

You've read 8 articles in the last year

In a media landscape dominated by a powerful few, Guardian Australia's fearless, fiercely independent voice is vital.

Support the Guardian ->



Facebook, Twitter, Email icons. Nurseries in England feeling the pressure as 'pingdemic' hits children and staff. Read more



Tests on children aged from three months to three years old suggest their cognitive development has been held back by the coronavirus pandemic.

Children born during the coronavirus pandemic have significantly reduced verbal, motor and overall cognitive performance compared with children born before, a US study suggests.

The first few years of a child's life are critical to their cognitive development. But with Covid-19 triggering the closure of businesses, nurseries, schools and playgrounds, life for infants changed considerably...

With limited stimulation at home and less interaction with the world outside, pandemic-era children appear to have scored shockingly low on tests designed to assess cognitive development...

In the decade preceding the pandemic, the mean IQ score on standardised tests for children aged between three months and three years of age hovered around 100, but for children born during the pandemic that number tumbled to 78, according to the analysis...

"It's not subtle by any stretch," said Deoni. "You don't typically see things like that, outside of major cognitive disorders."

The study included 672 children from the state of Rhode Island. Of these, 188 were born after July 2020 and 308 were born prior to January 2019...

Those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds fared worse in the tests, the researchers found.

The biggest reason behind the falling scores is likely the lack of stimulation and interaction at home, said Deoni. "Parents are stressed and frazzled ... that interaction the child would normally get has decreased substantially."

Whether these lower cognitive scores will have a long-term impact is unclear. In the first few years of life, the foundations for cognition are laid, much like building a house - it's easier to add rooms or flourishes when you're building the foundation, Deoni said.

Given this data comes from a relatively affluent part of the US, where social support and unemployment benefits are generous, the fear is that things could be worse in poorer parts of the country and the world, he added.

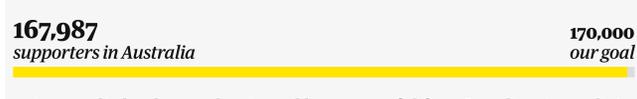
Sir Terence Stephenson, a Nuffield professor of child health at University College London, said the research was interesting given much has been written about the impact on the education of school-age children...

The key factor influencing these lower scores in infants has likely been stress on parents who faced challenges in both working and providing full-time attentive childcare, he said. "Perhaps not surprising that children from lower socioeconomic families have been most affected as this resonates with many of the other financial, employment and health impacts of the pandemic."

Most viewed

- Australia secures Pfizer doses from Poland as Victoria chases mystery cases - as it happened
Live Afghanistan: Taliban enter outskirts of Kabul as US begins embassy evacuation - live updates
New Covid variants 'will set us back a year', experts warn UK government
Australia secures 1m Pfizer vaccine doses from Poland, with half earmarked for Sydney Covid hotspots
'No concept of how awful it was': the forgotten world of pre-vaccine childhood in Australia

You've read 7 articles in the last year Article count on

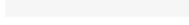


... in a media landscape dominated by a powerful few, Guardian Australia's fearless, fiercely independent voice is vital.

Unlike many others, we are committed to keeping our journalism open to all readers, regardless of their ability to pay. We do this because we believe in information equality.

If you support our mission for high-impact, independent journalism that's available for all, join us today. To assure our future and strengthen our voice, we want to grow our community of supporters to 170,000.

Support the Guardian -> Remind me in September



Topics: Coronavirus, Early years education / Children / news

Facebook, Twitter, Email, LinkedIn icons. Reuse this content

More on this story

Four article thumbnails: Live / Covid live news, Fifth consecutive weekend of protests in France, Iran to impose six-day lockdown, Covid cluster at Sydney school.

More from Headlines

Four headline thumbnails: NSW Covid update, Pfizer vaccine / Australia secures 1m doses, Live / Afghanistan: Taliban enter outskirts of Kabul, Trapped / Afghans who worked with Australian forces.

Most popular

Grid of popular articles: New Covid variants 'will set us back a year', The Polo Lounge at the Dorchester Hotel, London's cafe culture has left a sour taste, Afghanistan: Taliban enter outskirts of Kabul, Dental students in England offered £10,000 to switch university.

Education Schools Teachers Universities Students

Footer navigation: News, Opinion, Sport, Culture, Lifestyle. Sign up for the Guardian Today email. Support the Guardian. About us, Contact us, SecureDrop, Vacancies, Privacy settings, Privacy policy, Cookie policy, Terms & conditions, Help. All topics, All writers, Events, Digital newspaper archive, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, Newsletters. Guardian Labs, Advertise with us, Search UK jobs.