

2.02 Overcrowding in households

The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in overcrowded households

Data sources

Data for this measure come from the 2004–05 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS), the 2002 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) and 2001 Census of Population and Housing.

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS)

The 2004–05 NATSIHS collected information from 10,439 Indigenous Australians of all ages. This sample was considerably larger than the supplementary Indigenous samples in the 1995 and 2001 National Health Surveys. The survey was conducted in remote and non-remote areas of Australia and collected a range of information from Indigenous Australians about health-related issues including health-related actions, health risk factors, health status, socioeconomic circumstances and women's health. It is planned to repeat the NATSIHS at six-yearly intervals, with the next NATSIHS to be conducted in 2010–11. Selected non-Indigenous comparisons are available through the 2004–05 National Health Survey (NHS).

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS)

The 2002 NATSISS collected information from 9,400 Indigenous Australians across all states and territories of Australia. The sample covered persons aged 15 years or over who were usual residents of private dwellings. It collected information on a wide range of subjects including family and culture, health, education, employment, income, financial stress, housing, as well as law and justice. The 2002 NATSISS is the second national social survey of Indigenous Australians conducted by the ABS. Selected non-Indigenous comparisons are available through the 2002 General Social Survey (GSS). The ABS plans to conduct the NATSISS every 6 years. The next survey is planned for 2008.

Census of Population and Housing

The ABS Census of Population and Housing is conducted by the ABS at five-yearly intervals with 2006 the most recent and is designed to include all Australian households. The Census uses the ABS standard Indigenous status question and it is asked for each household member.

While the Census data are adjusted for undercounts at the person level to arrive at the Estimated Resident Population, no such adjustment is done at the household level. This affects the accuracy of the person counts at the household level to provide adjusted household estimates.

There is no single standard measure of housing overcrowding in Australia. The Canadian National Occupancy Standard and the Proxy Occupancy Standard are commonly used to measure overcrowding and are described below.

Canadian National Occupancy Standard

The Canadian National Occupancy Standard is most widely used in Australia. This standard specifies the number of bedrooms required in a dwelling based on the numbers, age, sex and relationships of household members. Households that require one more bedroom to meet the standard are considered to experience 'a moderate degree of overcrowding', whereas households requiring two or more bedrooms are said to experience a 'high degree of overcrowding'.

The Canadian National Occupancy Standard states that:

- there should be no more than two persons per bedroom
- a household of one unattached individual may reasonably occupy a bed-sit (that is, have no bedroom)
- parents or couples may share a bedroom
- children less than 5 years of age of different sexes may reasonably share a bedroom
- children 5 years of age or over of the opposite sex should not share a bedroom
- children less than 18 years of age and of the same sex may reasonably share a bedroom
- single household members aged 18 years or over should have a separate bedroom (AIHW 2005).

Most of the data presented for this indicator are based on the Canadian National Occupancy Standard.

Proxy Occupancy Standard

The Proxy Occupancy Standard has been used recently to assess the extent of overcrowding in Commonwealth State Housing Agreement data collections for State Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing, public housing and community housing. The Proxy Occupancy Standard has been endorsed by the Standing Committee on Indigenous Housing.

Households that require two or more bedrooms to meet the Proxy Occupancy Standard are considered overcrowded.

The Proxy Occupancy Standard specifies that:

- a single adult or group of adults should have one bedroom per adult
- a couple with no children should have two bedrooms
- a sole parent or couple with one child should have two bedrooms
- a sole parent or couple with two or three children should have three bedrooms
- a sole parent or couple with four children should have four bedrooms (AIHW 2005).

The Proxy Occupancy Standard does not require information on the age and sex of children and it is therefore easier to collect the data required. However, it only allows for children to share bedrooms in some cases, which may lead to an overestimation of overcrowding. In the *National housing assistance data dictionary version 3* the Proxy Occupancy Standard has been modified to adequately specify needs for large or multi-family households.

The revised criteria are that for sole-parent or couple households with more than four children, the dwelling size in terms of bedrooms should be the same value as the total number of children in the household. Where more than one of the groups specified in the occupancy standard is present, the needs of the two or more groups should be added together. For example, a sole parent with one child living with the sole parent's parents

(three generations) would require four bedrooms, that is, two bedrooms for the sole parent and child and two bedrooms for the married couple (AIHW 2006).

