

# Improving child and family outcomes: Building policy relevant evidence using linked data

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## **Routinely reported data from single agency:**

**System-focused** view of the health or social problems experienced by children and families

How many children and young people received child protection services in the last financial year?

In the **2019-20 financial year**, **112,517 children and young people** were screened by child protection as being at risk of significant harm.

# Linked data from multiple agencies:

**Child and family view** of health and social *problems*, *service contacts* and *outcomes*

Pregnancy | Birth | Early childhood | Primary school age | Adolescence



Perinatal data

Birth registrations

Congenital conditions

Hospital and emergency department data

GP and specialist claims (Medicare) and medicine claims (PBS) data

Developmental outcomes: AEDC (Kindergarten), NAPLAN (Yrs 3, 5, 7, 9)

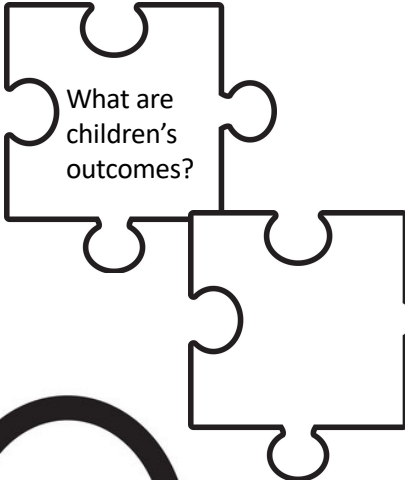
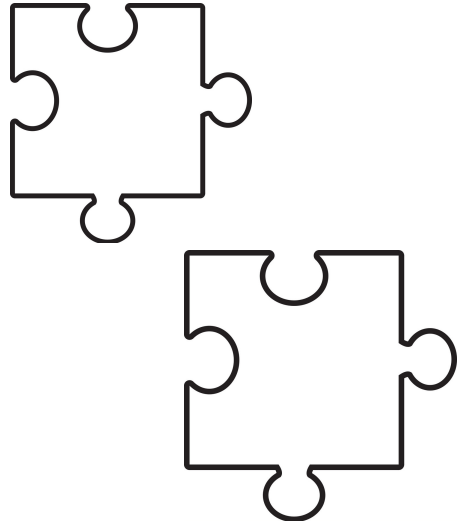
School enrolments

Child protection data

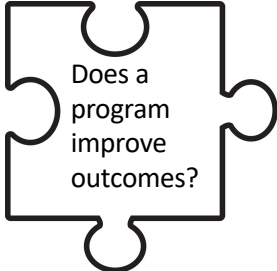
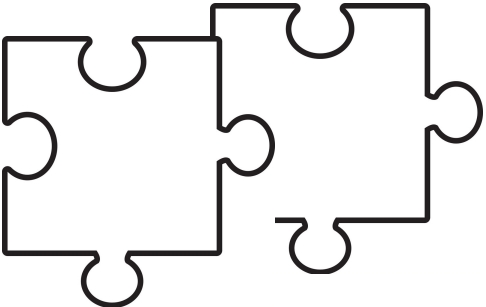
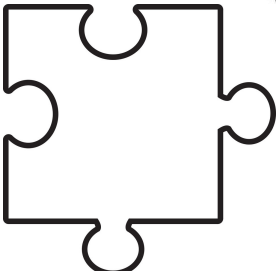
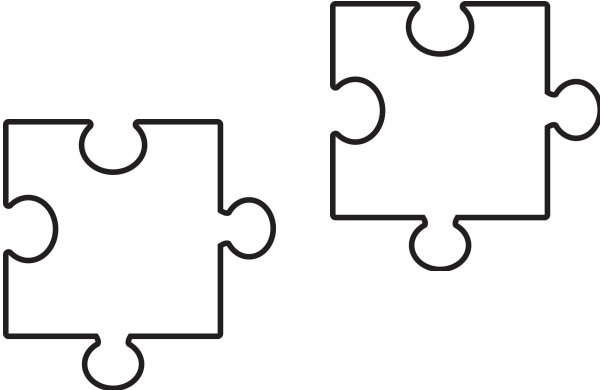
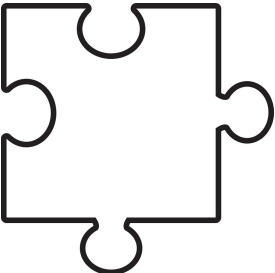
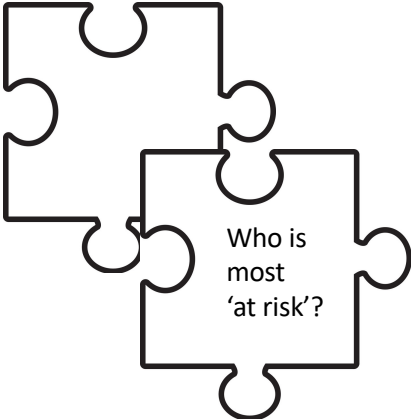
Justice data

Social services data (Centrelink)

