

Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study: Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care

Identifying the Cultural Background of Children in the Study





Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study: Outcomes of Children and Young People in OOHC in NSW

Technical Report No.12

Identifying the Cultural Background of Children
in the Study

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Prepared by

Courtney Breen, Joanna Hopkins, Marina Paxman and Albert Zhou, NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ).

About the information in this report

The analyses presented in this report are based on the 2017 version of the Wave 1-3 unweighted data collected in face-to-face interviews with children, young people and caregivers; 2019 version of Wave 4 data; and the DCJ administrative data.

Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study Clearinghouse

All study publications including research reports, technical reports and evidence to action notes can be found on the study webpage www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/research/pathways-of-care

Study design by NSW Department of Communities and Justice (Insights, Analysis and Research); Australian Institute of Family Studies; Professor Judy Cashmore, University of Sydney; Professor Paul Delfabbro, University of Adelaide; Professor Ilan Katz, University of NSW; Dr Fred Wulczyn, Chapin Hall Center for Children University of Chicago.

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Preface

The Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study (POCLS) is funded and managed by the New South Wales Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ). It is the first large-scale prospective longitudinal study of children and young people in out-of-home care (OOHC) in Australia. Information on safety, permanency and wellbeing is being collected from various sources. The child developmental domains of interest are physical health, socio-emotional wellbeing and cognitive/learning ability.

The overall aim of this study is to collect detailed information about the life course development of children who enter OOHC for the first time and the factors that influence their development. The POCLS objectives are to:

- Describe the characteristics, child protection history, development and wellbeing of children and young people at the time they enter OOHC for the first time
- Describe the services, interventions and pathways for children and young people in OOHC, post restoration, post adoption and on leaving care at 18 years
- Describe children's and young people's experiences while growing up in OOHC, post restoration, post adoption and on leaving care at 18 years
- Understand the factors that influence the outcomes for children and young people who grow up in OOHC, are restored home, are adopted or leave care at 18 years
- Inform policy and practice to strengthen the OOHC service system in NSW to improve the outcomes for children and young people in OOHC.

The POCLS is the first study to link data on children's child protection backgrounds, OOHC placements, health, education and offending held by multiple government agencies; and match it to first-hand accounts from children, caregivers, caseworkers and teachers. The POCLS database will allow researchers to track children's trajectories and experiences from birth.

The population cohort is a census of all children and young people who entered OOHC for the first time in NSW over the 18 month period between May 2010 and October 2011 (n=4,126). A subset of those children and young people who went on to receive final Children's Court care and protection orders by April 2013 (2,828) were eligible to participate in the study. For more information about the study please visit the study webpage www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/research/pathways-of-care.

The POCLS acknowledges and honours Aboriginal people as our First Peoples of NSW and is committed to working with the DCJ Aboriginal Outcomes team to ensure that Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities are supported and empowered to improve their life outcomes. The POCLS data asset will be used to

improve how services and supports are designed and delivered in partnership with Aboriginal people and communities.

The DCJ recognises the importance of Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDS) and Indigenous Data Governance (IDG) in the design, collection, analysis, dissemination and management of all data related to Aboriginal Australians. The POCLS is subject to ethics approval, including from the Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council of NSW. The DCJ is currently in the process of scoping the development of IDS and IDG principles that will apply to future Aboriginal data creation, development, stewardship, analysis, dissemination and infrastructure. The POCLS will continue to collaborate with Aboriginal Peoples and will apply the DCJ research governance principles once developed.

Introduction

The cultural background of the children and young people participating in the POCLS is recorded during the child and young person interview, caregiver interview, caseworker on-line survey, teacher on-line survey and the DCJ administrative data. For some children, cultural background changes over time as more information is known or it is inconsistently recorded across the different POCLS data sets. The likely accuracy of the various data sources listed above also varies. These issues are demonstrated in this technical report. Due to this situation, a counting rule was established for the child's cultural background in the POCLS. The purpose of this counting rule is to ensure consistency in analysis and reporting of Aboriginal and Cultural and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) children over time. The counting rule is based on the POCLS Wave 1-3 child and caregiver interview data and the DCJ administrative data. The POCLS counting rule for the child's cultural background is based on an examination of more than one data source aiming to reduce the amount of incomplete data.

