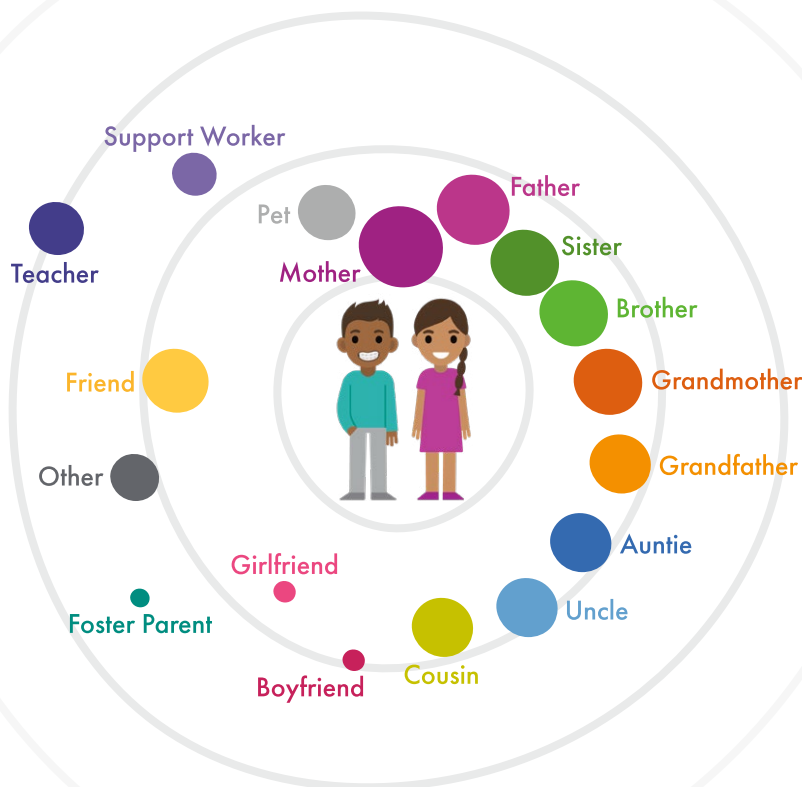


# RELATIONSHIPS DURING EARLY ADOLESCENCE

Footprints  
in Time 

## Results from Waves 11 and 12 (2018/19)

*Footprints in Time* Study Youth have many important people in their lives. In early adolescence, friendships and connections with people outside of their immediate family circle are increasing in importance. At this stage in life, relationships play a key role in identity formation and fostering cross cultural understandings.



*Footprints in Time* youth are close to many people in their social network.

Connection to kin continued to be strong for *Footprints in Time* youth in early adolescence, with a broad range of close relationships evident in Waves 11 and 12. Their mums are still most likely to remain the closest relationship, with other types of relationships emerging at this time in their lives. Social and kinship networks support youth to grow their cultural identity. Close connections are especially influential because they contribute to youth feeling understood and strong in their culture. In the face of racism, encouraging youth to identify their strengths and ask for support from their communities helps to build resilience.

As part of the survey, *Footprints in Time* youth indicated how close they were to the individuals in their lives by placing the person in one of five rings. Youth were asked to indicate how close they felt to people by placing them in rings around a central circle, with people they felt closer to nearer the centre. In this picture, the size of the coloured dot shows how many youth included that person in their relationship ring (larger dot is larger proportion).

## Quality of relationships: getting along well with family.

Getting along with the people closest to them helps youth feel supported and understood. For *Footprints in Time* youth, families tended to get along, with around 80% of youth reporting that their family gets along with each other 'most of the time' or 'always'. When asked if they get along with their brothers, sisters, and cousins, 3 in 4 answered 'always' or 'most of the time'.



## Diverse relationships can foster cross-cultural understanding.

Diversity in friendships and connections can support youth to develop an understanding of others and different lived experiences. Many *Footprints in Time* youth said they have a broad mix of friends by gender and cultural identity. Connections to kin and community provide safety for youth so they can build their identity. Being able to relate to people from differing backgrounds can support growing empathy.

**3 in 4**

***Footprints in Time* youth have both males and females in their friendship group**

**7 in 10**

***Footprints in Time* youth have both Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous friends**



## *Footprints in Time* youth have a diverse mix of friends.

Connections with friends are important and influential for youth during adolescence. They influence how youth form their own cultural identity and how they view the identity of others. Diversity in friendships and social groups can support youth to grow their cultural awareness and understanding of others.

Almost all *Footprints in Time* youth living in very remote areas reported 'some' or 'all' of their friends were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (97%). In major cities the majority of *Footprints in Time* youth still reported 'some' or 'all' of their friends were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (78%). This benefits youth in building their cultural identity and community connections.

### **Families, communities and services working together to support Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people to grow up strong can help through:**

- Services and communities acknowledging the significant role positive and supportive relationships and friendships play in forming youth identity
- Fostering cultural identity and growth in understanding of others through relationships
- Supporting the value placed on knowing about their culture and belonging to Country.

**DISCLAIMER** This factsheet uses unit record data from *Footprints in Time: the Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children (LSIC)*. LSIC was conducted by the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS). We acknowledge the role and support of state and territory departments of education and Catholic dioceses in the collection of LSIC data. The findings and views reported in this factsheet, however, are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the Australian Government, DSS, or the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and their communities involved in this study.

#### **FULL REPORT**

*Footprints in Time*, The Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children, Report from Wave 11 and 12. The Kids Research Institute Australia.

For more information on the *Footprints in Time* study <https://www.dss.gov.au/lsic>

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