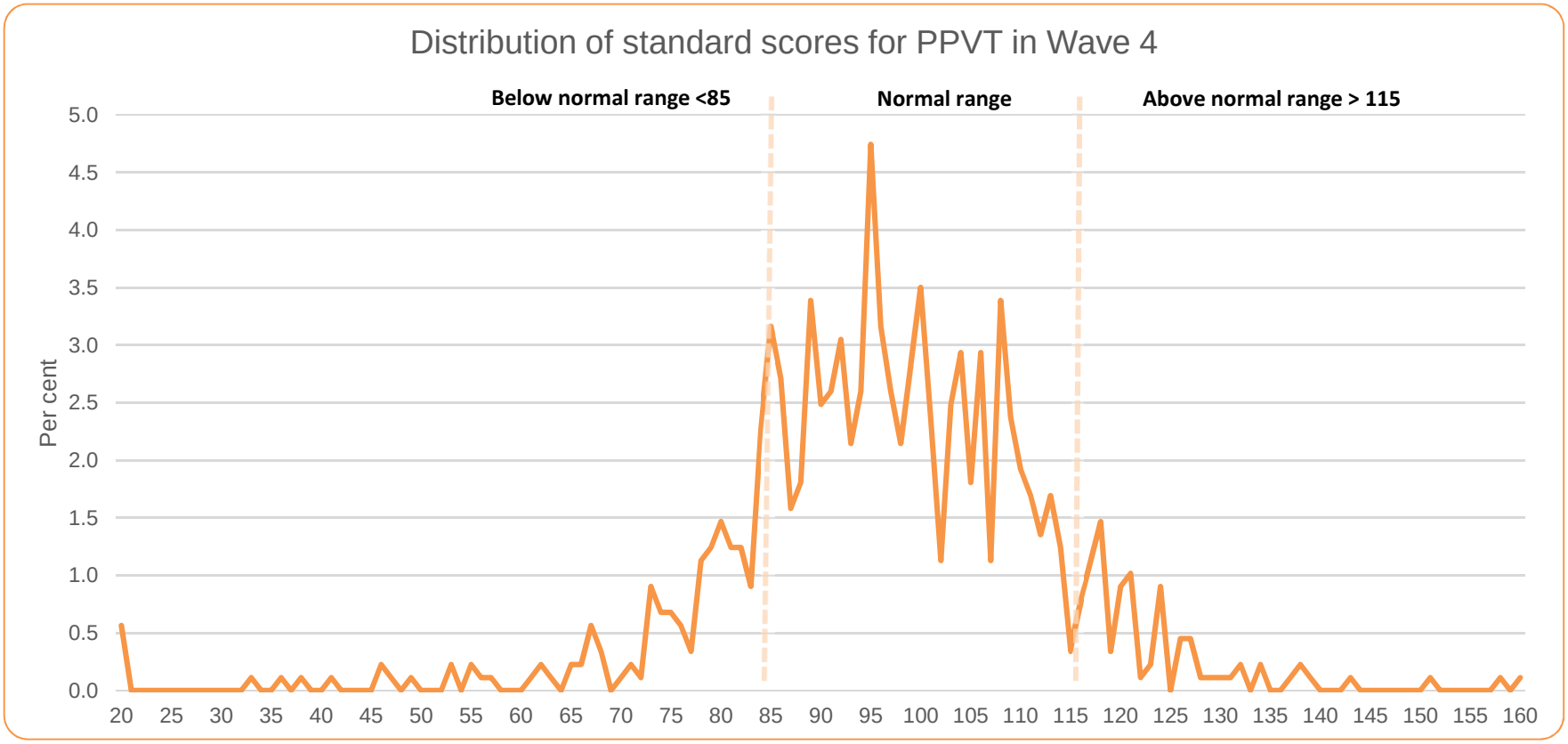
- Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT-IV) was used for children aged 3 to 17 years to measure verbal ability from Wave 1 onwards.
- Communication and Symbolic Behaviour Scale (CSBS) was used for children 9-23 months in Wave 1
- MacArthur Bates Communicative Developmental Inventories (MCDI-III) vocabulary percentile rank was used for children 24-35 months in Waves 1 and 2.

OUTCOME DOMAINS	9-35 mths	3-5 yrs	6-11 yrs	12-17 yrs
Cognitive development verbal	CSBS MCDI-III	PPVT	PPVT	PPVT

NSW GOVERNMENT Family & Community Services

Wave 4 average verbal ability score slightly lower than for the general population



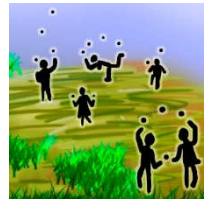


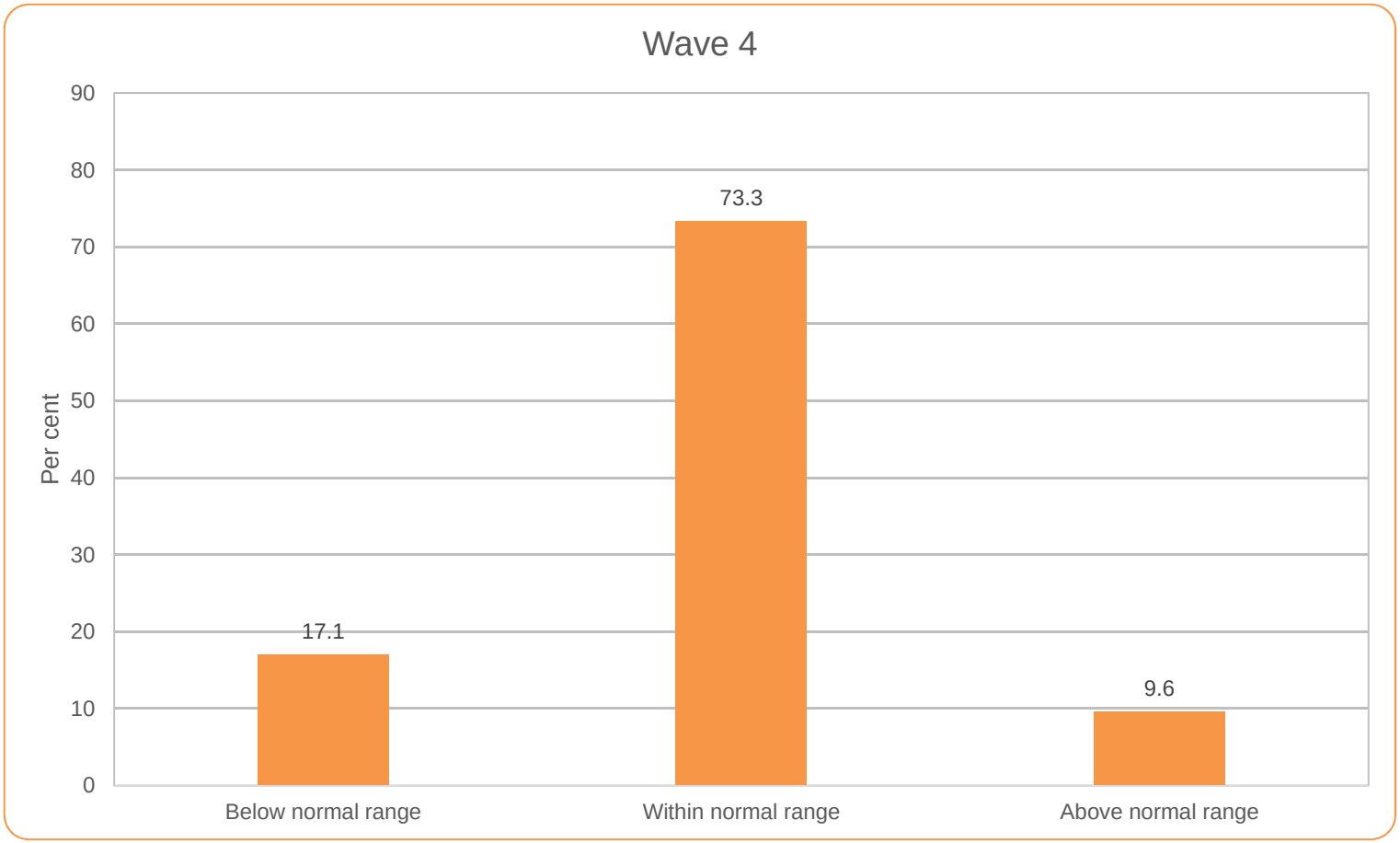
Average PPVT standard score

Wave 4 participants	**96.5**
General population	**100.0**

NSW GOVERNMENT Family & Community Services

Most children were in the normal or above normal range for verbal ability at Wave 4

