

2024 AEDC Snapshot #1

# South Australia - Key findings



# The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) in South Australia

This snapshot provides an overview of South Australia's (SA) results from the 2024 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC), a national measure of children's development as they begin full-time school.

Results highlight trends in children's development since 2009 in 5 key domains closely linked to child health, education and social outcomes later in life.

Looking at AEDC results provides insights into the early life experiences of cohorts of children, factors influencing their development, what might be working well or getting in the way, and where to focus efforts to make a difference.

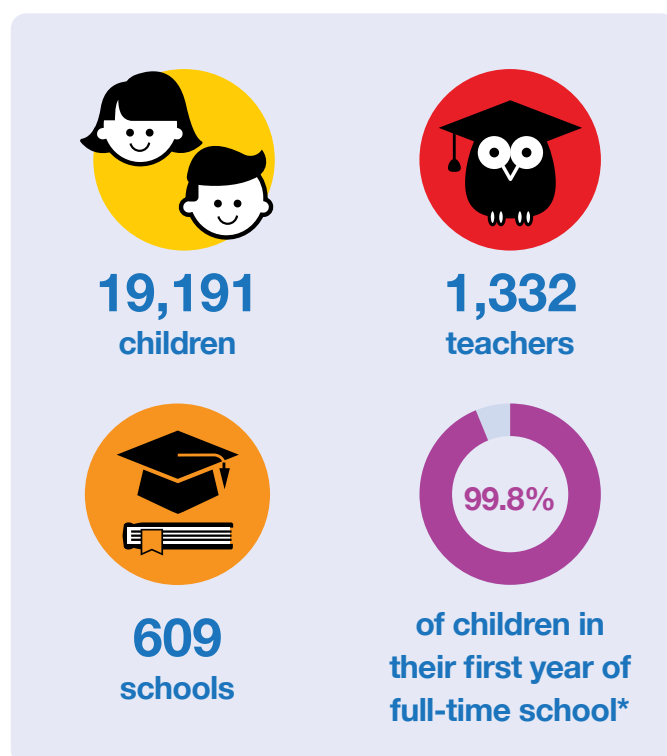
Being available at community, state and national level, AEDC data is helping shape government, educator and community decisions, policies and practices driving better outcomes for children.

## Participation in the 2024 AEDC

The 2024 AEDC was the sixth AEDC since 2009 and took place between 1 May 2024 and 31 July 2024.

Since 2012 over 96% of South Australian children were included in each census. This reached 99.8% in 2024, the highest since 2009. These high rates help make the AEDC a comprehensive early childhood development data collection.