Death registrations / cause of death data

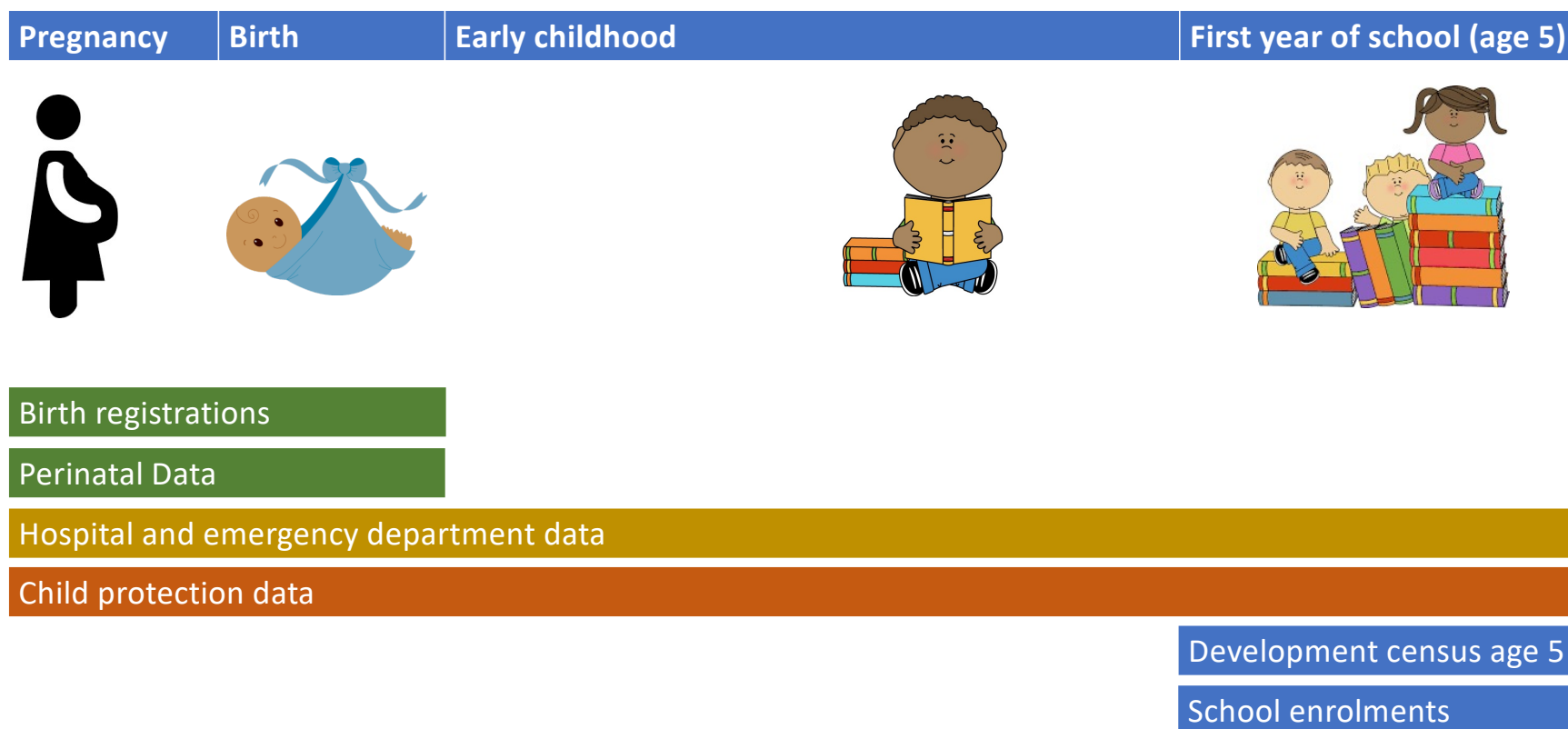


How **'big'** is a health or social problem across the lifetime of a child?



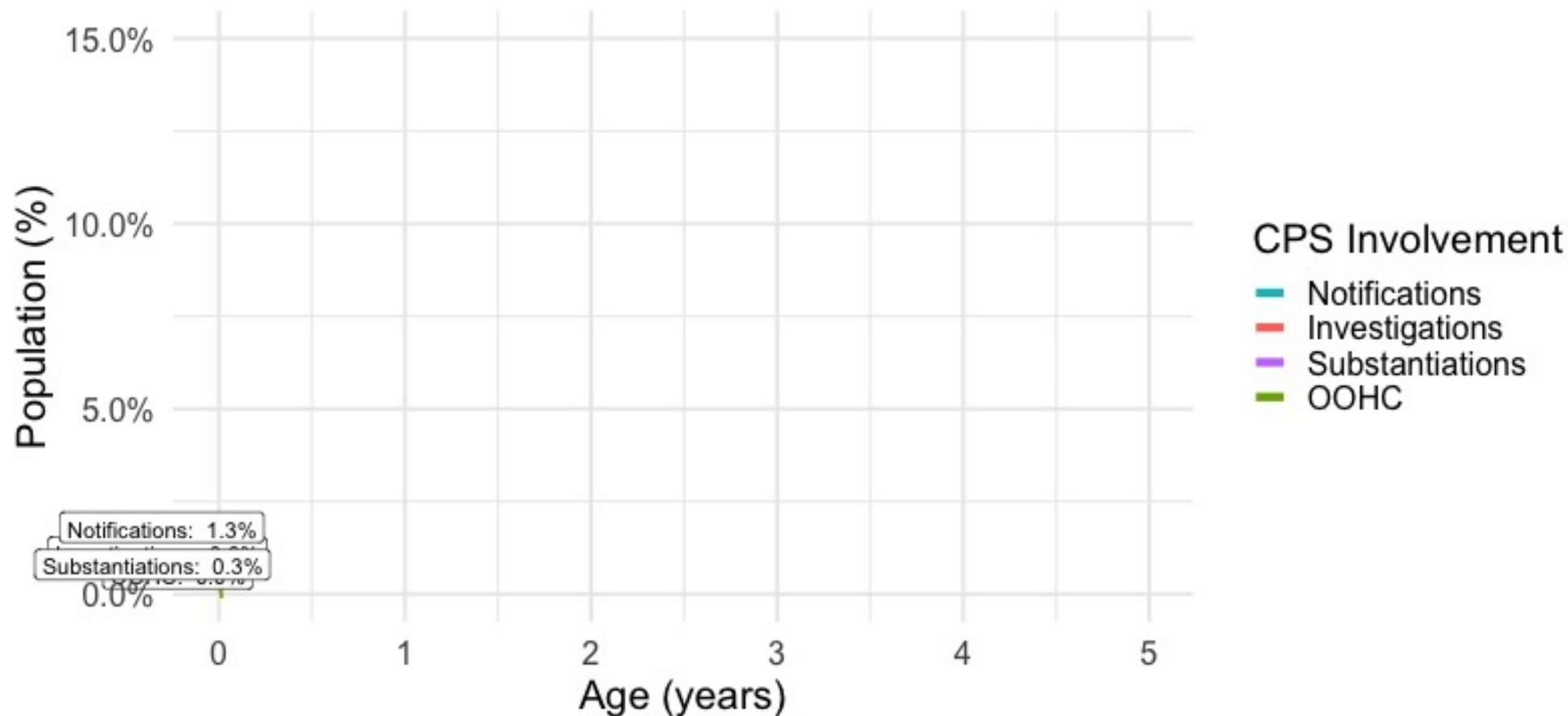
# Child born in NSW and started school in 2009/12

