

2.18 Tobacco use

The proportion of Indigenous Australians who are current regular smokers

Data sources

Data for this indicator come from the 2004–05 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey and 2004 National Drug Strategy Household Survey.

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 6-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 Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS)

The NDSHS is conducted by the AIHW every 3 years and collects information relating to drug use in Australia. The sample size for the 2004 survey was 29,445 persons aged 12 years and over.

The NDSHS does not have an enhanced Indigenous sample. Therefore, only a small number of Indigenous respondents are picked up in this survey. In 2004, approximately 150 Indigenous respondents were included. The sample size for Indigenous Australians is very small and therefore the estimates should be interpreted with caution (ABS & AIHW 2005). This small Indigenous sample size also limits the reliability of time series analyses.

NDSHS data are reportable at the national level only. Data are not available for remoteness areas, regional areas and state and territory levels.

Data analyses

Smoking status

- In 2004–05, approximately 46% of Indigenous Australians aged 18 years and over reported they were current daily smokers compared with 21% of non-Indigenous Australians. Around 24% of Indigenous adults were ex-smokers compared with 30% of non-Indigenous adults.

Smoking status by age group and sex

- A higher proportion of Indigenous and non-Indigenous males were current daily smokers (48% and 24% respectively) than Indigenous and non-Indigenous females (45% and 18% respectively) (Table 2.18.1).

- Indigenous adults aged 25–34 and 35–44 years were most likely to report being current daily smokers (55%). The lowest proportion of Indigenous adults who were current daily smokers were aged 55 years and over (30%).

Table 2.18.1: Smoker status, by Indigenous status, sex and age group, 2004–05

Smoker status	18–24		25–34		35–44		45–54		55 and over		Total		Total age-standardised ^(a)	
	Indig.	Non-Indig.	Indig.	Non-Indig.	Indig.	Non-Indig.	Indig.	Non-Indig.	Indig.	Non-Indig.	Indig.	Non-Indig.	Indig.	Non-Indig.
Per cent														
Males														
Current smoker	53	33	57	32	59	31	52	27	36	15	53	26	50	26
Daily	50	29	56	29	57	29	50	25	35	14	51	24	48	24
Other	3 ^(c)	4	1 ^(c)	3	2 ^(c)	2	2 ^(c)	2	1 ^(d)	1 ^(c)	2	2	2	2
Ex-smoker	13	13	15	24	15	28	30	37	43	55	20	35	26	35
Never smoked	34	54	28	43	25	41	19	36	21	30	26	39	24	39
Total number^(b)	26,714	939,483	32,574	1,368,120	27,186	1,439,208	18,812	1,340,599	15,193	2,170,272	139,595	7,666,352	139,595	7,666,352
Females														
Current smoker	52	25	55	26	59	25	52	21	27	10	51	20	47	20
Daily	51	23	54	23	54	23	51	20	26	9	49	18	45	18
Other	1 ^(c)	2 ^(c)	1 ^(c)	3	5 ^(c)	2	1 ^(d)	1 ^(c)	1 ^(c)	1	2 ^(c)	2	2 ^(c)	2
Ex-smoker	12	14	18	24	19	25	19	29	33	29	19	25	22	25
Never smoked	36	62	27	50	22	50	29	50	40	62	30	55	31	55
Total number^(b)	30,009	917,595	37,198	1,393,234	31,871	1,460,358	20,766	1,364,981	17,974	2,359,406	154,046	7,866,025	154,046	7,866,025
Persons														
Current smoker	52	29	56	29	59	28	51	23	31	13	51	23	48	23
Daily	50	26	55	26	55	26	50	22	30	12	49	21	46	21
Other	2 ^(c)	3	1	3	4 ^(c)	2	1 ^(c)	2	1 ^(c)	1	2 ^(c)	2	2	2
Ex-smoker	12	13	16	24	17	27	24	33	37	41	19	30	24	30
Never smoked	35	58	28	47	24	45	24	43	32	46	30	47	28	47
Total number^(b)	56,723	1,857,078	69,772	2,761,354	59,057	2,899,566	39,578	2,705,580	33,167	4,529,678	293,641	15,532,377	293,641	15,532,377

(a) Directly age-standardised proportions.

(b) Includes smoker status not known.

(c) Estimate has a relative standard error of between 25% and 50% and should be used with caution.

(d) Estimate has a relative standard error greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use.

Source: ABS 2006.

Smoking status by state/territory

- In 2004–05, the proportion of Indigenous persons aged 18 years and over who were current smokers ranged from 44% in the Australian Capital Territory to 56% in South Australia and the Northern Territory (Table 2.18.2).
- The proportion of Indigenous ex-smokers in 2004–05 ranged from 14% in the Northern Territory to 24% in Victoria.
- The proportion of Indigenous adults who reported that they had never smoked was similar across most states and territories.

