

2.11 Single-parent families by age group

Household composition, in particular single-parent families in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population

Data sources

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

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).

Census of Population and Housing

The ABS Census of Population and Housing is conducted by the ABS at five-yearly intervals with 2006 being 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.

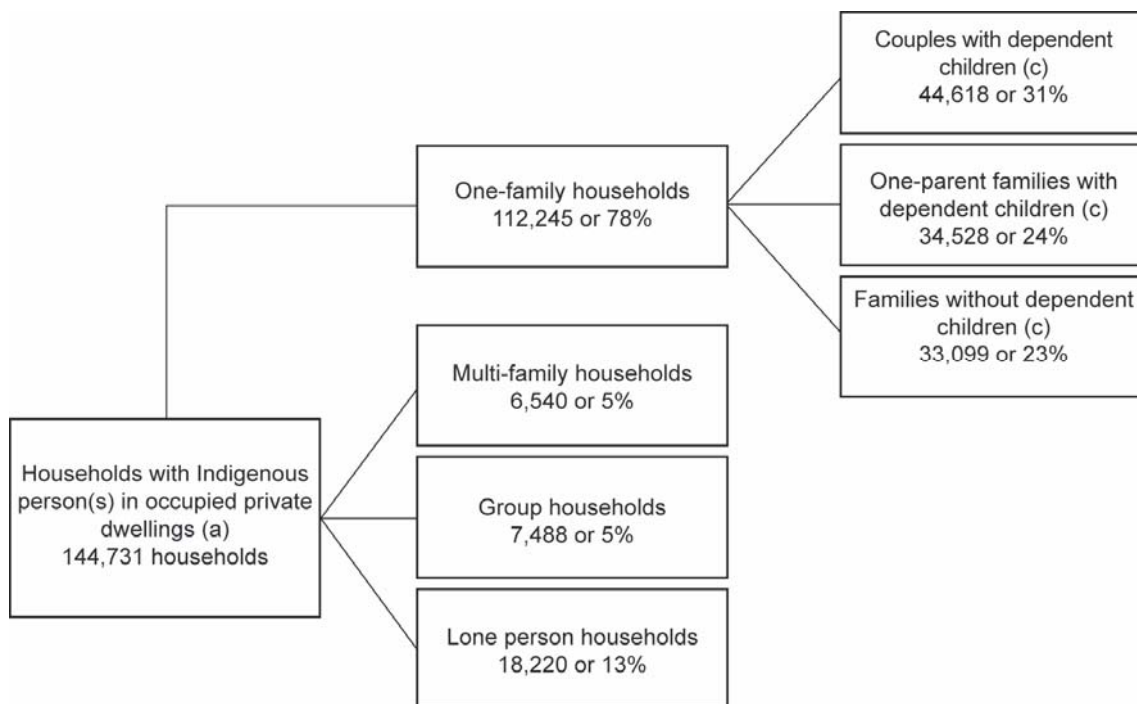
The Census collects data on family type, household type, household composition and relationships in the household. Indigenous households are defined as households with at least one Indigenous person, of any age resident on Census night. One-parent (single-parent) families are defined as families comprising a person who has no spouse or partner usually present in the household but who forms a parent-child relationship with at least one child usually resident in the household. The child may be either dependent or non-dependent.

Care should be taken in interpreting information on relationships among people in a household as the standard Census relationship classifications may not fully represent the complexity of family relationships in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Data analyses