## The Seeding Success study



# How many children are involved with child protection services before their fifth birthday?

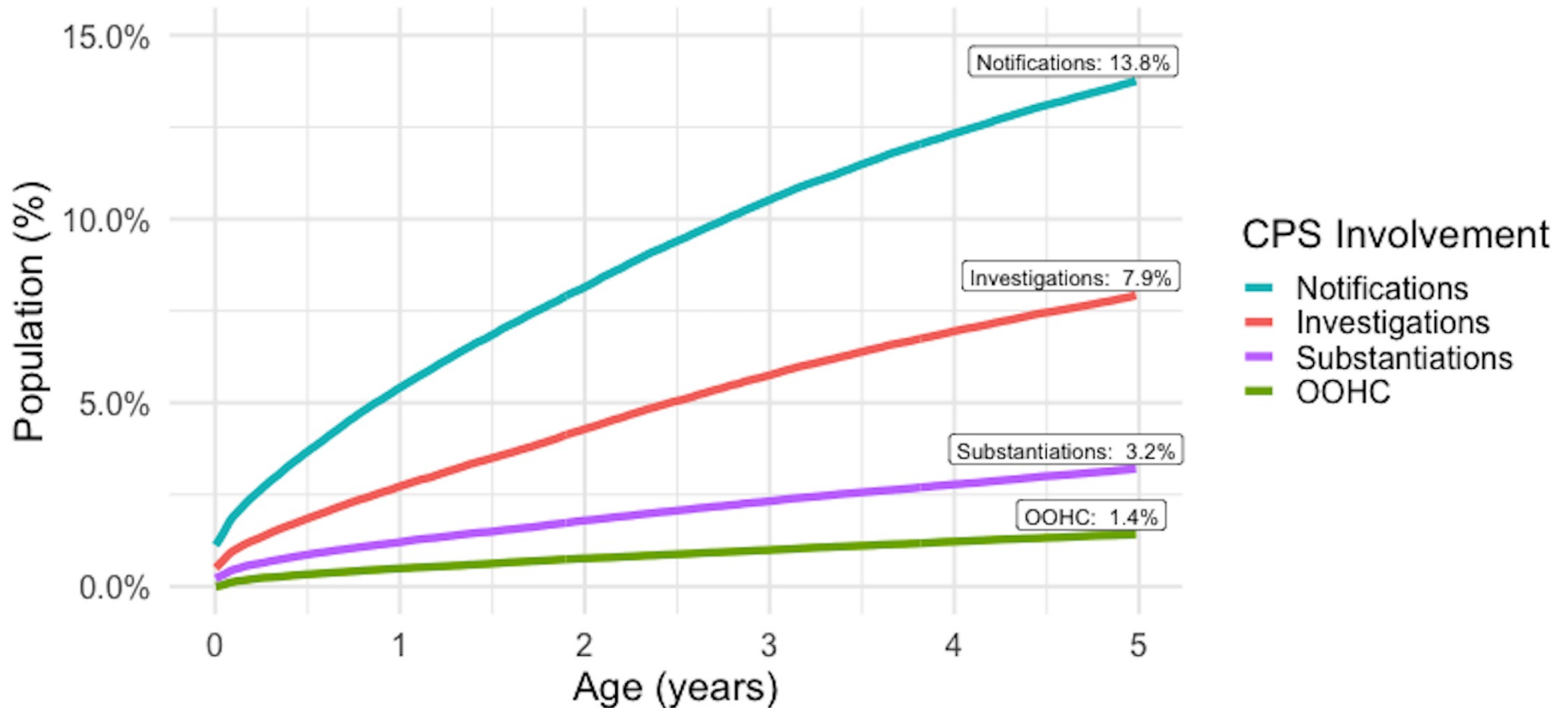
0.0 Years



Data from Falster et al (2020) JAMA Pediatrics  
doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2020.1151

# How many children are involved with child protection services before their fifth birthday?

5.0 Years

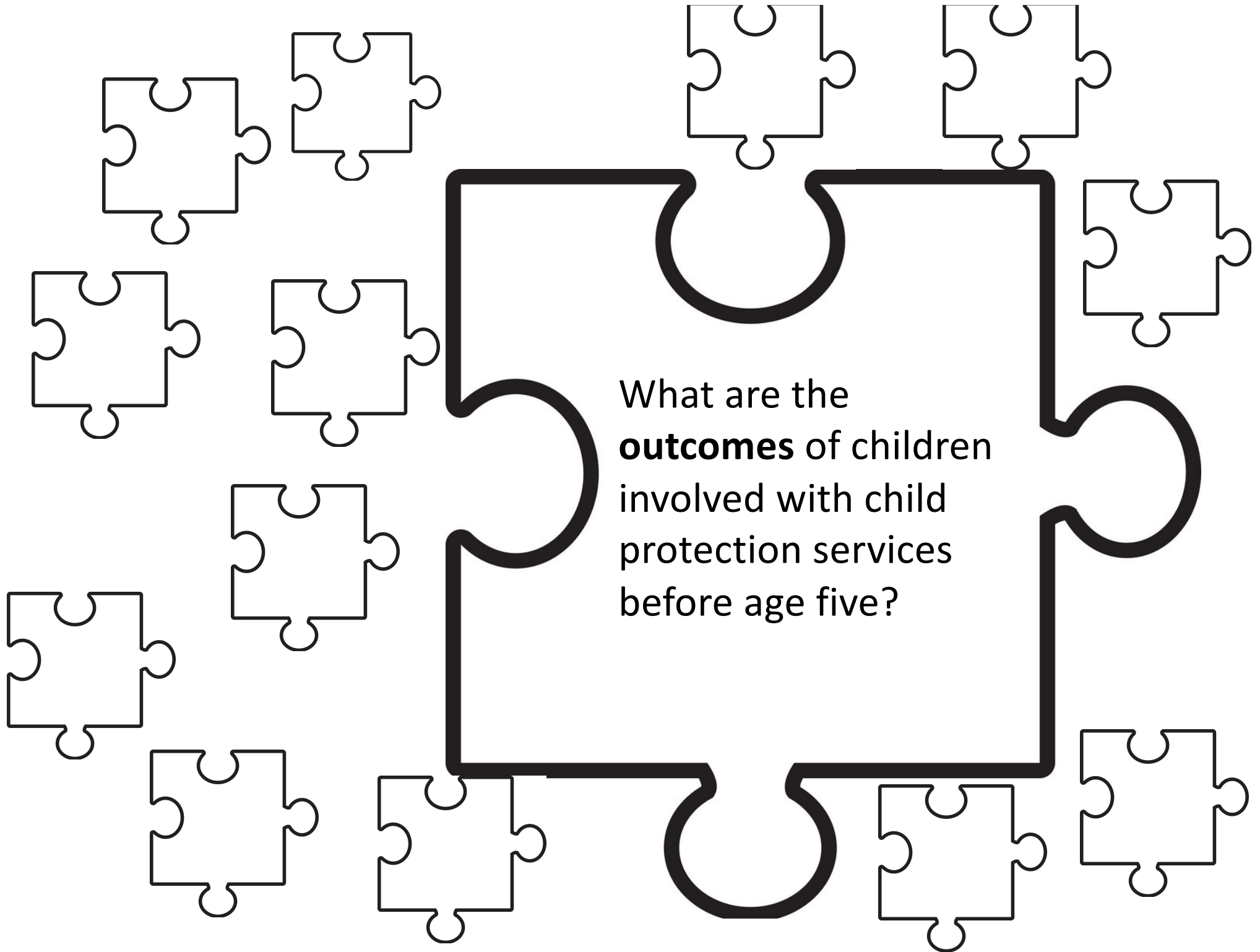


Data from Falster et al (2020) JAMA Pediatrics  
doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2020.1151