Figure 1 - 2024 AEDC participation in South Australia

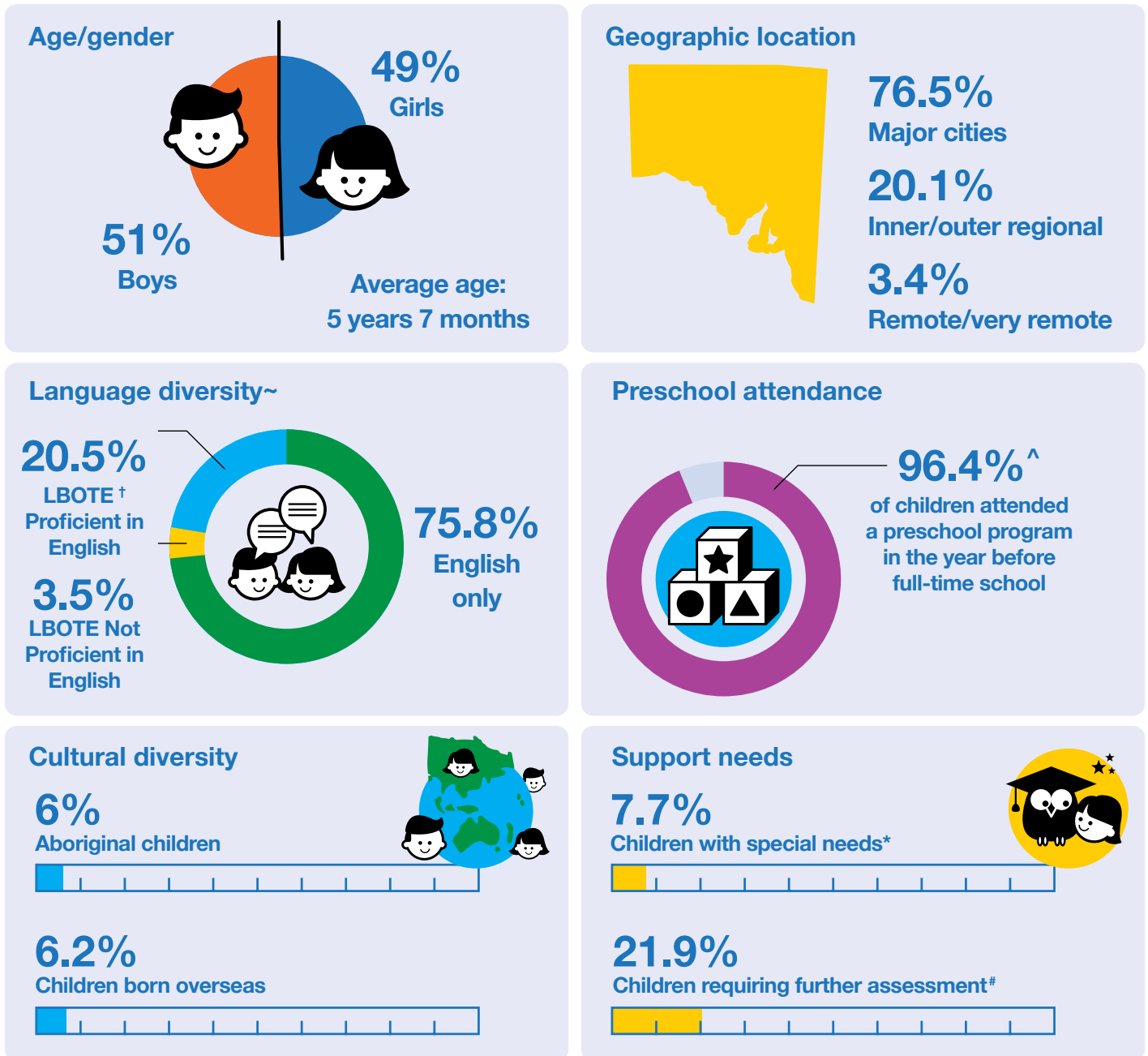


\*percentage of the estimated child population

## Demographic snapshot

The AEDC gives useful insights into the demographics of children in the 2024 collection. Figure 2 showcases important demographic features and the diversity of the South Australian child population captured in the collection.

**Figure 2** - Demographic characteristics of children who participated in the 2024 AEDC in South Australia



~ The sum of the Language diversity groups shown in the chart does not add up to 100% as children whose Proficiency in English is unknown have been excluded.

<sup>^</sup> Although teachers are well-placed to report on the development of children, the extent to which teachers know about children's preschool/ kindergarten experience varies. If teachers indicate they 'don't know' this information, these cases are excluded from the reporting figure. In 2024, 6.8% of teachers selected 'don't know'.

† Language background other than English.

\* Children requiring special assistance because of chronic medical, physical, or intellectually disabling conditions based on a medical diagnosis. Children may be included in both 'special needs' and 'requiring further assessment'. Domain and summary indicator results exclude this group who are already considered vulnerable.

# Children who are currently being assessed or who have been identified by a teacher as needing further assessment.

# Trends in Development

The AEDC captures data on 5 key areas or 'domains' of early childhood development shown to predict later mental health, wellbeing and educational outcomes, reporting this for groups of children.

For more information see the [About the AEDC Domains fact sheet](#)



## The AEDC domains



### 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 and hyperactivity and inattention.



### Language and cognitive skills (school-based)

Children's basic literacy, numeracy and memory, advanced literacy and basic numeracy.



### Communication skills and general knowledge

Children's communication skills and general knowledge based on broad development competencies and skills measure in the school context.

## How children's scores are classified

Children receive a score from 0 to 10 for each of the 5 AEDC domains. These scores are classified using 2009 AEDC benchmarks into these 3 categories.

