



LSIC Housing Research Report Factsheet

Housing and Indigenous children's education outcomes

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 is based on data up to Wave 13 (2020), when the children were aged 13 to 18 years. It uses NAPLAN scores from tests undertaken in grades 3, 5, 7, and 9 for the older cohort, and in grades 3, 5, and 7 for the younger cohort.

Key Points

- It is well known that Indigenous children living in more remote parts of Australia fare worse on NAPLAN tests. The LSIC Housing Research Report looks at some additional effects associated with children's housing circumstances.
- Living in community or public housing, household crowding, and frequently moving house impact negatively on Indigenous children's educational attainment.
- Educational outcomes appear more sensitive to housing than outcomes in other domains, such as children's physical health and social and emotional wellbeing.
- NAPLAN tests do not capture other aspects of knowledge, such as cultural knowledge and traditional language fluency. The results suggest that living in more remote housing has offsetting benefits in those other domains for Indigenous children.

Children's educational achievement

This factsheet looks at how the study children's educational achievement varied by key housing characteristics, based on the children's test scores for the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). For consenting participants, the children's NAPLAN scores were matched to the LSIC survey data.

The NAPLAN scores are scaled so that one student's results can be compared to other students at the same grade, and used to measure a student's progress over time.

Student achievement is known to be higher for children living in urban Australia. Figures 1 and 2 show there is also a consistent pattern in achievement by the tenure type of the household in which the children lived. For each subject, children living in homeownership had the highest average achievement, followed by private renters, while children of renters in community housing and public housing record the lowest average scores.

The address where each child lived was classified into one of five categories: Major Cities, Inner Regional, Outer Regional, Remote, or Very Remote Australia. The decline in NAPLAN scores with remoteness holds for children living in each tenure type. While we have only reported results for numeracy and reading, patterns reported in this factsheet are similar for the other NAPLAN test scores of writing, spelling, and grammar.

Figure 1: Average NAPLAN numeracy scores by remoteness and housing tenure, pooled scores for grades 3, 5, 7, and 9.

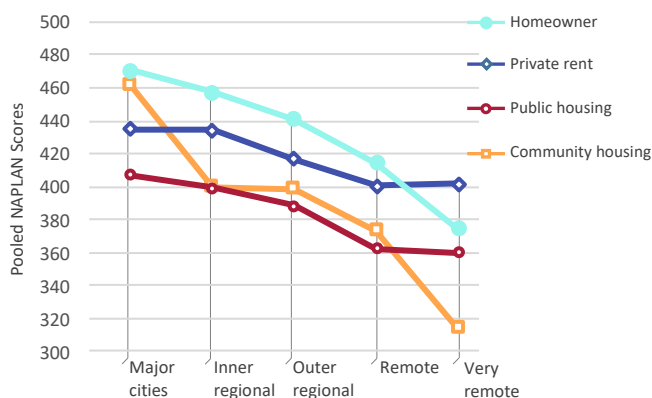
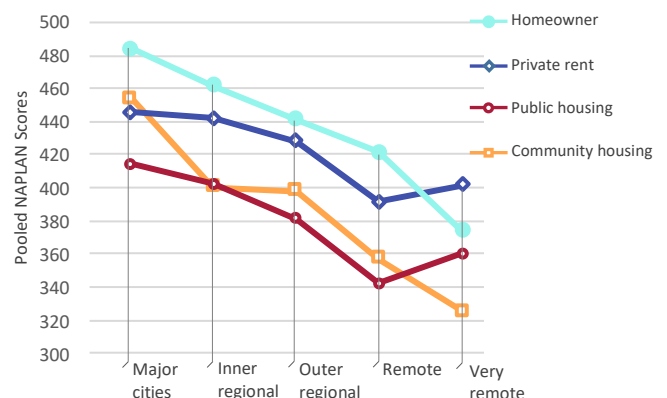


Figure 2: Average NAPLAN reading scores by remoteness and housing tenure, pooled scores for grades 3, 5, 7, and 9.



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We can also look at how students' scores progress from Year 3 to Year 9. Generally, the differences by remoteness and by tenure persist as the children age. As examples, Figure 3 shows progressions in average numeracy scores by remoteness.