By age five, **1 in every 7 children** in Kindergarten has been screened-in by child protection services as **at risk of significant harm.**

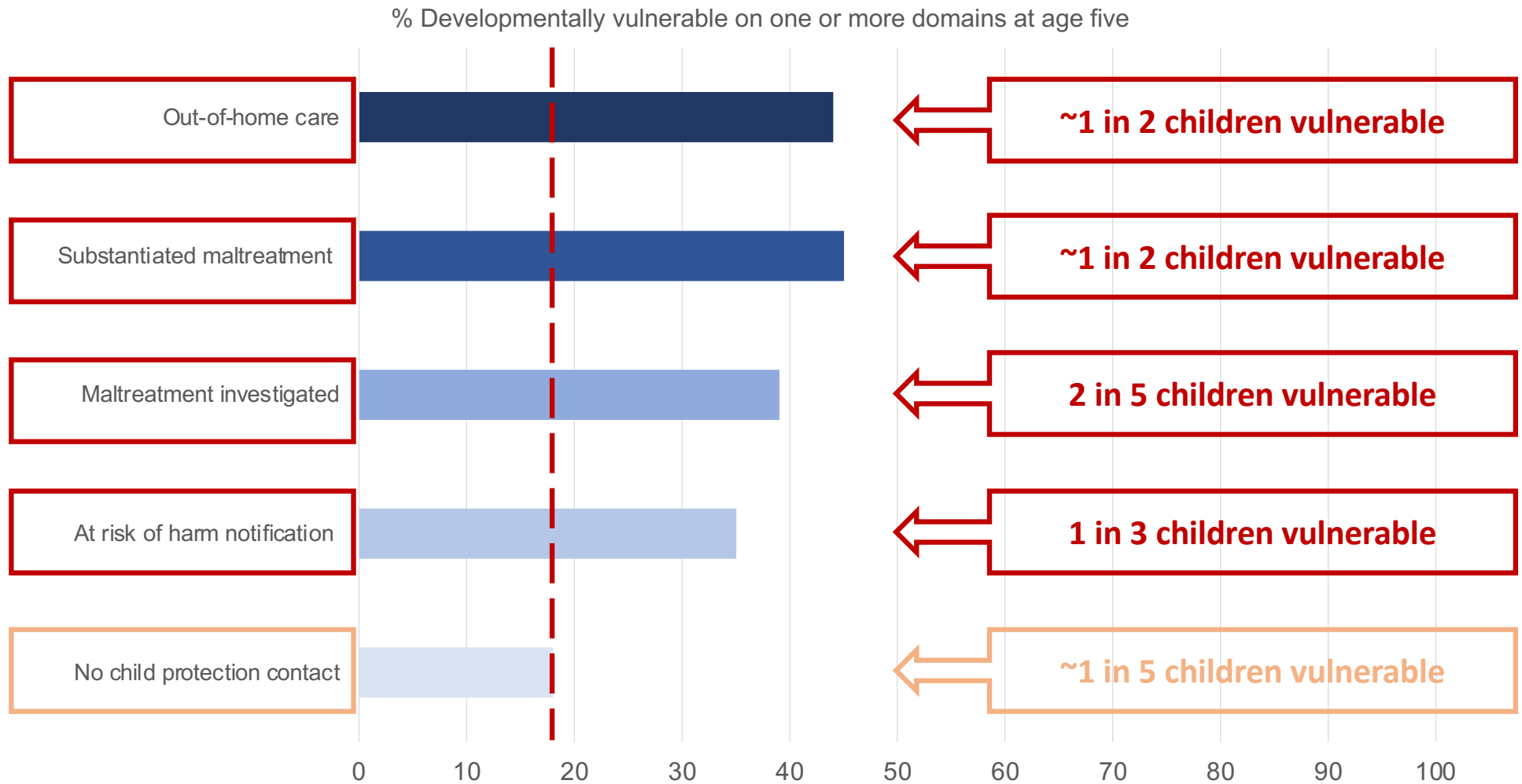
The size of the **child maltreatment problem** is comparable to **childhood asthma.**