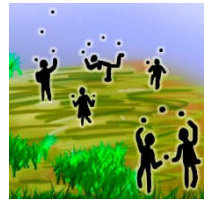


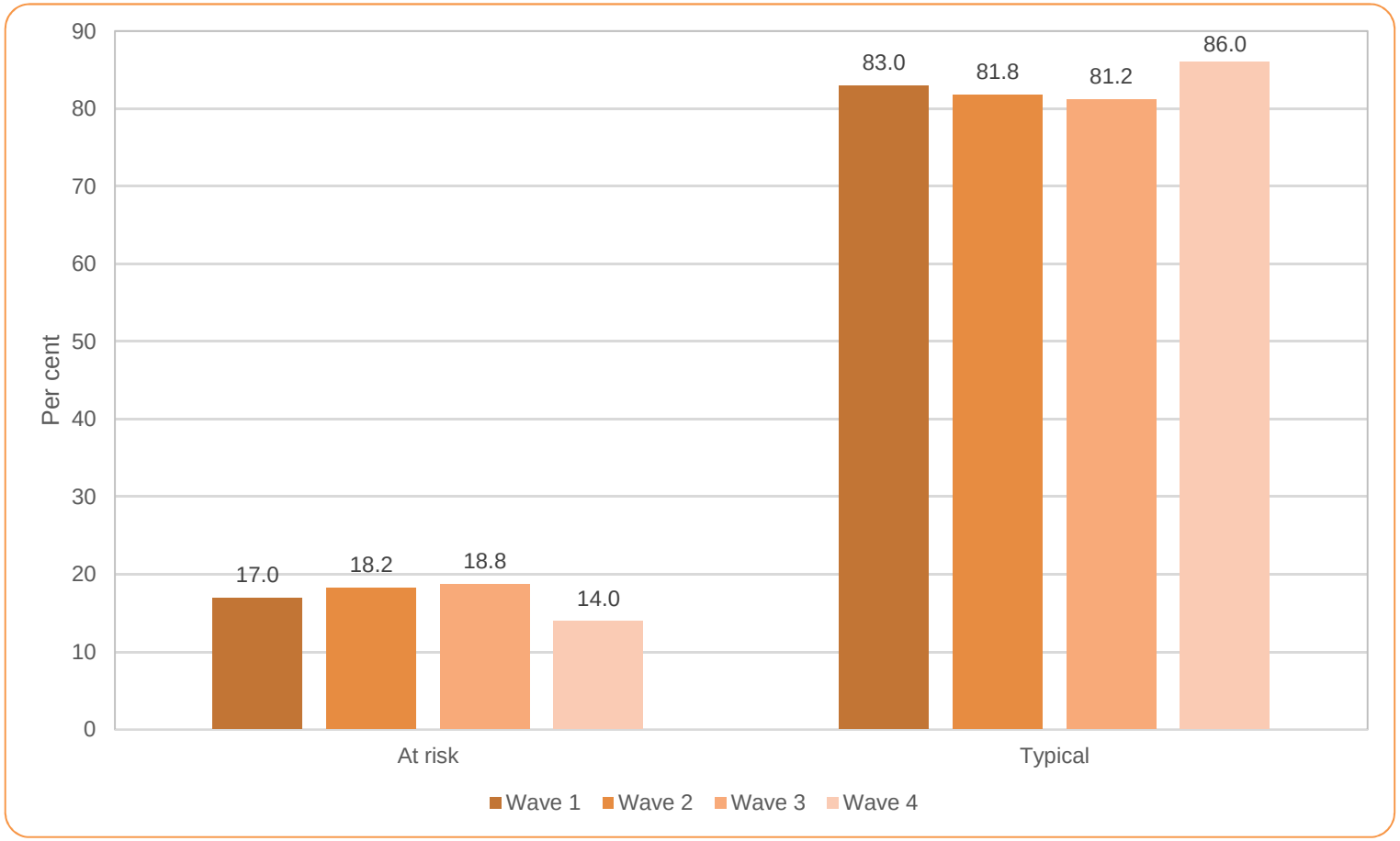


All participants in the PPVT in Wave 4, n=885

NSW GOVERNMENT Family & Community Services

Increase in the proportion of children in the typical range for verbal ability between Waves 3 and 4