<b>Developmentally on track</b>	scores above the 25th percentile	children are developing well
<b>Developmentally at risk</b>	scores between the 10th to 25th percentile	children are facing challenges in some aspects of their development
<b>Developmentally vulnerable</b>	scores below the 10th percentile	children are facing some significant challenges in their development

## The AEDC summary indicators

The AEDC has 3 summary indicators that collectively can be used to monitor trends in children's development.

For more information see the [AEDC summary indicators fact sheet](#)



**OT5**

The percentage of children who are developmentally on track on 5 AEDC domains

Highlights children's developmental strengths and the importance of holistic development, helping identify where things are working well to support children's development

**DV1**

The percentage of children who are developmentally vulnerable on 1 or more domains

Identify trends in children's developmental vulnerability, indicating where community-level support may be needed

**DV2**

The percentage of children who are developmentally vulnerable on 2 or more domains

A subset of DV1, indicating where more targeted supports may be needed

## Understanding significant change

To identify significant change in children's development over time for domain results, the AEDC uses 'critical difference' methodology to compare results between 2 collections.

If a change is significant, this means that it is likely to represent a real shift in child development between the 2 time points being considered and is not just due to random variation.

For more information see the [Comparing results over time fact sheet](#).



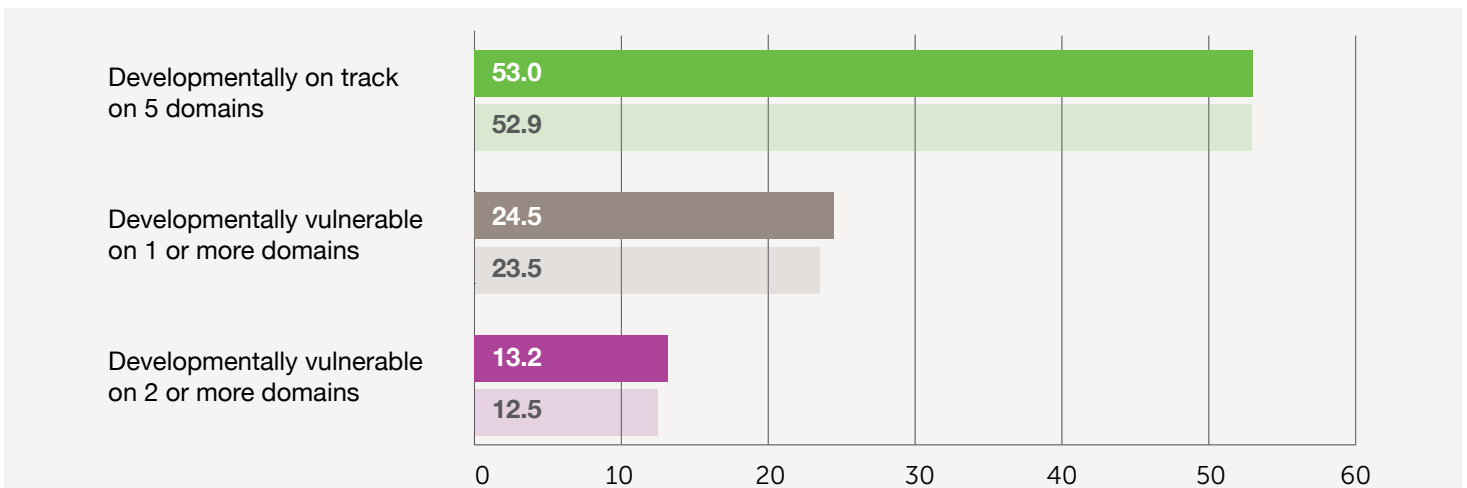
# State 2024 AEDC summary indicator and trend results

In 2024 53% of South Australia's children were developmentally on track on all 5 domains, higher than the 52.9% result for Australia. This is a significant improvement from 51.7% in 2009, and the 0.7 percentage points decrease from 2021 to 53% in 2024, is less than the 1.9 percentage points national decrease from 54.8% in 2021 to 52.9% in 2024.

Although the percentage of children developmentally vulnerable on 1 or more domains increased by 0.7 percentage points compared to the 1.5 percentage points change for Australia from 2021 to 2024, the total for South Australia at 24.5% is higher than 23.5% for Australia.

