

1.13 Disability

The prevalence of disability among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including children with special needs

Data sources

Data for this measure come from the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, the 2006 Census of Population and Housing and the Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey.

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS)

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) conducted the 2002 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) between August 2002 and April 2003. The 2008 NATSISS was conducted between August 2008 and April 2009. The survey provides information about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations of Australia for a wide range of areas of social concern including health, education, culture and labour force participation. The 2008 NATSISS included for the first time children aged under 15. The NATSISS will be conducted every 6 years with the next survey planned for 2013.

The 2008 NATSISS collected information by personal interview from 13,300 Indigenous Australians across all states and territories of Australia, including those living in remote areas. The sample covered persons aged 15 years and over who are usual residents in selected private dwellings. It collected information on a wide range of subjects including family and culture, health, education, employment, income, financial stress, housing, and law and justice.

Census of Population and Housing

The ABS Census of Population and Housing is conducted by the ABS at 5-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 for each household member.

Although the Census data are adjusted for undercount 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 1996 and 2001 Census used the Australian Standard Classification of Occupations, but this was replaced by the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations for the 2006 Census.

Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey

This survey was a large-scale investigation into the health of 5,289 Western Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–17 years. The Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, in conjunction with the Kulunga Research Network, undertook this survey in 2001 and 2002. The survey was the first to gather comprehensive health,

educational and developmental information on a population-based sample of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families and communities.

The survey findings were published in four volumes between June 2004 and November 2006.

The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health defines disability as a multi-dimensional concept, relating to:

- body functions and structures of people
- activities people do and the life areas in which they participate
- factors in their environment which affect these experiences.

Analyses

NATSISS data

Disability status

Common criteria

The common criteria for disability are based on a set of common criteria used to identify Indigenous people aged 15 years and over with a disability in both remote and non-remote areas. This measure does not include people whose only reported disability was psychological (that is, a nervous or emotional condition and/or mental illness requiring supervision).

Tables 1.13.1, 1.13.2, 1.13.3 and 1.13.4 present data on the disability status of Indigenous Australians in 2002 based on the common criteria for disability.

- In 2008, 327,101 (50%) of Indigenous people aged 15 years and over had a disability or a long-term health condition according to the common criteria (Table 1.13.1). Of these, 25,841 or 8% of the population aged 15 years and over had a profound or severe core-activity limitation, meaning that they always or sometimes needed assistance with at least one activity of everyday living (self-care, mobility or communication).
- The rate of disability or long-term health condition increased with age. Approximately 78% of people aged 55 years and over had a disability or long-term health condition.
- Overall, the prevalence rate, or proportion of people with a disability or long-term health condition, was similar in males (49%) and females (51%) (Table 1.13.2).
- In 2008, there was little difference between the proportion of Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over reporting a disability or long-term condition in non-remote and remote areas (50% and 49% respectively) (Table 1.13.3).

Table 1.13.1: Disability type^(a), by age group, Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over, 2008

Disability type	15–24	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55 or over	Total (15+)	Total (18+)
	Per cent							
Has profound or severe core-activity limitation	5.0	5.8	5.6	6.6	10.0	18.7	7.9	8.5
Has unspecified limitation or restriction	30.0	32.3	36.9	44.7	56.3	58.8	41.9	43.9
Total with disability or long-term health condition	35.1	38.1	42.5	51.3	66.2	77.5	49.8	52.4
Has no disability or long-term health condition	65.0	61.9	57.5	48.7	33.8	22.5	50.2	47.6
Total^(b)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	103,780	67,616	69,931	63,851	46,912	42,627	327,101	290,937

(a) Excluding psychological disability.

(b) Includes disability type not specified. Note that more than one disability type may be reported and thus the sum of the components may add to more than the total.

Source: AIHW analysis of 2008 NATSISS.

Table 1.13.2: Disability status, by sex, Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over, 2008

Disability status	Male	Female	Persons
	Per cent		
Has profound or severe core-activity limitation	7.8	8.1	7.9
Has unspecified limitation or restriction	40.7	43.0	41.9
Total with disability or long-term health condition	48.5	51.0	49.8
Has no disability or long-term health condition	51.5	49.0	50.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	156,052	171,048	327,101

Source: AIHW analysis of 2008 NATSISS.