Figure 3: Mean numeracy scores by remoteness, years 3 to 9

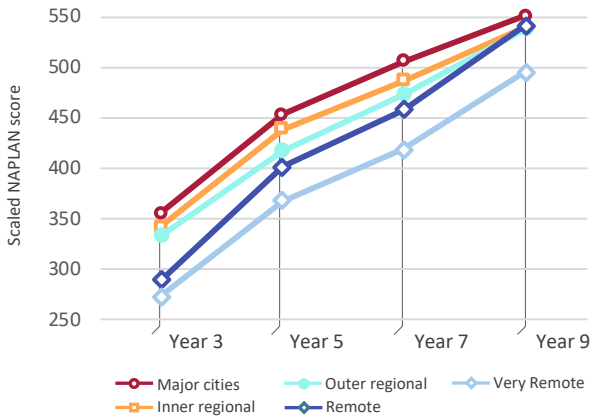
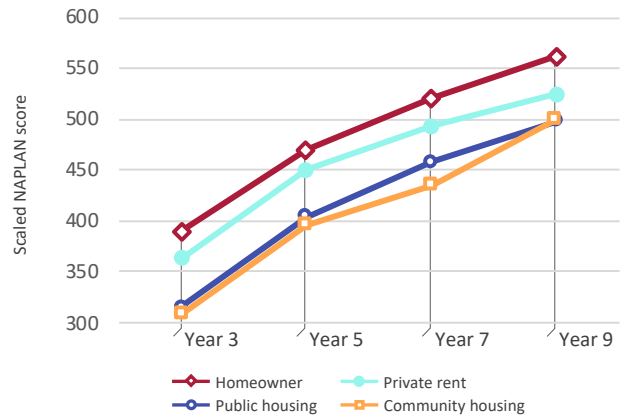


Figure 4 shows progressions in reading scores by tenure. Some relative improvement is evident in Remote students' numeracy scores, and this also applies for grammar and reading. Relative achievement by housing tenure is quite consistent across the subjects from Year 3 to Year 9.

Figure 4: Mean reading scores by tenure, years 3 to 9



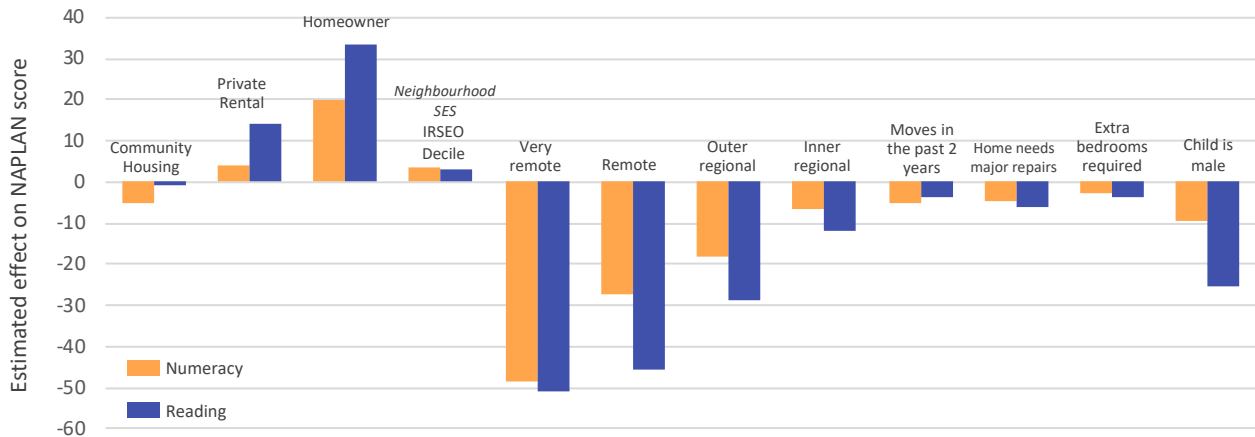
How housing affects education outcomes

It's difficult to disentangle all the things that affect children's test scores. For example, Indigenous children living in Remote Australia are more likely to live in public or community housing, and with more people in their house. So are lower NAPLAN scores for those children due to remoteness, or differences in their housing circumstances, or both?

The research sought to estimate the effect of individual housing factors on NAPLAN scores after controlling for other background characteristics of the child and family. Full details can be found in the LSIC Housing Research Report, while Figure 5 presents some key results relating to housing effects.

- Compared to children living in public housing, children living in community housing have lower scores, and those in private rental and homeownership have higher scores.
- Compared to children living in major cities, those living in more remote areas have lower scores – by around 50 points for those in very Remote Australia.
- Living in housing that is more crowded, needing repairs, in less well-off neighbourhoods and frequently changing address are associated with lower test scores.
- By way of comparison, results relating to the child's gender are included in the figure: on average boys achieve lower scores for all subjects, but the effect is not as big for numeracy (about 10 points lower).

Figure 5: Summary of associations between housing characteristics and children's NAPLAN achievement



Notes: The decile (1 to 10) of the family's neighbourhood on a measure of socio-economic outcomes of the Indigenous population in that area, where 10 is associated with the highest outcomes. Moves in past two years can range from 0 to 2; Extra bedrooms required allows for couples and 2 children to share a bedroom, and 1 bedroom each for other adults. Comparison categories are Public Housing for tenure and Major Cities for remoteness.

This factsheet is based on the LSIC Housing Research Report by A. M. Dockery and M. Moskos. This factsheet uses unit record data from Footprints in Time: the Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children (LSIC), conducted by the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS). The views are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the Australian Government, DSS or the Indigenous people and their communities involved in the LSIC. The full report can be accessed at <https://bit.ly/footprintsintimeLSIChousing>.