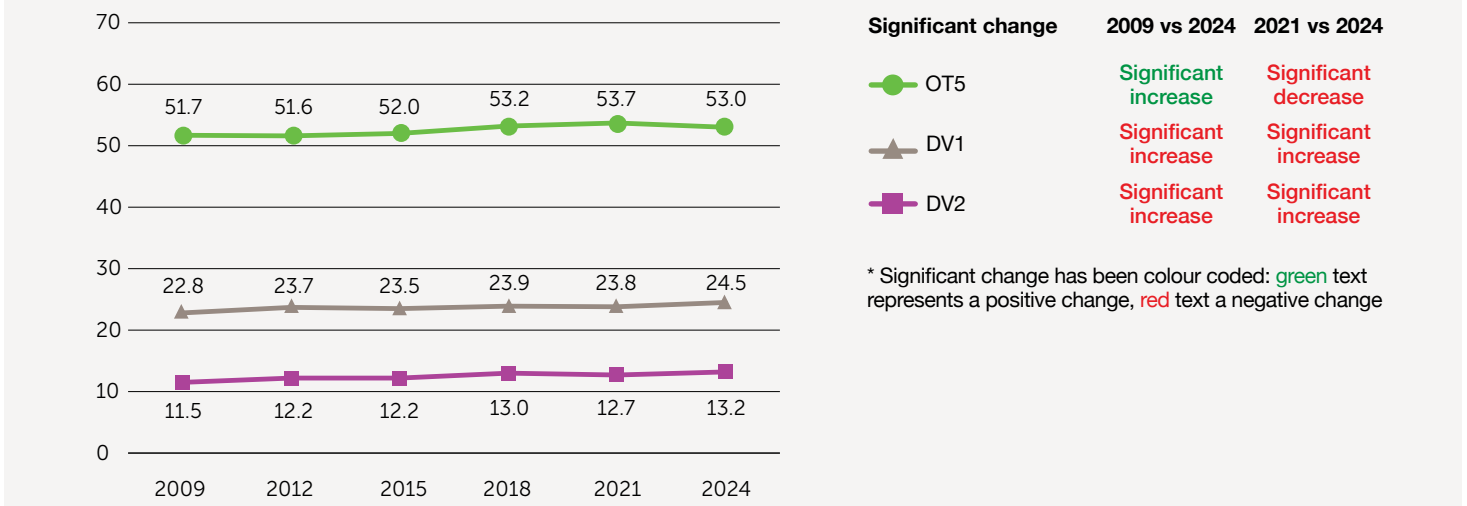
The percentage of children developmentally vulnerable on 2 or more domains was 13.2% in 2024, compared to 12.5% for Australia. This increase of 0.5 percentage points from 2021 for South Australia was less than the 1.1 percentage points increase for Australia in 2024.

**Figure 3 – SA and Australia 2024 AEDC Summary Indicators - percentage of children**



Note: darker bars represent results for SA, lighter bars represent results for Australia