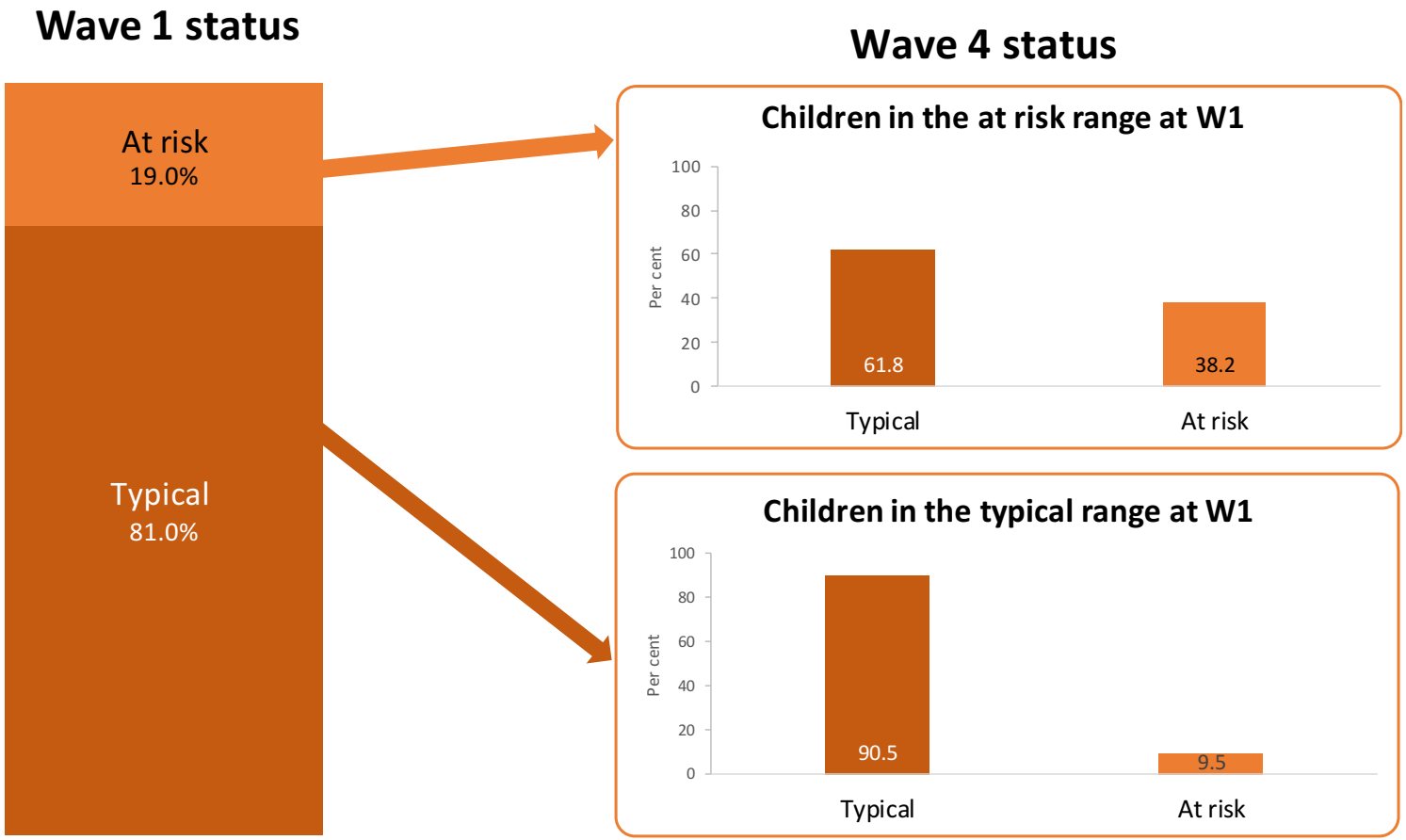


Children who participated the verbal ability measures in all four waves, n = 565

Wave 1: 35% CSBS, 16% MCDI-III, 49% PPVT
Wave 2: 0% CSBS, 25% MCDI-III, 75% PPVT
Wave 3: 100% PPVT
Wave 4: 100% PPVT

NSW GOVERNMENT Family & Community Services

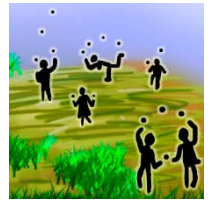
Change in verbal ability by status at W1

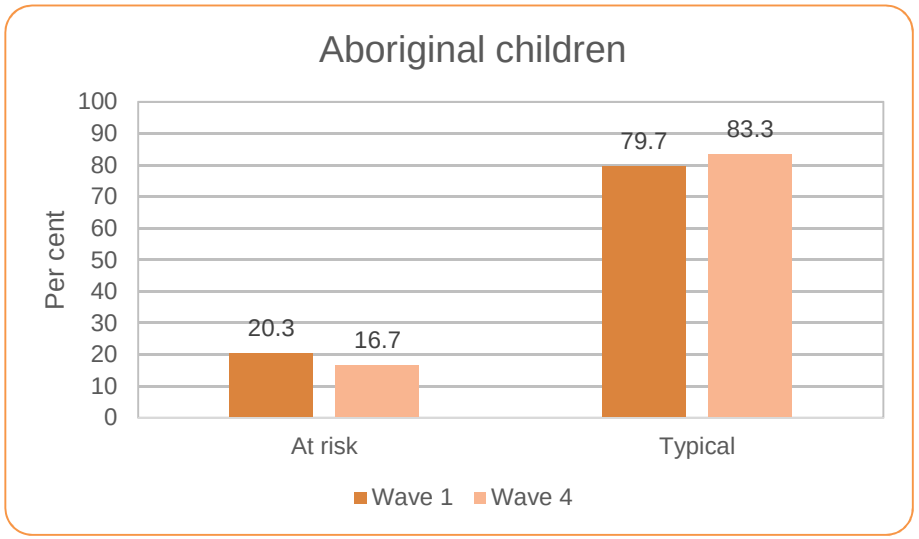


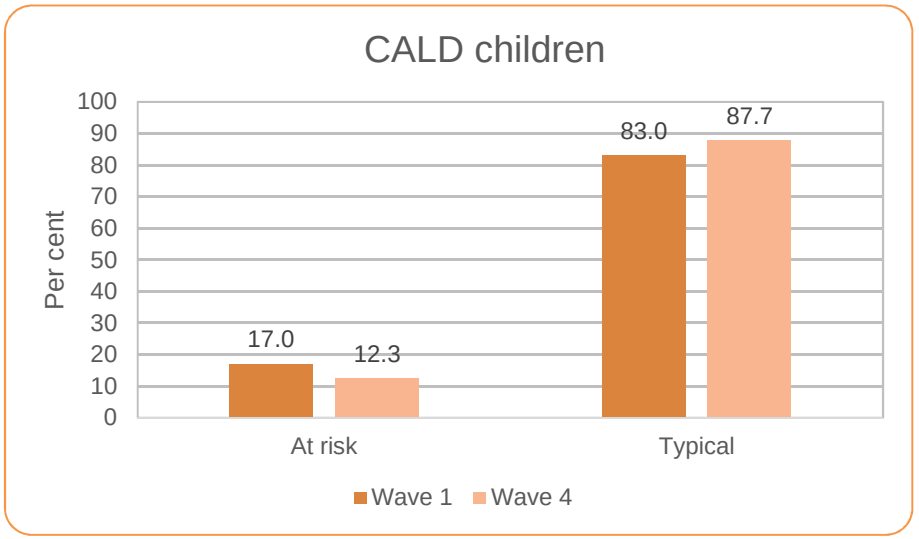
All participants in the verbal ability tests in Waves 1 and 4, n=689

NSW GOVERNMENT Family & Community Services

No change in verbal ability between Waves 1 and 4 by cultural background







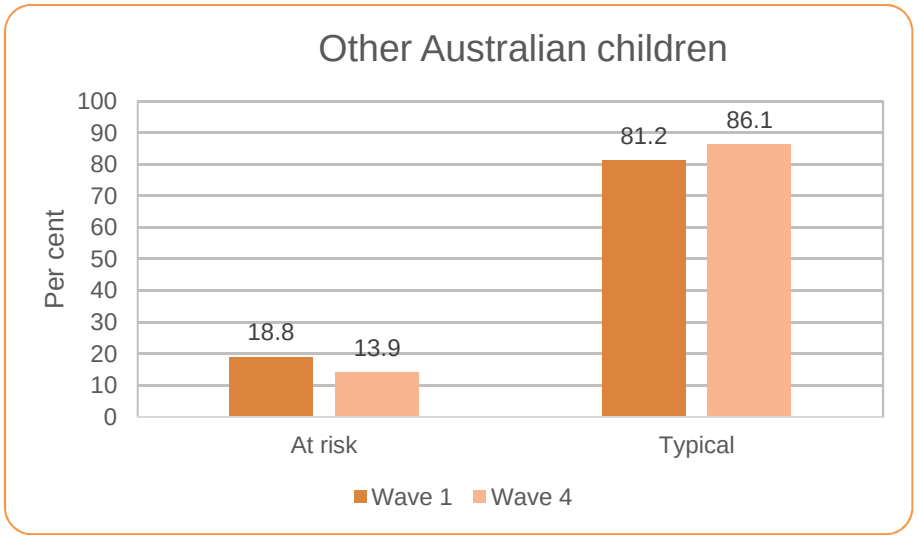
Participants in verbal ability tests in both Waves 1 and Wave 4

Aboriginal children n=276
CALD children n=106
Other Australian children n=345

Measure used in Wave 1
- Aboriginal children: 20% MCDI-III, 35% CSBS, PPVT 45%
- CALD children: 12% MCDI-III, 46% CSBS, PPVT 42%
- Other Australian children: 16% MCDI-III, CSBS 38%, PPVT46%

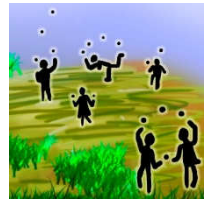
All children completed the PPVT in Wave 4.