Table 1.13.3: Disability status, by remoteness, Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over, 2008

Disability status	Major cities	Inner regional	Outer regional	Sub-total Non-remote	Remote	Very remote	Sub-total Remote
	Per cent						
Has profound or severe core-activity limitation	9.0	7.0	7.2	7.9	6.7	8.9	8.1
Has unspecified limitation or restriction	44.6	39.2	41.7	42.3	45.3	38.0	40.7
Total with disability or long-term health condition	53.6	46.2	48.9	50.2	52.0	46.9	48.8
Has no disability or long-term health condition	46.4	53.8	51.1	49.8	48.0	53.1	51.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: This variable is only appropriate for Indigenous persons. Even then, the population is limited to the criteria used to identify disability in remote area (no questions on mental illness).

* Differences between Indigenous non-remote and remote rates are statistically significant.

Source: NATSISS 2008.

Table 1.13.4: Disability status, Indigenous persons aged 15–18 years, 2008

Disability status	Number	Proportion
Has profound or severe core-activity limitation	2,206	4.5
Has unspecified limitation or restriction	13,612	27.7
Total with disability or long-term health condition	15,818	32.1
Has no disability or long-term health condition	33,392	67.9
Total	49,210	100.0

Source: AIHW analysis of 2008 NATSISS.

Broader criteria

The broader criteria for disability were used in non-remote areas only. This includes Indigenous people with a psychological disability and is directly comparable to criteria used to identify non-Indigenous people with a disability in the ABS 2008 General Social Survey (GSS). The GSS collected information on non-Indigenous persons aged 18 years and over. Comparisons between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people are therefore limited to those aged 18 years and over in non-remote areas using the broader criteria.

Tables 1.13.5, 1.13.6 and 1.13.7 present disability rates for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians using the broader criteria for disability in non-remote areas of Australia.

- In 2008, after adjusting for differences in age structure, Indigenous Australians aged 18 years and over in non-remote areas were 1.5 times more likely to have a profound or severe core-activity limitation than non-Indigenous Australians in non-remote areas (Table 1.13.5).
- Indigenous people had a higher rate of profound and severe core-activity limitation than non-Indigenous people in all age groups (Table 1.13.6).
- In 2008, Indigenous Australians aged 18 years and over had higher rates of disability than non-Indigenous Australians in all states and territories (rate ratios of between 1.2 and 1.6) (Table 1.13.7).
- The proportion of Indigenous Australians with a profound or severe core-activity limitation was almost three times that for non-Indigenous Australians in South Australia and Tasmania.

Table 1.13.5: Disability status, by Indigenous status, persons aged 18 years and over, 2008, non-remote areas, age-standardised rates

	Major cities			Inner regional			Outer regional			Sub-total Non-remote		
	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Rate ratio	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Rate ratio	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Rate ratio	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Rate ratio
Has profound or severe core-activity restriction (per cent)	18.8	10.5	1.8	16.1	11.1	1.5	14.6	13.0	1.1	16.7	10.8	1.5
Disability/restriction not defined (per cent)	81.2	89.5	0.9	83.9	88.9	0.9	85.4	87.0	1.0	83.3	89.2	0.9
Total with disability or long-term health condition (per cent)	100.0	100.0	..	100.0	100.0	..	100.0	100.0	..	100.0	100.0	..
Total number with disability or long-term health condition	52,037	4,269,634	..	28,785	1,568,924	..	34,270	638,190	..	115,092	6,476,748	..

Sources: NATSISS 2008 and NHS 07-08.

Table 1.13.6: Disability status, by Indigenous status and age group, persons aged 15 years and 18 years and over, 2008^{(a)(b)}, non-remote only

