

2021 AEDC Snapshot #1

# Key Findings for South Australia



# About the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)

This snapshot provides key findings about South Australia's (SA) results from the 2021 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC), highlighting trends in children's development since 2009.

## The AEDC:

- is a nationwide measure that looks at how young children have developed when they start their first year of full-time school
- measures 5 important areas (called domains) of early childhood development that are closely linked to the predictors of adult health, education and social outcomes.

## The 5 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.

For each domain, children receive a score from 0 to 10. Using 2009 data, cut-points (0-10) were set to define 3 categories of development for each domain:

- **Developmentally vulnerable** (below 10th percentile)
- **Developmentally at risk** (10th to 25th percentile)
- **Developmentally on track** (above 25th percentile)

The cut-points (0-10 scale) are fixed over time, this allows to track changes in the % of children who are developmentally on track, at risk and vulnerable on each domain for successive cohorts of children.

## How can the AEDC help?

The AEDC can:

- provide evidence to support policy, planning and action for health, education and community support
- help us understand:
  - the environments children are growing up in
  - what might be supporting or getting in the way of their development and wellbeing and
  - where to focus efforts to make a difference
- provide an insight into how our children may fare later in life
- provide comprehensive early childhood data at a community, jurisdictional and national level.

## A stronger future

A strong future for South Australia demands a commitment to giving our youngest the best start in life. To improve life outcomes for South Australia's children all key stakeholders must work together.

[South Australia's Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People](#) is using the AEDC to measure progress for children from birth to five years.

The Office for the Early Years was established to drive [South Australia's Early Learning Strategy 2021-2031](#). The strategy supports all young children to be thriving and learning.

By improving environments for children, it is anticipated the AEDC data will demonstrate a higher proportion of South Australian children who are developmentally on track in the future.

