



Indigenous health

Extracted from *Australia's Health 2010*
Chapter Five Pages 227–245

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Indigenous Australians) generally have significantly more ill health than other Australians. They typically die at much younger ages and are more likely to experience disability and reduced quality of life because of ill health.

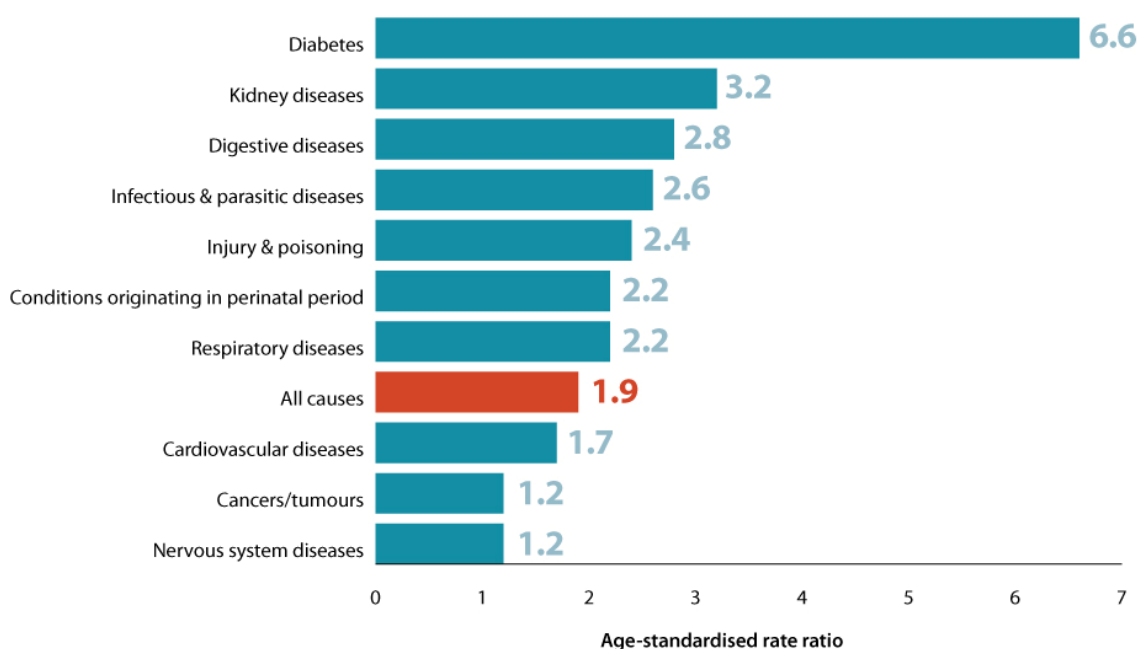
One of the reasons for this poorer health is that Indigenous Australians are socioeconomically disadvantaged compared with other Australians. On average, they report having lower incomes than other Australians, higher rates of unemployment, lower educational attainment, and more overcrowded households.

In 2009, the estimated Indigenous population was about 550,000, constituting 2.5% of the total Australian population. Of all Indigenous Australians, 6% identified themselves as being of Torres Strait Islander origin and 4% as being of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin. Despite the common perception that most Indigenous Australians live in remote areas, the majority (76%) live in major cities and non-remote regional areas.

Death rates

Indigenous males and females have a considerably higher death rate than their non-Indigenous counterparts for a range of major disease groups, often a very much higher rate. The higher Indigenous rates ranged from being 20% higher for cancers/tumours, to over 6 times as high for diabetes. It can also be seen that the higher Indigenous death rate is wide ranging, not just for a few diseases. This adds up to an estimated life expectancy that for Indigenous males is about 12 years less than that of non-Indigenous males. For Indigenous females the corresponding gap is 10 years.

Death rates: ratio of Indigenous to non-Indigenous

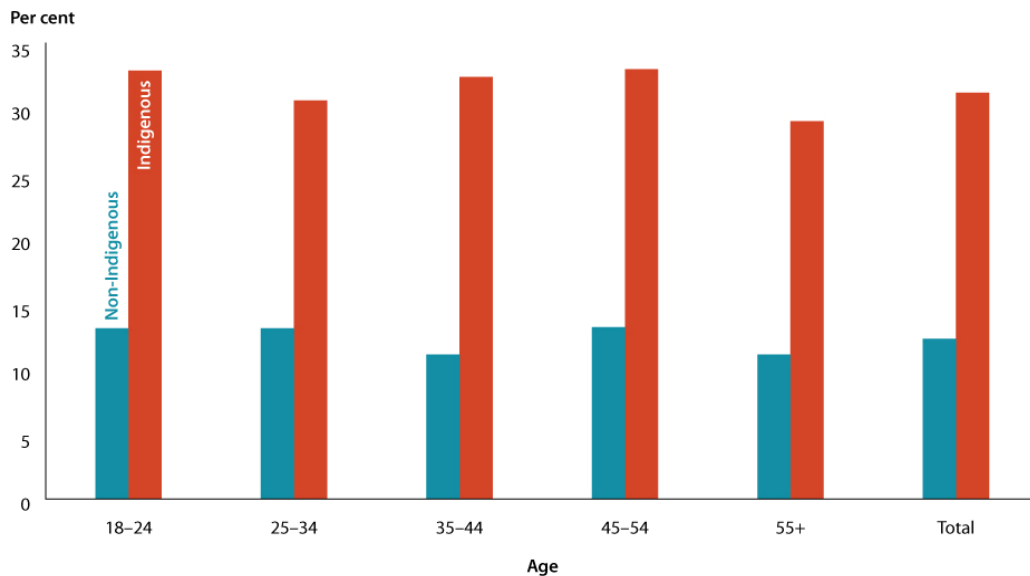




High Indigenous distress

Another window into the quality of life of many Indigenous Australians is their level of psychological distress. Indigenous people are about twice as likely to have high or very high levels of distress as other Australians.

High/very high distress levels



Discussion questions

1. List some of the reasons you think contribute to the large gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.
2. a) Why do you think levels of Type 2 diabetes are very high?
b) What sort of programs or education initiatives do you think the government could take to help Indigenous Australia's become more aware of Type 2 Diabetes?
3. Indigenous people are about twice as likely to have high or very high levels of distress as other Australians. Discuss the factors that may contribute to increased distress for Indigenous people.