Disability status		Profound/severe core-activity limitation	Has unspecified limitation or restriction	Total with disability or long-term health condition	No disability or long-term health condition	Total
Per cent						
15–24	Indigenous	5.3*	32.2*	37.5*	62.5*	100
	Non-Indig.	2.5*	19.6*	22.1*	77.9*	100
18–24	Indigenous	6.3*	35*	41.3*	58.7*	100
	Non-Indig.	3*	21.5*	24.4*	75.6*	100
25–34	Indigenous	6.2*	37.2*	43.4*	56.6*	100
	Non-Indig.	2.4*	25.8*	28.2*	71.8*	100
35–44	Indigenous	6.2*	44.6*	50.9*	49.1*	100
	Non-Indig.	3*	30.7*	33.7*	66.3*	100
45–54	Indigenous	10.2*	56*	66.2*	33.8*	100
	Non-Indig.	4.1*	38.3*	42.4*	57.6*	100
55 and over	Indigenous	17.7*	60.1*	77.8*	22.2*	100
	Non-Indig.	8.5*	53.3*	61.8*	38.2*	100
Total (18+)	Indigenous	8.6*	44.8*	53.3*	46.7*	100
	Non-Indig.	4.8*	37.2*	42*	58*	100
Total 18+ age-standardised^(b)	Indigenous	10.3*	48.58*	58.9*	41.1*	100
	Non-Indig.	4.7*	36.5*	41.2*	58.8*	100
Rate ratio		2.2	1.3	1.4	0.7	1
Total (15+)	Indigenous	8*	42.7*	50.6*	49.4*	100
	Non-Indig.	4.7*	36.1*	40.8*	59.2*	100
Total 15+ age-standardised^(b)	Indigenous	9.9*	47.4*	57.3*	42.7*	100
	Non-Indig.	4.5*	35.4*	40*	60*	100
Rate ratio		2.2	1.3	1.4	0.7	1

* Differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous rates are statistically significant for all categories.

(a) Includes psychological disability.

(b) Directly age-standardised proportions.

Notes

1. This variable is only appropriate for comparison with other surveys where the population is limited to non-remote areas, where questions on mental illness were included.
2. Non-Indigenous data are from the 2007–08 NHS.

Sources: NATSISS 2008 and NHS 07–08.

Table 1.13.7: Disability status, by Indigenous status and state/territory, persons aged 18 years and over, 2008^(a)

			Profound/ severe core-activity limitation	Has unspecified limitation or restriction	Total with disability or long-term health condition	No disability or long-term health condition	Total
NSW	Indigenous	%	11.1*	49.6*	60.7*	39.3	100
	Non-Indig.	%	4.5*	35.1*	39.6*	60.4	100
	Ratio		2.5	1.4	1.5	0.7	..
Vic	Indigenous	%	11.5*	52.3*	63.7*	36.3*	100
	Non-Indig.	%	4.9*	36.3*	41.2*	58.8*	100
	Ratio		2.4	1.4	1.6	0.6	..
Qld	Indigenous	%	8 ^(a)	46.8*	54.8*	45.2*	100
	Non-Indig.	%	4.5	39.9*	44.5*	55.5*	100
	Ratio		1.8	1.2	1.2	0.8	..
WA	Indigenous	%	8.6	45.5*	54.1*	45.9*	100
	Non-Indig.	%	4.9	34*	38.9*	61.1*	100
	Ratio		1.8	1.3	1.4	0.8	..
SA	Indigenous	%	13*	51.3*	64.4*	35.6*	100
	Non-Indig.	%	5*	37.2*	42.3*	57.7*	100
	Ratio		2.6	1.4	1.5	0.6	..
Tas	Indigenous	%	12*	47*	59*	41*	100
	Non-Indig.	%	4.7*	37.8*	42.5*	57.5*	100
	Ratio		2.6	1.2	1.4	0.7	..
ACT	Indigenous	%	12.1 ^(a)	52.2	64.2*	35.8*	100
	Non-Indig.	%	n.p.	n.p.	43*	57*	100
	Ratio		n.p.	n.p.	1.5	0.6	..
NT	Indigenous	%	11.8 ^(a)	46.5	58.3*	41.7	100
	Non-Indig.	%	n.p.	n.p.	35.7*	64.3	100
	Ratio		n.a.	n.a.	1.6	0.7	..
Australia	Indigenous	%	10.3	48.5*	58.9*	41.1*	100
	Non-Indig.	%	4.7	36.5*	41.2*	58.8*	100
	Rate ratio		2.2	1.3	1.4	0.7	..

* Differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous rates are statistically significant for these categories.

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

Notes

1. Proportions are age-standardised.
2. This variable is only appropriate for comparison with other surveys where the population is limited to non-remote areas, where questions on mental illness were included.

Sources: NATSISS 2008 and NHS 07–08.

Disability type

Using the common criteria, disabilities and long-term health conditions have been grouped into broad disability types: physical, sensory/speech (sight, hearing or speech) and intellectual.

