# Performance and Evaluation Division Snapshot

## Areas of concern for children starting school

In 2014, 63,391 parents of Prep children completed a School Entrant Health Questionnaire (SEHQ). This was 85 per cent of all Prep enrolments (across all sectors); with slightly higher response rates in Government schools (88 per cent).

While the demographic characteristics of children beginning school tend to be stable, there was a slight increase in 2014 of children born outside Australia, and with a language other than English.

## Major parental concerns

In 2014, the most common concerns that parents indicated were for their child‘s development, oral health and speech (one in seven parents had a concern).

One in eleven parents were concerned with their child‘s behaviour. Development, speech and behavioural issues are linked to poorer future educational outcomes1.

## At risk groups

Children are acknowledged as being in a population ‘at risk’ if they have one or more of the following characteristics: a language background other than English; are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin; live in a one-parent family; and/or live in an area of most socio-economic disadvantage. Parental concerns are often higher in ‘at risk’ groups, as shown below.

## Language background other than English

Parents of children with a language background other than English (LBOTE) report higher levels of concern across all areas except for speech.

The largest difference compared with non-LBOTE children is in oral health (where one in five parents of LBOTE children expressed concern); and weight, where one in eight parents perceived their child to be under- or over-weight.

## Aboriginal children

The top four issues of concern are higher for Aboriginal children. One in four parents of Aboriginal children are concerned with their child‘s speech or oral health (compared to one in seven for non-Aboriginal children).

One in five parents of Aboriginal children cited concerns with their child‘s development or behaviour.

Parents of Aboriginal children are five times more likely to express concern about their child‘s vision and weight, and six times more likely to rate their child‘s general health as fair or poor.

## Children who live in one-parent families

Single parents expressed higher rates of concern across all issues listed. Children who live with one parent are more than twice as likely to have behavioural issues (based on parent‘s perception) than children who live with both parents.

One in five sinlge parents cited concerns with their child‘s development, oral health and speech (compared with one in seven couple parents).

**Disadvantage** – in the SEHQ statewide report, results are reported for children living in areas of most socio-economic disadvantage, with comparison against children living in areas of least disadvantage. Another perspective of disadvantage is provided via Health Care Card. Research has shown that children listed on a Health Care Card are almost three times more likely to have poorer wellbeing at Prep2.

## Children listed on a Health Care Card

Children who are listed on a Health Care Card have higher rates of parental concern across the seven areas listed.

One in five parents (whose child is listed on a Health Care Card) expressed concerns about their child‘s development, oral health and speech (compared with one in eight where there is no Health Care Card).

Behavioural issues are three times more likely in children listed on a Health Care Card.

## About the SEHQ

The School Entrant Health Questionnaire (SEHQ) is completed by around 60,000 parents/guardians annually. Although initally designed as a clinical tool to inform nurse practice, the data gained from the SEHQ provides an evidence base for health and education policy as it identifies those children who are at risk of poorer outcomes.

The SEHQ provides vital data on health, safety, development, learning and wellebing of young children and is a major component of the Victorian Child and Adolescent Monitoring System (VCAMS). It also contributes to measuring what matters in the Department of Education and Training Outcomes Framework.

Statewide SEHQ results and results by local government area can be found at: [SEHQ](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/research/pages/reportdatahealth.aspx)

*1 Research by Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research (Mendez and Ryan) using SEHQ (2010) linked to NAPLAN (2013)*

*2 Steele E, Wong E, Karahalio A, Johnson S, Weston K, Kremer P, de Silva A, Davis E, Nolan T, Waters E.  The influence of social disadvantage on children’s emotional and behavioural difficulties at age 4-7 years. 2015. The Journal of Pediatrics, vol. 167, Issue 2*

Note: proportions labelled on charts are rounded to the nearest integer*.*