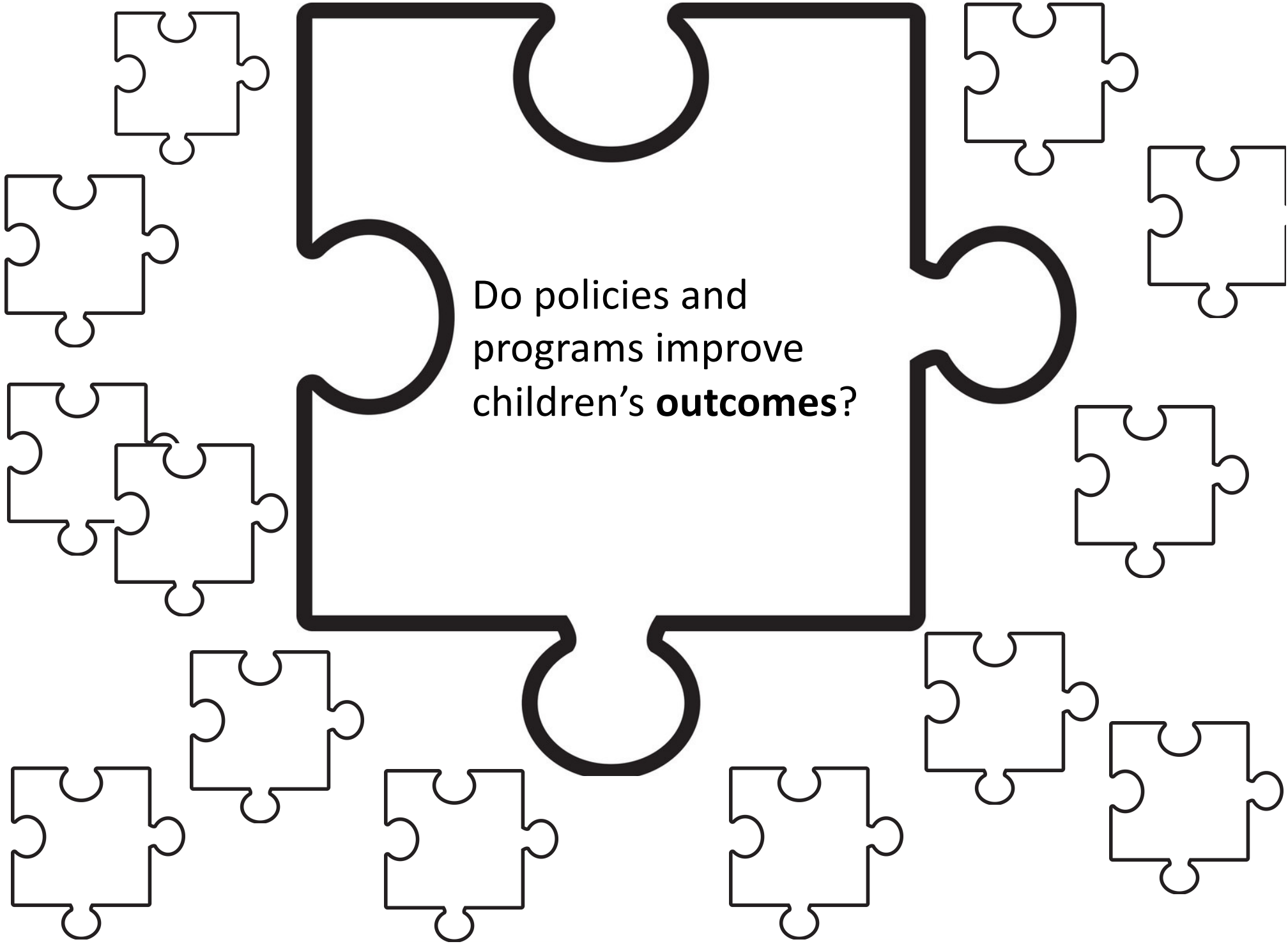




What are the **outcomes** of children involved with child protection services before age five?

# Developmental vulnerability at age five is more common among children involved with child protection services





Do policies and programs improve children's **outcomes**?



### 3 Children are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years

Collapse ↑


#### Outcome

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years.

#### Target

By 2025, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in Year Before Fulltime Schooling (YBFS) early childhood education to 95 per cent.