- In 2008, 50% of Indigenous people aged 15 years and over had a disability or long-term health condition, 33% had a physical disability, 17% had a sensory/speech disability and 8% had an intellectual disability (Table 1.13.8).
- The proportions of Indigenous people with a sensory/speech or physical disability were higher in the older age groups. In the 55 years and over age group, 31% of Indigenous people reported a sensory/speech disability, 59% reported a physical disability and 6% reported an intellectual disability.

Table 1.13.8: Disability type^(a), by age group, Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over, 2008

Disability type	15–24 years	18–24 years	25–34 years	35–44 years	45–54 years	55 years and over	Total (15+)	Total (18+)
	Per cent							
Sight, hearing, speech	9.7	10.3	12.5	17.1	27.1	30.9	17.0	18.1
Physical	18.5	22.0	25.5	34.8	47.4	59.3	32.6	35.2
Intellectual	9.2	9.4	6.3	6.2	9.7	6.1	7.7	7.5
Total with a disability or long-term health condition^(b)	35.1	38.1	42.5	51.3	66.2	77.5	49.8	52.4
Total with no disability or long-term health condition	65.0	61.9	57.5	48.7	33.8	22.5	50.2	47.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	103,780	67,616	69,931	63,851	46,912	42,627	327,101	290,937

(a) Excluding psychological disability.

(b) Includes disability type not specified. Note that more than one disability type may be reported and thus the sum of the components may add to more than the total.

Source: AIHW analysis of 2008 NATSISS.

Disability by selected population characteristics

Table 1.13.9 presents disability status of Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over in non-remote areas of Australia by selected population characteristics. Data are based on the broader criteria used to identify persons with a disability in non-remote areas.

- In 2008, in non-remote areas, around 62% of Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over with a disability or long-term condition did not have a non-school qualification. Around 44% of Indigenous persons with a disability reported the highest year of school completed was Year 9 or below.
- Approximately 53% of Indigenous Australians in non-remote areas with a disability or long-term health condition had household income in the lowest quintile, and for 55% their principal source of income was government cash, pensions or allowances.
- Approximately equal numbers of Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over with a disability or long-term condition were either employed (45%) or not in the labour force (also 45%) in 2008.
- Approximately 88% of Indigenous persons in non-remote areas with a disability or long-term health condition reported they had been involved in social activities in the last 3 months and 87% were able to get support in a time of crisis. Around 61% of Indigenous persons with a disability or long-term condition had been removed, or had a relative that had been removed, from their natural family and 25% currently lived on their homelands.

Table 1.13.9: Disability status, by selected population characteristics, Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over, non-remote areas, 2008

	Has disability or long-term health condition	Has no disability or long-term health condition
	Per cent	
Education		
Attending post-school education institution	10.1	11.2
Non-school qualification ^(a)		
Has a non-school qualification	38.0	42.8
Does not have a non-school qualification	62.0	57.2
Highest school qualification attained ^(b)		
Completed Year 12	15.6	24.6
Completed Year 10/11	40.5	47.7
Completed Year 9 or below	43.9	27.7
Household income		
1st quintile	52.8	41.2
5th quintile	7.6	12.2
Total	60.4	53.4
Principle source of personal income		
Community Development Employment Program (CDEP)	4.3	6.2
Employee income	37.9	54.5
Government cash, pensions, allowances	55.0	37.3
Unincorporated business income	0.7	0.4
Other sources of income	2.1	1.7
<i>Subtotal received income^(c)</i>	<i>94.1</i>	<i>89.7</i>
Did not receive personal income	5.9	10.3
Employment		
Employed		
Full time	26.5	32.3
Part time	7.7	8.4
Casual	9.3	14.6
Shiftwork	1.3	1.9
Not known	0.5	0.7
<i>Total employed</i>	<i>45.4</i>	<i>58.0</i>
Unemployed	9.6	10.8
Not in the labour force	45.0	31.2

(continued)

Table 1.13.9 (continued): Disability status, by selected population characteristics, Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over, non-remote areas, 2008

	Has disability or long-term health condition	Has no disability or long-term health condition
	Per cent	
Transport access		
Can easily get to places needed	69.1	78.5
Sometimes has difficulty getting to the places needed	17.0	13.0
Cannot, or often has difficulty, getting to places needed	13.3	8.4
Never go out and housebound	0.6	0.2
Family and culture		
Involved in social activities in last 3 months	87.6	89.3
Able to get support in time of crisis from someone outside the household	86.7	90.9
Has been removed from natural family	11.1	5.8
Relatives removed from natural family	49.7	39.1
Currently lives in homelands	25.4	25.1
Attended cultural event(s) in last 12 months	60.4	59.7
Total	100.0	100.0
Total number	162,944	164,157

(a) Rate for persons aged 25–64 years.