Data analyses

Overcrowding

- The 2004–05 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey estimated that there were 127,546 Indigenous Australians aged 18 years and over living in overcrowded households according to the Canadian National Occupancy Standard (one or more additional bedroom required). This represented 27% of all Indigenous persons aged 18 years and over. There were around 1 million other Australians living in overcrowded households in 2004–05, representing 5% of all other persons aged 18 years and over (Table 2.02.1). Approximately 14% of Indigenous people were living in households that required two or more additional bedrooms compared to 1% of other people.
- The 2002 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey estimated that there were 72,600 Indigenous Australians aged 15 years and over living in overcrowded households according to the Canadian National Occupancy Standard. This represented 26% of all Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over (Table 2.02.2).
- The 2001 Census estimated that there were 21,274 Indigenous households that were overcrowded according to the Canadian National Occupancy Standard. This represented 15% of all Indigenous households in 2001 (Table 2.02.5). According to the Proxy Occupancy Standard, there were approximately 13,380 Indigenous households that were overcrowded in 2001, which represented 10% of all Indigenous households. Only 2% of other households were classified as overcrowded according to this standard (Table 2.02.7).

Overcrowding by state/territory

- In 2004–05, the Northern Territory had the highest proportion of Indigenous persons aged 18 years and over living in overcrowded households (65%) and New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory had the lowest (between 10% and 12%) (Table 2.02.1).
- In 2002, the Northern Territory had the highest proportion of Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over living in overcrowded households (63%), followed by Queensland (26%) and Western Australia (25%). Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory had the lowest proportion of Indigenous persons living in overcrowded households (11% and 14% respectively) (Table 2.02.2; Figure 2.02.1).
- In 2001, the proportion of Indigenous households that were overcrowded in 2001 ranged from 6% in Tasmania to 36% in the Northern Territory (Table 2.02.5).

Table 2.02.1: Number and proportion of people aged 18 years and over living in overcrowded households,^(a) by Indigenous status and state/territory, 2004–05

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas and ACT	NT ^(b)	Australia
One or more additional bedrooms required								
Estimated number of Indigenous people living in overcrowded households	16,579	3,355	37,577	23,140	6,550	2,302	38,041	127,546
% of Indigenous people living in overcrowded households	11.9	11.4	28.9	33.6	24.6	10.4	65.3	26.9
Estimated number of other people living in overcrowded households	412,163	331,962	122,118	55,346	57,950	18,846	12,306	1,010,690
% of other people living in overcrowded households	6.4	6.8	3.3	3.0	3.9	2.4	9.8	5.2
Rate ratio	1.9	1.7	8.7	11.3	6.3	4.2	6.7	5.1
Two or more additional bedrooms required								
Estimated number of Indigenous people living in overcrowded households	4,347	837	17,374	10,794	3,463	589	28,083	65,487
% of Indigenous people living in overcrowded households	3.1	2.8	13.4	15.7	13.0	2.7	48.2	13.8
Estimated number of other people living in overcrowded households	83,955	32,397	19,459	14,264	10,425	1,693	2,960	165,154
% of other people living in overcrowded households	1.3	0.7	0.5	0.8	0.7	0.2	2.4	0.9
Rate ratio	2.4	4.3	25.3	20.5	18.5	12.1	20.4	16.1

(a) Based on Canadian National Occupancy Standard.

(b) Indigenous households only.

Source: AIHW analysis of 2004–05 NATSIHS and 2004–05 National Health Survey.

Table 2.02.2: Number and proportion of Indigenous Australians aged 15 years and over living in overcrowded households,^(a) by state/territory, 2002

State/territory	Number	Proportion (%)
New South Wales	12,000	14.4
Victoria	2,700	15.5
Queensland	20,000	26.2
Western Australia	9,900	25.1
South Australia	3,800	23.9
Tasmania	1,200	11.1
Australian Capital Territory	400	14.0
Northern Territory	22,600	62.5
Australia	72,600	25.7

(a) Based on the Canadian National Occupancy Standard for housing appropriateness.

