

1.15 Perceived health status

Self-reported, self-assessed health status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians

Data sources

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

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.

Analyses

Age-standardised rates and ratios have been used for this indicator as a measure of morbidity in the Indigenous population relative to other Australians. Ratios of this type illustrate differences between the rates of morbidity among Indigenous people and those of other Australians, taking into account differences in age distributions.

Self-assessed health status

- In 2004–05 around 43% of the Indigenous population aged 15 years or over reported their health as being very good or excellent, 35% reported their health as being good and 22% reported their health as being fair or poor.

- After adjusting for differences in age structure between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous population, Indigenous Australians were almost twice as likely as non-Indigenous Australians to report their health as fair or poor.

Self-assessed health status by age and sex

- The proportion of Indigenous Australians aged 15–24 years reporting fair or poor health was 9% compared with 50% of those aged 55 years and over (Table 1.15.1). Indigenous Australians were more likely than non-Indigenous Australians to report fair or poor health across all age groups (Figure 1.15.1).
- Indigenous females were more likely to report their health as fair or poor than Indigenous males (24% compared with 19%) (Table 1.15.2).

Table 1.15.1: Self-assessed health status, by Indigenous status and age, persons aged 15 years and over, 2004–05^{(a)(b)}

Self-assessed health status	Age group (years)										Total non-age standardised		Total age-standardised		Rate ratio
	15–24		25–34		35–44		45–54		55 and over		Indig (%)	Non-Indig (%)	Indig (%)	Non-Indig (%)	
	Indig (%)	Non-Indig (%)	Indig (%)	Non-Indig (%)	Indig (%)	Non-Indig (%)	Indig (%)	Non-Indig (%)	Indig (%)	Non-Indig (%)					
Excellent	23*	31*	12*	24*	10*	22*	7*	19*	5*	13*	14*	21*	11	21	0.5*
Very good	36	39	37	40	28*	40*	18*	36*	14*	28*	30*	35*	25	36	0.7*
<i>Subtotal excellent/very good</i>	<i>59*</i>	<i>70*</i>	<i>49*</i>	<i>64*</i>	<i>38*</i>	<i>62*</i>	<i>25*</i>	<i>55*</i>	<i>19*</i>	<i>41*</i>	<i>43*</i>	<i>56*</i>	36	57	<i>0.6*</i>
Good	32*	24*	36*	28*	38*	27*	38*	29*	32*	30*	35*	28*	35	28	1.3*
Fair	8	6	12*	7*	18*	9*	24*	11*	31*	19*	16*	11*	20	11	1.8*
Poor	1 ^(c)	1	3	2	6*	2*	12*	5*	19*	9*	6*	4*	10	4	2.2*
<i>Subtotal fair/poor</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>15*</i>	<i>9*</i>	<i>24*</i>	<i>11*</i>	<i>36*</i>	<i>16*</i>	<i>50*</i>	<i>28*</i>	<i>22*</i>	<i>16*</i>	29	15	<i>1.9*</i>
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total number	92,067	2,636,199	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	..

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

(a) Self-reported data from the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2004–05.

(b) Information for some persons aged 15–17 years was provided by a parent or guardian.