Household composition

- In 2001, of the 144,731 Indigenous households, 112,245 (78%) were one-family households, 18,220 (13%) were lone-person households, 7,488 (5%) were group households and 6,540 (5%) were multi-family households (Figure 2.11.1).
- Of the 112,245 one-family households, 44,618 (31%) were couples with dependent children, 34,528 (24%) were one-parent families with dependent children and 33,099 (23%) were families without dependent children (Table 2.11.1).
- In 2001, approximately 34,528 households with Indigenous person(s) were one-parent families with dependent children. This was 41% of all Indigenous households with dependent children. Approximately 20% of other households with dependent children were one-parent families (Table 2.11.1).
- Approximately 15% of Indigenous households with dependent children had four or more children compared to 6% of other households. Indigenous one-parent families with dependent children were twice as likely to have four children and seven times as likely to have seven or more children as other one-parent families.
- In 2001, one-family Indigenous households were three times as likely as other one-family households to be one-parent families with dependents (31% compared with 10%), less likely to be families without dependants (30% compared with 50%) and equally likely to be couples with dependent children (around 40%) (Figure 2.11.2).
- In 2001, among Indigenous persons in occupied private dwellings, approximately 39% were children under the age of 15 years. This compared to 20% among non-Indigenous persons. Indigenous persons were also twice as likely to be classified as a lone parent (8% compared with 4%) and half as likely to be classified as a husband, wife or partner in a couple relationship as non-Indigenous persons (23% compared with 46%) (Table 2.11.2).
- Approximately 6% of Indigenous persons were classified as extended family members (other related individual) living with relatives other than their spouse/partner or children compared to 2% of non-Indigenous persons (Table 2.11.2).



- (a) Households occupied by usual residents, where household could be classified.
- (b) Households with two or more families.
- (c) Dependent children are defined as children under 15 years of age, or those aged 15–24 years who were full-time students.

Source: ABS 2003.

Figure 2.11.1: Indigenous household composition, 2001

Table 2.11.1: Number and percentage of dependent children^{(a)(b)} in occupied private dwellings, by household composition and Indigenous status, 2001

Number of dependent children							
Number of dependent children	One-family households			Total	Two-family households	Three-family households	All households with dependent children
	Couples with dependent children	One-parent families with dependent children					
Households with Indigenous person(s)							
1	13,403	13,770	27,173	617	16	27,806	
2	15,232	10,648	25,880	1,119	69	27,068	
3	9,231	5,880	15,111	919	107	16,137	
4	4,444	2,724	7,168	556	152	7,876	
5	1,375	994	2,369	288	132	2,789	
6	549	318	867	169	116	1,152	
7 or more	385	191	576	218	249	1,043	
Total	44,618	34,528	79,146	3,882	844	83,872	
Percentage	53.2	41.2	94.4	4.6	1.0	100.0	
Rate ratio^(c)	0.7	2.1	1.0	3.0	37.3	1.0	
Other households							
1	610,226	234,824	845,050	13,044	139	858,233	
2	781,481	156,617	938,098	14,837	179	953,114	
3	326,035	54,797	380,832	5,452	139	386,423	
4	85,940	14,268	100,208	1,683	93	101,984	
5	15,419	3,291	18,710	531	34	19,275	
6	4,381	660	5,041	181	20	5,242	
7 or more	1,876	226	2,102	104	20	2,226	
Total	1,825,358	464,681	2,290,039	35,834	628	2,326,501	
Percentage	78.5	20.0	98.4	1.5	0.0	100.0	
All households							
1	623,629	248,594	872,223	13,661	155	886,039	
2	796,713	167,265	963,978	15,956	248	980,182	
3	335,266	60,677	395,943	6,371	246	402,560	
4	90,384	16,992	107,376	2,239	245	109,860	
5	16,794	4,285	21,079	819	166	22,064	
6	4,930	978	5,908	350	136	6,394	
7 or more	2,261	417	2,678	322	269	3,269	
Total	1,869,976	499,209	2,369,185	39,716	1,472	2,410,373	
Percentage	77.6	20.7	98.3	1.6	0.1	100.0	

(continued)

Table 2.11.1 (continued): Number and percentage of dependent children^{(a)(b)} in occupied private dwellings, by household composition and Indigenous status, 2001

