



LSIC Housing Research Report Factsheet

The changing nature of Indigenous children’s housing by remoteness

Footprints in Time - The Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children (LSIC)

From 2008, the LSIC has been following a cohort of Indigenous children, interviewing their families each year as they grow up. The initial sample comprised of 1,671 children from two age groups: from 6 months to 2 years and 3½ years to 5 years.

This factsheet looks at differences in housing experiences of Indigenous children living in urban, regional and remote Australia. Unless otherwise stated, figures reported are based on data from Waves 1 (2008) to 13 (2020) of the LSIC.

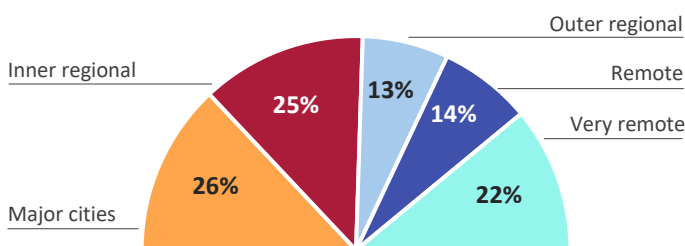
Key Points

- Compared to Indigenous children living in urban areas, Indigenous children in remote Australia are more likely to live in state government or community rental housing, with higher occupancy levels, and dwellings in need of repairs.
- Standard measures of housing quality would suggest Indigenous children living in more remote areas experience inferior housing. This appears to be associated with lower educational achievement, but has little association with Indigenous children’s health and social and emotional wellbeing.
- The researchers argue this may be because housing in more remote areas provides greater connection to family, culture and country – factors which contribute to Indigenous children growing up strong.

Where the study children lived in Wave 1 (2008)

The address where each child lived was classified by the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) into one of five categories: Major Cities, Inner Regional, Outer Regional, Remote, or Very Remote Australia. The sample is not a statistically representative random sample, but contains good coverage of each of those areas.

Figure 1: Children’s address by remoteness, Wave 1 (2008)



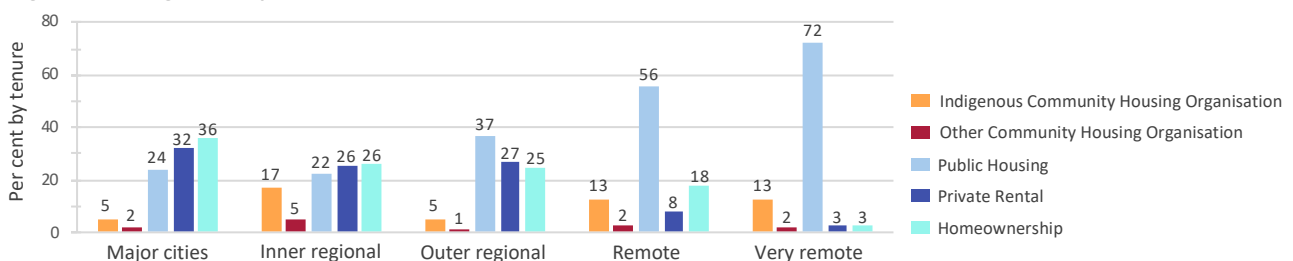
Of the initial 1,671 children in the first wave:

- 26 per cent were living in Major cities
- 25 per cent in Inner Regional areas
- 13 per cent in Outer Regional Australia
- 14 per cent in Remote Australia
- 22 per cent in Very Remote Australia
- Around 95 per cent of the study children were living with at least one parent, including 42 per cent living in sole-parent families.

Housing tenure by remoteness in Wave 8 (2015)

- Homeownership is rare for Indigenous families living in Remote Australia
- Public and community housing is the dominant form of remote housing tenancy

Figure 2: Housing tenure by remoteness, Wave 8 (2015)



In all areas, close to 90 per cent of the study children lived in what were described as ‘separate houses’, as opposed to townhouses, flats or apartments. However, there is significant variation in the tenure of their home (Figure 2).

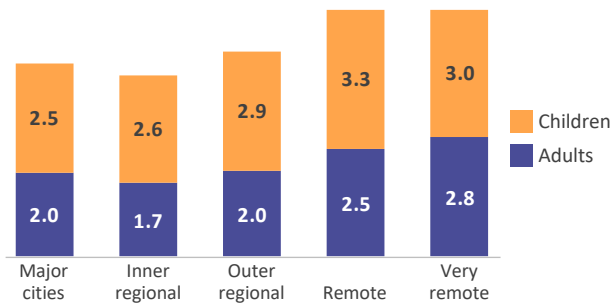
Just over one-third (36 per cent) of the families in major cities were in homeownership, and this rate declined steadily with remoteness. The proportion living in a home rented on the private market is also much lower in remote areas. In contrast, the proportion living in public or community rental housing increases with remoteness.

In Very Remote Australia 72 per cent of the families lived in state government rental housing (public housing), 15 per cent rented from a community housing organisation (primarily an Indigenous-run organisation) and just 2.5 per cent were in homeownership or a privately rented home.

The changing nature of Indigenous children's housing by remoteness

Dwelling occupancy levels increase with remoteness

Figure 3: Average number of occupants per dwelling, Wave 1 (2008)



Three-quarters of the study children lived in households with other children, primarily their own siblings. The number of occupants in the homes, including the study child, ranged from 2 to as many as 22 in Wave 1.

- On average, there were 5 occupants per household; an average 2.8 children and 2.2 adults. The most common number of occupants was 4.
- In Remote and Very Remote Australia there was around one more person per household, on average, than in cities and regional areas.
- On average, households had 1.6 occupants per bedroom. Again, this was higher in Remote Australia (2.0 occupants per bedroom) and Very Remote Australia (1.9 occupants per bedroom). This is partly because houses in Remote and Very Remote areas had fewer bedrooms, but the main factor is simply that more people lived in those houses.

Housing experiences in Remote and Very Remote Australia

Based on parents' reports, the proportion of homes needing major things fixed was much higher in Remote and Very Remote Australia (40 per cent). This is partly because of the higher number of people living in those houses. Families living in Remote Australia (40 per cent) and Very Remote Australia (20 per cent) were the most likely to be sharing facilities with other families. Less than 4 per cent of families in other regions shared facilities with other families.

These measures could imply that the Indigenous children in more remote areas live in inferior housing. This variation in housing circumstances has little association with children's health and social-emotional wellbeing, although it does appear to impact adversely on educational achievement. Moreover, parents' satisfaction with their homes and neighbourhoods is as high, if not higher, in more remote areas, particularly in terms of feeling part of the community (Figure 4). This might be because housing in remote communities provides access to other factors that help Indigenous children to grow up strong: greater connection to kinship networks, culture, and country.

Satisfaction with housing and community higher in remote areas

In Wave 5 (2012), families were asked how satisfied they were with their home and aspects of their neighbourhood using a scale from 0 (least satisfied) to 10 (most satisfied).

Figure 4: Satisfaction with aspects of home and community in which families lived