Source: SCRGSP 2005: ABS NATSISS 2002.

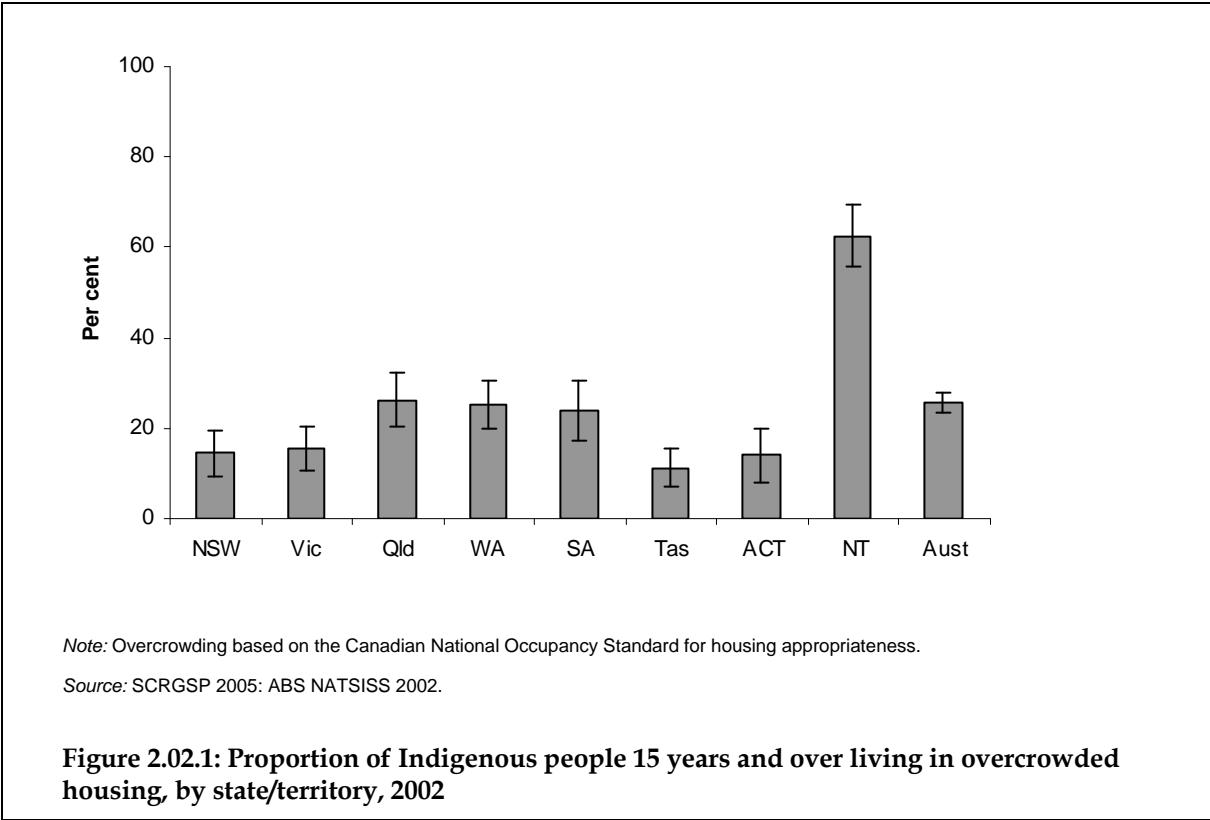


Table 2.02.3: Number and proportion of people aged 18 years and over living in overcrowded households,^(a) by Indigenous status and remoteness, 2004–05

	Major cities	Inner regional	Outer regional	Remote or very remote	Australia
One or more bedroom required					
Number of Indigenous persons	20,632	13,230	27,513	66,170	127,546
Proportion	14.3	13.8	25.3	52.5	26.9
Number of other persons	760,953	152,683	85,480	11,574	1,010,690
Proportion	5.8	3.9	4.1	5.0	5.2
Rate ratio	2.5	3.5	6.1	10.5	5.1
Two or more bedrooms required					
Number of Indigenous persons	7,852	3,412	11,559	42,664	65,487
Proportion	5.4	3.6	10.6	33.9	13.8
Number of other persons	135,218	16,256	11,620	2,060	165,154
Proportion	1.0	0.4	0.6	0.9	0.9
Rate ratio	5.3	8.6	18.9	37.9	16.1

(a) Based on Canadian National Occupancy Standard.