(b) Excludes persons still at school.

(c) Includes both positive and negative income.

Note: Data based on the broader criteria for disability.

Source: AIHW analysis of 2008 NATSISS.

Table 1.13.10: Disability status, by selected population characteristics, Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over, non-remote areas, 2008

	Has disability or long-term health condition	Has no disability or long-term health condition	Total
	Per cent		
Education			
Attending post-school education institution	47.1	52.9	100.0
Non-school qualification ^(a)			
Has a non-school qualification	51.9	48.1	100.0
Does not have a non-school qualification	56.8	43.2	100.0
Highest school qualification attained ^(b)			
Completed Year 12	40.8	59.2	100.0
Completed Year 10/11	48.0	52.0	100.0
Completed Year 9 or below	63.2	36.8	100.0
Household income			
1st quintile	55.8	44.2	100.0
5th quintile	38.0	62.0	100.0
Total	52.7	47.3	100.0
Principle source of personal income			
Community Development Employment Program (CDEP)	42.3	57.7	100.0
Employee income	42.2	57.8	100.0
Government cash, pensions, allowances	60.8	39.2	100.0
Unincorporated business income	63.8	36.2	100.0
Other sources of income	57.6	42.4	100.0
Did not receive personal income	36.6	63.4	100.0
Employment			
Employed	43.7	56.3	100.0
Full time	44.9	55.1	100.0
Part time	47.6	52.4	100.0
Unemployed	46.9	53.1	100.0
Not in the labour force	58.9	41.1	100.0
Transport access			
Can easily get to places needed	46.6	53.4	100.0
Sometimes has difficulty getting to the places needed	56.5	43.5	100.0
Cannot, or often has difficulty, getting to places needed	61.2	38.8	100.0
Never go out and housebound	75.5	24.5	100.0

(continued)

Table 1.13.10 (continued): Disability status, by selected population characteristics, Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over, non-remote areas, 2008

	Has disability or long-term health condition	Has no disability or long-term health condition	Total
	Per cent		
Family and culture			
Involved in social activities in last 3 months	49.3	50.7	100.0
Able to get support in time of crisis from someone outside the household	48.6	51.4	100.0
Has been removed from natural family	65.4	34.6	100.0
Relatives removed from natural family	55.6	44.4	100.0
Currently lives in homelands	50.2	49.8	100.0
Attended cultural event(s) in last 12 months	50.1	49.9	100.0
Total	49.8	50.2	100.0
Total number	162,944	164,157	327,101

(a) Rate for persons aged 25–64 years.

(b) Excludes persons still at school.

Note: Data based on the broader criteria for disability.

Source: AIHW analysis of 2008 NATSISS.

Census data

According to the 2006 Census, 19,613 Indigenous Australians (4.3%) had a core-activity need for assistance. After adjusting for differences in the age structures of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were almost twice as likely as non-Indigenous people to have a core-activity need for assistance in 2006 (ABS & AIHW 2008).

Disability by age and sex

- The prevalence of core-activity need for assistance increased noticeably from about 35 years of age onwards for both Indigenous men and women (Table 1.13.11). The disability rate ranged from 1.1% of Indigenous children aged 0–4 years to 38% of Indigenous people aged 75 years and over.
- Indigenous Australians had a higher rate of core-activity need for assistance than non-Indigenous Australians across all age groups. The greatest differences occurred in the age groups 50–54 years and 65–69, where Indigenous Australians reported a core-activity need for assistance around three times the rate of non-Indigenous Australians (Table 1.13.11).
- Indigenous males were slightly more likely than Indigenous females to have a core-activity need for assistance (4.5% compared with 4.1%). In comparison, non-Indigenous females were more likely than non-Indigenous males to have a core-activity need for assistance (4.6% compared with 3.9%).