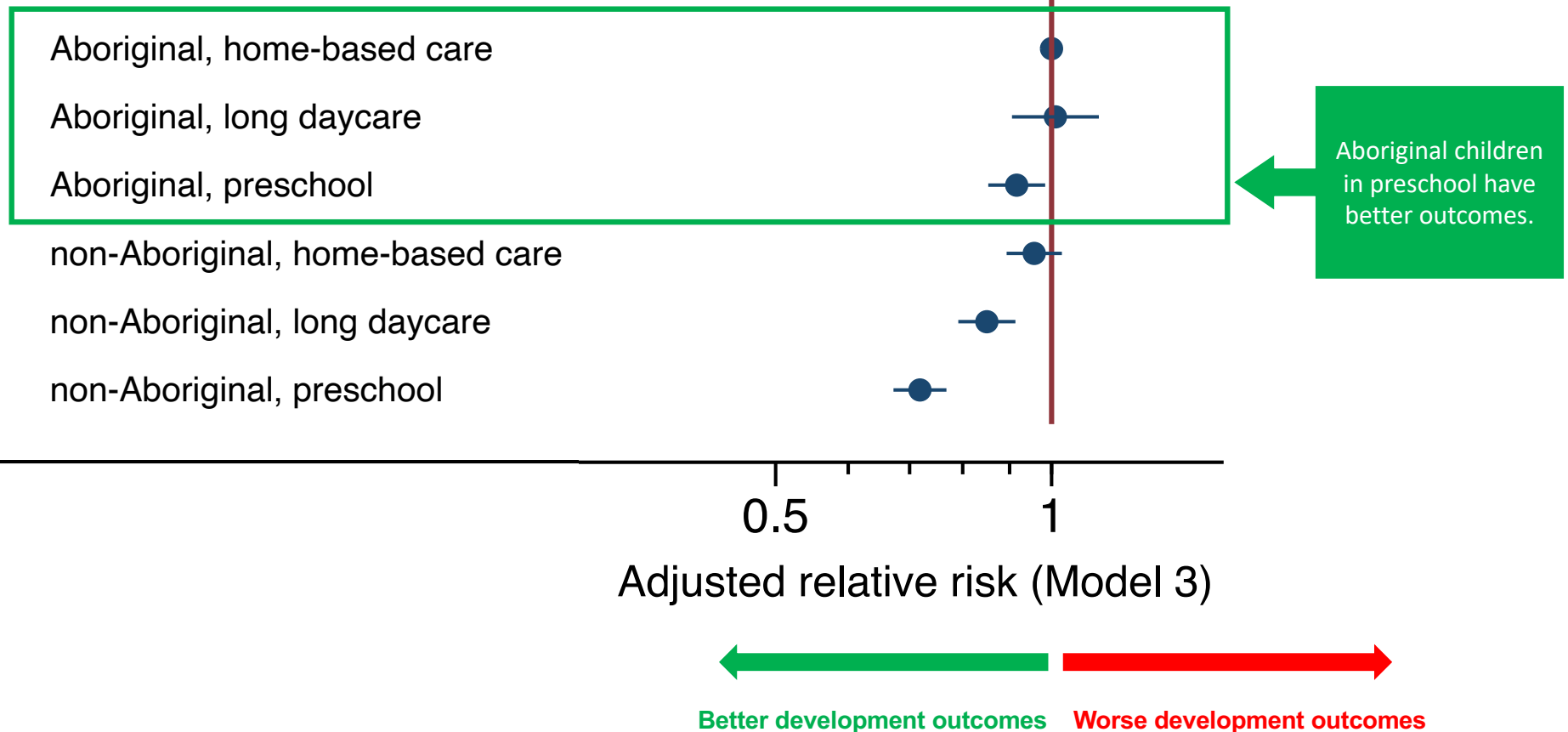
#### Data

 See all the data →

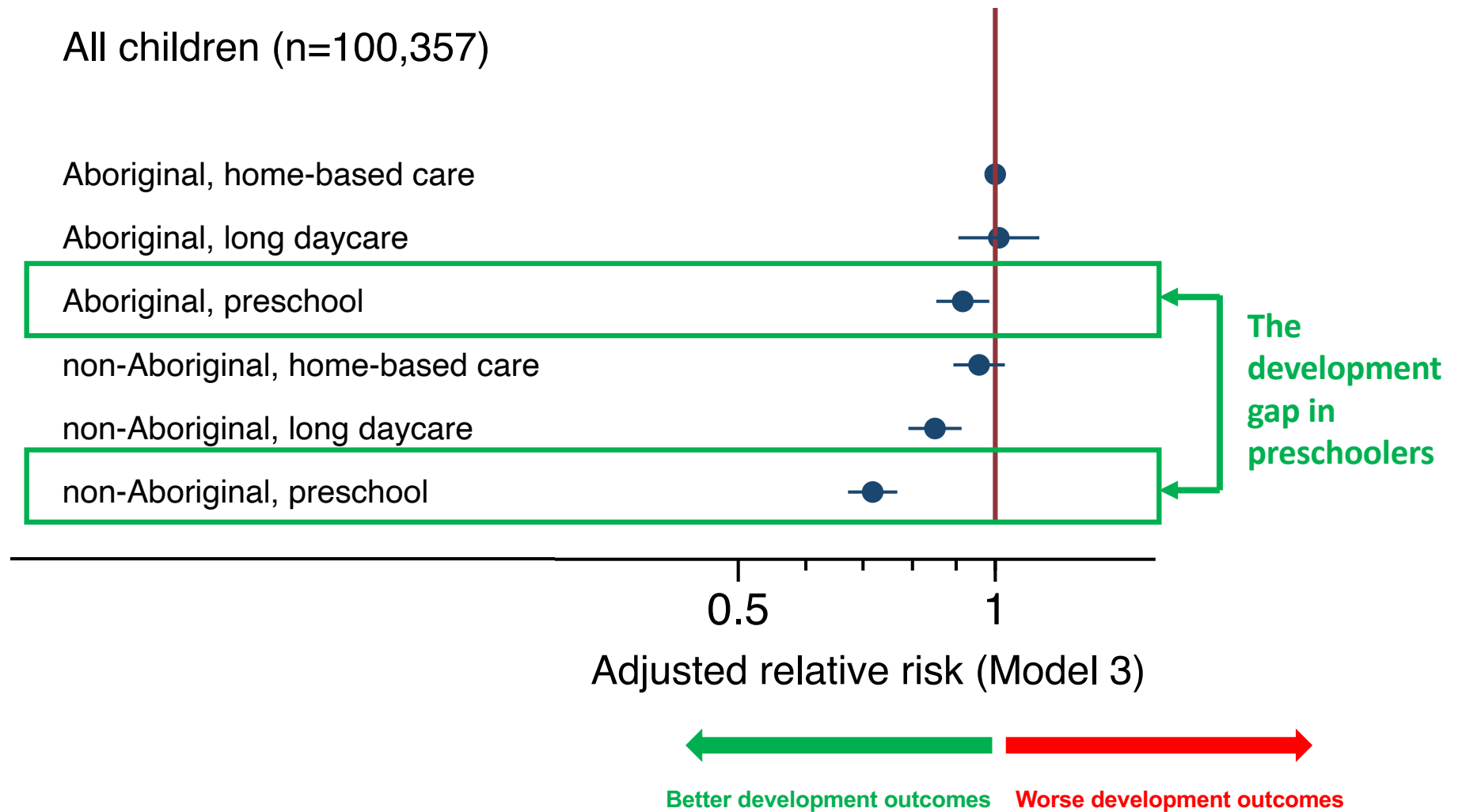
The policy motivation is to **improve early childhood development** via preschool attendance...

# Aboriginal children in **preschool** have **better developmental outcomes** than other care...

All children (n=100,357)



# Developmental gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children in preschool



# Building the policy-relevant evidence base for child maltreatment: NSW and South Australia

Pregnancy | Birth | Early childhood | Primary school age | Adolescence



Perinatal data

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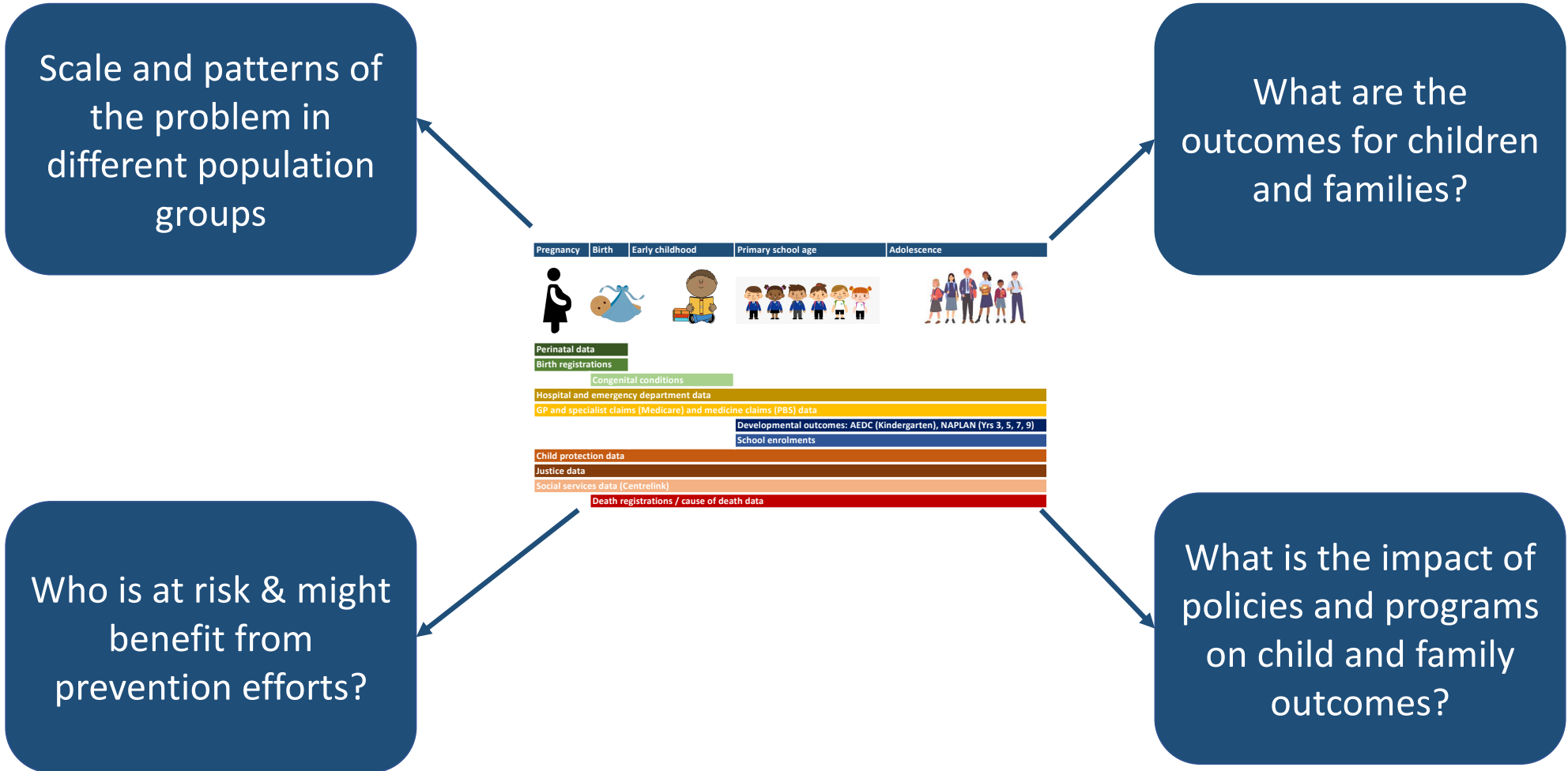
Child protection data