Source: AIHW analysis of 2004–05 NATSIHS and 2004–05 National Health Survey.

Overcrowding by remoteness

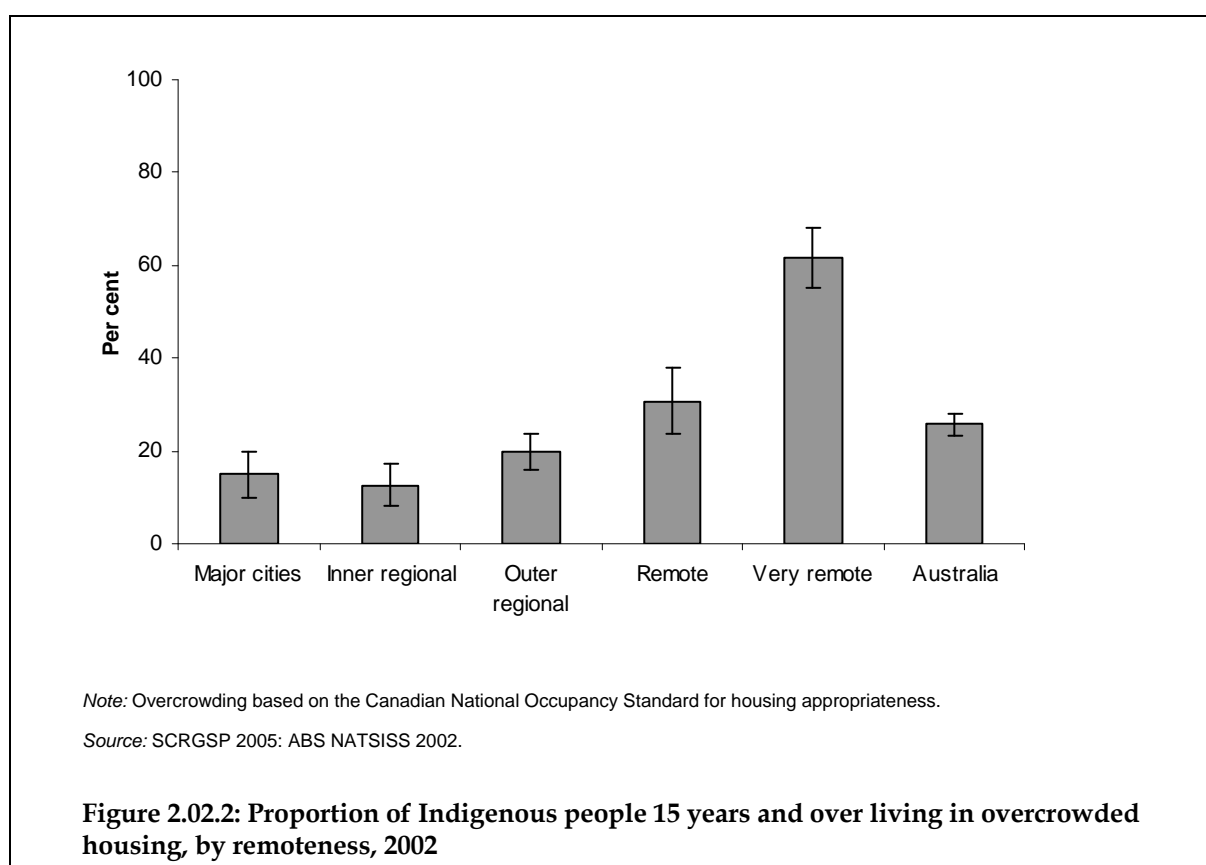
- In 2004–05, the proportion of Indigenous people aged 18 years and over living in overcrowded households was much higher in remote and very remote areas (52%) than Indigenous people in major cities (14%) (Table 2.02.3).
- In 2002, overcrowding also increased with remoteness with 62% of Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over living in very remote areas, 31% in remote areas and only 16% in non-remote areas (Table 2.02.4; Figure 2.02.2).