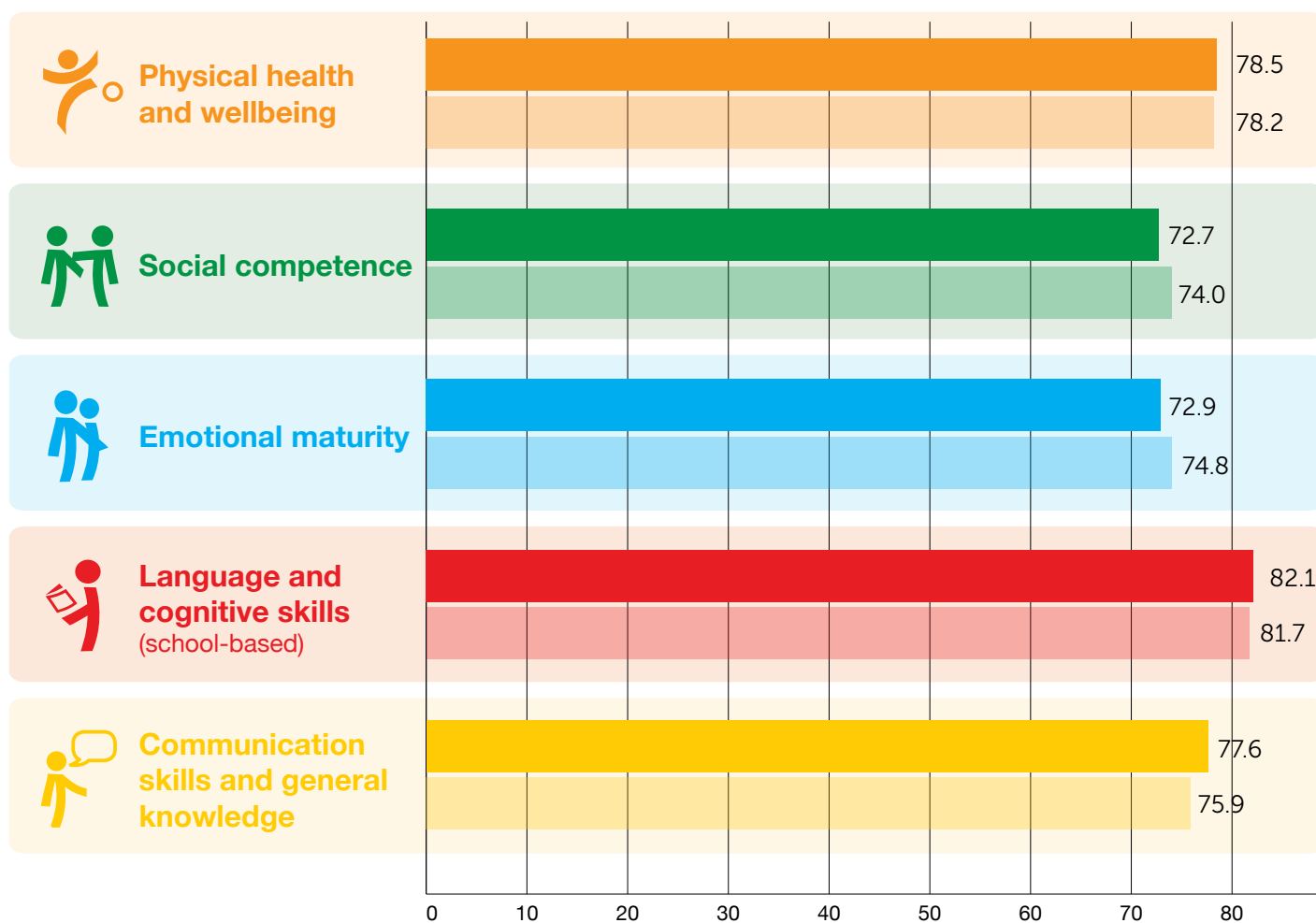
**Figure 4 - SA Summary Indicator trends – percentage of children**



# State 2024 AEDC domain and trend results

In 2024 South Australia had a higher proportion of children developmentally on track in the Physical health and wellbeing, Language and cognitive skills (school-based) and Communication skills and general knowledge domains, compared to national results.

**Figure 5 - Percentage of children developmentally on track on the AEDC domains for SA and Australia in 2024**



Note: darker bars represent results for SA, lighter bars represent results for Australia

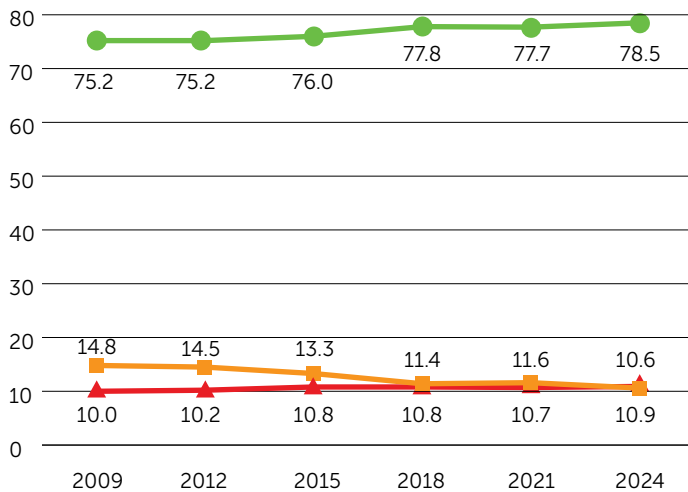


## Physical health and wellbeing

Positively since 2009, the percentage of children developmentally on track increased from 75.2% to 78.5% in 2024, and the at risk category reduced from 14.8% to 10.6% in 2024. While the percentage

of children measured as developmentally vulnerable increased over time the increase of 0.2 percentage points from 10.7% in 2021 to 10.9% in 2024 was not significant.