It is important that a child's cultural background is accurately recorded so that cultural best practice can be adopted for Aboriginal and CALD children and families to ensure their safety, permanency and wellbeing. This includes finding appropriate placements, case planning, services and supports. The accurate collection and recording of a child or young person's cultural background is an important policy and practice issue for DCJ and OOHC providers.

1 POCLS data sources on the child's cultural background

This section describes 3 POCLS data collections on the child's cultural background:

1. DCJ child protection administrative data at 2-time points (Wave 1, Wave 2)¹
2. Caregiver interview at 3-time points (Wave 3, Wave 4, Wave 5). At earlier time points the child's cultural background was preloaded into the programmed interview from the DCJ child protection administrative data
3. Child and young person (7-17 years old) interview at 4-time points (Wave 2, Wave 3, Wave 4, Wave 5).

1.1. DCJ child protection administrative data

The DCJ child protection administrative data was sourced from the client information system known as the Key Information Directory System (KiDS)² when the POCLS commenced in 2010. The child's cultural background was entered into KiDS by caseworkers. In KiDS, Aboriginal status was a mandatory field but CALD status was not mandatory resulting in missing data.

Selected data variables from the KiDS including the child's cultural background was preloaded into the POCLS programmed interview for caregivers in Wave 1. The information for every child in the POCLS interview cohort was verified by District staff prior to the caregiver's first interview (Wave 1) to ensure data quality.

The pre-loaded data in the caregiver interview was updated in Wave 2 if a child changed placement otherwise it remained the same. In Wave 3, a question about the child's cultural background was added to the caregiver interview to replace the preloaded KiDS data variables.

¹ On average, the interval between Waves 1-3 is 18 months after entering OOHC for the first time and the interval for subsequent waves is approximately 24 months.

² In 2018, KiDS was replaced by a new data system, ChildStory

2 POCLS counting rule for the child’s cultural background

The POCLS counting rule approach for cultural background uses data from Waves 1-3 and more than one data source aiming to reduce the amount of incomplete data.

For the POCLS, a child’s cultural background has been defined using the DCJ child protection administrative data at Wave 1 and Wave 2; and the caregiver report of the child’s cultural background collected from Wave 3.

Note, there is some variation across waves in the number of interview participants, question responses and missing data. The consistency in reporting is explored below.

2.1 Caregiver report

There was consistency over time in caregiver reports of the study child’s Aboriginal cultural background with 95.1% of caregivers providing the same response at Wave 3 and 4 (Table 1). Note the child may have had a different carer in these waves.

Table 1: Caregiver reports of **the child’s** Aboriginal background in both Wave 3 and Wave 4

Carer report: child is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander? (Wave 3)	Carer report: child is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander? (Wave 4)			
	Yes	No	Don’t know	Total
Yes	285	7	2	294
No	21	499	4	524
Don’t know	1	5	0	6
Total	307	511	6	824

2.2 Child or young person report

The child report of their cultural background is not used in the counting rule as the question is only asked of children aged 7-17 years and at Wave 3, approximately half of the children (54.0%) were still under 7 years old. However, comparing the consistency between the caregiver and child responses may indicate the accuracy of the caregiver reports of the child’s cultural background.

For the children aged 7 or more, the majority of child and caregiver responses were the same for Aboriginal identity at both Wave 3 (74.1%) and Wave 4 (74.3%) (Table 2). Less than 5% of children aged 7 or more refused to answer this question (3.4% in

Wave 3, 4.7% in Wave 4). In Wave 3, there were missing data for 7.9% of children due to a technical error.