Table 2.02.4: Number and proportion of Indigenous Australians aged 15 years or over living in overcrowded households,^(a) by remoteness area, 2002

Remoteness category	Number	Proportion (%)
Major cities	12,800	14.9
Inner regional	6,900	12.6
Outer regional	12,700	19.9
<i>Total non-remote</i>	<i>32,500</i>	<i>15.8</i>
Remote	7,500	30.8
Very remote	32,600	61.7
<i>Total remote</i>	<i>40,100</i>	<i>52.0</i>
Total	72,600	25.7

(a) Based on the Canadian National Occupancy Standard for housing appropriateness.

Source: SCRGSP 2005: ABS NATSISS 2002.



Overcrowding by tenure type

- In 2002, of Indigenous households that were overcrowded, 83% were renters and 13% were home owners (Table 2.02.5).
- In 2001, overcrowding varied by tenure type with 42% of Indigenous households in Indigenous or mainstream community housing overcrowded in 2001, according to the

Canadian National Occupancy Standard. This compares with around 15% of Indigenous households in mainstream public housing or State Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing (SOMIH), 13% of private renters and 8% of home owners or purchasers (Table 2.02.6).

- In 2001, approximately 34% of Indigenous households that were renters of Indigenous or mainstream community housing were overcrowded according to the Proxy Occupancy Standard compared to 2% of other households (Table 2.02.7).

Table 2.02.5: Overcrowded Indigenous households using the Canadian National Occupancy Standard, by state/territory and tenure type, 2002

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas and ACT	NT ^(a)	Aust
Owner without a mortgage	1.5	7.2	3.4	0.7	2.3	1.5	0.4	2.0
Owner with a mortgage	18.8	13.6	15.8	5.1	4.5	24.6	2.4	11.1
Renter (excludes boarders)	79.7	71.7	78.6	84.9	85.6	70.8	94.0	83.2
Other	0.0	7.5	2.2	6.6	3.1	2.2	2.0	2.8
Total^(b)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

(a) Indigenous households only

(b) Includes not stated.

Note: Non-Indigenous comparisons are not available as information on number of additional bedrooms required was not collected in 2002 General Social Survey.

Source: AIHW analysis of 2002 NATSISS.

Table 2.02.6: Number and proportion of overcrowded Indigenous households, using the Canadian National Occupancy Standard, by tenure type and state/territory, 2001

Tenure type	NSW & ACT	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	NT	Aust^(a)
No. of overcrowded Indigenous households								
Home owner/purchaser	1,290	339	901	390	204	175	192	3,491
Renter mainstream public housing/SOMIH	1,335	275	1,108	989	372	118	317	4,514
Renter Indigenous/mainstream community housing	563	47	1,624	1,041	297	7	2,835	6,414
Private renter	1,836	386	1,922	386	157	131	187	5,005
Other	424	89	565	284	111	32	345	1,850
Total	5,448	1,136	6,120	3,090	1,141	463	3,876	21,274
Total number of Indigenous households^(b)								
Home owner/purchaser	17,407	4,665	11,259	4,812	2,627	3,835	1,619	46,224
Renter mainstream public housing/SOMIH	10,795	2,232	6,084	4,829	2,629	1,218	1,605	29,395
Renter Indigenous/mainstream community housing	3,075	351	4,506	2,118	779	53	4,499	15,381
Private renter	14,495	3,253	13,546	3,446	1,758	1,678	1,065	39,244
Other	4,189	1,035	4,080	2,088	800	455	1,864	14,511
Total	49,961	11,536	39,475	17,293	8,593	7,239	10,652	144,755

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Table 2.02.6 (continued): Number and proportion of overcrowded Indigenous households, using the Canadian National Occupancy Standard, by tenure type and state/territory, 2001

Tenure type	NSW & ACT	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	NT	Aust ^(a)
Proportion of overcrowded households (%)								
Home owner/purchaser	7.4	7.3	8.0	8.1	7.8	4.6	11.9	7.6
Renter mainstream public housing/SOMIH	12.4	12.3	18.2	20.5	14.1	9.7	19.8	15.4
Renter Indigenous/mainstream community housing	18.3	13.4	36.0	49.2	38.1	13.2	63.0	41.7
Private renter	12.7	11.9	14.2	11.2	8.9	7.8	17.6	12.8
Other	10.1	8.6	13.8	13.6	13.9	7.0	18.5	12.7
Total	10.9	9.8	15.5	17.9	13.3	6.4	36.4	14.7

(a) Includes not stated state/territory.