# 2021 key findings for South Australia



**Over 97%**  
children assessed



**1 in 4**  
children were developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains (DV1)



**1 in 3**  
Aboriginal children were on track on all five domains (OT5)



**601**  
Participating schools



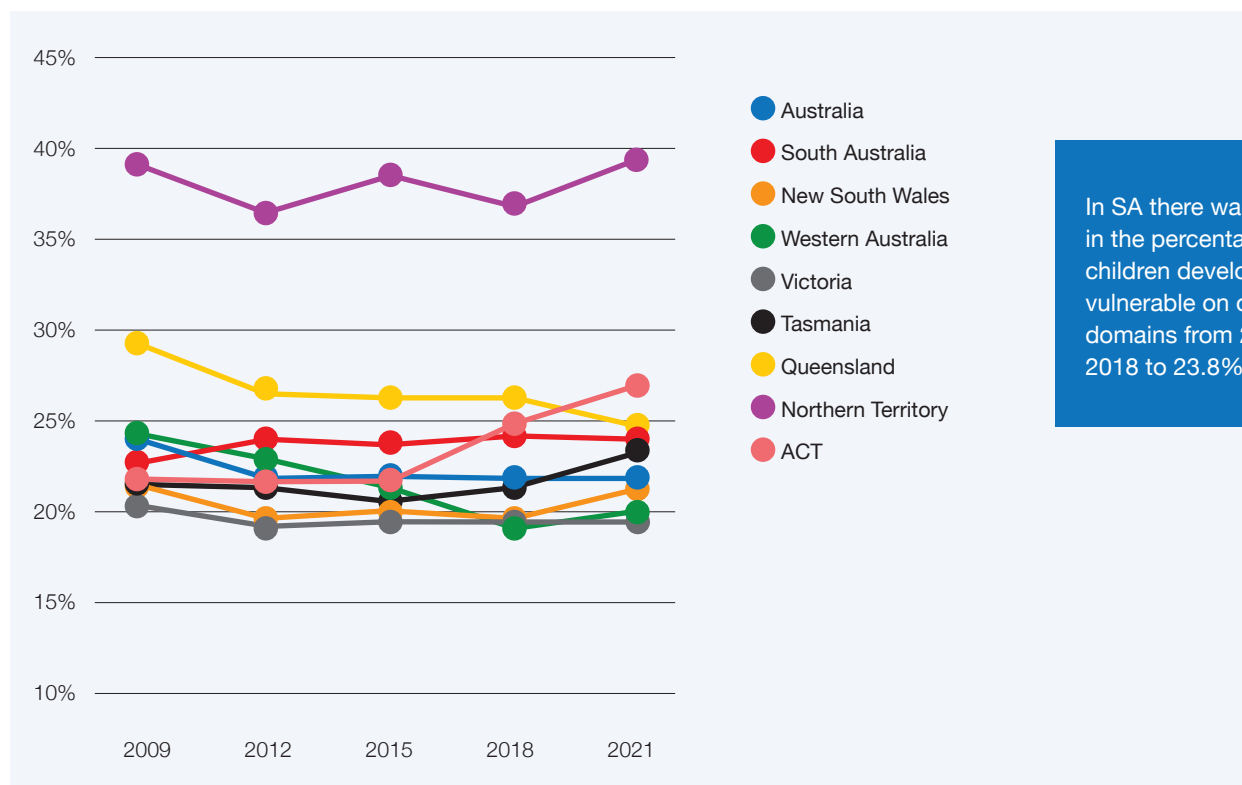
**20,259**  
Participating children



**95,378**  
Total children in all five collections  
(inc 2009, 2012, 2015, 2018 and 2021)

## SA results compared to other states and territories

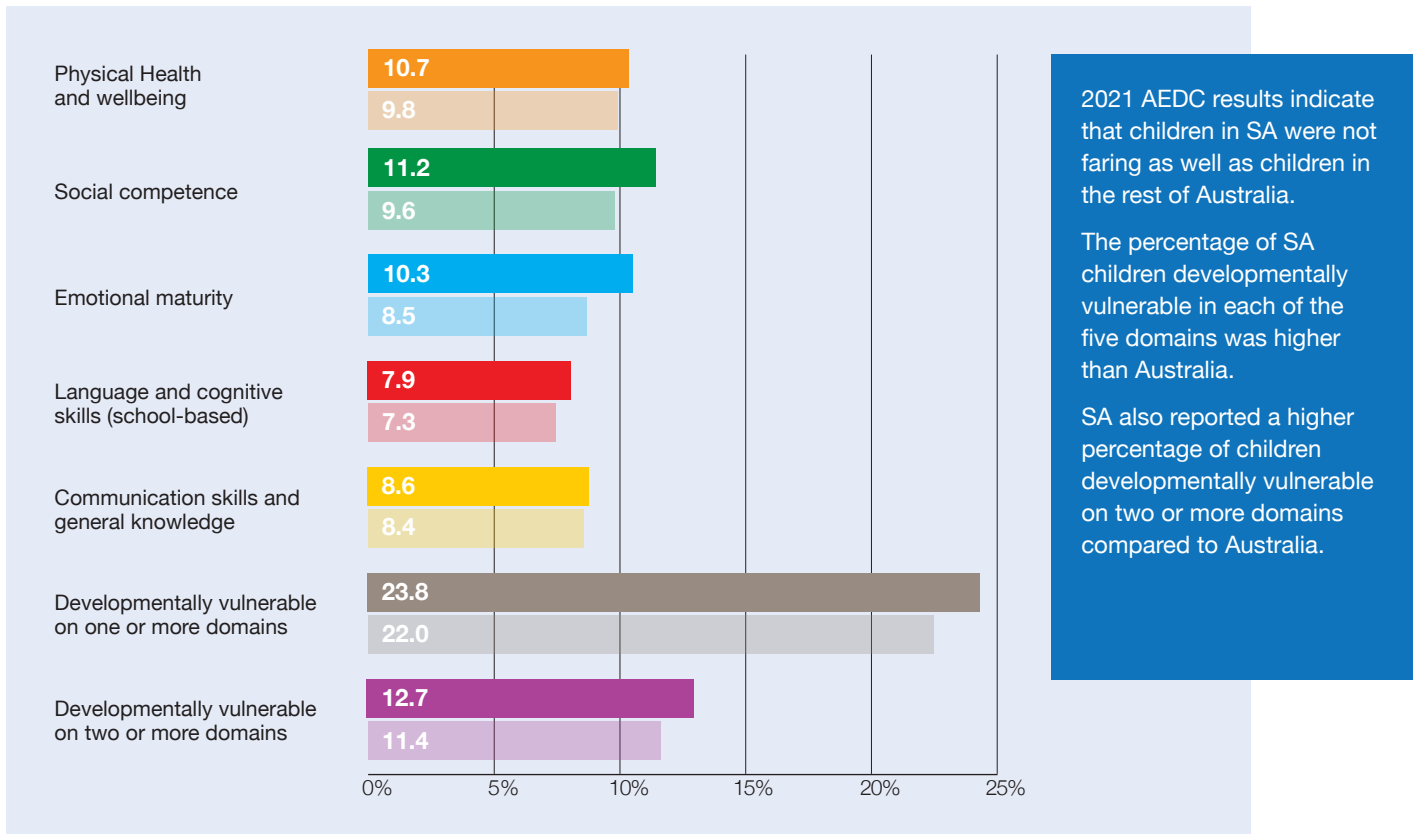
Percentage of children developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains



In SA there was a decrease in the percentage of children developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains from 23.9% in 2018 to 23.8% in 2021.

## SA results compared to National results

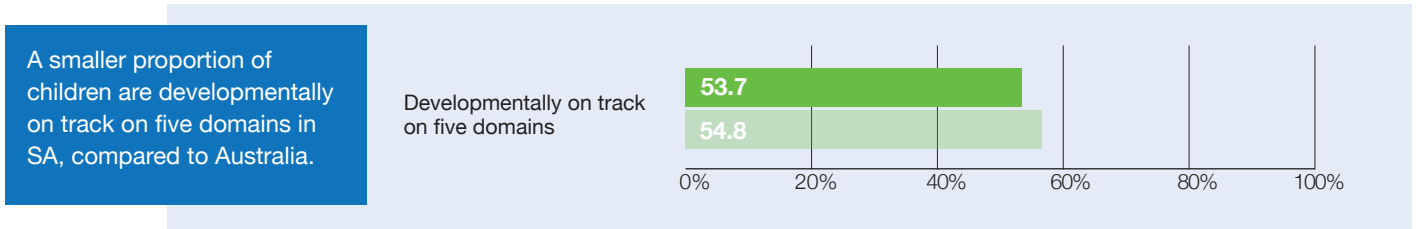
Percentage of children developmentally vulnerable on the AEDC domains and two summary indicators



2021 AEDC results indicate that children in SA were not faring as well as children in the rest of Australia.

The percentage of SA children developmentally vulnerable in each of the five domains was higher than Australia.

SA also reported a higher percentage of children developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains compared to Australia.