Table 2: Child and caregiver reports of Aboriginal identity of children aged 7 and older, Wave 3 and 4

Caregiver report: Is child Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?	Child report: Are either of your birth parents Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?									
	Wave 3 Children aged 7 + years n=355					Wave 4 Children aged 7 + years n= 614				
	Yes	No	Don't know	Other	Total	Yes	No	Don't know	Other	Total
Yes	103	6	14	17	140	185	10	26	15	236
No	6	160	26	23	215	22	271	64	15	372
Don't know	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	0	6
Total	109	166	40	40	355	209	283	92	30	614

* Other – missing, refused/pass

Child reports of Aboriginal identity (Table 3) were not as consistent as caregiver reports (Table 1), although about two-thirds of children aged 7 years or older (64.8%) provided the same response in Waves 3 and 4.

Table 3: Child reports of Aboriginal identity (children aged 7 and older), children with responses for both Wave 3 and Wave 4

Child report: Are either of your birth parents Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander? (W3)	Child report: Are either of your birth parents Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander? (Wave 4)				
	Yes	No	Don't know	Other	Total
Yes	53	4	6	2	65
No	12	85	22	0	119
Don't know	5	9	14	1	29
Other	8	11	3	1	23
Total	78	109	45	4	236

* Other – missing, refused/pass

3 Variables derived using the POCLS counting rule

Three variables have been derived using the POCLS counting rule:

1. Child identified as Aboriginal: binary variable
2. Child identified as CALD: binary variable
3. Child's cultural background: non-binary.

The Appendix contains tables showing the number of children in the POCLS identifying as Aboriginal and/or CALD.

3.1 Child identified as Aboriginal: binary variable

A child is counted as Aboriginal if he/she was identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander in the DCJ child protection administrative data at Wave 1 or Wave 2 or if the caregiver indicated that the child was Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander at Wave 3. The small number of children identified as both Aboriginal and CALD are classified as Aboriginal using this counting rule.

Table 4: POCLS Aboriginal child binary variable

Child identified as Aboriginal counting rule
If the preloaded data for the child's cultural background at Wave 1 (s_sc_culture) is 'Aboriginal' or the preloaded data for the child's cultural background at Wave 2 (s_sc_culture) is 'Aboriginal' or the Wave 3 caregiver response to the child's Aboriginality (CHILD_ATSI) is 'Yes, Aboriginal' or 'Yes, Torres Strait Islander' or 'Yes, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander'
Binary variable
KD_ADMIN_STUDYCHILD_ATSI (intv_cypc_w123_long.sav) 0=Non-Aboriginal 1=Aboriginal.

3.2 Child identified as CALD: binary variable

A child is counted as CALD if he/she was identified as CALD in the DCJ child protection administrative data at Wave 1 or Wave 2 or if the caregiver indicated that

the child was CALD at Wave 3. The small number of children identified as both Aboriginal and CALD are classified as CALD using this counting rule.

Table 5: POCLS CALD child binary variable

Child identified as CALD counting rule
<p>If the preloaded data for the child’s cultural background at Wave 1 (s_sc_culture) is ‘CALD’</p> <p>or</p> <p>the preloaded data for the child’s cultural background at Wave 2 (s_sc_culture) is ‘CALD’</p> <p>or</p> <p>the Wave 3 caregiver response to the child’s cultural background Child_CALD_01 ‘Study Child’s primary cultural background’ is ‘Other’</p>
Binary variable
<p>KD_ADMIN_STUDYCHILD_CALD (intv_cypc_w123_long.sav)</p> <p>0=Non-CALD</p> <p>1=CALD.</p>

3.3 Child’s cultural background: non-binary variable

Children can be identified as Aboriginal, CALD, both Aboriginal and CALD, or neither Aboriginal nor CALD (i.e. Other Australian). The small number of children identified as both Aboriginal and CALD are classified as both Aboriginal and CALD using this counting rule.