**Figure 6 - SA trends/Physical health and wellbeing domain– percentage of children**



Significant change	2009 vs 2024	2021 vs 2024
OT On track	Significant increase	Significant increase
AR At risk	Significant decrease	Significant decrease
DV Vulnerable	Significant increase	No significant change

**Note:** For all domain graphs significant change has been colour coded: green text represents a positive change, red text a negative change. At risk has not been colour coded as any changes should be interpreted in context with changes in the percentage of children who are developmentally vulnerable and on track.

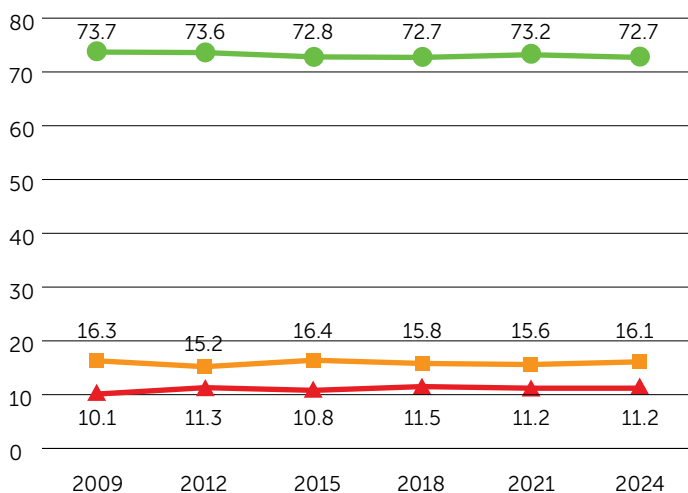


## Social competence

The percentage of children developmentally on track for this domain fell by 0.5 percentage points from 2021 to 72.7% in 2024 with a correlating change in the developmentally at risk category, increasing from

15.6% in 2021 to 16.1% in 2024. The percentage of children developmentally vulnerable however remained stable at 11.2% in 2024.

**Figure 7 - SA trends/Social competence domain – percentage of children**



Significant change	2009 vs 2024	2021 vs 2024
OT On track	Significant decrease	Significant decrease
AR At risk	No significant change	No significant change
DV Vulnerable	Significant increase	No significant change