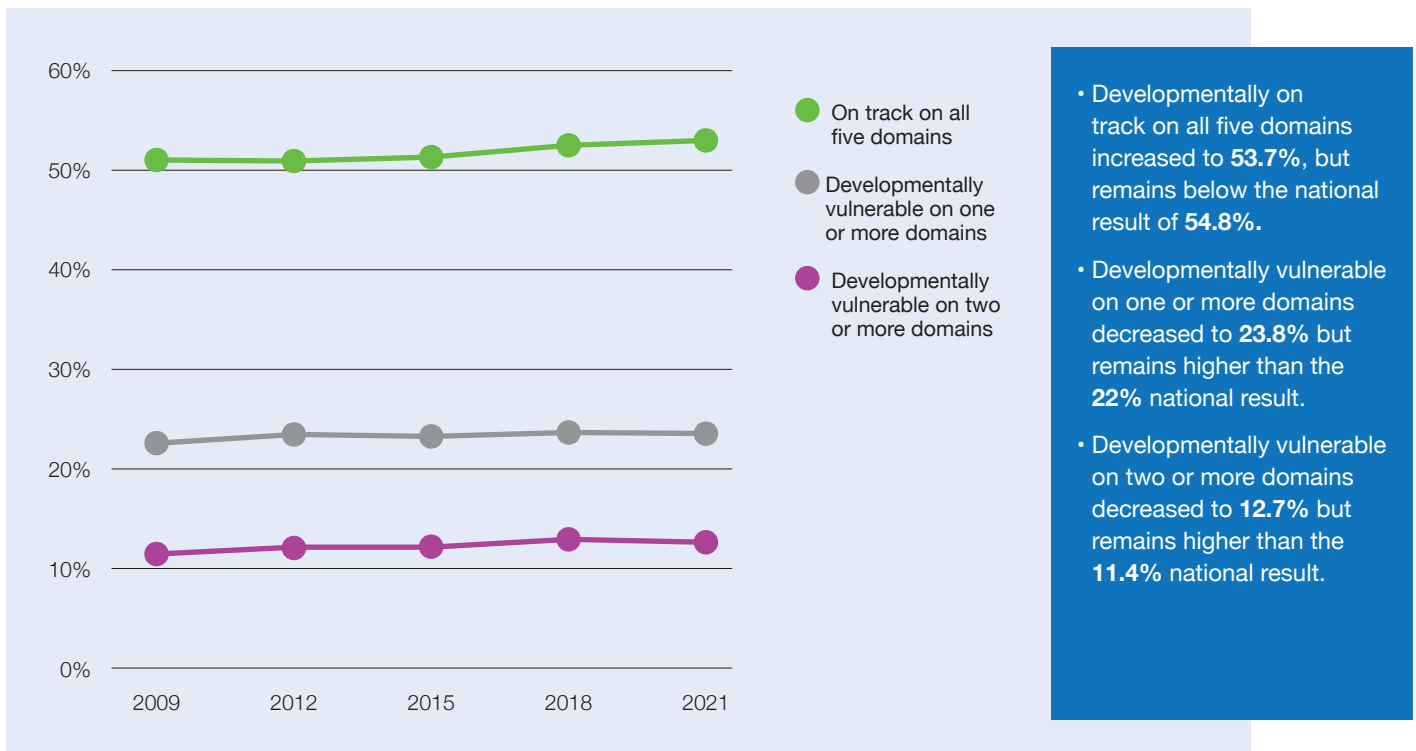


A smaller proportion of children are developmentally on track on five domains in SA, compared to Australia.