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# Building the policy-relevant evidence base for child maltreatment: NSW and South Australia



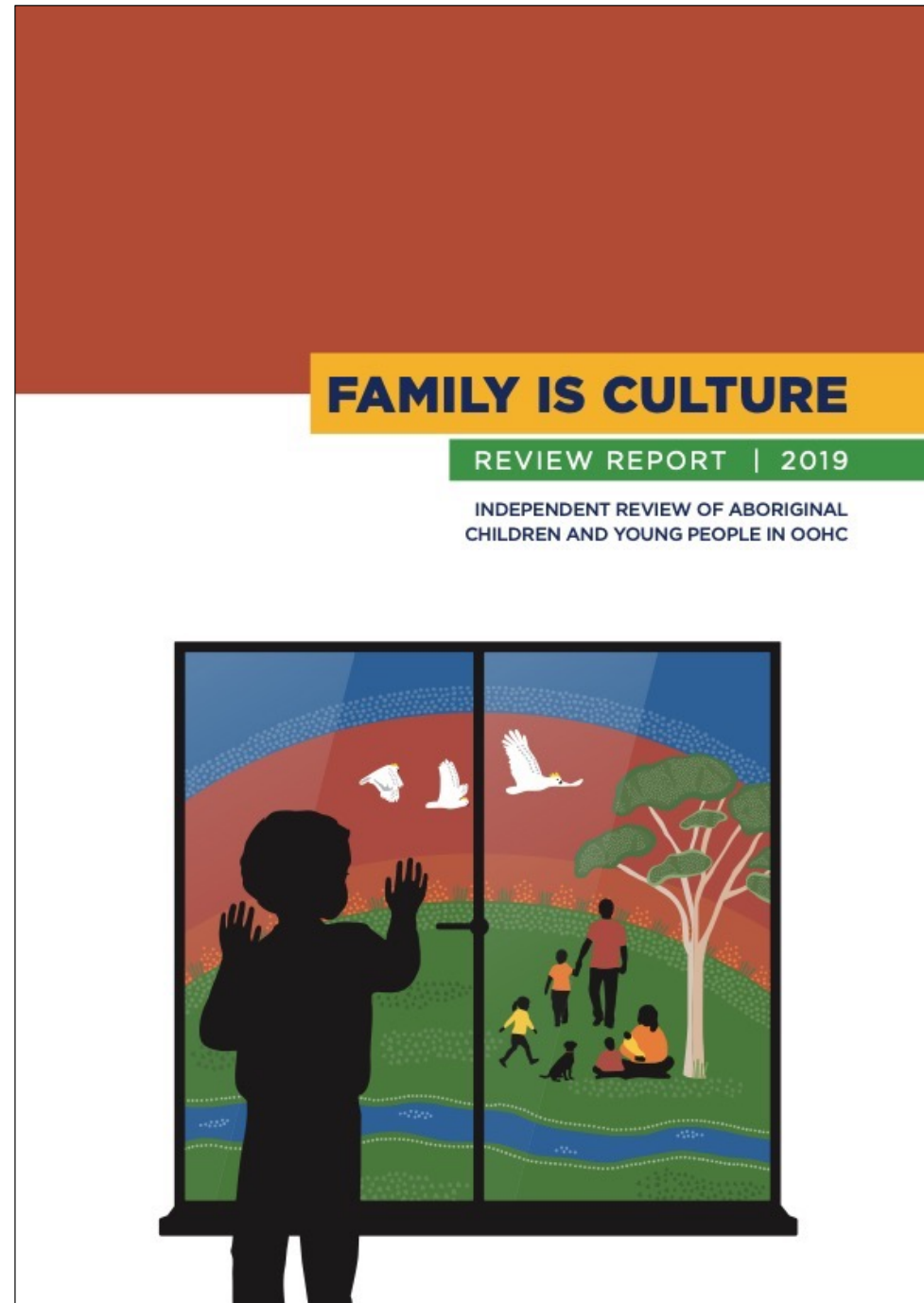


# Partnership is key to building policy, practice, and community relevant evidence



# Data supporting opportunities for child protection policy and practice reform:

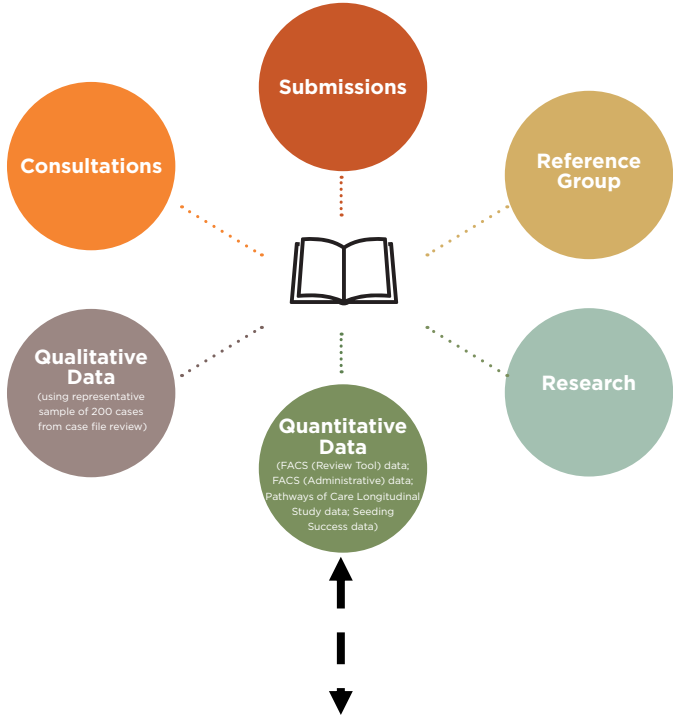
An example of Aboriginal-led inquiry



# Background to Family Is Culture Review

## Information gathering

This phase involved stakeholder engagement (including public consultations and the calling for submissions), data collection and further research.