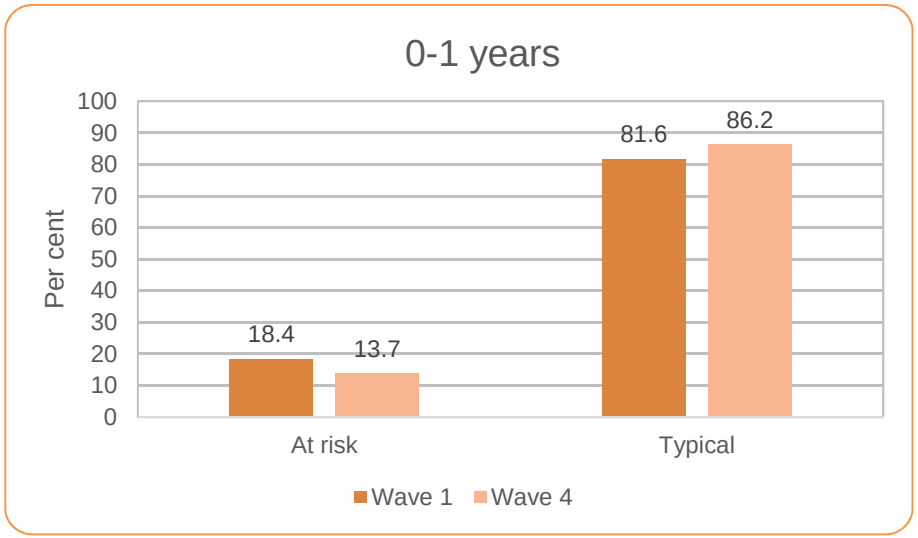
Note: children can appear in both the Aboriginal and CALD graphs

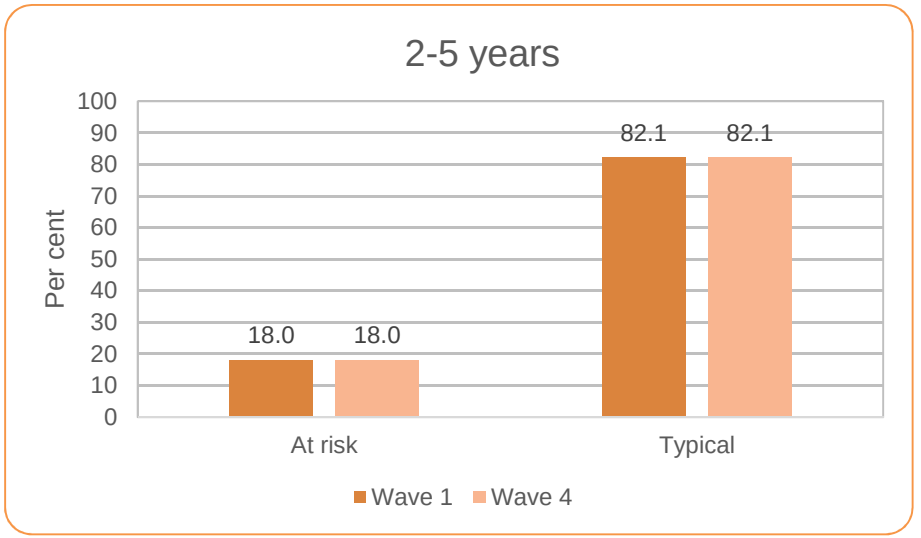


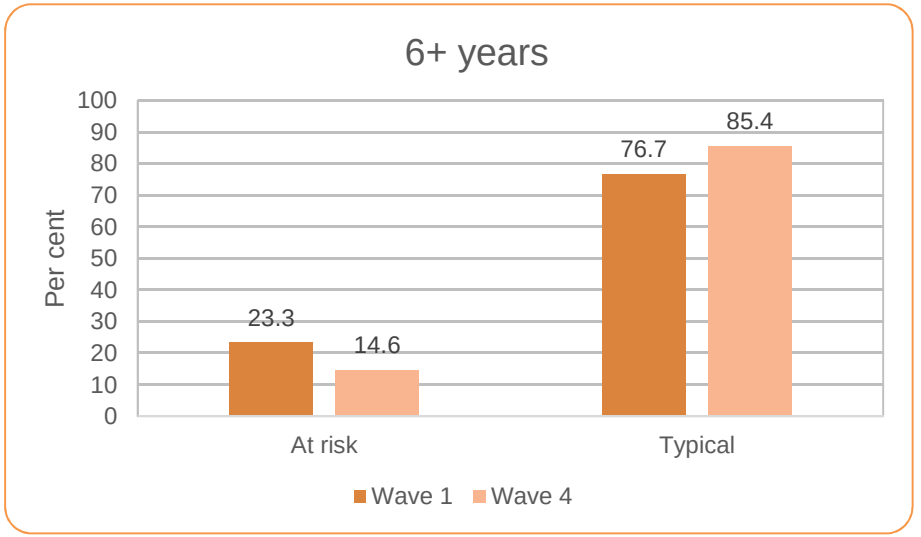
NSW GOVERNMENT Family & Community Services

No change in verbal ability between Waves 1 and 4 by age at entry into OOHC









Participants in verbal ability tests in both Waves 1 and Wave 4

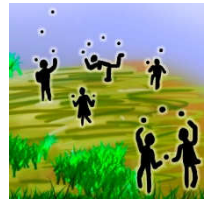
0-1 years n=408
2-5 years n=178
6+ years n=103

Measure used in Wave 1
- 0-1 years: 28% MCDI-III, 64% CSBS, 7% PPVT
- 2-5 years: 1% (n=2) MCDI-III, 99% PPVT
- 6+ years: 100% PPVT

All children completed the CBCL in Wave 4.

NSW GOVERNMENT Family & Community Services

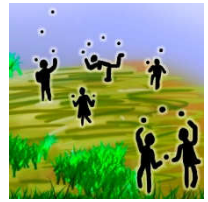
Cognitive development: non-verbal ability