Table 1.13.11: Indigenous persons with core-activity need for assistance, by sex and age group, 2006

Age group (years)	Indigenous						Non-Indigenous						Rate ratio		
	Males		Females		Persons		Males		Females		Persons				
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	Males	Females	Persons
0–4	388	1.4	238	0.9	628	1.1	6,421	1.1	3,828	0.7	10,249	0.9	1.2	1.3	1.2
5–9	963	3.3	525	1.9	1,487	2.6	16,422	2.7	8,017	1.4	24,439	2.1	1.2	1.3	1.2
10–14	970	3.3	556	2.0	1,528	2.7	15,799	2.5	8,175	1.4	23,974	1.9	1.3	1.5	1.4
15–19	697	2.8	422	1.8	1,117	2.3	11,191	1.8	7,081	1.2	18,272	1.5	1.6	1.5	1.5
20–24	461	2.5	318	1.7	779	2.1	8,464	1.4	6,403	1.1	14,867	1.2	1.8	1.6	1.8
25–29	381	2.6	308	1.9	688	2.2	7,759	1.3	6,272	1.1	14,031	1.2	1.9	1.8	1.8
30–34	482	3.2	351	2.1	833	2.6	9,404	1.5	7,979	1.2	17,383	1.3	2.1	1.8	2.0
35–39	572	4.0	562	3.4	1,135	3.7	11,819	1.8	10,428	1.5	22,247	1.6	2.2	2.3	2.3
40–44	711	5.6	689	4.8	1,400	5.2	14,661	2.2	13,328	1.9	27,989	2.0	2.6	2.5	2.6
45–49	742	6.9	786	6.6	1,527	6.8	17,062	2.6	16,780	2.4	33,842	2.5	2.7	2.7	2.7
50–54	773	9.0	817	8.7	1,590	8.8	19,558	8.8	19,617	3.1	39,175	3.2	2.8	2.8	2.8
55–59	796	12.7	787	11.3	1,583	12.0	27,660	4.8	23,793	4.1	51,453	4.4	2.6	2.8	2.7
60–64	688	16.3	717	15.1	1,405	15.6	29,695	6.6	22,383	5.0	52,078	5.8	2.5	3.0	2.7
65–69	500	18.5	578	17.4	1,077	17.9	23,405	6.7	22,483	6.3	45,888	6.5	2.8	2.8	2.8
70–74	382	21.6	581	25.0	962	23.5	24,813	9.1	30,308	10.1	55,121	9.6	2.4	2.5	2.4
75 and over	642	33.3	1232	40.3	1,874	37.6	108,098	22.7	221,711	32.1	329,809	28.2	1.5	1.3	1.3
Total (crude)	10,147	4.5	9,468	4.1	19,613	4.3	352,231	3.9	428,586	4.6	780,817	4.3	1.2	0.9	1.0
Total—age-standardised^(a)	..	7.5	..	7.2	..	7.4	..	3.9	..	4.2	..	4.1	1.9	1.7	1.8

(a) Age-standardised to the 2001 Australian standard population.

Source: ABS & AIHW analysis of 2006 Census data; ABS & AIHW 2008.

Disability by state/territory

- In 2006, after adjusting for differences in age structure, Indigenous Australians had higher rates of core-activity need for assistance than non-Indigenous Australians in all states and territories (Table 1.13.12).
- The proportion of Indigenous Australians with core-activity need for assistance was around twice that for non-Indigenous Australians in all states and territories (Table 1.13.12).

Table 1.13.12: Indigenous persons with core-activity need for assistance, by state/territory, 2006

	Indigenous			Non-Indigenous			Age standardised Rate ratio
	No.	Age standardised proportion ^(a)		No.	%	Age standardised proportion ^(a)	
NSW	6,907	5.0	7.7	263,724	4.4	4.1	1.9
Vic	1,588	5.3	7.8	201,714	4.4	4.1	1.9
Qld	4,812	3.8	6.7	146,041	4.1	4.0	1.7
WA	2,278	3.9	7.5	64,471	3.6	3.6	2.1
SA	1,250	4.9	8.1	70,397	5.0	4.4	1.8
Tas	871	5.2	7.7	21,735	5.0	4.5	1.7
ACT	150	3.9	6.8	9,897	3.2	3.7	1.8
NT	1,750	3.3	7.2	2,795	2.3	3.3	2.2
Australia^(b)	19,613	4.3	7.4	780,817	4.3	4.1	1.8

(a) Age-standardised to the 2001 Australian standard population.

(b) Australia total includes other territories.

Source: ABS & AIHW analysis of 2006 Census data.