Table 6: POCLS cultural background of the child – non-binary variable

Child’s cultural identify counting rule
<p>If binary ATSI variable (KD_ADMIN_STUDYCHILD_ATSI) is ‘non-Aboriginal’ and the binary CALD variable (KD_ADMIN_STUDYCHILD_CALD) is ‘non-CALD’ then non-binary derived cultural background is ‘Other Australian’ i.e. not Aboriginal or CALD</p> <p>or</p> <p>If binary ATSI variable (KD_ADMIN_STUDYCHILD_ATSI) is ‘Aboriginal’ and the binary CALD variable (KD_ADMIN_STUDYCHILD_CALD) is ‘non-CALD’ then non-binary derived cultural background is ‘Aboriginal only’.</p> <p>or</p> <p>If binary ATSI variable (KD_ADMIN_STUDYCHILD_ATSI) is ‘non-Aboriginal’ and the binary CALD variable (KD_ADMIN_STUDYCHILD_CALD) is ‘CALD’ then non-binary derived cultural background is ‘CALD only’.</p> <p>or</p> <p>If binary ATSI variable (KD_ADMIN_STUDYCHILD_ATSI) is ‘Aboriginal’ and the binary CALD variable (KD_ADMIN_STUDYCHILD_CALD) is ‘CALD’ then non-binary derived cultural background is ‘both Aboriginal and CALD’</p>

Non-binary variable

KD_STUDYCHILD_CULTURAL_BACKGROUND (intv_cypc_w123_long.sav)

1= Other Australian (non-Aboriginal and non-CALD)

2=Aboriginal only

3=CALD only

4=both Aboriginal and CALD.

3.4 Which variable should I use in my analysis?

The cultural background variable selected by researchers for analysis will depend on the research question and comparison groups being reported. If the non-binary variable is considered appropriate for the research question, a decision will need to be made by the researcher about children who identify as both Aboriginal and CALD and an explanation provided in the methodology section of the report.

4 Reporting on a child's cultural background

There are important considerations regarding both the definition of Aboriginality and CALD and the reporting of information on cultural background. There is currently a project underway within DCJ on Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Indigenous Data Governance. The DCJ guidelines are still in development and the POCLS guidelines are being updated. Principles of good governance of Aboriginal data defined by the emerging data sovereignty movement should be considered and include:

- that Aboriginal peoples have a voice to determine who should be counted among them
- that data must reflect the interests and priorities of Aboriginal peoples
- communities must not only dictate the content of data collected about them, but also have the power to determine who has access to these data ([Walker et al., 2017](#)).

The POCLS analyses that focus on Aboriginal and CALD children should involve collaboration with appropriate colleagues and community members in the development, design and reporting stages of the analysis. When reporting the POCLS data it is recommended to report results using a strengths based approach rather than a deficits discourse.⁴

POCLS publications undergo peer review and must also be reviewed by the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AH&MRC) Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) for approval to publish.

⁴ The above mainly discusses the definition of Aboriginality but much can also apply to the definition of CALD.

Appendix 1: Number of children in the POCLS who identified as Aboriginal and/or CALD

Tables 7, 8 and 9 present the binary and non-binary data for children interviewed at Wave 3. At Wave 3 there were 62 children who were identified as both CALD and Aboriginal (Table 9).

Table 7: Number of children identifying as Aboriginal at Wave 3 using the POCLS binary variable

Child's characteristics	Non -Aboriginal		Aboriginal		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Age at Entry						
<1 year	246	59.1	170	40.9	416	100
1 - 2 years	113	61.1	72	38.9	185	100
3 - 5 years	108	55.1	88	44.9	196	100
6 -11 years	128	61.5	80	38.5	208	100
12 -17 years	19	67.9	9	32.1	28	100
Gender						
Female	290	57.4	215	42.6	505	100
Male	324	61.4	204	38.6	528	100
District						
Hunter New England and Central Coast	148	56.5	114	43.5	262	100
Murrumbidgee Far West and Western NSW	68	47.6	75	52.4	143	100
Western Sydney and Nepean Blue Mountains	82	62.6	49	37.4	131	100
Mid North Coast and Northern NSW	56	64.4	31	35.6	87	100
South Western Sydney	73	69.5	32	30.5	105	100
Illawarra Shoalhaven and Southern	45	47.4	50	52.6	95	100
South Eastern, Northern and Sydney	61	78.2	17	21.8	78	100
Total*	614	59.4	419	40.6	1,033	100.0

Notes: *Column Totals reflect age of entry and gender but not District as n=128 missing, <5 children are in State-wide Services – data not shown.