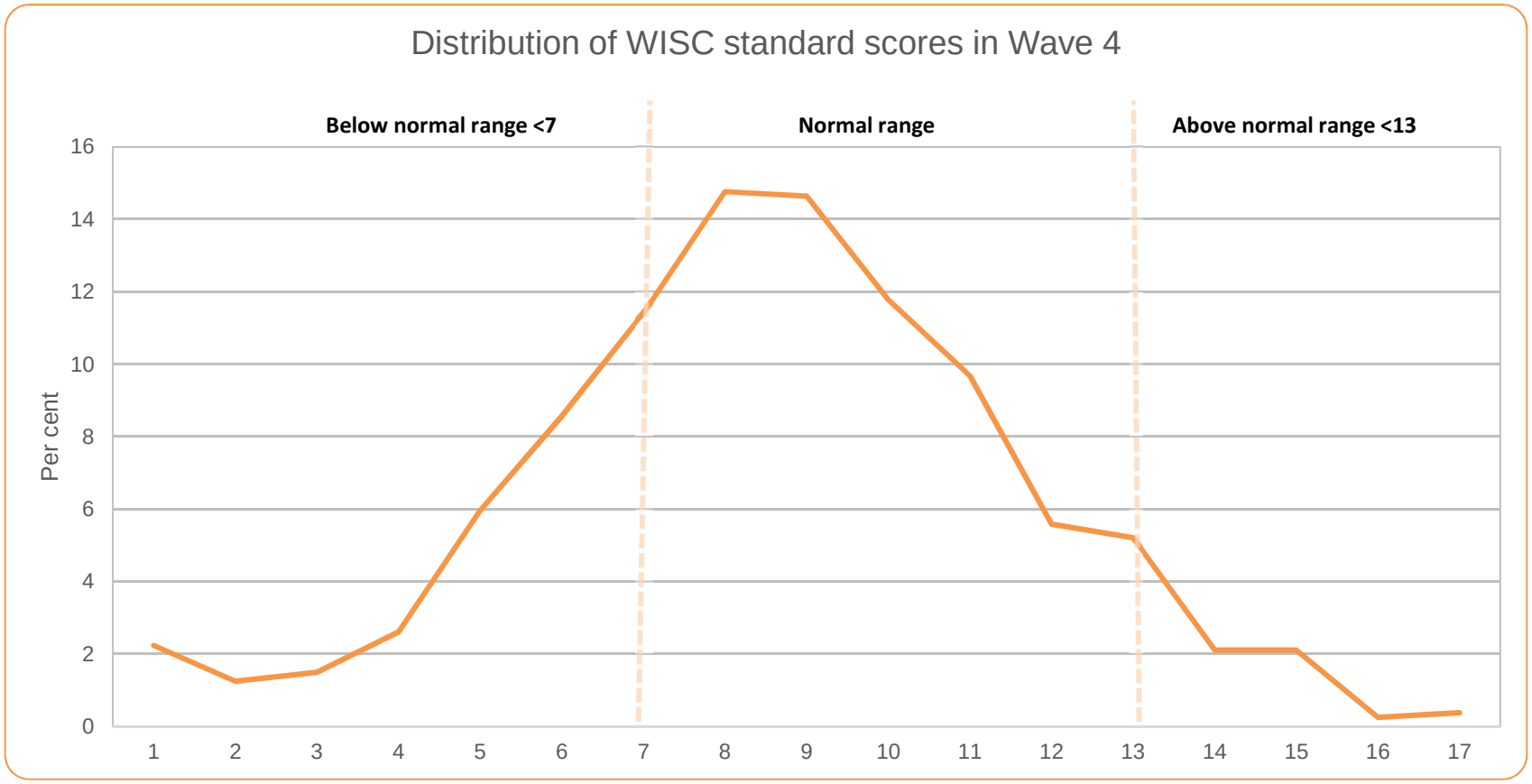


- Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) Problem Solving Scale was used for children aged up to 66 months from Wave 1 onwards.
- Matrix Reasoning Test (WISC IV) was used for children aged 6 to 16 years to measure non-verbal reasoning ability (eg problem solving) from Wave 1 onwards.

OUTCOME DOMAINS	9-35 mths	3-5 yrs	6-11 yrs	12-17 yrs
Cognitive development non verbal	ASQ (Problem-Solving Scale)	ASQ	MR-WISC	MR-WISC

Wave 4 average non-verbal ability score slightly lower than for the general population



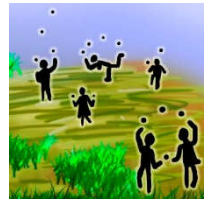


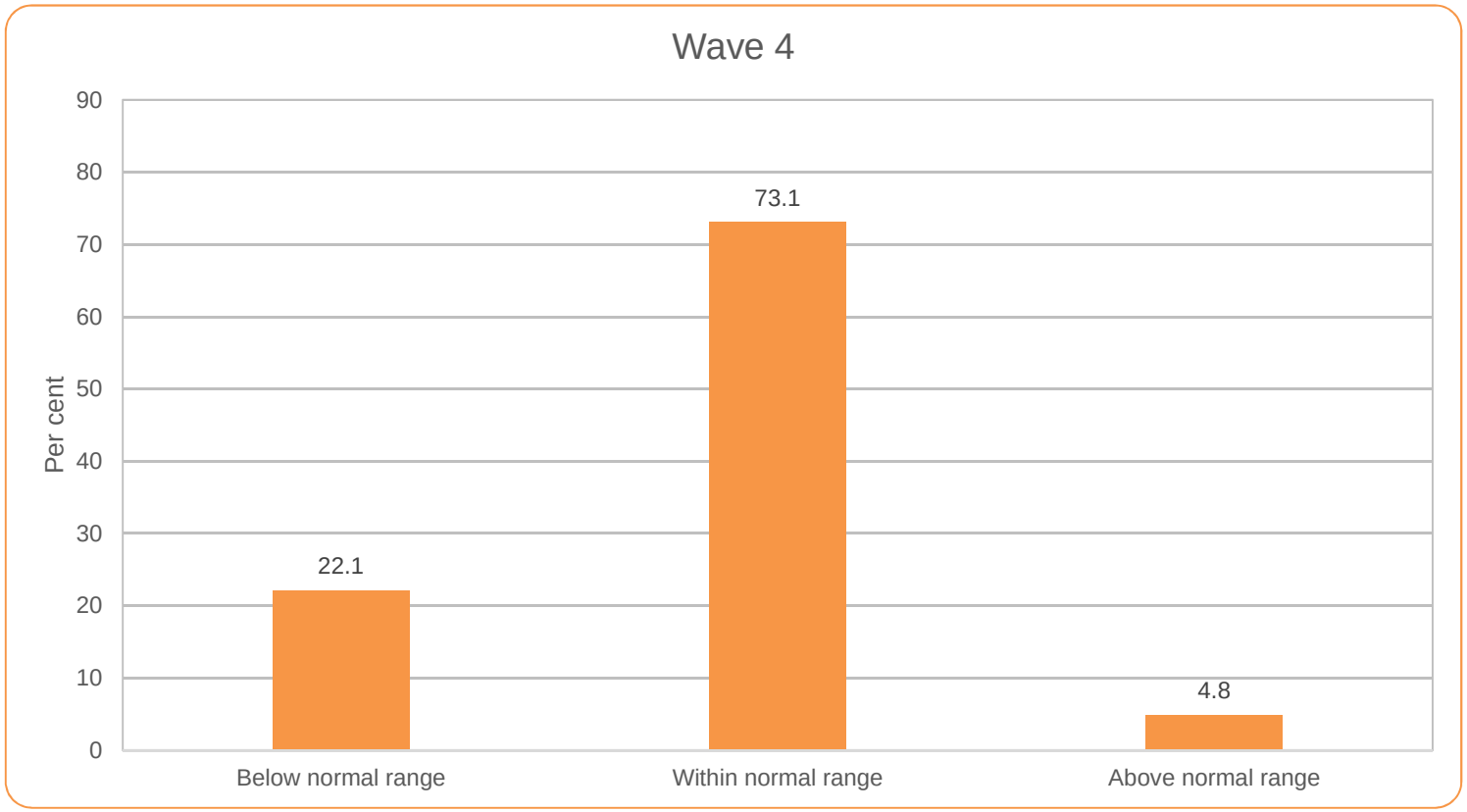
Average MR-WISC standard score

Wave 4 participants	**8.6**
General population	**10.0**

NSW GOVERNMENT Family & Community Services

Most children were in the normal or above normal range for non-verbal ability at Wave 4

