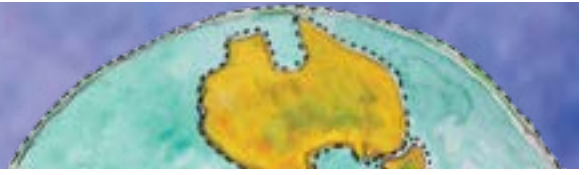


7.2 Indigenous life expectancy and death rates



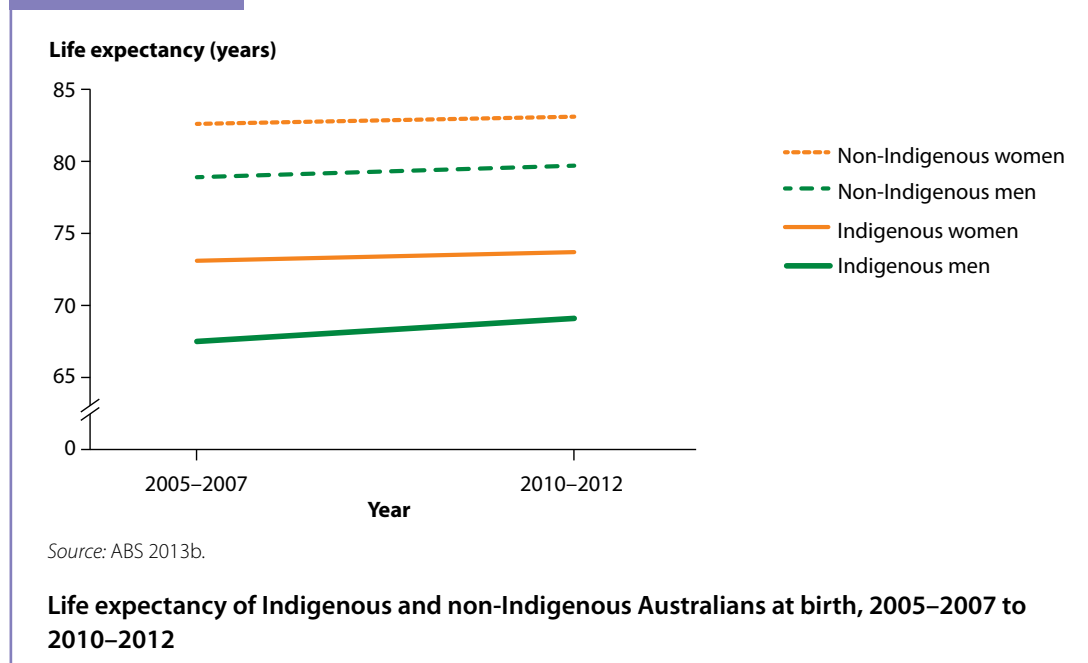
Life expectancy and mortality rates are important measures of the health status of a population (see Chapter 3 'Life expectancy' and 'Leading cause of death in Australia'). Indigenous Australians tend to die earlier than non-Indigenous Australians and their death rates are almost twice those of non-Indigenous Australians.

Information on Indigenous deaths is reported for New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory combined. Other jurisdictions have a small number of Indigenous deaths and identification of Indigenous status in the data is poor, making the data less reliable.

Life expectancy

- Indigenous boys born between 2010 and 2012 can expect to live to 69.1 years and Indigenous girls to 73.7 years compared with 79.7 for non-Indigenous boys and 83.1 for non-Indigenous girls.
- Life expectancy at birth has increased by 1.6 years for Indigenous men and 0.6 years for Indigenous women since 2005–2007 (Figure 7.2). It has also increased by 0.8 years for non-Indigenous men and 0.5 years for non-Indigenous women.

Figure 7.2





Death rates

- Indigenous Australians had higher death rates than non-Indigenous Australians across all age groups during 2007–2011. In the 35–44 age group, Indigenous people died at about 5 times the rate of non-Indigenous people.
- Between 2001 and 2011, there was a 6% fall in the death rate for Indigenous Australians and a narrowing of the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Leading causes of death

- Between 2007 and 2011, Indigenous Australians were most likely to die from circulatory conditions (26% of all Indigenous deaths), cancer (19%) and external causes such as suicides, falls, transport accidents and assaults (15%).
- The largest gap in death rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians was in circulatory disease deaths (22% of the gap) followed by endocrine, metabolic and nutritional disorders (particularly diabetes) (14% of the gap).
- Indigenous Australians were 5 times as likely as non-Indigenous Australians to die from endocrine, nutritional and metabolic conditions (such as diabetes), and 3 times as likely to die of digestive conditions.