(b) Refers to the total number of households for which household groups and dwelling details were unknown.

Notes

1. 'Renter mainstream public housing/SOMIH' includes households in public housing and State Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing.
2. 'Renter Indigenous /mainstream community housing' includes households in mainstream and Indigenous Community Housing.
3. 'Private renter' includes those renting privately with landlord not in same household and those renting from a real estate agent.
4. 'Other' includes households renting from relatives, employers, caravan park owners/managers and other landlords not elsewhere classified as well as those living rent-free and those in rent-buy schemes.
5. Households are considered overcrowded if one or more additional bedroom is required to satisfy the Canadian National Occupancy Standard.

Source: ABS Census 2001, customised tables.

Table 2.02.7: Number and proportion of overcrowded households, using the Proxy Occupancy Standard, by Indigenous status, state/territory and tenure type, 2001

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust ^(a)
No. of overcrowded households									
Indigenous									
Home owner/purchaser	810	190	580	250	110	100	20	110	2,160
Renter mainstream public housing/SOMIH	660	160	690	630	210	50	30	240	2,660
Renter Indigenous/mainstream community housing	380	30	1,260	870	240	2,530	5,320
Private and other renter	890	180	1,110	270	110	60	20	190	2,840
Total	2,810	580	3,740	2,110	690	220	60	3,160	13,380
Other^(b)									
Home owner/purchaser	26,690	20,130	8,200	3,620	4,160	1,050	560	470	64,900
Renter mainstream public housing/SOMIH	2,860	1,640	730	280	470	130	170	70	6,360
Renter Indigenous/mainstream community housing	240	100	80	20	40	10	..	10	480
Private and other renter	15,810	6,790	5,070	1,420	1,060	330	170	260	30,900
Total	46,910	29,630	14,450	5,520	5,880	1,540	910	840	105,700

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Table 2.02.7 (continued): Number and proportion of overcrowded households, using the Proxy Occupancy Standard, by Indigenous status, state/territory and tenure type, 2001

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust ^(a)
Proportion of overcrowded households (per cent)									
Indigenous									
Home owner/purchaser	4.8	4.0	5.2	5.2	4.1	2.5	2.6	7.0	4.7
Renter mainstream public housing/SOMIH	6.4	7.0	11.3	13.1	7.9	4.4	6.2	14.5	9.1
Renter Indigenous/mainstream community housing	12.5	8.5	27.7	39.4	31.2	55.2	34.0
Private and other renter	5.5	4.9	7.1	6.1	4.8	3.3	4.0	11.6	6.1
Total	5.9	5.1	9.8	12.6	8.2	3.1	4.1	32.4	9.5
Other^(b)									
Home owner/purchaser	1.8	1.7	1.0	0.8	1.1	0.9	0.7	2.1	1.4
Renter mainstream public housing /SOMIH	2.8	3.2	1.8	1.2	1.1	1.3	1.8	2.0	2.2
Renter Indigenous/mainstream community housing	2.6	1.6	1.5	0.7	0.9	0.7	..	1.6	1.7
Private and other renter	3.1	2.1	1.5	1.0	1.1	1.1	0.8	1.6	2.1
Total	2.2	1.8	1.2	0.9	1.1	0.9	0.8	1.9	1.6

(a) Includes not stated state/territory.

(b) Refers to the total number of households for which household groups and dwelling details were unknown.

Notes

1. 'Renter mainstream public housing/SOMIH' includes households in public housing and State Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing.
2. 'Renter Indigenous/mainstream community housing' includes households in mainstream and Indigenous Community Housing.
3. 'Private and other renter' includes those renting privately with landlord not in same household and those renting from a real estate agent, relatives, employers, caravan park owners/managers and other landlords not elsewhere classified.
4. 'Total' includes households living rent-free, those in rent-buy schemes and those with tenure type not stated.
5. Based on the Proxy Occupancy Standard.