Table 8: Number of children identifying as CALD at Wave 3 using the POCLS binary variable

Child's characteristics	Non-CALD		CALD		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Age at Entry						
<1 year	342	82.2	74	17.8	416	100
1 - 2 years	160	86.5	25	13.5	185	100
3 - 5 years	171	87.2	25	12.8	196	100
6 -11 years	176	84.6	32	15.4	208	100
12 -17 years	22	78.6	6	21.4	28	100
Gender						
Female	436	86.3	69	13.7	505	100
Male	435	82.4	93	17.6	528	100
District						
Hunter New England and Central Coast	251	95.8	11	4.2	262	100
Murrumbidgee Far West and Western NSW	114	79.7	29	20.3	143	100
Western Sydney and Nepean Blue Mountains	93	71.0	38	29.0	131	100
Mid North Coast and Northern NSW	np	np	np	np	np	100
South Western Sydney	79	75.2	26	24.8	105	100
Illawarra Shoalhaven and Southern	90	94.7	5	5.3	95	100
South Eastern, Northern and Sydney	44	56.4	34	43.6	78	100
Total*	871	84.3	162	15.7	1,033	100.0

Notes: *Column Totals reflect age of entry and gender but not District as n=128 missing, <5 children are in State-wide Services – data not shown. Np – not published; secondary suppression and small numbers n<5.

Figures 1 and 2 below show the DCJ administrative data at Wave 1 and Wave 2 and the caregiver report at Wave 3 for the child's cultural background. The children where cultural identity data are not consistent across waves are highlighted in orange.

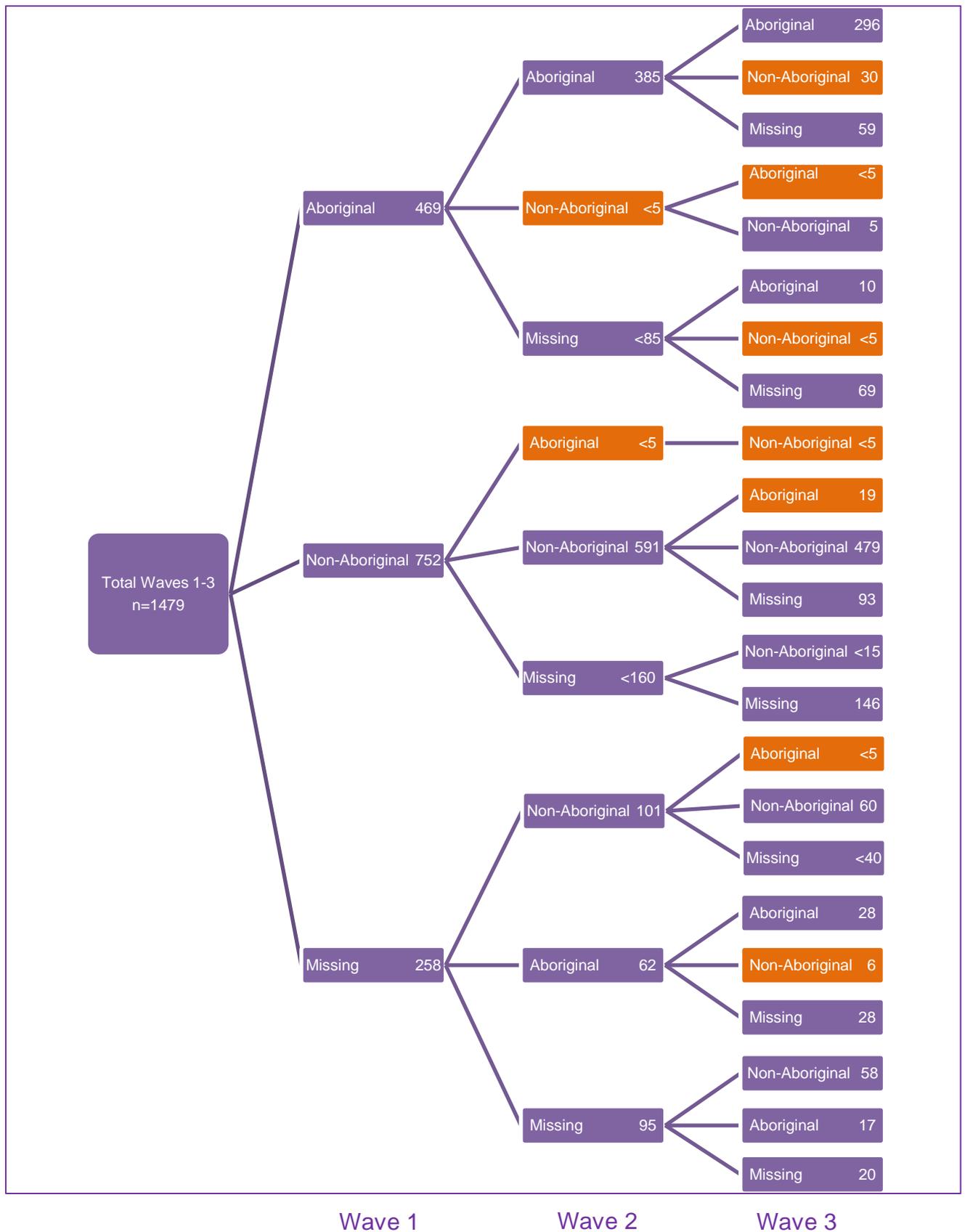
Table 9: Number of children identifying as Aboriginal and/or CALD in the POCLS by Wave 3 using the POCLS non-binary variable

