

Title	Characteristics of families that separate which help account for long-term outcomes in the children: the Australian PATH Through Life project.		
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Children from separated families fare less well in the long term than their peers from intact families, across a range of social and psychological outcomes. These differences most probably arise from associated experiences before, during and after family separation, but we have little idea of what the most potent risk factors are for different outcomes.

The PATH project, a study of three age cohorts (initially 20-24, 40-44 and 60-64 years) in the Canberra Region of Australia, asked questions about 17 possible adverse experiences up to age 16 including parental separation. These data were used to model a range of adult outcomes covering education, mental health, substance use, and age of entering adult roles, with parental separation as the primary independent variable and the other adversities added subsequently.

The findings implicated some adversities, especially parental mental health and substance use problems, as being important in explaining poorer outcomes for children from separated families and there was consistency in this across the three age cohorts. However, for outcomes representing early transitions to adult roles, parental separation *per se* appeared to be important. Further analyses of later life transitions (e.g. own marital separation) in the 40-44 and 60-64 cohorts chart the longer-term sequelae in mid-life and older adulthood.

This study identifies characteristics of families that separate which are most likely to account for long-term difficulties encountered by the children. These risk factors should be incorporated into prospective studies to determine whether their influence is exerted before, during or following separation.