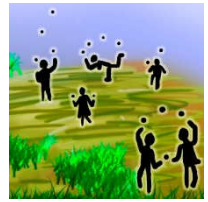


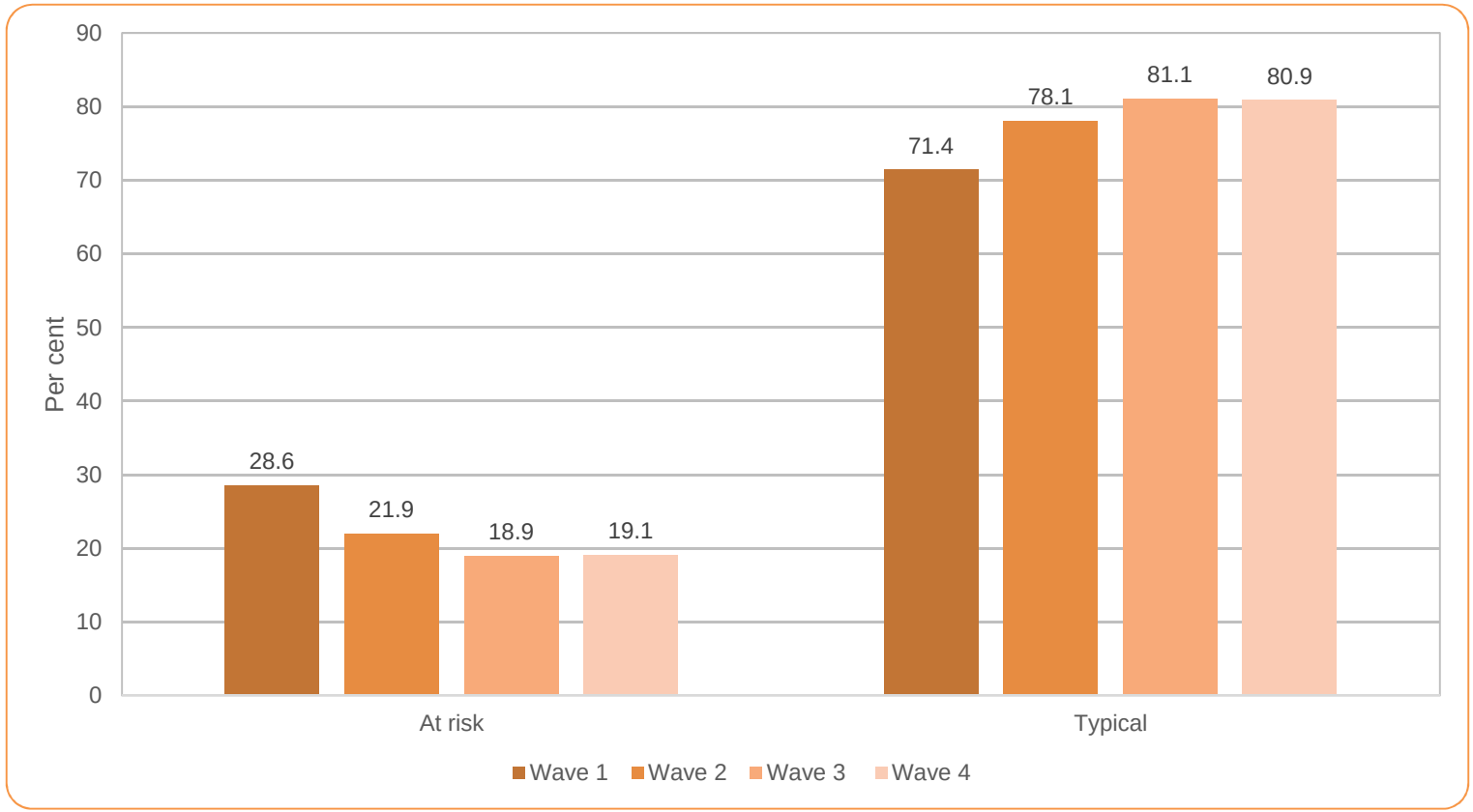


All participants in the MR-WISC in Wave 4, n=806

NSW GOVERNMENT Family & Community Services

Increase in the proportion of children in the typical range for non-verbal ability between Waves 1 and 2



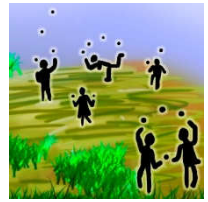


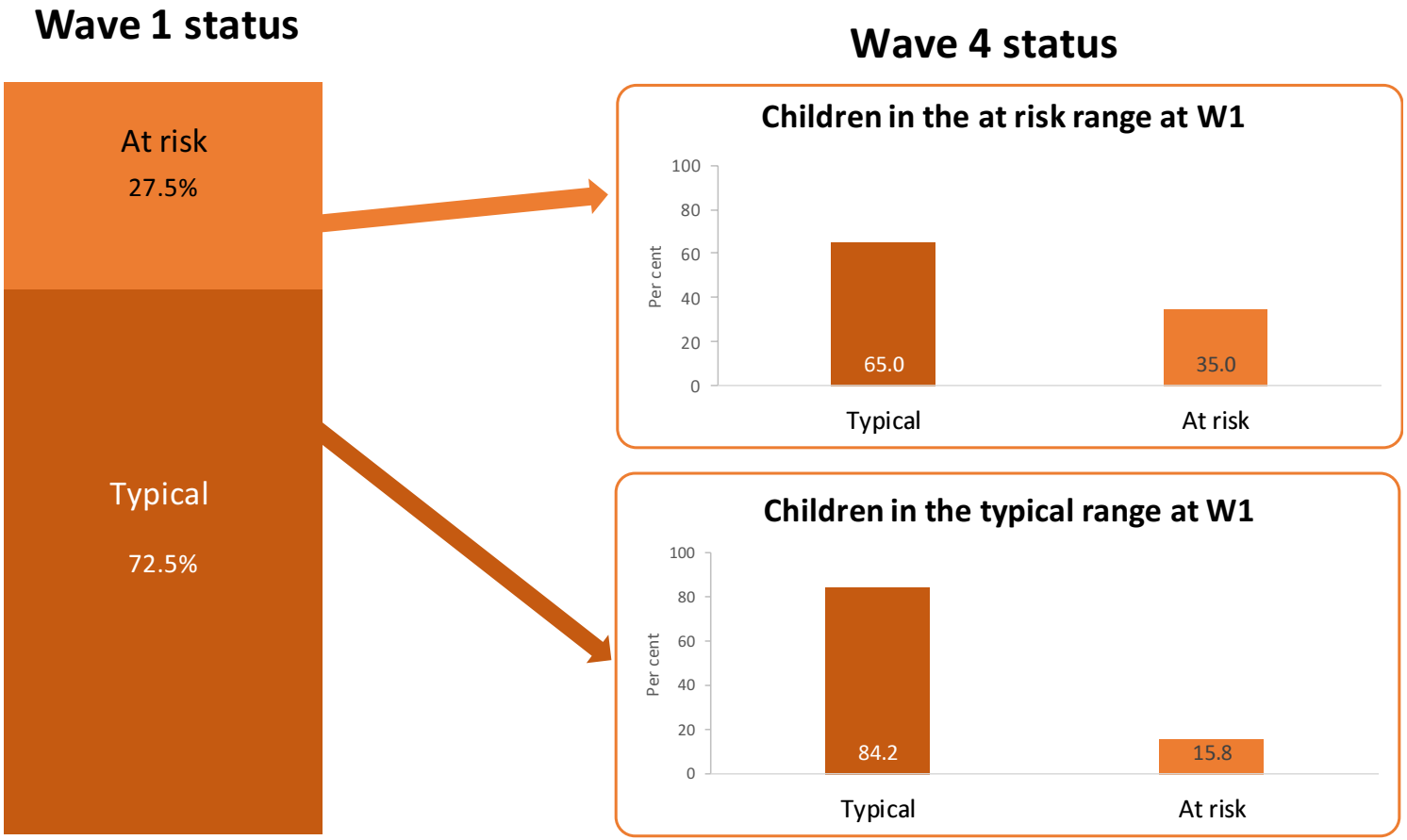
Children who participated in non-verbal ability tests in all four waves, n=497

Wave 1: 72% ASQ, 28% MR-WISC
Wave 2: 66% ASQ, 34% MR-WISC
Wave 3: 54% ASQ, 48% MR-WISC
Wave 4: 100% MR-WISC

NSW GOVERNMENT Family & Community Services

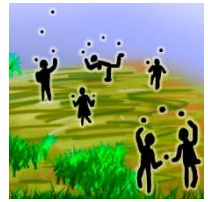
Change in non-verbal ability by status at W1