Disability by remoteness

- After adjusting for differences in age structure, Indigenous Australians had higher rates of core-activity need for assistance than non-Indigenous Australians across all remoteness levels (Table 1.13.13).
- The proportion of Indigenous Australians with core-activity need for assistance was 2.5 times that of non-Indigenous Australians in *Very remote* areas (Table 1.13.13).

Table 1.13.13: Indigenous persons with core-activity need for assistance, by remoteness, 2006

	Indigenous			Non-Indigenous			Age standardised rate ratio
	Number	Per cent	Age standardised proportion ^(a)	Number	Per cent	Age standardised proportion ^(a)	
Major cities	7,007	4.8	7.5	520,953	4.1	4.0	1.8
Inner regional	4,824	4.9	7.7	175,193	4.8	4.3	1.8
Outer regional	4,105	4.2	7.1	74,279	4.5	4.1	1.8
Remote	1,466	3.7	7.3	7,212	3.1	3.3	2.3
Very remote	2,127	3.1	6.7	1,711	2.3	2.7	2.5
Australia^(b)	19,613	4.3	7.4	780,817	4.3	4.1	1.8

(a) Age-standardised to the 2001 Australian standard population.

(b) Australia total includes No Usual Address.

Source: ABS & AIHW analysis of 2006 Census data.

Prevalence of disability among Indigenous children

The 2006 Census was the first national survey to include a question on disability which included Indigenous respondents less than 15 years of age.

Table 1.13.14 presents proportions of Indigenous children with core-activity need for assistance.

- In 2006, among Indigenous children aged 0–18 years, a higher proportion of males than females required assistance with core activities.
- Indigenous children aged 0–4 years were slightly more likely to have a core-activity need for assistance than non-Indigenous children of the same age (ratios of 1.2 for males and 1.3 for females).
- Approximately 2.6% of Indigenous children aged 5–18 years had a core-activity need for assistance. Indigenous males and females in this age group were 1.3 and 1.5 times as likely to have a profound or severe disability as non-Indigenous males and females of the same age.

Table 1.13.14: Indigenous children aged 0–18 years with a core-activity need for assistance, by sex, 2006

Age group (years)	Males		Females		Persons		Ratio		
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Males	Females	Persons
0–4	388	1.4	238	0.9	626	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.2
5–18	2,526	3.2	1,436	1.9	3,962	2.6	1.3	1.5	1.4
0–18	2,914	2.7	1,674	1.6	4,588	2.2	1.3	1.4	1.3

Note: Data exclude those for whom whether needed assistance with core activities was not stated (7% for Indigenous and 2% for non-Indigenous all ages).

Source: ABS & AIHW analysis of 2006 Census data; ABS & AIHW 2008.

Data relating to disability in Indigenous children were also collected in the Western Australia Aboriginal Child Health Survey of Aboriginal children and a small number of Torres Strait Islander children in Western Australia over 2001 and 2002. Parents and carers were asked a number of questions in relation to their child's health and special needs.

An estimated 2% of Indigenous children aged 4–17 years in Western Australia needed help with activities of daily living such as eating, dressing, bathing and going to the toilet. Four per cent of children of the same age experienced limitations in vigorous activity.

Approximately 8% of Indigenous children did not have normal vision in both eyes, and 7% did not have normal hearing in both ears (ABS & AIHW 2005).

Additional information

Indigenous carers

Information on Indigenous carers of persons with a disability, long-term health condition or problems related to old age is available from the 2006 Census. Information on the carers of Indigenous children with a disability, chronic illness or pain is available from the Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey. These data are presented below.

In 2006, the Census collected, for the first time, information on the number of carers aged 15 years and over in Australia. Table 1.13.15 presents data for carers by Indigenous status and age.

- After adjusting for differences in the age structures of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, Indigenous Australians were more likely than non-Indigenous Australians to be caring for another person with a disability, long-term illness or problems related to old age.
- The median age of Indigenous carers was 37 years, compared with 49 years for non-Indigenous carers (ABS & AIHW 2008). The age groups 35–44 years and 45–54 years had the highest proportion of Indigenous carers and the age group 55–64 years had the highest proportion of non-Indigenous carers.
- Indigenous persons aged 15–34 years were almost twice as likely as non-Indigenous persons of the same age to be carers in 2006. The proportion of persons aged 45 years and over who were carers was similar for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

Table 1.13.15: carers^(a) by Indigenous status and age, 2006

Age group (years)	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Rate ratio
	Per cent		
15–24	7.9	4.5	1.7
25–34	12.1	7.5	1.6
35–44	14.7	11.2	1.3
45–54	15.3	15.0	1.0
55–64	14.0	16.5	0.9
65 and over	10.4	10.4	1.0
Total^(b)	11.9	10.8	1.1
Total—age-standardised^(c)	12.4	10.5	1.2
Total carers^(a)	31,600	1,532,057	..

