

## The geography of wellbeing across four longitudinal surveys

**David Dennis, Fiona Skelton**

National Centre for Longitudinal Data, Department of Social Services, ACT

The Department of Social Services (DSS) aims to improve the lifetime wellbeing of people and families in Australia. The Department has invested in a number of longitudinal studies that provide policy relevant data and insights into wellbeing at varying levels of geography across the life course. The new National Centre for Longitudinal Data at DSS includes four longitudinal datasets about Indigenous and non-Indigenous children, households and humanitarian migrants.

Preliminary results will be flagged from *Growing Up in Australia*: the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC) and *Footprints in Time* the Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children (LSIC); each study having released five waves of unit record data about, collectively, more than 11700 children and their families. More than 12 waves of data about more than 7,500 households are available to researchers from The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) study and Building a New Life in Australia: the longitudinal study of humanitarian migrants (BNLA) will soon release data about more than 2,500 respondents.

This presentation will highlight relationships to morbidity uncovered in cursory analyses that deserve further exploration with the data sets. For example, in HILDA and LSIC psychological distress reduces with remoteness and mental health tends to increase but there are no differences by geography for LSAC parents or BNLA participants. LSIC children's social and emotional difficulties scores are higher in remote than urban areas. Nearly two thirds of LSIC children eat bush tucker, which is bivariately related to lower BMI z scores in each wave of the data. The consumption of bush tucker is much more common in more remote (90%) areas than in urban (30%).

While social and emotional wellbeing sometimes improves with increased remoteness, the factors contributing to social and emotional wellbeing are often poorer for those in remote areas. Recently arrived humanitarian migrants experience similar rates of financial hardship to that of Indigenous parents and carers. Experiences of racism, discrimination or prejudice can affect health and wellbeing. Humanitarian migrants report these negative experiences more often in regional rather than urban Australia; however the reverse is true for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary carers in LSIC.

Conference participants will also hear how longitudinal data has been used for policy development and how to apply for the data for their own research work.