



Introduction to the Interactive Dashboards: Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study (POCLS)

Overview of the POCLS

The POCLS is funded and managed by the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ). The POCLS is the first large-scale prospective longitudinal study of children and young people in out-of-home care (OOHC) in Australia. The overall aim of the 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:

1. Describe the characteristics, child protection history, development and wellbeing of children and young people at the time they enter OOHC for the first time
2. Describe the services, interventions and pathways for children and young people in OOHC, post restoration, post adoption and on leaving care at 18 years
3. Describe children's and young people's experiences while growing up in OOHC, post restoration, post adoption and on leaving care at 18 years
4. 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
5. 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 collects information on the safety, permanency and wellbeing of children and their caregivers. The child developmental domains of interest are physical health, socio-emotional wellbeing and cognitive/learning ability.

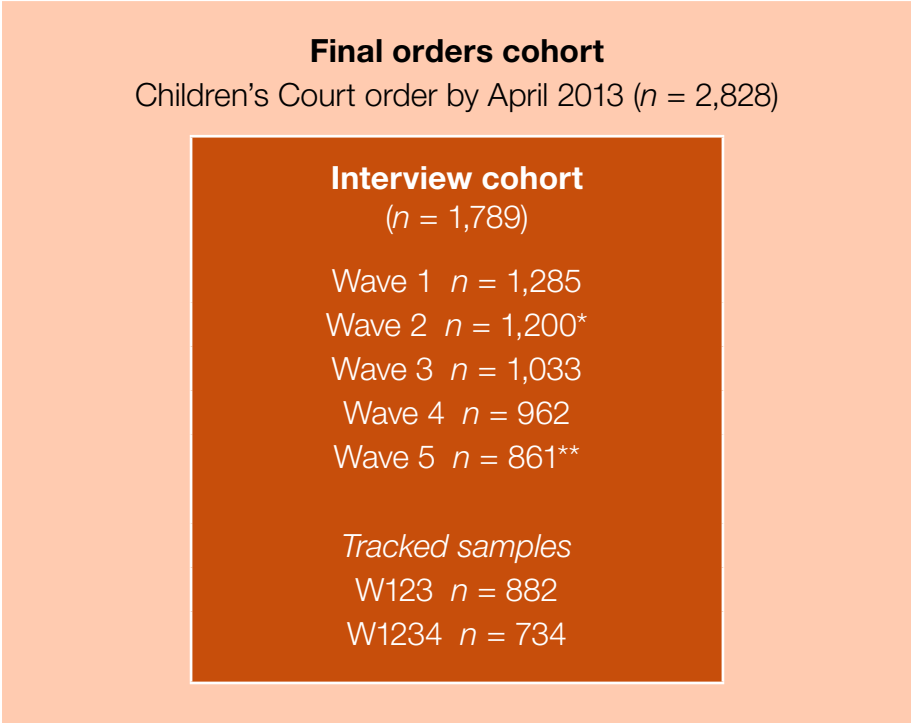
First-hand accounts from children, caregivers, caseworkers and teachers are matched to administrative data on child protection, OOHC, health, justice and education.

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). The POCLS collects administrative data about this cohort.

A subset of these children and young people who went on to receive final Children’s Court care and protection orders by April 2013 (n=2,828) were eligible to participate in the interview component of the study.

The numbers who participated in interviews at each Wave can be found in Figure 1. The interview cohort (n=1,789) refers to those who agreed to be invited to an interview at Wave 1; and are the group who are invited for an interview at each Wave. Detailed information from children, carers, teachers and caseworkers are collected for this cohort.

