Australian Government
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

education

Indigenous health snapshot

Extracted from *Australia's health 2012*

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as a whole, experience disproportionate levels of disadvantage and poorer health compared with other Australians.
In June 2006, about 1 in 40 Australians identified as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin.

Life expectancy*

Life expectancy at birth for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is much lower than for non-Indigenous Australians

- Indigenous males **67.2 years** *compared with* **79.5 years** non-Indigenous males
- Indigenous females **72.9 years** *compared with* **84 years** non-Indigenous females.

*Indigenous figures refer to 2005–2007; non-Indigenous figures refer to 2008–2010.

Risk factors

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were 2.2 times as likely as non-Indigenous Australians to smoke tobacco.
- The proportion of women who smoked while pregnant was higher for Indigenous women (48%) than non-Indigenous women (13%).
- High proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people used cannabis in the previous 12 months compared with non-Indigenous Australians (18% and 10% respectively).

- In 2004–05, after adjusting for differences in age structure, 34% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults were obese compared with 18% of non-Indigenous adults.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are less likely than non-Indigenous Australians to consume alcohol. However, Indigenous Australians who do drink generally consume at much more harmful levels.

Disease

- Asthma rates ↑ than non-Indigenous Australians—17% *compared with* 10%.
- Injury rates ↑ than non-Indigenous Australians—almost three times as high.
- Diabetes rates ↑ than non-Indigenous Australians— more than three times.
- Dementia rates ↑ than non-Indigenous Australians—localised studies suggest the rate is disproportionately higher.
- Kidney disease rates ↑ than non-Indigenous Australians— six times as high.
- Ear problems ↑ than non-Indigenous children—three times more likely to have ear diseases.
- Tooth decay rates ↑ than non-Indigenous children— more likely to have decayed and missing teeth.

Closing the Gap program

Closing the gap in Indigenous health is a priority for the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), which in 2008 agreed to a $1.6 billion National Partnership Agreement to address this health disadvantage through a range of initiatives.

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