(a) Persons aged 15 years and over living in private dwellings who provided unpaid care, help or assistance to another person because of their disability, long-term illness or problems related to old age.

(b) Rates are age-specific so will not add to 100%.

(c) Age-standardised to the 2001 final estimated resident population

Source: ABS & AIHW 2008.

In the survey, carers of Indigenous children were asked whether each child placed a burden on them and the family as a result of any disability, chronic illness or pain. Carers reported that around 5% of children placed a 'little or some' burden on their carers and families, and 3% children placed 'quite a lot or very much' burden on their carers and families. The experience of burden on carers and families declined with increasing level of relative isolation. Burden was reported to be particularly high in families where children were reported to have impairments in self-care (e.g. activities of daily living). Just over half of the carers of the 380 children who needed special help with eating, dressing, bathing or toileting reported that this placed 'quite a lot' or 'very much' burden on the family (Zubrick et al. 2004).

Data quality issues

Census of Population and Housing

Hospital separations data

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 the 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. Although 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.

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS)

The NATSISS is conducted in all states and territories and includes remote and non-remote areas. The 2008 sample was 13,300 persons in 6,900 households, with a response rate of 82 per cent of households. Up to three randomly selected Indigenous people were chosen from selected households to participate in the survey. Trained Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) interviewers conducted the survey using face-to-face interviews. In non-remote areas interviewers used a notebook computer to record responses, while in remote areas a paper questionnaire was used. Interviewers obtained the consent of a parent or guardian before interviewing those aged 15 to 17 years. Indigenous persons usually resident in non-private dwellings such as hotels, motels, hostels, hospitals, short-stay caravan parks, prisons and other correctional facilities were excluded.

The NATSISS uses the standard Indigenous status question. The NATSISS sample was specifically designed to select a representative sample of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

As with other surveys, the NATSISS is subject to sampling and non-sampling errors. Care has been taken to ensure that the results of this survey are as accurate as possible. Trained ABS officers conducted all the interviews. However, some factors may affect the reliability of the data.

Information recorded in this survey is 'as reported' by respondents, and therefore may differ from information available from other sources or collected using different methodologies.

Data on health-related indicators have been age-standardised to the 2001 total Australian population to account for differences in the age structures of the states and territories and the Indigenous and non-Indigenous population.

Time series comparisons for the 2008 survey are available through the 1994 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey and the 2002 NATSISS. However not all data elements align across the three (1994, 2001 and 2008) NATSISS surveys, hence care is required when reviewing results across the three surveys. There are no strictly comparable non-Indigenous results available for the 2008 NATSISS as the latest General Social Survey (which has been used in the past to compare with Indigenous results from the NATSISS) was run in 2006, with the next being run in 2010-11. Data from other ABS surveys run in 2008 may however be used to obtain rough non-Indigenous comparisons for some data

items. Where possible, ABS has provided recommendations for non-Indigenous data comparisons and these have been adopted in this report.

The 2008 NATSISS has a relatively large level of undercoverage when compared to other ABS surveys. There was also an increase in undercoverage compared to previous ABS Indigenous surveys. For example, the estimated undercoverage in the 2004–05 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey was 42%. The overall undercoverage rate for the 2008 NATSISS is approximately 53% of the in-scope population at the national level. This rate varies across the states and territories (ABS 2010).

Further information on NATSISS data quality issues can be found in the 2008 NATSISS User's guide (ABS 2010).

Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey

Survey data are subject to sampling and non-sampling errors. Confidence intervals are published with the data to provide a guide to the reliability of the estimates. Non-sampling errors can occur in surveys owing to questionnaire design problems, respondent difficulty recalling information/lack of appropriate records, and errors made in the recording and processing of the data. Every effort was made to minimise non-sample errors in this survey.

List of symbols used in tables

n.a. not available

– rounded to zero (including null cells)

0 zero

.. not applicable

n.e.c. not elsewhere classified

n.f.d. not further defined

n.p. not available for publication but included in totals where applicable, unless otherwise indicated

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