Table 2.18.2: Smoker status, by state/territory, Indigenous persons aged 18 years and over, 2004–05

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
	Per cent								
Current smoker	53	52	51	48	56	51	44	56	52
Daily	51	50	50	44	53	50	41	54	50
Other	2 ^(a)	2 ^(a)	1 ^(a)	4 ^(a)	3 ^(a)	1 ^(a)	3 ^(b)	2	2
Ex-smoker	20	24	20	22	17	22	25	14	20
Never smoked	27	24	29	30	27	27	31	30	28
Total^(c)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total number	75,000	16,500	70,600	36,500	14,500	9,500	2,300	33,400	258,300

(a) Estimate has a relative standard error of between 25% and 50% and should be used with caution.

(b) Estimate has a relative standard error greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use.

(c) Includes smoker status not known.

Source: ABS and AIHW analysis of 2004–05 NATSIHS.

Smoking status by remoteness

Table 2.18.3 presents the smoking status of Indigenous and non-Indigenous adults by remoteness area for 2004–05.

- The proportion of Indigenous adults who reported they were current smokers was similar across all remoteness areas.
- The rate ratio of Indigenous to non-Indigenous current smokers was higher in Major Cities (2.1) than in Remote areas of Australia (1.4). This is because, although the proportion of Indigenous adults who smoked was similar, the proportion of non-Indigenous Australians who reported they were current smokers was higher in Remote areas (34%) than in Major Cities (22%).

Table 2.18.3: Smoker status, by remoteness area and Indigenous status, persons aged 18 years and over, 2004–05

Smoker status	Major Cities			Inner Regional			Outer Regional			Remote			Very Remote ^(a)			Australia		
	Indig.	Non-Indig.	Rate ratio	Indig.	Non-Indig.	Rate ratio	Indig.	Non-Indig.	Rate ratio	Indig.	Non-Indig.	Rate ratio	Indig.	Non-Indig.	Rate ratio	Indig.	Non-Indig.	Rate ratio
	%	%		%	%		%	%		%	%		%	%		%	%	
Current smoker	46	22	2.1*	47	26	1.8*	50	27	1.9*	47	34	1.4*	51	n.a.	—	48	23	2.1*
Daily	45	20	2.3*	46	24	1.9*	48	25	1.9*	45	32	1.4*	48	n.a.	—	46	21	2.2*
Other	2 ^(d)	2	0.9	1 ^(c)	2	0.6	2 ^(c)	2	1.0	2 ^(c)	2 ^(c)	1.4	3 ^(c)	n.a.	—	2	2	1.0
Ex-smoker	27	30	0.9	25	31	0.8*	22	31	0.7*	25	27	0.9	18	n.a.	—	24	30	0.8*
Never smoked	26	49	0.5*	28	44	0.6*	29	42	0.7*	28	40	0.7*	31	n.a.	—	28	47	0.6*
Total^(b)	100.0	100.0	..	100.0	100.0	..	100.0	100.0	..	100.0	100.0	..	100.0	n.a.	..	100.0	100.0	..

* Represents statistically significant differences in the Indigenous/ non-Indigenous comparisons.

(a) The National Health Survey did not collect data in Very Remote Australia.

(b) Includes smoker status not known.

(c) Estimate is subject to sampling variability too high for most practical purposes.

(d) Estimate has a relative standard error greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use.

Note: Data are directly age-standardised.

Source: ABS and AIHW analysis of 2004–05 NATSIHS and 2004–05 NHS.

Smoking status over time

- The proportion of Indigenous adults who reported they were current smokers was similar in 2001 and 2004–05 (51% and 48%) (Table 2.18.4).
- The rate ratios of Indigenous to non-Indigenous smokers, ex-smokers and non-smokers were also similar in 2001 and 2004–05.
- Data on the smoking status of Indigenous Australians were collected in the 1995 National Health Survey, but they are available for non-remote areas only. The proportion of Indigenous adults in non-remote areas who reported they were current daily smokers was similar in 1995, 2001 and 2004–05 (50%, 48% and 49% respectively) (ABS 2006).

Table 2.18.4: Smoker status, by Indigenous status, persons aged 18 years and over, 2001 and 2004–05

	2001			2004–05		
	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Rate ratio	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Rate ratio
	Per cent					
Current smoker	51	24	2.1*	48	23	2.1*
Daily	49	22	2.2*	46	21	2.2*
Other	2 ^(a)	2	1.2	2	2	1.0
Ex-smoker	21	26	0.8*	24	30	0.8*
Never smoked	28	50	0.6*	28	47	0.6*
Not known	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	100.0	100.0	..	100.0	100.0	..

* Represents statistically significant differences in the Indigenous/non-Indigenous comparisons.