Percentages and rate ratio							
Number of dependent children	One-family households			Total	Two-family households	Three-family households	All households with dependent children
	Couples with dependent children	One-parent families with dependent children					
Households with Indigenous person(s)							
1	30.0	39.9	34.3	15.9	1.9	33.2	
2	34.1	30.8	32.7	28.8	8.2	32.3	
3	20.7	17.0	19.1	23.7	12.7	19.2	
4	10.0	7.9	9.1	14.3	18.0	9.4	
5	3.1	2.9	3.0	7.4	15.6	3.3	
6	1.2	0.9	1.1	4.4	13.7	1.4	
7 or more	0.9	0.6	0.7	5.6	29.5	1.2	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
Other households							
1	33.4	50.5	36.9	36.4	22.1	36.9	
2	42.8	33.7	41.0	41.4	28.5	41.0	
3	17.9	11.8	16.6	15.2	22.1	16.6	
4	4.7	3.1	4.4	4.7	14.8	4.4	
5	0.8	0.7	0.8	1.5	5.4	0.8	
6	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.5	3.2	0.2	
7 or more	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.3	3.2	0.1	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
Rate ratio^(c)							
1	0.9	0.8	0.9	0.5	0.2	0.9	
2	0.8	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.5	0.8	
3	1.2	1.4	1.1	1.5	0.8	1.2	
4	2.1	2.3	2.0	2.5	1.1	2.1	
5	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.6	1.4	3.6	
6	4.7	4.7	4.4	4.9	1.5	5.2	
7 or more	7.1	6.6	6.4	6.9	1.6	9.2	
Total	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	

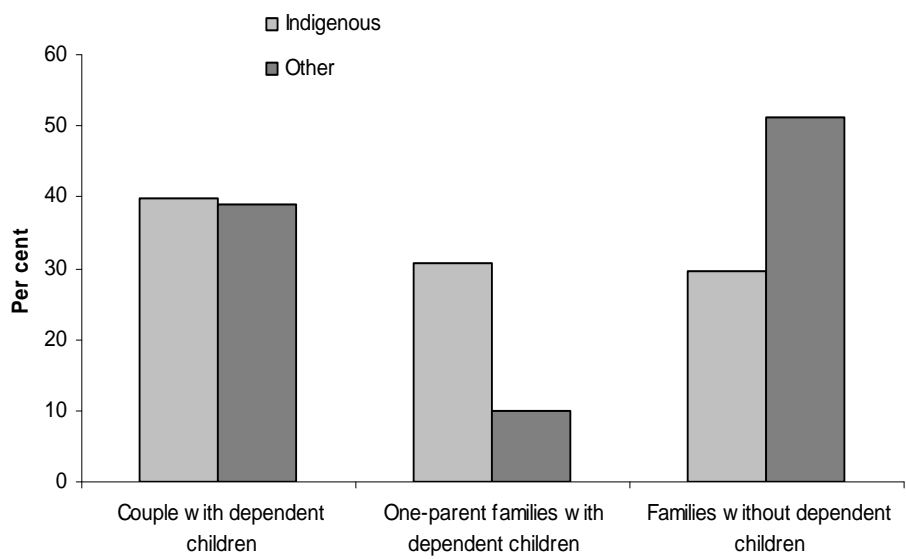
(a) Under 15 years of age. Includes up to three temporarily absent children.

(b) Persons enumerated at home.

(c) Ratio—Indigenous:other.

Note: One-parent families in multiple households have not been separately identified.

Source: ABS 2003.



Source: ABS 2003.

Figure 2.11.2: Selected family types as a proportion of all one-family households, 2001

Table 2.11.2: Relationship in household, persons in occupied private dwellings, 2001

	Indigenous persons		Non-Indigenous persons		All persons	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Husband, wife or partner ^(a)	90,937	23.1	7,826,912	45.7	8,001,824	43.9
Lone parent	31,166	7.9	721,911	4.2	762,632	4.2
Child under 15 years	151,453	38.5	3,489,370	20.4	3,709,854	20.4
Dependent student (15–24 years)	14,294	3.6	855,268	5.0	876,048	4.8
Non-dependent child	28,028	7.1	1,067,043	6.2	1,111,863	6.1
Other related individual						
Brother/sister	7,276	1.9	172,704	1.0	183,528	1.0
Father/mother	2,348	0.6	85,201	0.5	88,801	0.5
Grandchild	2,473	0.6	18,891	0.1	21,909	0.1
Grandfather/grandmother	548	0.1	9,907	0.1	10,722	0.1
Cousin	2,243	0.6	12,182	0.1	14,688	0.1
Uncle/aunt	1,321	0.3	7,390	—	8,891	0.1
Nephew/niece	3,980	1.0	16,935	0.1	21,289	0.1
Other	2,473	0.6	27,915	0.2	33,732	0.2
Total	22,662	5.8	351,125	2.1	383,560	2.1
Unrelated individual	5,938	1.5	140,590	0.8	151,165	0.8
Group household member	8,870	2.3	574,260	3.4	596,040	3.3
Lone person	18,220	4.6	1,544,001	9.0	1,616,214	8.9
Total^(b)	393,682	100.0	17,139,209	100.0	18,229,855	100.0

(a) Includes people in tribal marriages and same-sex couples.