Child's characteristics	Non Aboriginal & non CALD		Aboriginal only		CALD only		Aboriginal & CALD		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Age at Entry										
<1 year	198	47.6	144	34.6	48	11.5	26	6.3	416	100
1 - 2 years	99	53.5	61	33.0	14	7.6	11	5.9	185	100
3 - 5 years	97	49.5	74	37.8	11	5.6	14	7.1	196	100
6 -11 years	104	50.0	72	34.6	np	np	np	np	208	100
12 -17 years	16	57.1	6	21.4	np	np	np	np	28	100
Gender										
Female	245	48.5	191	37.8	45	8.9	24	4.8	505	100
Male	269	50.9	166	31.4	55	10.4	38	7.2	528	100
District*										
Hunter New England and Central Coast	140	53.4	111	42.4	np	np	np	np	262	100
Murrumbidgee Far West and Western NSW	63	44.1	51	35.7	np	np	np	np	143	100
Western Sydney and Nepean Blue Mountains	61	46.6	32	24.4	21	16.0	17	13.0	131	100
Mid North Coast and Northern NSW	55	63.2	28	32.2	np	np	np	np	87	100
South Western Sydney	50	47.6	29	27.6	np	np	np	np	105	100
Illawarra Shoalhaven and Southern	42	44.2	48	50.5	np	np	np	np	95	100
South Eastern, Northern and Sydney	31	39.7	np	np	30	38.5	np	np	78	100
Total*	514	49.8	357	34.6	100	9.7	62	6.0	1,033	100.0

Notes: *_Totals reflect age of entry and gender but not District as n=128 missing, <5 children are in State-wide Services – data not shown.

Np – not published; secondary suppression and small numbers n<5.