(a) Estimate has a relative standard error of between 25% and 50% and should be used with caution.

Note: Data are directly age-standardised.

Source: ABS and AIHW analysis of 2001 NHS (Indigenous supplement), 2004–05 NATSIHS and 2004–05 NHS.

Prevalence by selected population and health characteristics

- In 2004–05, Indigenous Australians aged 18 years and over were more likely to report being a current smoker if they were in the lowest (1st) household income quintile than if they were in the highest (55% compared with 32%); were in the most disadvantaged SEFIA (socio-economic index for areas) quintile (1st) than if they were in the least disadvantaged (52% compared with 25%); and if they were unemployed than if they were employed (76% compared with 42%). Similar trends were reported for non-Indigenous Australians (Table 2.18.5).
- Indigenous Australians were more likely to report being a current smoker if they did not have a non-school qualification than if they did (52% compared with 41%) or if the highest year of schooling completed was Year 9 or below than if they completed Year 12 (58% compared with 29%).
- A higher proportion of Indigenous Australians aged 18 years and over with a self-assessed health status of fair/poor reported being a current smoker than those with a self-assessed health status of excellent/very good (57% compared with 40%). Indigenous Australians were slightly more likely to report being an ex-smoker if they had diabetes than if they did not (27% compared with 22%) and if they had cancer than if they did not (29% compared with 24%). A higher proportion of Indigenous Australians without cancer reported they had never smoked (28%) than those with cancer (21%).
- Indigenous Australians aged 18 years and over were more likely to report being a current smoker if they drank at short- or long-term risky/high-risk levels than if they did not (long-term 66% compared with 45%, short-term 67% compared with 49%).
- Indigenous Australians aged 18 years and over were more likely to report being a current smoker if they reported their exercise level as low/sedentary rather than high (49% compared with 32%); if they reported not eating fruit daily (65%) compared with those who did (46%); if they reported not eating vegetables daily (56%) compared with those who did (48%); and if they were normal or underweight rather than if they were overweight or obese (57% compared with 43%).

Table 2.18.5: Proportion^(a) of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians aged 18 years and over, by smoking status and selected population characteristics, 2004–05

	Indigenous Australians			Non-Indigenous Australians		
	Current smoker	Ex-smoker	Never smoked	Current smoker	Ex-smoker	Never smoked
Household income						
1st quintile (lowest)	55.3*	22.4*	22.3*	32.4*	26.0*	41.7*
5th quintile (highest)	31.7*	26.4	41.9*	18.3*	31.6	50.1*
SEIFA (Socio-economic Indexes for Areas)						
1st quintile (most disadvantaged)	52.3*	21.2*	26.5*	31.4*	28.2*	40.4*
5th quintile (least disadvantaged)	24.7*	34.8 ^(b)	40.6*	15.7*	32.0	52.3*
Employment						
Employed	41.5*	25.9	32.6*	23.0*	30.1	46.8*
Unemployed	75.9*	14.1*	10.0*	41.5*	23.7*	34.8*
Not in the labour force	53.7*	21.9*	24.3*	26.0*	27.8*	46.2*
Has non-school qualification						
Yes	40.7*	26.5	32.7*	19.6*	31.8	48.7*
No	52.1*	22.2	25.7*	28.5*	28.0	43.5*
Highest year of school completed						
Year 12	28.6*	28.7	42.7*	17.0*	30.1	52.9*
Year 9 or below	57.9*	21.0*	21.1*	37.5*	26.2*	36.3*
Housing						
Owner	37.4	23.4	39.2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Renter	57.4	18.4	24.2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Self-assessed health status						
Excellent/very good	40.4*	25.0	34.6*	18.9*	30.1	51.0*
Good	49.7*	22.1*	28.2*	27.1*	28.9*	44.0*
Fair/poor	56.8*	22.5*	20.7*	35.3*	27.4*	37.2*
Number of long-term health conditions						
None	52.1*	18.8	29.1*	28.8*	18.3	52.8*
One	54.8*	14.9*	30.2*	24.2*	26.1*	49.7*
Two	44.4*	23.0	32.7*	20.8*	27.5	51.6*
Three or more	48.9*	25.6*	25.4*	25.6*	31.7*	42.7*
Circulatory problems						
Yes	50.8*	23.5*	25.7*	22.2*	31.1*	46.6*
No	47.4*	23.6*	29.0*	24.1*	28.7*	47.2*
Has diabetes						
Yes	45.4*	26.7	27.9*	21.1*	31.4	47.5*
No	49.9*	22.2*	28.0*	23.2*	29.6*	47.2*

(continued)

Table 2.18.5 (continued): Proportion^(a) of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians aged 18 years and over, by smoking status and selected population characteristics, 2004–05