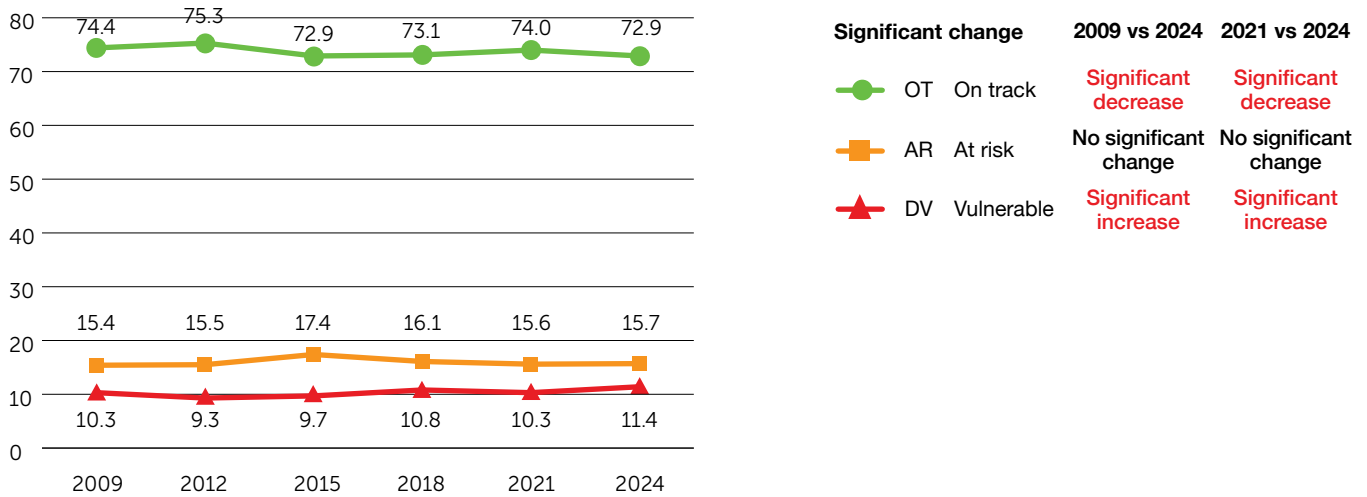


## Emotional maturity

In 2024 the largest shift in the percentage of children developmentally on track was in this domain, declining 1.1 percentage points from 74% in 2021 to 72.9% in 2024. There was no significant change in the at

risk category however the percentage of children developmentally vulnerable increased from 10.3% in 2021 to 11.4% in 2024, the highest level since 2009 and for all domains.

**Figure 8 - SA trends/Emotional maturity domain – percentage of children**

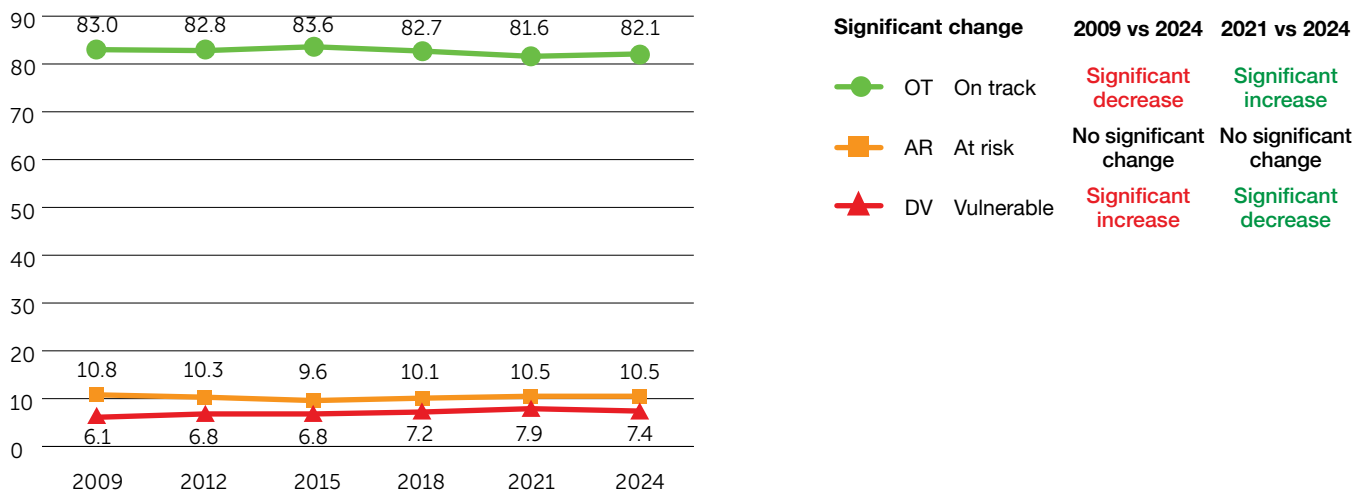


## Language and cognitive skills (school-based)

Since 2009 the language and cognitive skills (school-based) domain has consistently had the highest percentage of children developmentally on track compared to other domains, with a 0.5 percentage points of further improvement from 81.6% in 2021 to

82.1% in 2024. Similarly, this domain has the lowest percentage of children developmentally vulnerable with a reduction of 0.5 percentage points from 7.9% in 2021 to 7.4% in 2024, a positive change. From 2021 to 2024 there was no change in the at risk category.