The Seeding Success study (using linked data resource) with Aboriginal Reference Group, including AHMRC and AbSec

“This highlights a **profound** and **early over-representation** of Aboriginal children having contact with the child protection system in NSW”

(Family is Culture Review Report, 2019, page 40)



**ALMOST  
1 in 2**

Aboriginal children who lived in NSW and entered Kindergarten in 2009 and 2012 were screened-in at ROSH by the age of 5 years



**ALMOST  
1 in 3**

of these children experiencing a child protection response beyond a ROSH report before their fifth birthday

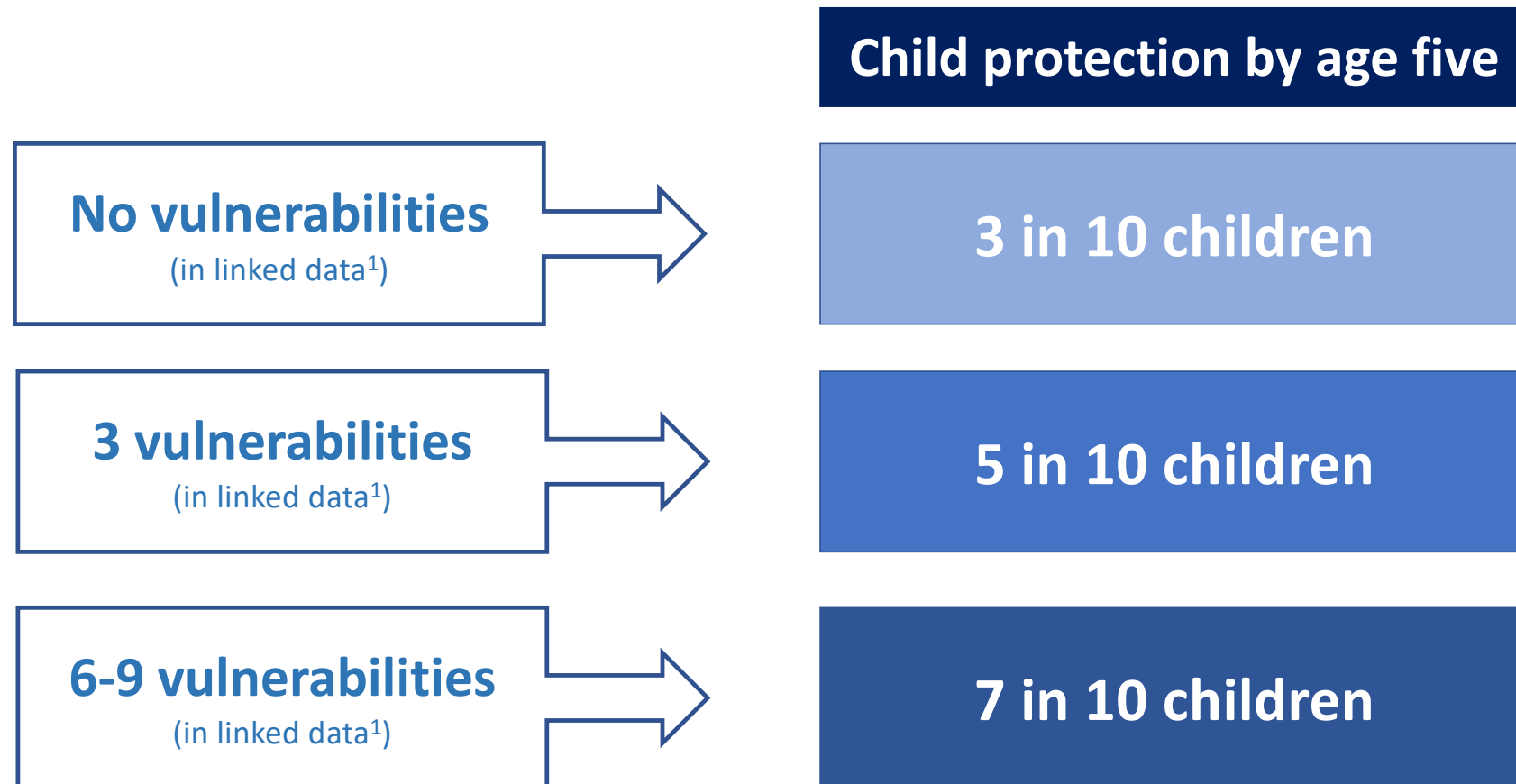


**ALMOST  
1 in 10**

Aboriginal children in NSW, who entered Kindergarten in 2012, were subject to a ROSH report before they were born

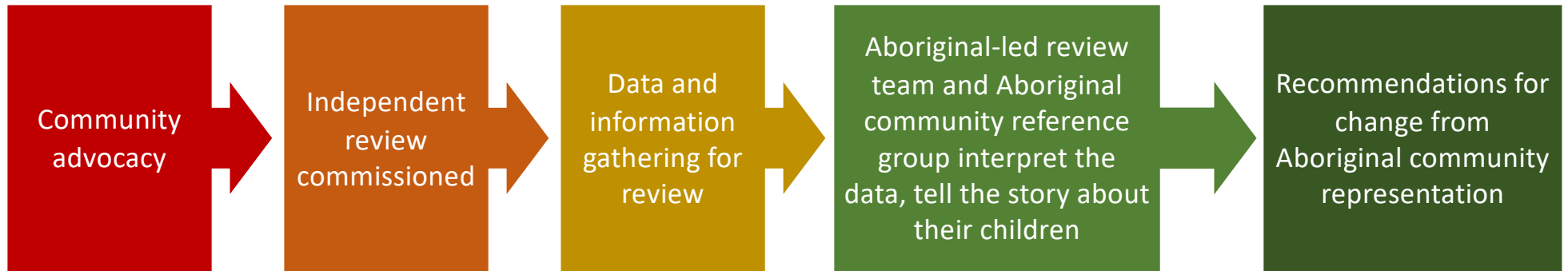
“This highlights the need for **earlier, targeted intervention and support for vulnerable Aboriginal families.**”

([Family is Culture Review Report](#), 2019, page 40)



1. Data sources on child and family vulnerabilities include the Perinatal Data Collection, Admitted Patient Data Collection, and Public School Enrolment data.

# Aboriginal community advocacy led to and shaped the Family is Culture Review



The Seeding Success study (using linked data resource) with Aboriginal Reference Group, including AHMRC and AbSec

# Bring Them Home, Keep Them Home

## Aboriginal child restoration project

- Aboriginal-led ARC-funded research project (Dr BJ Newton)
- Developed with AbSec

The project will aim to understand the:

- Barriers and enablers of child restoration in Aboriginal families
- **Scale and patterns of child removals and restorations** among Aboriginal children and families in NSW (using linked data)

# Acknowledgements

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- Data custodians of the data sources linked for the Seeding Success study
- Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW
- NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS)
- Their Futures Matter, NSW Government
- NSW Ministry of Health
- NSW Department of Education
- Australian Government Department of Education
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Maternal and Child Health Reference Group, UNSW Centre for Big Data Research in Health, including the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW, AbSec, and service provider representatives.
- A/Professor Paul Gray (formerly AbSec, now University of Technology)
- The Family is Culture Review team and Reference Group (Chaired by Professor Megan Davis, UNSW)

Family is Culture Final Report: Independent Review into Aboriginal Out-of Home Care in NSW. October 2019.  
Professor Megan Davis (Chairperson) and the Family is Culture Review team.

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