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

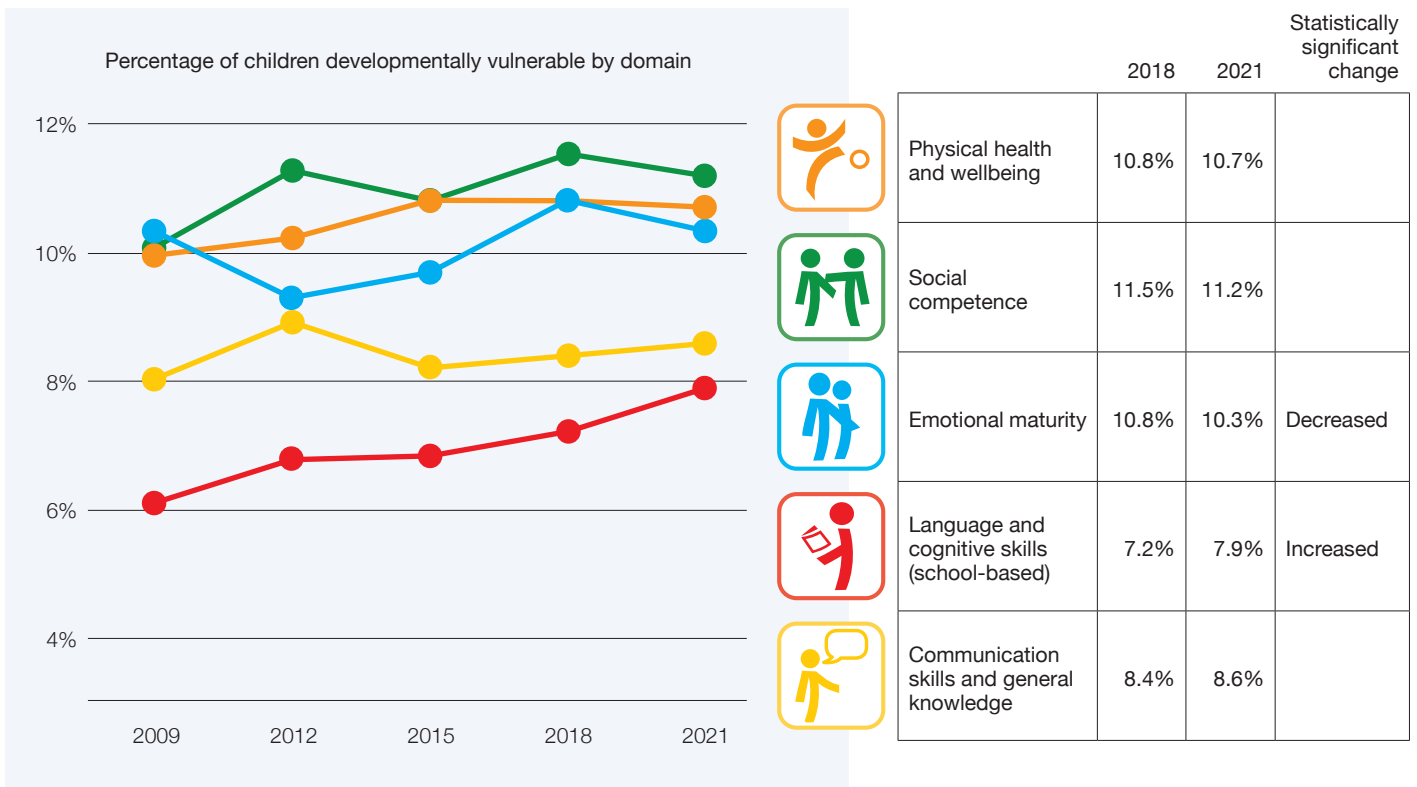
## Summary indicators

Percentage of children



- Developmentally on track on all five domains increased to **53.7%**, but remains below the national result of **54.8%**.
- Developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains decreased to **23.8%** but remains higher than the **22%** national result.
- Developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains decreased to **12.7%** but remains higher than the **11.4%** national result.