**Figure 9 - SA trends/Language and cognitive skills (school-based) – percentage of children**



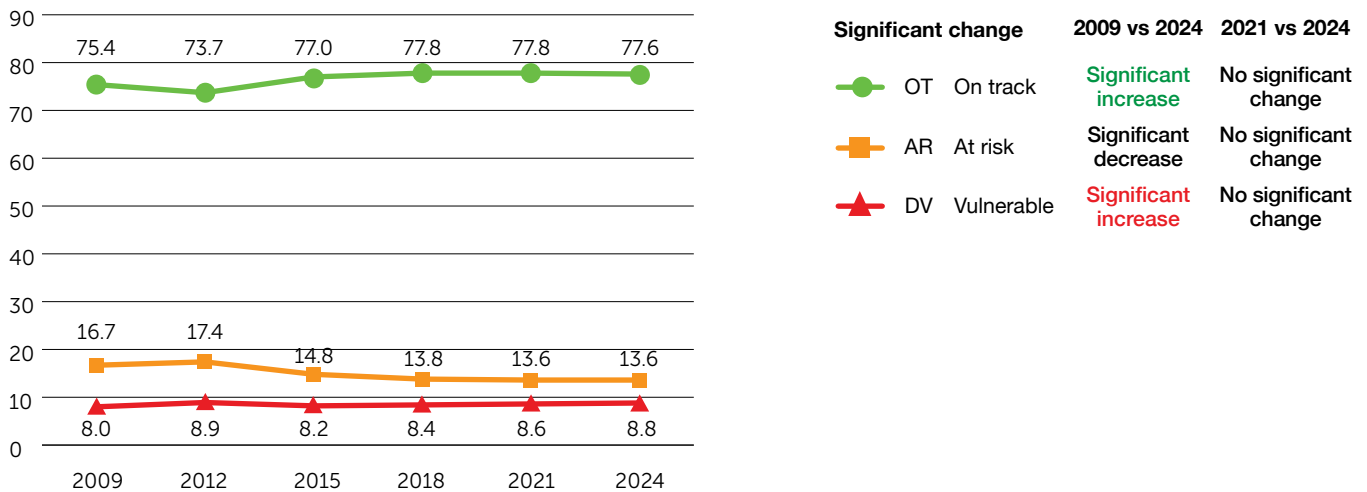


## Communication skills and general knowledge

While the percentage of children developmentally on track for this domain decreased by 0.2 percentage points from 77.8% in 2021 to 77.6% in 2024 it was not a significant shift and has remained relatively stable

over the past few collections. There was a correlating increase in the developmentally vulnerable category from 8.6% in 2021 to 8.8% in 2024 and the at risk category remained stable.

**Figure 10** - SA trends/Communication skills and general knowledge – percentage of children



For more detailed data see the [AEDC SA data tables and charts](#). This additional data complements this snapshot.



# The future for SA children

While around 1 in 4 South Australian children were developmentally vulnerable as they started school in the 2024 AEDC, the good news is most children are developmentally on track, and that more support in the early years of life can be effective in reducing developmental vulnerability and positively influence a child's life trajectory.

Recognising the significance of the early years for children's lifelong outcomes, in 2024 the State Government announced it is investing \$1.9 billion over the period to 2032-33, into [early years reform](#). Part of this investment is \$715 million over 5 years to implement key recommendations from the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care.

Reform priorities will deliver universal 3-year-old preschool, align the support offered through 4-year-old preschool with the enhanced support framework being developed for 3-year-old preschool, provide more support for children most in need, and grow and support the early childhood workforce.

The [Office for Early Childhood](#), set up to lead system reforms is delivering these commitments through 4 reform pillars; Universal preschool, growing the workforce, empowering Aboriginal learners and connecting services for the best start.

The new early childhood development system will support all children from birth to 5 years with information and services for families and carers.

Reporting against the [South Australian Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People](#) will continue to provide a holistic look at how children are faring and guide state authorities in their efforts.

Collectively we can make a difference at the local, community and state level and give our children the best start in life as we work to achieve the state's 20 year aim to reduce the level of developmental vulnerability to 15% as measured by the AEDC, by 2043.

For more information about other South Australian results visit the SA AEDC resources page on the Department for Education website.

To find out more about the AEDC visit the [AEDC national website](#) or the [Department for Education website](#), download the [2024 AEDC National Report](#), email [Education.AEDCTeam@sa.gov.au](mailto:Education.AEDCTeam@sa.gov.au)

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.

This snapshot uses data from the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC). The AEDC is funded by the Australian Government Department of Education. The findings and/or views reported are those of the author and should not be attributed to the Department or the Australian Government.