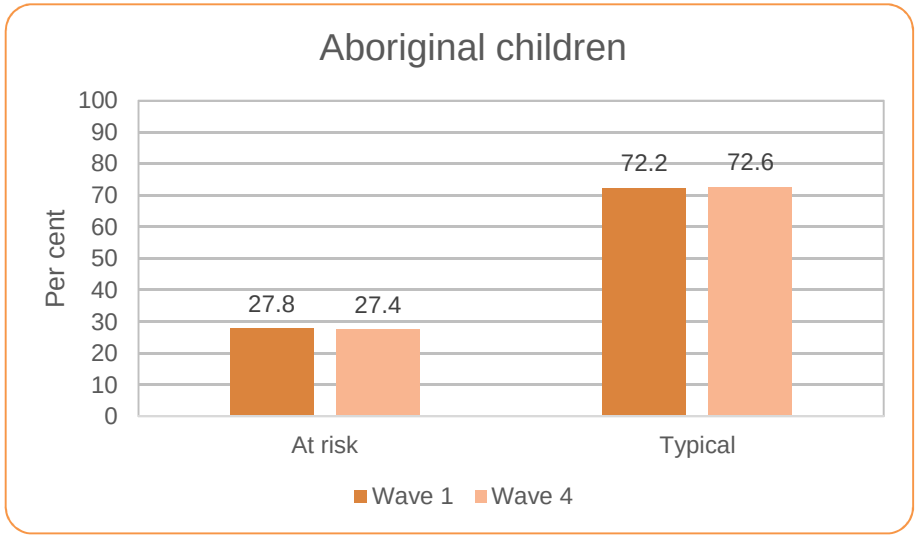


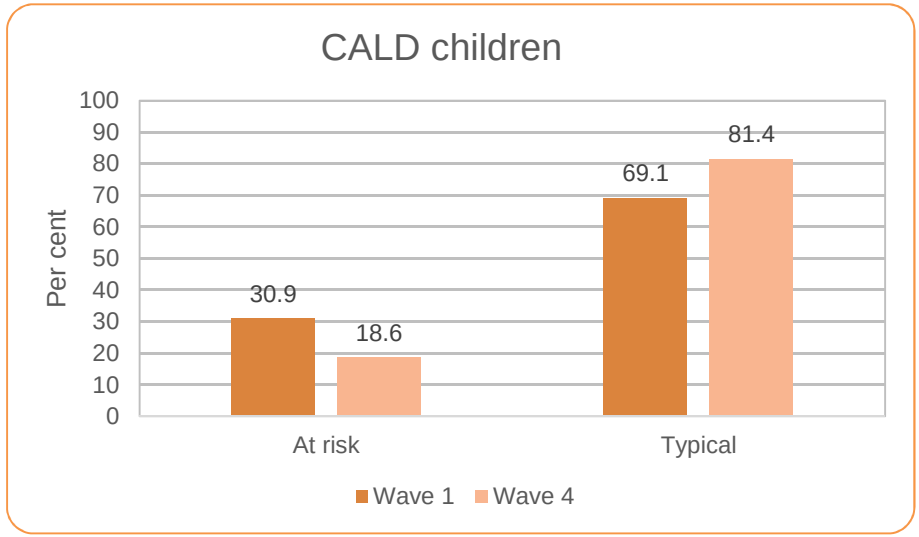


Children who participated in non-verbal ability tests in both Waves 1 and Wave 4, n=655

Increase in non-verbal ability for CALD and other Australian children







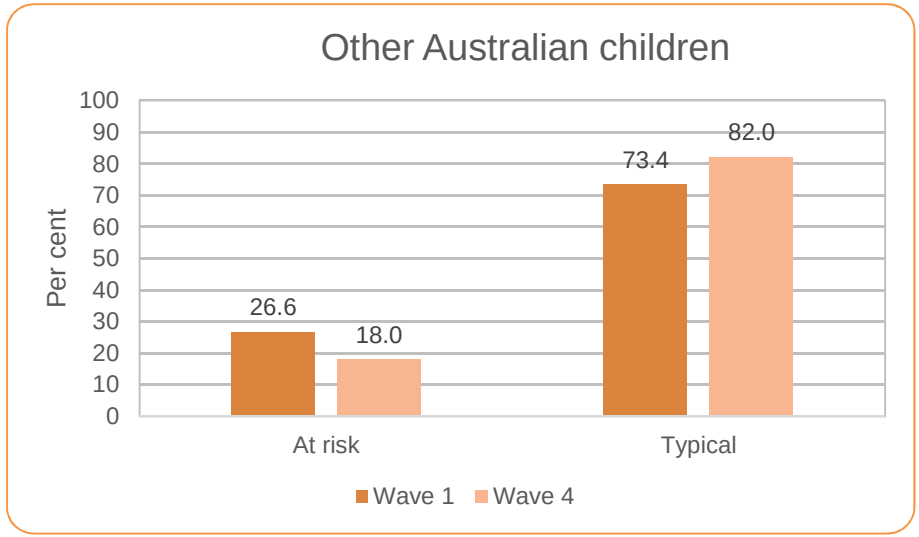
Children who participated in non-verbal ability tests in both Waves 1 and Wave 4

Aboriginal children n=259
CALD children n=97
Non-Aboriginal children n=334

Measure used in Wave 1
- Aboriginal children: 56% ASQ, 46% MR-WISC
- CALD children: 74% ASQ, 26% MR-WISC
- Other Australian children: 76% ASQ, 24% MR-WISC

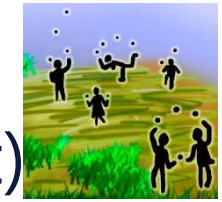
All children completed the MR-WISC in Wave 4.

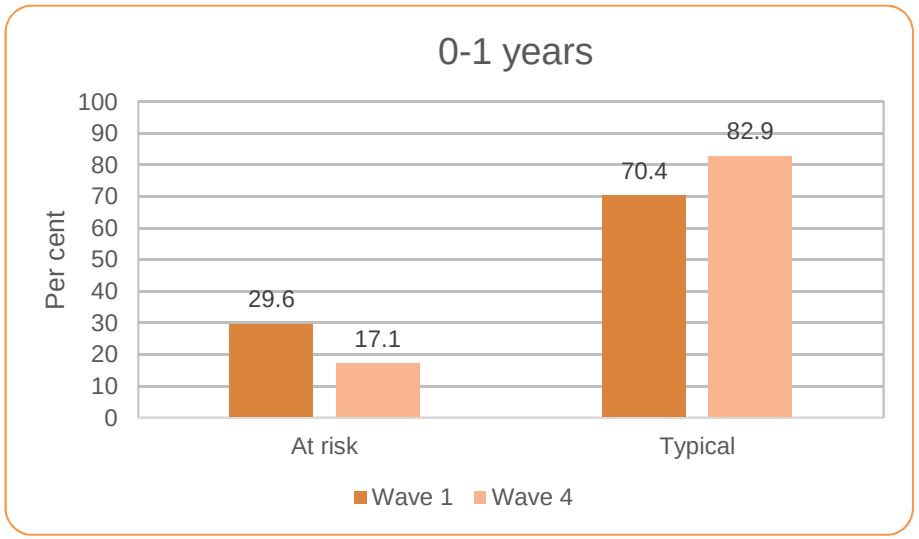
Note: children can appear in both the Aboriginal and CALD graphs.