(b) Includes persons not at home on Census night, and those in other not classifiable households.

Source: ABS 2003.

Additional information

Lone parents

Information on lone parents is available from the 2004–05 NATSIHS and is presented below.

- In 2004–05, an estimated 46,600 Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over were lone parents (16%).
- Around three-quarters of Indigenous lone parents were living in one-family households with only the family members present (Table 2.11.3).
- Indigenous lone parents were around four times as likely as non-Indigenous lone parents to be living in households with two or more families with only the family members present.
- Around 18% of Indigenous persons with reported fair/poor health were lone parents compared to 15% of Indigenous persons with excellent/very good/good health status (Table 2.11.4).
- A higher proportion of Indigenous persons whose highest year of school completed was Year 11 or below were lone parents than Indigenous persons who completed Year 12 (19% compared to 12%).
- Approximately 10% of Indigenous persons who were employed were lone parents compared to 23% of Indigenous persons who were not in the labour force.
- A higher proportion of renters were lone parents (19%) than home owners (8%).
- Approximately 19% of Indigenous persons who experienced stressors in the last 12 months were lone parents.

Table 2.11.3: Lone parents, by number of families in household and Indigenous status, 2004–05

	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Rate ratio
	%	%	
One-family household with only family members present ^(a)	75.2	90.4	0.8
One or more family household with non-family members present	1.5	4.1	0.4
Two or more family household with only family members present	23.3	5.6	4.2
Total	100.0	100.0	1.0
Total number	46,635	810,581	857,216

(a) Including lone-person households.

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

Table 2.11.4: Lone parents, by selected population characteristics: Indigenous persons aged 15 years and older, 2004–05

	Lone parent	Other	Total
	%	%	%
Self-assessed health status			
Excellent/very good/good	15.2	84.8	100.0
Fair/poor	18.2	81.8	100.0
Financial stress—unable to raise \$2,000 within a week for something important			
	19.1	80.9	100.0
Location			
Remote	13.2	86.8	100.0
Non-remote	16.9	83.1	100.0
Highest year of school completed			
Year 12	12.3	87.7	100.0
Year 11 or below	18.6	81.4	100.0
Whether has non-school qualification			
Has a non-school qualification	16.6	83.4	100.0
Does not have a non-school qualification	17.6	82.4	100.0
Employment			
Employed	10.1	89.9	100.0
Unemployed	13.8	86.2	100.0
Not in the labour force	23.0	77.0	100.0
Housing			
Owner	8.1	91.9	100.0
Renter	18.7	81.3	100.0
Stressors in last 12 months^(a)			
Serious illness or disability	16.1	83.9	100.0
Other stressors	19.6	80.4	100.0
Total experienced stressors	19.1	80.9	100.0
No stressors	13.8	86.2	100.0
Total	17.9	82.1	100.0
Total persons aged 15 years and over			
	15.9	84.1	100.0
Total number persons aged 15 years and over	46,635	247,006	293,641

(a) Data are based on Indigenous persons aged 18 years and older.

Source: AIHW analysis of 2004–05 NATSIHS.

Data quality issues

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS)

The NATSIHS uses the standard Indigenous status question. The NATSIHS sample was specifically designed to select a representative sample of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and thus overcomes the problem inherent in most national surveys with small and unrepresentative Indigenous samples. As with other surveys, the NATSIHS is 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 this survey is 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). 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 Survey.

In remote communities there were some modifications to the NATSIHS 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 data quality issues can be found in the national publication (ABS 2006).

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 NATSIHS 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.

Population data

The Census questions were designed to elicit population data according to Western social categories. Care should be taken when interpreting information as the standard Census relationship classifications used not fully represent the complexity of family relationships in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures (ABS 2003).

References

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