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

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

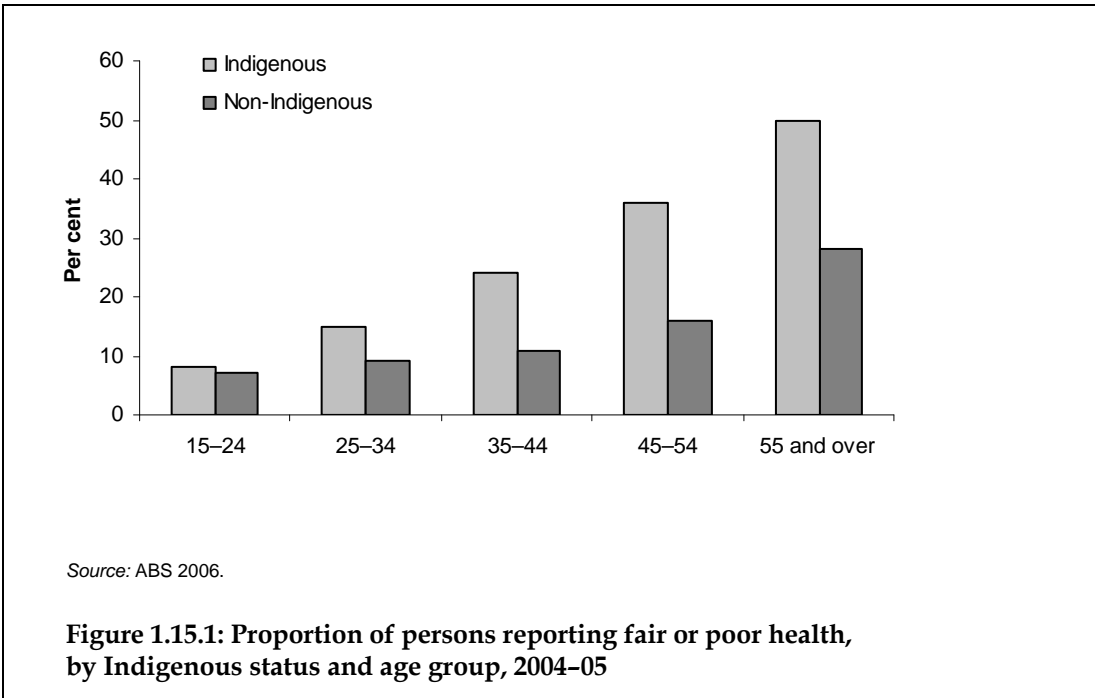


Table 1.15.2: Self-assessed health status, persons aged 15 years and over, by sex and Indigenous status, 2004–05^{(a)(b)}

Self-assessed health status	Non age standardised				Age standardised					
	Males		Females		Males			Females		
	Indig (%)	Non-Indig (%)	Indig (%)	Non-Indig (%)	Indig (%)	Non-Indig (%)	Ratio	Indig (%)	Non-Indig (%)	Ratio
Excellent	15*	21*	13*	21*	11	21	0.5*	11	22	0.5*
Very good	30*	34*	29*	36*	26	35	0.7*	25	37	0.7*
<i>Subtotal excellent/very good</i>	45*	55*	42*	58*	36	55	0.7*	36	58	0.6*
Good	36*	29*	34*	27*	35	29	1.2*	34	27	1.3*
Fair	14*	12*	17*	11*	19	12	1.6*	20	11	1.9*
Poor	6	5	7*	4*	9	5	2.1*	10	4	2.4*
<i>Subtotal fair/poor</i>	19*	16*	24*	15*	28	16	1.7*	30	15	2.0*
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	..	100	100	..
Total number	139,595	7,666,352	154,046	7,866,025	139,595	7,666,352	..	154,046	7,866,025	..

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

(a) Self-reported data from the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2004–05.

(b) Information for some persons aged 15–17 years was provided by a parent or guardian.

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

Self-assessed health status by state/territory and remoteness

- The proportion of Indigenous Australians aged 15 years and over reporting fair or poor health was similar in all states and territories (between 22% and 23%) except in the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory where 17% and 16% reported their health as fair or poor respectively (Table 1.15.3a). Indigenous Australians were twice as likely as non-Indigenous Australians to report fair or poor health across all states and territories (Table 1.15.3b).
- A higher proportion of Indigenous Australians aged 15 years and over in non-remote areas reported fair or poor health (23%) than Indigenous Australians in non-remote areas (19%) (Table 1.15.4a). Indigenous Australians were around twice as likely to report their health as fair or poor as non-Indigenous Australians across all remoteness categories (Table 1.15.4b).

Table 1.15.3a: Self-assessed health status, Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over, by state and territory, 2004–05^{(a)(b)}

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
Self-assessed health status	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Excellent	13	17	13	12	15	19	10	15	14
Very good	30	31	30	24	27	31	39	35	30
<i>Subtotal excellent/very good</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>43</i>
Good	34	30	35	42	35	27	34	34	35
Fair	16	15	16	15	17	14	10	13	16
Poor	7	6	6	7	6	9	8 ^(c)	3	6
<i>Subtotal fair/poor</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>22</i>
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total number	85,426	18,492	79,351	42,043	16,677	11,256	2,596	37,800	293,641

(a) Self-reported data from the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2004–05.