Figure 1: Child's recorded Aboriginality at each wave



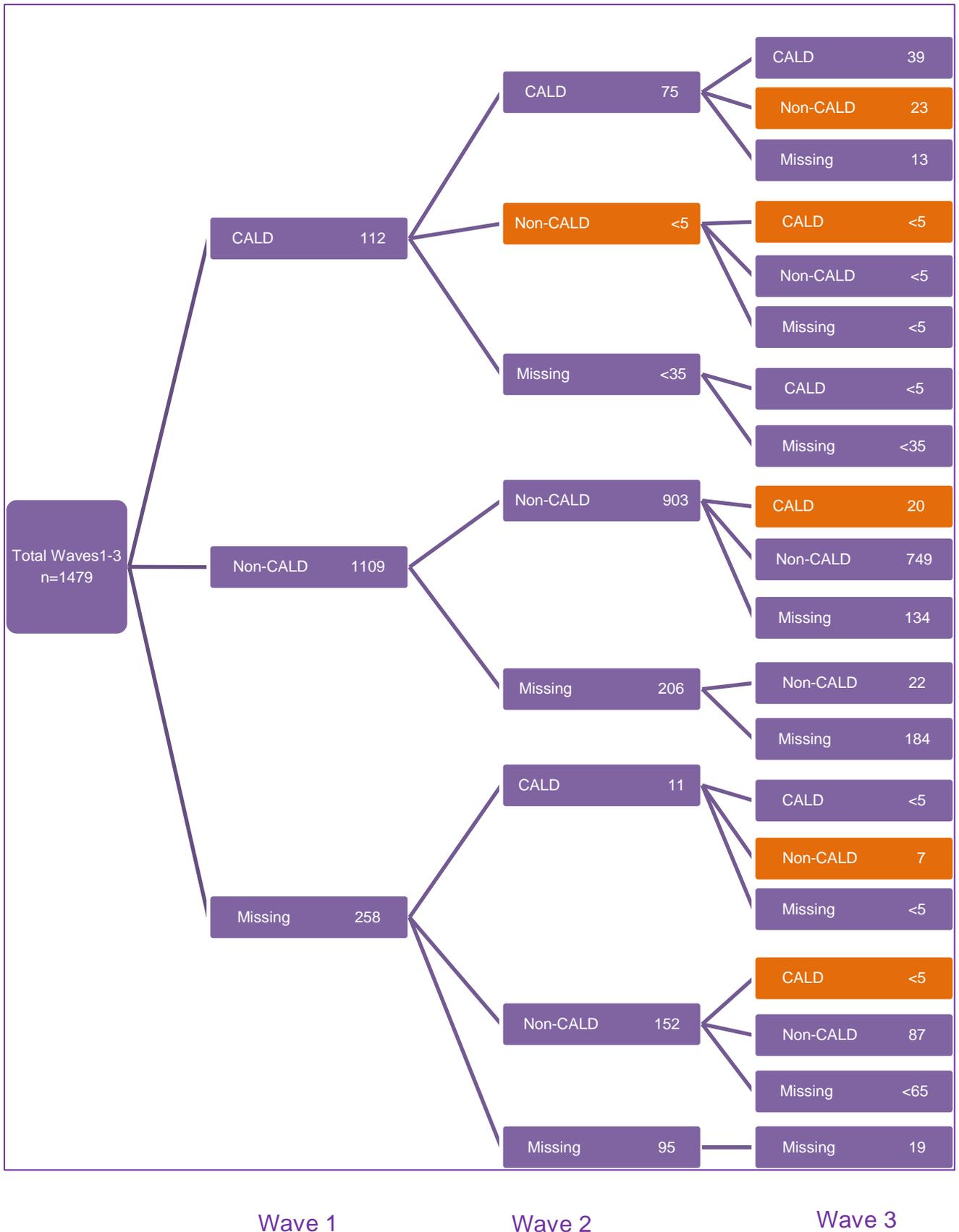
Notes:

Base: Children who were interviewed at any of the 3 waves

Data Sources: DCJ child protection administrative data at Wave 1 and Wave 2; caregiver report at Wave 3

Key: Orange fields indicates inconsistent reporting of Aboriginal status over time. Numbers < 5 are not published and exact numbers not provided in some instances for secondary suppression purposes.

Figure 2: Child's recorded CALD background at each wave



Notes:

Base: Children who were interviewed at any of the 3 waves

Data Sources: DCJ child protection administrative data Wave 1 and Wave 2; caregiver report at Wave 3

Key: Orange fields indicates inconsistent reporting of CALD status over time. Numbers < 5 are not published and exact numbers not provided in some instances for secondary suppression purposes.

References

Walker, J., Lovett, R., Kukutai, T., Jones, C. & Henry, D. (2017). Indigenous health data and the path to healing. *The Lancet*, 390, 2022-2023.