Figure 1: POCLS Interview cohort



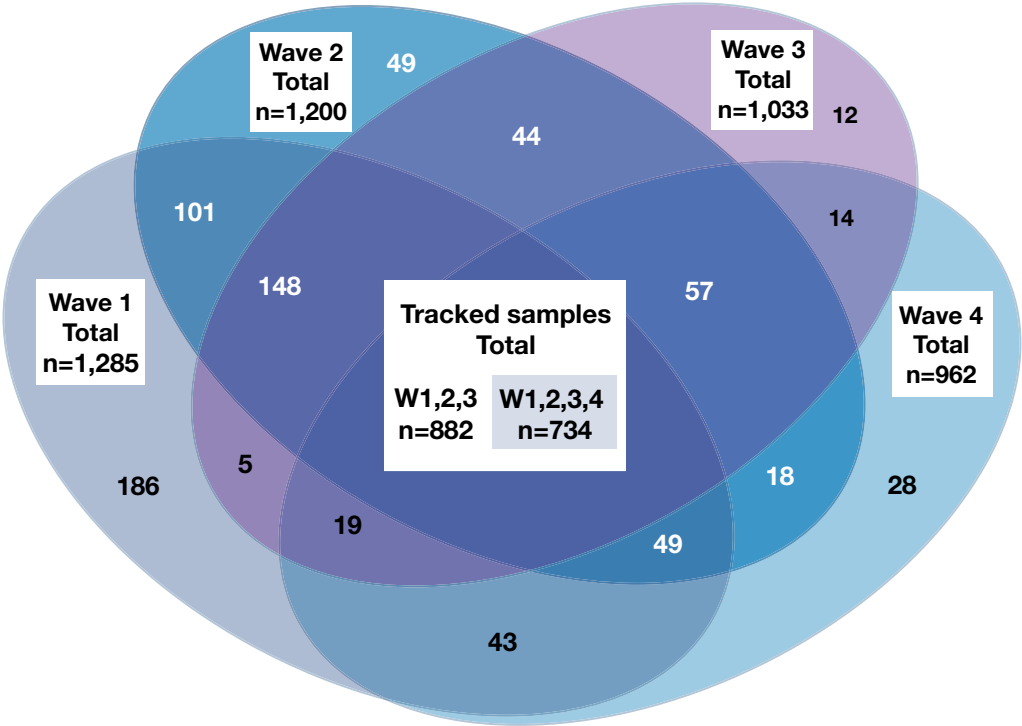
*Children restored before a Wave 1 interview could be conducted (while they were placed with a carer) joined the data collection in Wave 2. An interview was then conducted with a parent they lived with.

**Preliminary

Figure 2 shows a Venn diagram with the numbers participating in every possible Wave 1 to 4 combination. For example, 734 children participated in Waves 1 to 4 of the Study with 186 completing Wave 1 only, 49 completing Wave 2 only, 12 completing Wave 3 only and 28 completing Wave 4 only.

There were 101 children who completed Waves 1 and 2 only, 44 who completed Waves 2 and 3 only and 14 who completed Waves 3 and 4 only. There were also various combinations of children who were in three Waves of the Study, for example 148 children who completed Waves 1, 2 and 3 only and 57 who completed Waves 2, 3 and 4 only.

Figure 2: POCLS Participation Waves 1-4

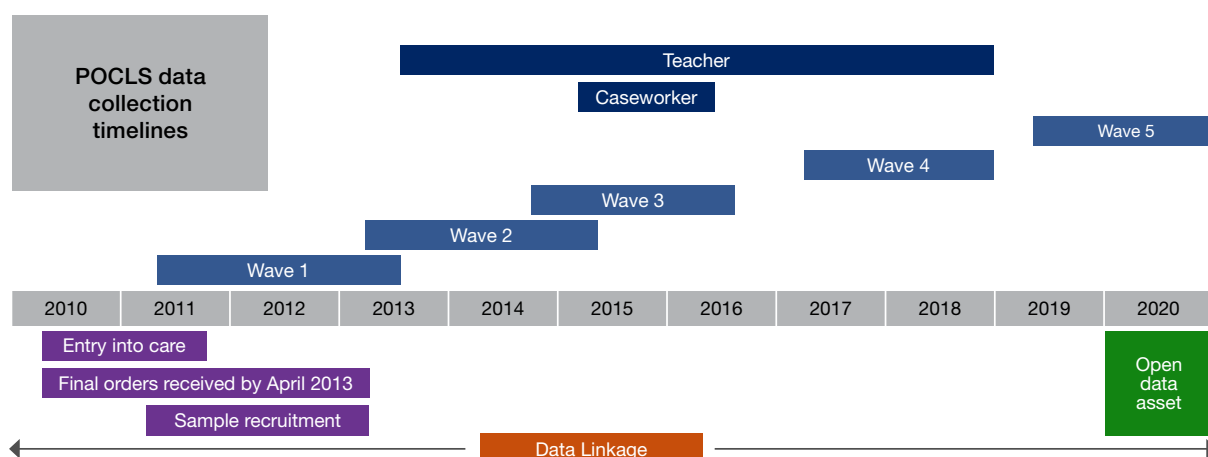


The breadth of information in the data asset is extensive and includes:

- Detailed information about the **child** including their physical health, socio-emotional well-being, cognitive development, how settled they are, temperament, activities and friends, education and work, services and supports, casework, and birth family contact.
- Detailed information about the **caregiver** including their relationship with the child, parenting style, carer experience and training, informal support network, casework support, satisfaction with being a carer, health/mental health, relationship with partner, finances and housing, and neighbourhood.
- Information from the **caseworker** about their current involvement, how well they know the child, placement and child needs, child's birth family, birth family contact and case planning.
- Information from the **child's teacher** (childcare, preschool or school) about the child's socio-emotional wellbeing, school attendance, education plans, progress with schoolwork, extra activities and friends.
- Details of **child protection** reports and **OOHC placements**
- **Health** data: Perinatal information about mothers and babies; Information about presentations to the emergency departments of public hospitals in NSW; Information about all admitted patient services provided by NSW public hospitals; Information from the NSW Mental Health Ambulatory Data Collection which is dedicated to the assessment, treatment, rehabilitation or care of non-admitted patients. It may include mental health day programs, psychiatric outpatients and outreach services (e.g. home visits); Death and cause of death information

- **Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS)** and **Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS)**
- Information on contact with the **juvenile justice** system including offending and custodial sentences (BOCSAR)
- Indicators of the children's development in their first year of full-time school using the **Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)**
- Details of **educational performance** using the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)

Design and collection timeframes



How do you use the POCLS dashboards?

The interactive dashboards are a resource for stakeholders to get a greater understanding of the experiences and trajectories of a cohort of children and young people who experience OOHC. The dashboards provide high level information and are designed to allow users to explore key POCLS data collected through the study at a high level.

The POCLS sample is not representative of all children and young people in OOHC. It is therefore important to consider the population that the sample was drawn from when considering the generalisability of the findings.

The dashboards do not show whether differences are statistically significant. To confirm trends observed in the dashboards please see POCLS webpage for published reports or contact the POCLS team.

Demographic data for all the children and young persons in the final orders cohort is presented in the first dashboard. There may be slight variations from the Wave 1 Baseline Statistical Report and other reports due to a refresh in the administrative data.

Responses from children and carers in each wave of data collection are available through the dashboards to get the most detailed view possible of the data currently available.

The dashboards also allow users to view the results of children who have participated in all of the first three waves (W1,2,3) and the first four waves (W1,2,3,4) to allow changes over time to be observed, though comparisons between waves should be made with caution. While children may have participated in every wave, they may not have completed every measure at each wave. This means results from a measure at one wave may include children that did not complete the measure at another wave.

Dashboard Functionality

The dashboards present the data in two ways:

1. **latest wave only:** displays the latest wave of data collected with the option to drill down by child dimensions (the dashboard opens on this option)
2. **customised:** displays cross-sectional data by wave, and longitudinal data/tracked samples, with the option to drill down by child dimensions (this can be accessed via the “Customise Dashboard” button at the bottom of each dashboard)

Data can be split out by the following child dimensions, which can be measured differently depending on the cohorts:

- **Cohort is the group of children whose data is displayed:**
 - Received final orders (only available in dashboard 1)
 - Responses from children and carers in each wave of data collection
 - Tracked samples (completed waves 1, 2 and 3; completed waves 1, 2, 3 and 4).

Breakdown dimension	Received final orders	Tracked samples	Responses in each wave
District	At first entry to care	At Wave 1 interview	At wave interview
Placement type	At first entry to care	At Wave 1 interview	At wave interview
Age group	At first entry to care	At first entry to care	At wave interview
Gender	From latest administrative data refresh	From latest administrative data refresh	From latest administrative data refresh

Masking and Confidentiality

To protect the identity of the children and families who have taken part in the study, any combination of child characteristics that produces a weighted total of less than five will lead to the data not being displayed. This means that some charts will not be available for certain combinations of filters.

In instances where masking would be enforced, age group categories were collapsed to only include groups of 9-35 months and 3-17 years. Masking was then enforced if there were still groups with a total of less than 5.

Where can I find further information?

The documents accompanying the dashboards present some key statistics about the carers and the children in the Study. If you are unable to use the interactive dashboards and need more granular information or other statistics, please contact the POCLS team on Pathways@facs.nsw.gov.au

For an overview of the POCLS please see the [Study objectives and strategic research agenda \(Technical Report No.1, 2020\)](#).

The POCLS acknowledges and honours Aboriginal people as our First Peoples of NSW and is committed to working with the DCJ's Ngaramanala (Aboriginal Knowledge Program) 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.

For more information on POCLS including our publications please visit our [web page](#).