(b) Information for some persons aged 15–17 years was provided by a parent or guardian.

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

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

Table 1.15.3b: Self-assessed health status, by Indigenous status and state and territory, persons aged 15 years and over, 2004–05^{(a)(b)}

Self-assessed health status	NSW		Vic		Qld		WA		SA		Tas		ACT		NT	
	Indig. (%)	Non-Indig. (%)	Indig. (%)	Non-Indig. (%)	Indig. (%)	Non-Indig. (%)	Indig. (%)	Non-Indig. (%)	Indig. (%)	Non-Indig. (%)	Indig. (%)	Non-Indig. (%)	Indig. (%)	Non-Indig. (%)	Indig. (%)	Non-Indig. ^(c) (%)
Excellent	11*	21*	12*	23*	10*	20*	9*	22*	12*	21*	16*	22*	7 ^{(d)*}	22*	12	..
Very good	25*	35*	27*	37*	25*	36*	20*	36*	24*	35*	26*	36*	36	36	31	..
<i>Subtotal excellent/very good</i>	36*	56*	40*	59*	35*	55*	29*	58*	35*	56*	42*	58*	44*	58*	42	..
Good	35*	28*	30	27	34*	28*	41*	28*	32	29	28	25	32	28	35	..
Fair	19*	12*	19*	10*	21*	12*	20*	10*	23*	12*	19*	12*	13 ^(d)	10	17	..
Poor	9*	5*	11*	4*	11*	4*	11*	4*	9*	4*	12 ^{(d)*}	6*	11 ^(d)	4	5	..
<i>Subtotal fair/poor</i>	29*	16*	30*	14*	31*	16*	31*	14*	32*	15*	31*	18*	24	14	22	..
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total number	85,426	5,222,355	18,492	3,944,895	79,351	2,949,876	42,043	1,498,665	16,677	1,200,435	11,256	366,280	2,596	252,744	37,800	..

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

(a) Self-reported data from the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2004–05.

(b) Information for some persons aged 15–17 years was provided by a parent or guardian.

(c) Sample does not support estimates for the non-Indigenous population in the Northern Territory.

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

Note: Data are age standardised.

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

Table 1.15.4a: Self-assessed health status, Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over, by remoteness, 2004–05^{(a)(b)}

	Major cities	Inner regional	Outer regional	Subtotal non-remote	Remote	Very remote	Subtotal remote	Total
Self-assessed health status	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Excellent	12	14	15	14	14	13	13	14
Very good	31	29	30	30	24	30	28	30
<i>Subtotal excellent/very good</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>41</i>	<i>43</i>
Good	32	34	33	33	38	41	40	35
Fair	16	16	16	16	17	13	14	16
Poor	8	7	5	7	7	3	5	6
<i>Subtotal fair/poor</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>22</i>
Total^(c)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total number	89,350	58,372	65,700	213,422	24,456	55,763	80,219	293,641

(a) Self-reported data from the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2004–05.

(b) Information for some persons aged 15–17 years was provided by a parent or guardian.

(c) Includes self-assessed health status 'not stated'.

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

Table 1.15.4b: Self-assessed health status, by Indigenous status and remoteness, persons aged 15 years and over, Australia 2004–05^{(a)(b)}

