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Family transitions during childhood, 1946-2000

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Abstract

The increasing diversity of family types and changes in the living arrangements of parents means that children potentially face a number of transitions in their family living arrangements during their childhood. While evidence suggests that these transitions are stressful for children and, on average, result in poorer outcomes for children, relatively little is known about the extent to which Australian children experience family transitions. Divorce statistics indicate how many children experience parental divorce but these statistics only capture a part of the changes that children experience in their living arrangements. They fail to capture disruptions due to cohabiting parents separating and they ignore the transitions children experience if their parent repartners. Nor do we know the extent to which children experience *multiple transitions* over their childhood. This paper will use data from wave 1 of the HILDA survey, collected in 2001. It draws on fertility and relationship histories to estimate, from the child perspective:

- The number and type of family transitions that children experience during their childhood;
- The relative stability for children of different living arrangements. In particular it will assess the chances of transitions for children living with two married biological parents, two cohabiting biological parents, step parents and lone mothers;
- The length of time that children spend living in different family types;
- Changes in the likelihood of children experiencing family transitions (dissolution or re-formation) between 1946-2000; and
- The number of transitions that children experience and changes in these from 1946-2000.

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