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Indicators of health status and
determinants of health

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Abbreviations

A	Accessible
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AGPS	Australian Government Publishing Service
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ARIA	Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia
ASGC	Australian Standard Geographical Classification
BMI	Body Mass Index
COPD	Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
DMF	Decayed, missing and filled (teeth)
DoHA	Department of Health and Ageing
HA	Highly Accessible
IR	Inner Regional
MA	Moderately Accessible
MC	Major Cities
MVTA	Motor vehicle traffic accidents
NATSIHS	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey
NCSCCH	National Cancer Statistics Clearing House
NDSHS	National Drug Strategy Household Survey
NHS	National Health Survey
NPDC	National Perinatal Data Collection
NPSU	National Perinatal Statistics Unit
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
OR	Outer Regional
Qld	Queensland
R	Remote
RA	Remoteness Areas
SA	South Australia
SDAC	Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers
SMHW	Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing of Adults
SMR	Standardised mortality ratio
SPR	Standardised prevalence ratio
Tas	Tasmania
Vic	Victoria

VR	Very Remote
WA	Western Australia
WHO	World Health Organization

Symbols

–	nil or rounded to zero
..	not applicable
n.a.	not available
n.p.	not published in this report
n.e.c.	not elsewhere classified
*	findings statistically significant

Summary

Indicators, describing the nature and extent of health dimensions across regions and time, provide a systematic set of measures which can inform rural health policy. In 2003, a Rural Health Information Framework was established to aid the understanding of, and to monitor the health of regional and remote populations. Indicators were identified across three areas: health status and outcomes; health determinants; and health system performance. This report is the second in an AIHW series, which reports on indicators of health from a regional and remote perspective. Indicators of health status and determinants of health are published here. A complementary report focusing on indicators of health system performance is scheduled for publication in mid-2008.

Key findings

- Rates of self-reported diabetes, cerebrovascular disease, coronary heart disease, depression, and anxiety were generally similar for those living in Major Cities and those living in regional and remote areas.
- Compared with those living in Major Cities, the incidence of cancer was slightly higher for those living in regional areas and slightly lower for those living in Very Remote areas in the two years 2001-03.
- People in regional and remote areas were more likely than those in Major Cities to report an acute or chronic injury, to drink alcohol in quantities risking harm in the short term, or to be overweight or obese.
- Compared with people living in Major Cities, people living in regional and remote areas were less likely to consume low-fat or skim milk or to consume the recommended two serves of fruit per day. However, they were more likely to consume four or more serves of vegetables per day.
- Lower birthweights outside Major Cities were particularly marked for teenage mothers (those aged younger than 20 years).
- Life expectancy decreases with increasing remoteness. Compared with Major Cities, the life expectancy in regional areas is 1-2 years lower and in remote areas is up to 7 years lower.
- Compared with those in Major Cities, people in regional and remote areas were less likely to report very good or excellent health.
- Across all geographic areas, the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples was generally worse than non-Indigenous Australians. The higher proportion of Indigenous Australians in remote area populations contributes to, but does not completely account for, the generally poorer health of people living in remote areas.

Other findings

- Indigenous Australians were generally less likely to report consumption of two serves of fruit and four or more serves of vegetables per day and more likely to report food insecurity than all people in Major Cities.
- Compared with their Major City counterparts, males were more likely to show high to very high levels of psychological distress in Outer Regional and remote areas.
- Compared with their Major City counterparts, females had higher fertility rates in all regional and remote areas.