Self-assessed health status	Major cities			Inner regional			Outer regional			Subtotal non-remote			Remote			Very remote ^(c)	Subtotal remote ^(c)
	Indig. (%)	Non-Indig. (%)	Ratio ^(d)	Indig. (%)	Non-Indig. (%)	Ratio ^(d)	Indig. (%)	Non-Indig. (%)	Ratio ^(d)	Indig. (%)	Non-Indig. (%)	Ratio ^(d)	Indig. (%)	Non-Indig. (%)	Ratio ^(d)	Indig. (%)	Indig. (%)
Excellent	10	22	0.4*	12	21	0.6*	11	18	0.6*	11	21	0.5*	11	19	0.6*	11	11
Very good	26	35	0.7*	25	37	0.7*	26	36	0.7*	26	36	0.7*	21	30	0.7*	26	24
<i>Subtotal excellent/very good</i>	36	57	0.6*	37	58	0.6*	37	54	0.7*	36	57	0.6*	32	49	0.6*	37	35
Good	31	28	1.1	34	26	1.3*	34	28	1.2*	33	28	1.2*	38	35	1.1	41	40
Fair	20	11	1.9*	19	12	1.5*	22	13	1.7*	20	11	1.8*	20	12	1.7*	17	18
Poor	13	4	3.2*	10	4	2.4*	7	5	1.3	11	4	2.4*	11	3 ^(e)	3.2*	5	7
<i>Subtotal fair/poor</i>	34	15	2.3*	29	16	1.8*	29	18	1.6*	31	15	2.0*	30	15	2.0*	22	25
Total^(f)	100	100	..	100	100	..	100	100	..	100	100	..	100	100	..	100	100

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

(a) Self-reported data from the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2004–05.

(b) Information for some persons aged 15–17 years was provided by a parent or guardian.

(c) Non-Indigenous data were not collected in very remote areas in the National Health Survey.

(d) Indigenous rate divided by non-Indigenous rate.

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

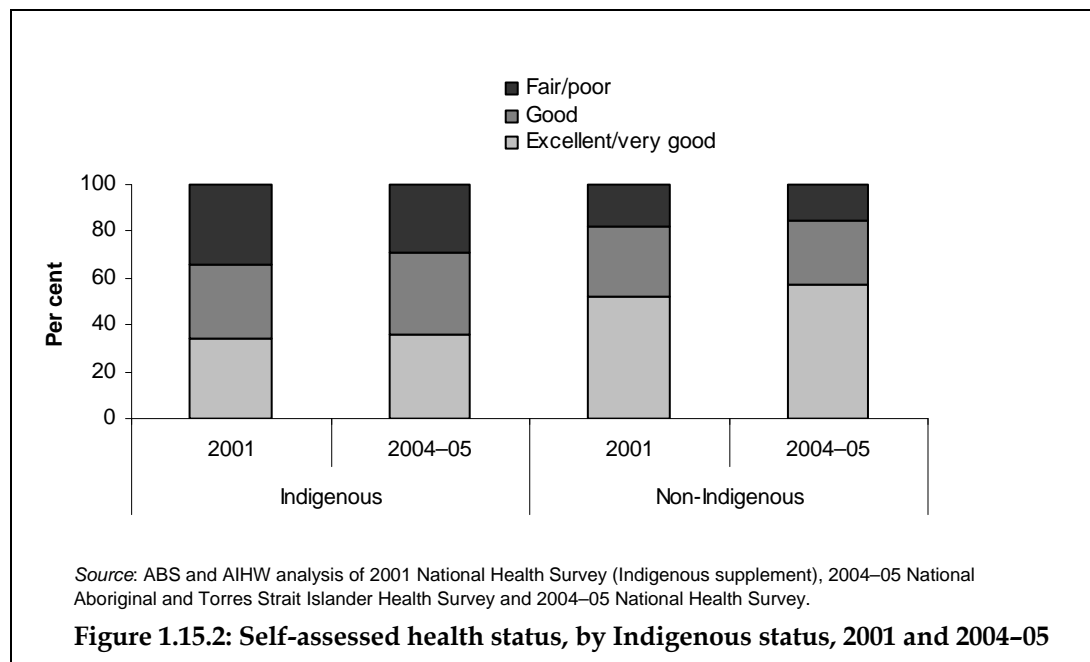
(f) Includes self-assessed health status 'not stated'.

Note: Data are age standardised.

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

Time series analysis

- There has been a significant decline in Indigenous Australians reporting their health as fair or poor between 2001 (26%) and 2004–05 (22%) (Figure 1.15.2).



Self-assessed health status by population, health and social/cultural characteristics

Table 1.15.5 presents data on the association between the self-assessed health status of Indigenous Australians and a number of summary population characteristics.