Source: ABS Census 2001, customised tables.

Overcrowding by self-assessed health status

- In 2004–05, there was little difference in the proportion of Indigenous Australians living in overcrowded and non-overcrowded households who reported their health as excellent/very good (42% and 44% respectively).
- After adjusting for differences in age structure, Indigenous Australians in both overcrowded and non-overcrowded households were twice as likely to report their health as fair/poor as non-Indigenous Australians. (Table 2.02.8)

Table 2.02.8: Persons living in overcrowded households, using Canadian National Occupancy Standard, by Indigenous status and self-reported health status, persons aged 15 years and over, 2004–05

Self-assessed health status	Overcrowded				Not overcrowded			
	Indig.	Indigenous age standardised	Non-Indig. age standardised	Ratio	Indig.	Indig. age standardised	Non-Indig. age standardised	Ratio
	%	%	%		%	%	%	
Excellent/very good	41.8	32.4	49.8	0.7	43.7	37.2	57.0	0.7
Good	39.0	37.6	30.0	1.3	33.5	33.8	27.6	1.2
Fair/poor	19.2	30.0	20.2	1.5	22.8	29.0	15.3	1.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	..	100.0	100.0	100.0	..

Source: AIHW analysis of 2004–05 NATSIHS and 2004–05 National Health Survey.

Data quality issues

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS) and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS)

The NATSIHS and NATSISS both use the standard Indigenous status question. The survey samples were specifically designed to select a representative sample of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and thus overcome the problem inherent in most national surveys with small and unrepresentative Indigenous samples. As with other surveys, the NATSIHS and NATSISS are subject to sampling and non-sampling errors. Calculations of standard errors and significance testing help to identify the accuracy of the estimates and differences.

Information recorded in these surveys are essentially 'as reported' by respondents. The ABS makes every effort to collect accurate information from respondents, particularly through careful questionnaire design, pre-testing of questionnaires, use of trained interviewers and assistance from Indigenous facilitators. Nevertheless, some responses may be affected by imperfect recall or individual interpretation of survey questions.

Non-Indigenous comparisons are available through the National Health Survey (NHS) and the 2002 General Social Survey. The NHS was conducted in major cities, regional and remote areas, but very remote areas were excluded from the sample. Time series comparisons are available through the 1995 and 2001 National Health Surveys and the 1994 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey.

In remote communities there were some modifications to the NATSIHS and NATSISS content in order to address language and cultural appropriateness in traditional communities, as well as to assist respondents in understanding the concepts. Some questions were excluded and some reworded. Also, paper forms were used in communities in remote areas and computer-assisted interview (CAI) instruments were used in non-remote areas. The CAI process included built in edit checks and sequencing.

Further information on NATSIHS and NATSISS data quality issues can be found in the national publications (ABS 2004a, 2006).

Overcrowding data

The NATSISS information on household type and number of bedrooms can only be used to assess overcrowding using the Canadian National Occupancy Standard.

Census of Population and Housing

The Census uses the National health data dictionary standard Indigenous status question and it is asked for each household member. Measures that are drawn from Census data are subject to broad data concerns relating to the unexplainable growth in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population since the 1991 Census, and limitations of self-identification. Other Census data issues relate to the accuracy of the Census count itself, for example, whether people are counted more than once, or are undercounted (ABS 1996).

For the 2002 NATSISS it was estimated that there were 165,700 Indigenous households compared with 144,700 enumerated in the 2001 Census. While the Census data are adjusted for undercounts at the person level to arrive at the Estimated Resident Population, no such adjustment is done at the household level. This affects the accuracy of the person counts at the household level to provide adjusted household estimates.

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Data quality issues (continued)

Housing data

The Census data may understate the number of households and residents in community rental housing. The Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey counted 21,287 permanent dwellings managed by Indigenous housing organisations, of which 19,618 were occupied. The Census data for the same period found 15,733 households with Indigenous residents in community rental housing. It is likely that some households with Indigenous residents have recorded a state/territory housing authority or private owner as their landlord on the Census when they were actually renting community housing (SCRGSP 2003)

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