## Domain trends

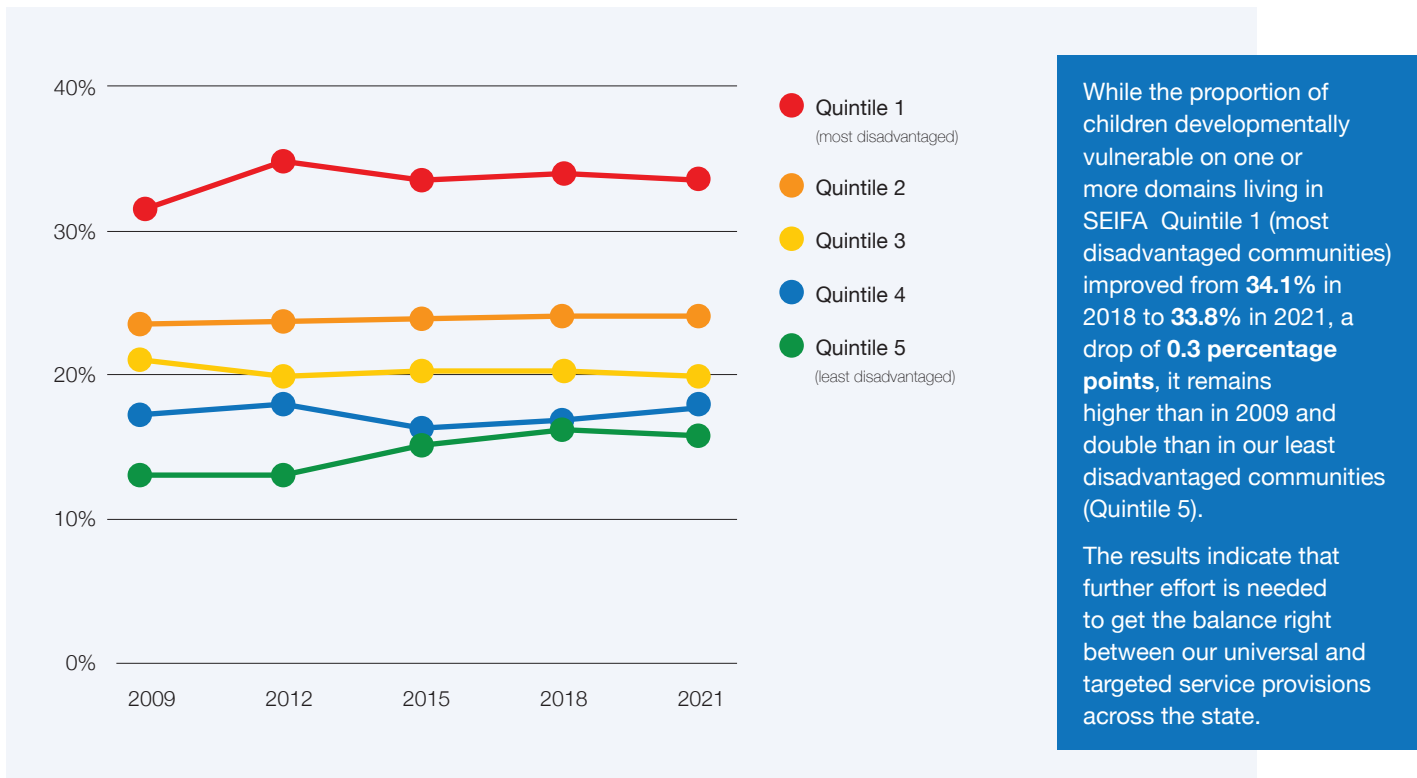


## Looking at our communities

There are developmentally vulnerable children in all SA communities. For change to happen, community stakeholders and governments need to build an approach to improving results.

### Socio-economic status

Percentage of children developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains

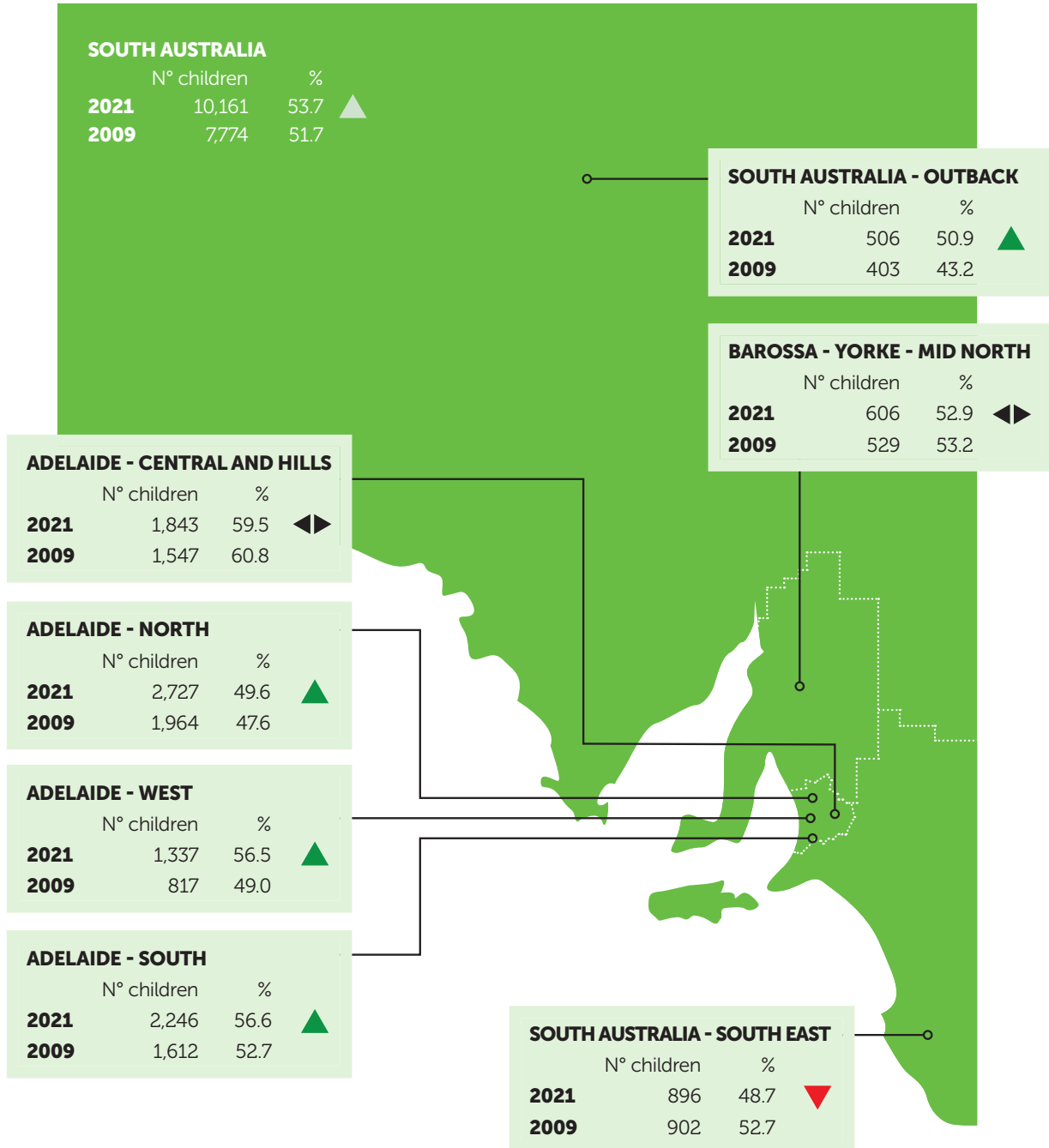


The Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) was developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics to rank geographical areas in Australia according to their relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage

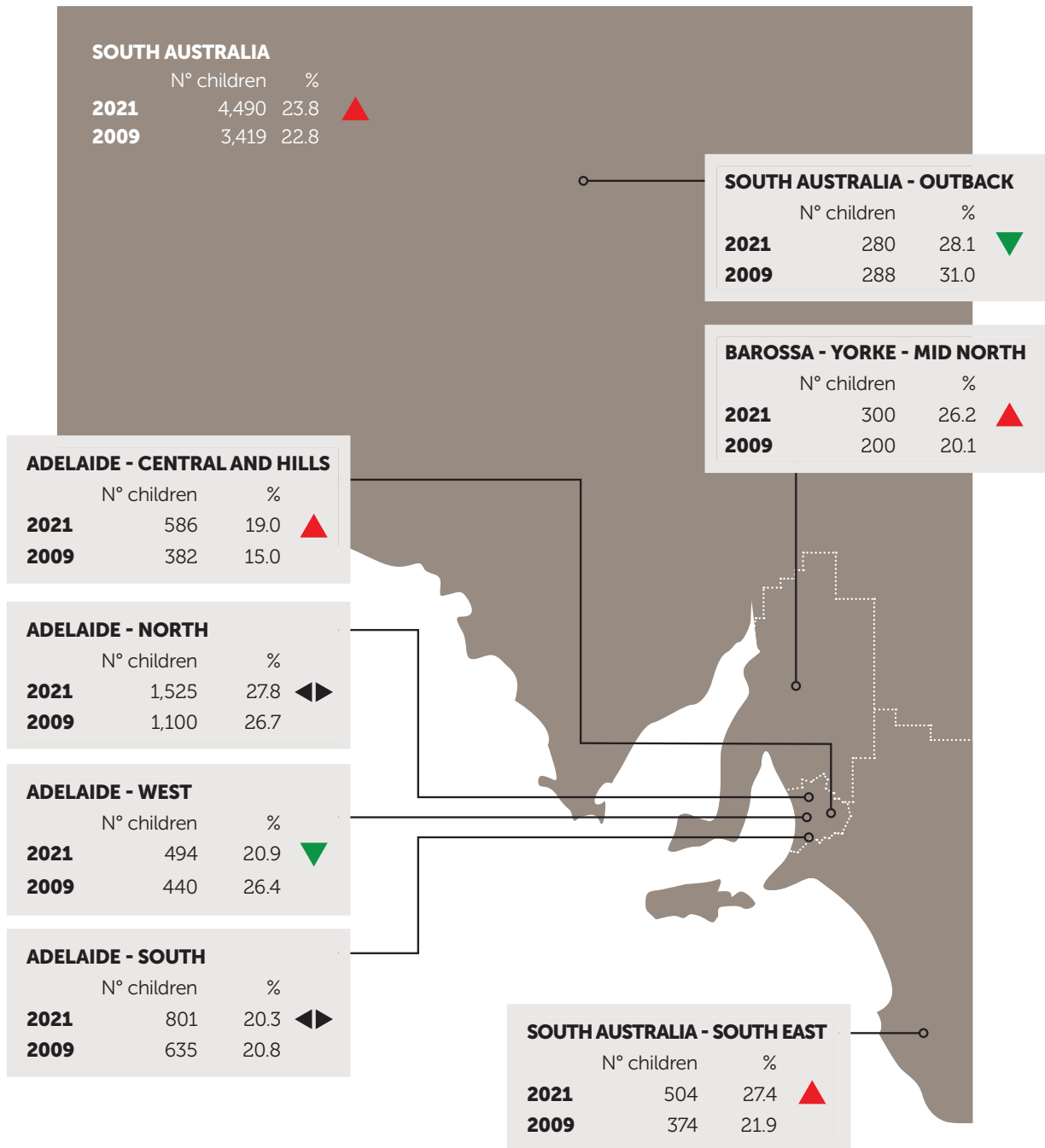
## Sub-state regions (SA4)

Every child has the right to be developing on track as they start school regardless of where they live. Further key findings about communities are available in the AEDC 2021 South Australian Snapshot – Communities.

Developmentally on track on all five domains



- ▲ Statistically significant increase in the percentage of children OT5 from 2009 to 2021
- ▼ Statistically significant decrease in the percentage of children OT5 from 2009 to 2021
- ◄► No statistically significant change in the percentage of children OT5 from 2009 to 2021



▲ Statistically significant increase in the percentage of children DV1 from 2009 to 2021

▼ Statistically significant decrease in the percentage of children DV1 from 2009 to 2021

◄► No statistically significant change in the percentage of children DV1 from 2009 to 2021

# The future for SA children

While improvements have been made over time, there is more work to do. Nearly one in four children are developmentally vulnerable when starting school. All communities need to increase the proportion of South Australian children developmentally on track as they start school.

Overall, the proportion of children developmentally vulnerable in each domain remains higher in 2021 than it was in 2009, except in the emotional maturity domain.

The 2021 AEDC data is giving us an early insight into how the pandemic is impacting children's development. These children started school amidst a global pandemic. For some, their communities have also experienced floods, fires and droughts in their first five years of life.

Without support to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic on families, effects on children's social and emotional development may become more evident when the AEDC is next collected for children starting school in 2024. Collectively we can make a difference at the local, community and state level and give our children the best start in life.

For more information about other South Australian snapshots visit the [SA AEDC resources page](#) on the Department for Education website.

To find out more information visit the [AEDC national website](#), the [Department for Education website](#), download the [2021 AEDC National Report](#) or send an email to [Education.AEDCTeam@sa.gov.au](mailto:Education.AEDCTeam@sa.gov.au).

**While most of South Australian children are developmentally on track, a significant proportion are not. Together we can make a difference so that all South Australian children have the best start in life.**