- In 2004–05, Indigenous Australians aged 15 years and over who reported their highest year of schooling was Year 9 or below were more likely to report their health as fair or poor than Indigenous Australians who had completed Year 11 or 12 as their highest year of schooling (Table 1.15.5).
- A higher proportion of Indigenous Australians who were employed reported their health as excellent or very good than Indigenous Australians who were unemployed or not in the labour force.
- Indigenous Australians who were in the lowest quintile of household income and index of disparity were more likely to report their health as fair or poor than Indigenous Australians in the highest quintile for these characteristics.
- Table 1.15.6 presents data on the self-assessed health status of Indigenous Australians by the number of long-term conditions reported.
- In 2004–05, a higher proportion of Indigenous Australians with no long-term conditions reported their health as excellent/very good than Indigenous Australians with three or more long-term conditions (49% compared with 27%).

Table 1.15.5: Self-assessed health status, by selected population characteristics and Indigenous status, persons aged 15 years and over, Australia, 2004–05^{(a)(b)}

	Excellent/very good			Good			Fair/poor			Total	
	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Rate ratio ^(c)	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Rate ratio ^(c)	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Rate ratio ^(c)	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
	(%)	(%)		(%)	(%)		(%)	(%)		(%)	(%)
Main language spoken at home^(d)											
English	34	57	0.6*	35	28	1.2*	32	15	2.0*	100	100
Other	23	44	0.5*	45	34	1.3	32	22	1.0	100	100
Highest year of school completed^(e)											
Year 12	42	62	0.7*	35	27	1.3	24	11	2.2*	100	100
Year 11	39	57	0.7*	41	30	1.4	20	13	1.5	100	100
Year 10	36	53	0.7*	38	31	1.2*	26	16	1.6*	100	100
Year 9 or below ^(f)	30	41	0.7*	36	31	1.2*	34	28	1.2*	100	100
Whether has non-school qualification^(e)											
Has a non-school qualification	38	59	0.6*	36	28	1.3*	26	13	2.1*	100	100
Does not have a non-school qualification	33	52	0.6*	36	29	1.2*	31	19	1.6*	100	100
Employment											
Employed	43	64	0.7*	39	27	1.4*	18	9	2.0*	100	100
Unemployed	38	48	0.8	25	31	0.8	37	21	1.8	100	100
Not in the labour force	29	47	0.6*	33	28	1.2*	38	26	1.5*	100	100
Household income											
1st quintile	30	42	0.7*	34	29	1.2*	35	29	1.2*	100	100
5th quintile	45	69	0.7*	40	24	1.6	14	7	2.1	100	100

(continued)

Table 1.15.5 (continued): Self-assessed health status, by selected population characteristics and Indigenous status, persons aged 15 years and over, 2004–05^{(a)(b)}

	Excellent/very good			Good			Fair/poor			Total	
	Indigenous (%)	Non-Indigenous (%)	Rate ratio ^(c)	Indigenous (%)	Non-Indigenous (%)	Rate ratio ^(c)	Indigenous (%)	Non-Indigenous (%)	Rate ratio ^(c)	Indigenous (%)	Non-Indigenous (%)
Index of disparity											
1st quintile	33	48	0.7*	35	29	1.2*	32	22	1.5*	100	100
5th quintile	49	65	0.8	24	25	1.0	27	10	2.6	100	100
Location											
Remote ^(g)	35	n.p.	n.p.	40	n.p.	n.p.	25	n.p.	n.p.	100	100
Non-remote	36	57	0.6*	33	28	1.2*	31	15	2.0*	100	100
Total persons aged 18 years and over	34	55	0.6*	36	28	1.3*	30	16	1.9*	100	100
Total persons aged 15 years and over	36	57	0.6*	35	28	1.3*	29	15	1.9*	100	100

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

(a) Self-reported data from the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2004–05.

(b) Information for some persons aged 15–17 years was provided by a parent or guardian.

(c) Indigenous rate divided by non-Indigenous rate.

(d) Persons aged 18 years and over.

(e) Persons not still at school.

(f) Includes persons who never attended school.

(g) Non-Indigenous data were not collected in remote areas in the National Health Survey.

Note: Data are age standardised.