	Indigenous Australians			Non-Indigenous Australians		
	Current smoker	Ex-smoker	Never smoked	Current smoker	Ex-smoker	Never smoked
Has cancer						
Yes	49.5*	29.1 ^(c)	21.4*	29.1*	35.1	35.8*
No	48.1*	23.5*	28.4*	23.0*	29.7*	47.3*
Has respiratory problems						
Yes	47.5*	24.3*	28.1*	22.6*	31.0*	46.4*
No	48.7*	23.2*	28.2*	23.3*	29.3*	47.3*
Stressors in last 12 months						
Serious illness or disability	50.9	20.3	28.8	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Total experienced stressors	53.7	19.7	26.6	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
No stressors	46.5	20.3	33.2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Long-term risky/high-risk alcohol consumption						
Yes	65.8*	16.6 ^{(b)*}	17.5*	36.9*	35.5*	27.6*
No	44.8*	25.0*	30.2*	20.9*	29.0*	50.1*
Short-term risky/high-risk alcohol consumption						
Yes	67.2*	16.4*	16.3	43.9*	34.8*	21.3
No	48.6*	24.6*	26.8*	22.2*	31.8*	46.1*
Physical activity^(c)						
Low/sedentary	49.3*	24.0	26.7*	24.7*	28.6	46.7*
Moderate	42.9*	32.1	25.1*	20.0*	33.2	46.7*
High	31.7*	19.1 ^(b)	49.1	14.6*	33.5	51.9
Eats fruit daily						
Yes	45.7*	24.7*	29.6*	21.4*	30.3*	48.3*
No	64.7*	16.0*	19.3*	48.0*	23.3*	28.7*
Eats vegetables daily						
Yes	47.7*	23.8*	28.5*	22.9*	29.9*	47.2*
No	55.7*	20.5	23.8*	43.0*	28.2	28.9*
Overweight/obesity						
Yes	43.0*	26.2*	30.8*	22.9*	32.2*	44.8*
No	57.0*	19.9*	23.0*	23.4*	27.4*	49.2*
Total (age-standardised)						
	48.1*	23.7*	28.2*	23.1*	29.9*	47.1*
Total (crude)						
	52.1*	19.7*	28.3*	22.8*	30.1*	47.1*
Total number persons aged 18 years and over	134,537	50,748	72,964	3,365,115	4,444,458	6,943,683

* Represents statistically significant differences in the Indigenous/non-Indigenous comparisons.

(a) Proportions are age-standardised except for data for housing tenure and stressors experienced in the previous 12 months for which crude proportions are presented, because data for non-Indigenous Australians are not available.

(b) Estimate has a relative standard error of between 25% and 50% and should be used with caution.

(c) Non-remote areas only.

Source: AIHW analysis of 2004–05 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey.

Additional information

Smoking status among those aged 12 years and over

The 2004 National Drug Strategy Household Survey collected information on smoking status of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians aged 12 years and over.

- In 2004 approximately 52% of Indigenous people aged 12 years and over had smoked 100 cigarettes in their lifetime (or equivalent amount of tobacco), and 35% had smoked in the 12 months before the survey. For other Australians, 45% had smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their lifetime, and 20% had smoked in the previous 12 months (AIHW 2005).

These data should be interpreted with caution, because as the sample size for Indigenous Australians was very small (463).

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 establish 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, Inner and Outer Regional areas 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.

In remote communities there were some modifications to the NATSIHS content in order to accommodate language and cultural appropriateness in traditional communities and help respondents understand 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 2004–05 NATSIHS publication (ABS 2006).

Smoking data

The survey included smoking status, starting age of tobacco use, Indigenous status, age and sex. The NATSIHS has a large Indigenous sample size resulting in reliable estimates.

The question on smoking is asked of persons aged 18 years and over. Since most Australians start smoking before the age of 18, this limits our understanding of teenage smoking patterns. Teenagers are one of the main groups that smoking prevention programs focus on.

National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS)

The NDSHS collects information relating to drug use in Australia. The sample size for the 2004 survey was 29,445 persons aged 12 years and over.

The NDSHS does not have an enhanced Indigenous sample. Therefore, only a small number of Indigenous respondents are picked up in this survey. In 2004, approximately 150 Indigenous respondents were included. The sample size for Indigenous Australians is very small and therefore the estimates should be interpreted with caution (ABS & AIHW 2005). This small Indigenous sample size also limits the reliability of time series analyses.

NDSHS data are reportable at the national level only. Data are not available for remoteness areas, regional areas and state and territory levels.

Smoking data

The survey includes smoking status, age of starting tobacco use, sex and age. The survey collects data from persons aged 12 years and over (with parent/guardian consent). Children are one of the main groups to focus on when trying to reduce the uptake of smoking tobacco.

References

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