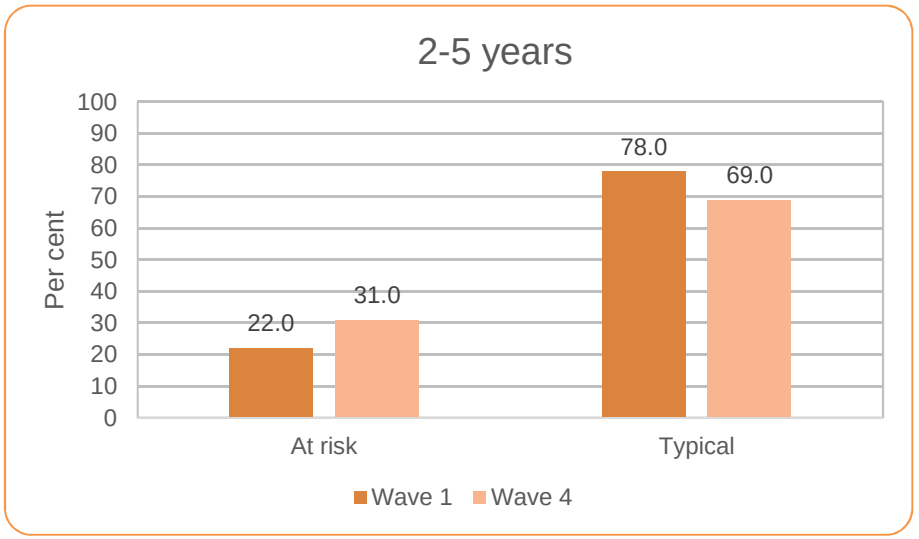


NSW GOVERNMENT Family & Community Services

Increase in non-verbal ability for children who entered OOHC aged 0-1 (other ages not significant)





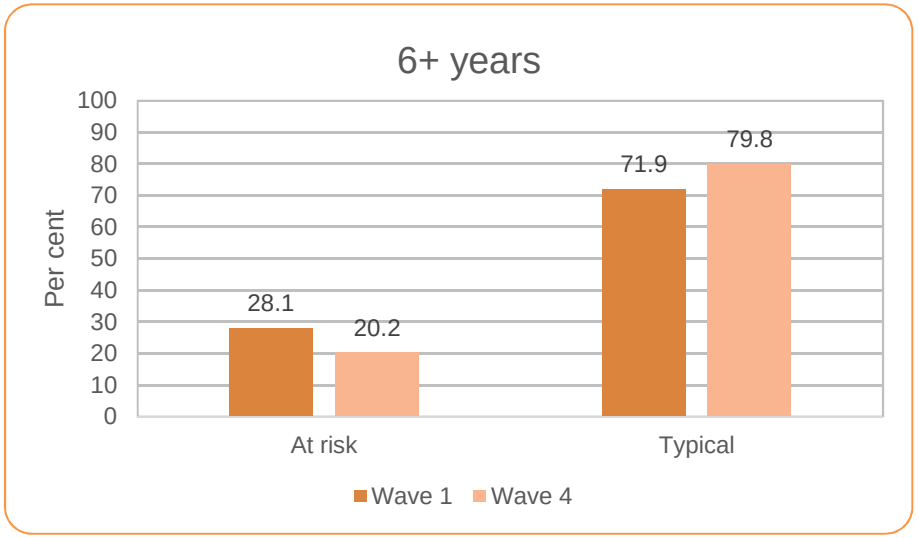


Participants in non-verbal ability tests in both Waves 1 and Wave 4

0-1 years n=398
2-5 years n=168
6+ years n=89

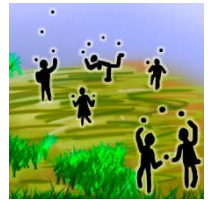
Measure used in Wave 1
- 0-1 years: 100% ASQ
- 2-5 years : 59% ASQ, 41% MR-WISC
- 6+ years: 100% MR-WISC

All children completed the MR-WISC in Wave 4.



NSW GOVERNMENT Family & Community Services

Combinations of high needs in Wave 4

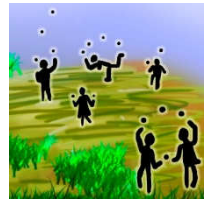


	Number	%
High needs		
Behaviour only	120	14.9
Verbal ability only	45	5.6
Non-verbal ability only	84	10.4
Behaviour and verbal	21	2.6
Behaviour and non-verbal	30	3.7
Verbal and non-verbal	34	4.2
Behaviour, verbal and non-verbal	29	3.6
All normal/borderline/above normal ranges	**441**	**54.9**
Total children who participated in all three tests in Wave 4	**804**	**100.0**

NSW GOVERNMENT Family & Community Services

High needs are clinical range behaviour problems, below normal range verbal and non-verbal abilities

Summary of findings



- Waves 1-4 span a 6 year period, covering approximately 7 years since the child first entered OOHC.
- At Wave 4, around half (53%) of the children who participated were aged 6-8 years at the time of the interview. At Wave 1, approximately half (52%) were aged less than 4 years old.
- The vast majority of children were in considered to be in good physical health and this has remained constant over time.

Summary of findings

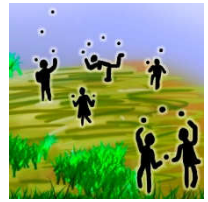
Behaviour problems

- At Wave 4, one quarter (27%) of the children were in the clinical range for total behaviour problems on the CBCL
    - 27% for externalising problems
    - 14% for internalising problems

- There was a significant increase in the proportion of children in the clinical range for total behaviour problems between Wave 3 and Wave 4, driven by a significant increase in externalising problems.

- There was no significant change between Waves 2 and 3.

Summary of findings



Behaviour problems

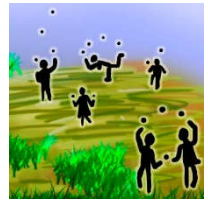
- Of the children in the clinical range at Wave 2, one-third had improved at Wave 4 with 20% in the normal range and 13% in the borderline range.
- Of the children in the normal range at Wave 2, around a quarter were now in the borderline or clinical range.
- The proportion of children in the clinical range increased significantly for:
    - Aboriginal and other Australian children but not CALD children (although there were smaller numbers in this group)
    - Children who entered at age 0-1 years and 2-5 years but not for those that entered aged 6+ years.

Summary of findings

Verbal ability

- At Wave 4, 83% of children who participated were in the normal or above normal range for verbal ability
- There was a significant increase in the proportion of children in the typical range between Waves 3 and 4 with no significant changes between Waves 1 and 3.
- Of the children who were at risk at Wave 1, 62% had improved and were in the typical range at Wave 4.
- Around 10% of the children who were in the typical range at Wave 1 were at risk at Wave 4.
- The improvements between Wave 1 and 4 did not differ by age at entry or cultural background.

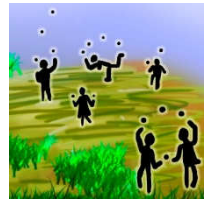
Summary of findings



Non-verbal ability

- At Wave 4, the majority (78%) of children were in the normal or above normal range based on the WISC.
- Between Waves 1 and 2 there was a significant increase in the proportion of children in the typical range. There were no significant differences between Waves 2 and 4.
- Of the children who were in the at risk range at Wave 1, 65% had improved and were in the typical range at Wave 4.
- Around 16% of the children who were in the typical range at Wave 1 were at risk at Wave 4.
- Significant increases in the proportions of children in the typical range between Waves 1 and 4 were found for:
    - CALD and other Australian children (no change for Aboriginal children)
    - Children who entered at age 0-1 years.

Combined standardised measures



Measure	Category according to manual	Cut-off points according to manual
Verbal ability		
PPVT	Below average range	Standard score of <85
CSBS	Below average range	Standard score of <=81
MCDI-III		Bottom 15 percentile
Non-verbal ability		
ASQ	Follow-up/monitor or refer	1-2 SD or >2 SD
WISC	Below average range	>1 SD below average (or scaled score < 7)