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

Table 1.15.6: Self-assessed health status, by long-term conditions and Indigenous status, persons aged over 15 years, 2004–05^{(a)(b)}

Self-assessed health status	Number of long-term conditions ^(c)														
	0			1			2			3+			Total		
	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
Excellent	17 ^(d)	36	0.5*	16	31	0.5*	13	23	0.5*	6	13	0.5*	11	21	0.5*
Very good	32	34	0.9	30	42	0.7*	29	40	0.7*	21	32	0.6*	25	36	0.7*
<i>Subtotal excellent/very good</i>	49	70	0.7*	46	72	0.6*	42	63	0.7*	27	45	0.6*	36	57	0.6*
Good	43	25	1.7*	42	23	1.8*	36	28	1.3*	34	32	1.1	35	28	1.3*
Fair	7 ^(d)	4 ^(d)	2.0	12 ^(d)	4	3.0*	16	7	2.3*	26	16	1.6*	20	11	1.8*
Poor	0 ^(e)	1 ^(e)	0.3	1 ^(e)	1 ^(d)	0.7	6 ^(d)	1	4.7*	13	7	2.0*	10	4	2.2*
<i>Subtotal fair/poor</i>	8 ^(d)	5 ^(d)	1.5	12 ^(d)	5	2.6*	22	8	2.7*	39	23	1.7*	29	15	1.9*
Total	100	100	..	100	100	..	100	100	..	100	100	..	100	100	..
Total number	66,545	2,232,436	..	53,944	3,043,357	..	51,243	2,746,277	..	121,838	7,510,307	..	293,571	15,532,377	..

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

- (a) Self-reported data from the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2004–05.
- (b) Information for some persons aged 15–17 years was provided by a parent or guardian.
- (c) Includes chronic long-term conditions and injury only.
- (d) Estimate has a relative standard error of between 25% and 50% and should be used with caution.
- (e) Estimate has a relative standard error of greater than 50% and is too high for most practical purposes.

Note: Data are age standardised.

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

Additional information

Data on the association between self-assessed health status and other health and social/cultural characteristics are presented in a number of other health performance measures included in this framework. These data come from the 2004–05 NATSIHS and the 2002 NATSISS. These data are summarised below.

- In 2002, approximately 45% of Indigenous Australians aged 15 years and over who reported their health as fair/poor had been formally charged by the police compared with 30% of Indigenous Australians who reported their health as excellent or very good (Measure 2.13).
- In 2004–05, the proportion of Indigenous Australians who reported that they usually went to the same GP or medical service was similar for those with reported excellent/very good/good health and those with fair/poor health (89% and 90% respectively) (Measure 3.12).
- In 2002, approximately 21% of Indigenous Australians aged 15 years and over who reported they did not recognise or live on their homeland/traditional country reported their health as fair/poor compared to 24% of Indigenous Australians who reported they recognised and lived on their homeland (Measure 2.16).
- In 2004–05, a higher proportion of Indigenous Australians with reported fair/poor health accessed health care in the last 12 months than Indigenous Australians with reported excellent/very good or good health (64% compared with 44%) (Measure 3.10).
- The proportion of Indigenous Australians aged 18 years who drank at short-term or long-term risky/high-risk levels and reported their health as fair/poor was similar to the proportion of Indigenous Australians in the total population who reported their health as fair/poor (Measure 2.19).
- Approximately 58% of Indigenous Australians in non-remote areas with fair/poor health status reported exercising at sedentary levels compared to 48% of Indigenous Australians with excellent/very good/good health status (Measure 2.21).
- In 2004–05, approximately 65% of Indigenous Australians aged 15–64 years with reported excellent/very good/good health were in the labour force (55% employed) compared to 43% of Indigenous Australians with reported fair/poor health (35% employed) (Measure 2.07).
- A higher proportion of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians aged 18 years who could not get to places when needed reported fair/poor health status than Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians who could easily get to places when needed (Measure 2.15).

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 2004; ABS 2006).

References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 2004. National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey 2002. ABS cat. no. 4714.0. Canberra: ABS.

ABS 2006. National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2004-05. ABS cat. no. 4715.0. Canberra: ABS.