Infant and child deaths

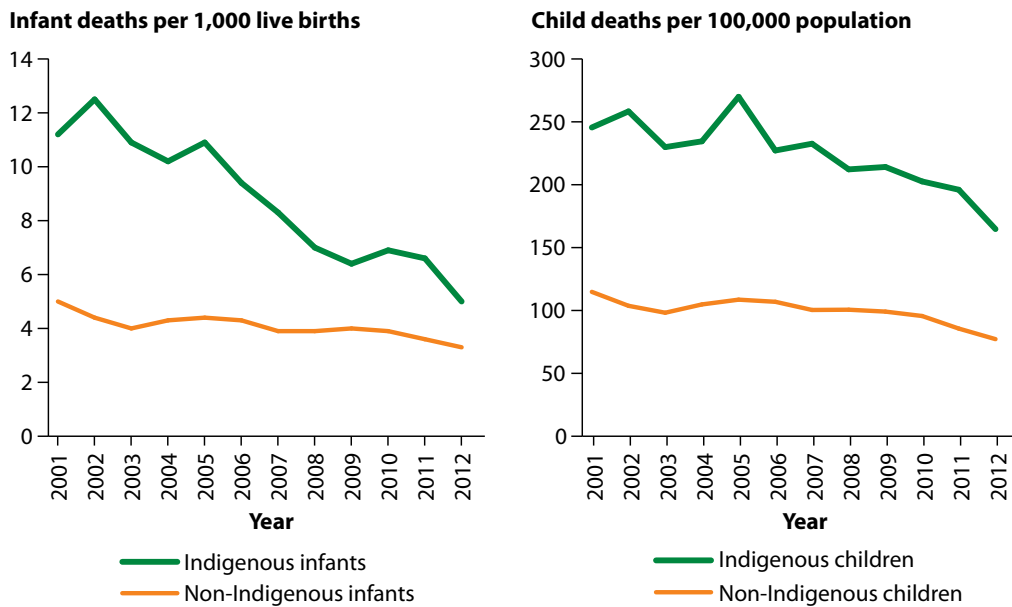
- There were 10,396 infant deaths between 2001 and 2012, of which 1,315 (13%) were Indigenous infants. The rate of Indigenous infant deaths fell by 62% between 2001 and 2012 and by 23% for non-Indigenous infants (Figure 7.3).
- Indigenous children aged 0–4 died at more than twice the rate of non-Indigenous children in 2012 (165 per 100,000 compared with 77 per 100,000 population) (SCRGSP forthcoming). Indigenous child death rates fell by 30% from 2001 to 2012 compared with 22% for non-Indigenous children (Figure 7.3).

What is missing from the picture?

Not all Indigenous deaths are identified as such in death registration data. An Australian Bureau of Statistics study that linked 2011 Census records with death registration records found that about 87% of assumed Indigenous deaths were reported as Indigenous in death registration records (ABS 2013b). The level of Indigenous identification varies across states and territories, as well as by remoteness area (see Chapter 7 'Profile of Indigenous Australians').

The AIHW's Enhanced Mortality Database project is using data linkage to improve estimates of Indigenous deaths and life expectancy. Death registrations are linked with hospital, residential aged care and perinatal data to investigate opportunities to improve the measurement of Indigenous deaths.

Figure 7.3



Sources: ABS 2013a; AIHW National Mortality Database; SCRGSP forthcoming.

Indigenous and non-Indigenous infant and child (aged 0–4) mortality rates (NSW, Qld, WA, SA and NT), 2001–2012

Where do I go for more information?

More information on the life expectancy and death rates of Indigenous Australians is available at www.aihw.gov.au/indigenous-observatory. The report [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework 2012: detailed analyses](#) and other recent publications are available for free download.

More information is also available on the ABS website at www.abs.gov.au.

References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 2013a. Births, Australia 2012. ABS cat. no. 3301.0. Canberra: ABS.
 ABS 2013b. Life tables for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2010–2012. ABS cat. no. 3302.0.55.003. Canberra: ABS.
 SCRGSP (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision), forthcoming. National Agreement performance information 2012–13: National Indigenous Reform Agreement. Canberra: Productivity Commission.