



Economic participation, housing and community safety

3



Key points

Early childhood development, school achievements and Year 12 attainment

- The majority of Indigenous children in their first year of full-time schooling were developmentally on track (57% in 2012). However, they were more than twice as likely as non-Indigenous children to be developmentally vulnerable in 1 or more areas (43% and 21%, respectively). The proportion of Indigenous children who were developmentally vulnerable in 1 or more areas declined between 2009 and 2012 (from 47% to 43%).
- In 2013, 3 in 4 (74%) Indigenous children were enrolled in preschool in the year before full-time schooling, and 70% were attending preschool.
- The proportion of Indigenous students who achieved at or above the national minimum standard in reading in 2014 across the 4 school years tested (Years 3, 5, 7 and 9) ranged from 70% in Year 5 to 77% in Year 7; in numeracy, the range was from 71% in Year 5 to 80% in Year 7.
- Between 2008 and 2014, there was no significant change in the proportion of Indigenous students who were at or above the national minimum standard in either reading or numeracy for each of the 4 school years tested.
- Most (98%) Indigenous students who had begun secondary education at Year 7/8 in 2010/2011 completed Year 10 in 2013. However, retention rates decreased with each additional year of schooling, with the Year 12 retention rate being 55%.
- Year 12 retention rates for Indigenous students increased substantially over time—from 36% in 2001 to 55% in 2013. However, the Indigenous Year 12 school retention rates in 2013 remained below the rate for other students (83%).
- Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates for Indigenous young people aged 20–24 increased from 41% in 2001 to 47% in 2006 and 54% in 2011. The attainment gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people narrowed by 4 percentage points between 2006 and 2011.

Employment and income

- In 2012–13, 60% of Indigenous people aged 15 to 64 were in the labour force and the unemployment rate was 21%. The unemployment rate for Indigenous people was 4.2 times as high as the rate for non-Indigenous people (based on age-standardised rates).
- Unemployment rates rose for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people between 2008 and 2012–13; however, the rate for Indigenous people rose more, leading to an increase in the unemployment gap of 4 percentage points.
- A larger proportion of Indigenous workers were employed as professionals in 2011 than in 2006 (14% compared with 12%), while a smaller proportion were employed as labourers (18% in 2011 and 25% in 2006).
- Average disposable income for Indigenous people aged 15 and over increased from \$391 per week in 2006 to \$488 in 2011 (taking inflation into account); however, the ratio of Indigenous to non-Indigenous average income remained steady at 0.7 over the period.



Housing and homelessness

- Home ownership rates among Indigenous households increased from 32% in 2001 to 36% in 2011.
- More than 1 in 3 (35%) Indigenous households reported living in a dwelling with 1 or more major structural problems and about 1 in 6 (15%) reported living in a dwelling that was lacking working facilities in 2012–13.
- The proportion of Indigenous households living in overcrowded conditions fell from 16% in 2001 to 13% in 2011. There was a narrowing of the gap in overcrowding levels by 3 percentage points over the decade.
- The rate of homelessness among Indigenous people fell by 14% between 2006 and 2011, compared with an increase of 12% among non-Indigenous people. However, the homelessness rate for Indigenous people in 2011 was nearly 14 times the rate for non-Indigenous people. Of Indigenous people who were homeless, 3 in 4 (75%) were considered as such because they were living in severely crowded dwellings.

Community safety

- The age-standardised rate of hospitalisations for assault among Indigenous people was 14 times as high as for non-Indigenous people (1,157 compared with 83 per 100,000 population) in 2012–13.
- In 2013, Indigenous people aged 14 and over were significantly more likely than non-Indigenous people to indicate they had been a victim of an alcohol-related incident (38% and 26%) or an illicit drug-related incident (16% and 8.1%) in the previous year.
- On an average day in 2012–13, 44% of young people aged 10–17 under youth justice supervision were Indigenous. Indigenous young people aged 10–17 were 14 times as likely as non-Indigenous young people to be under supervision. However, the rate of Indigenous young people under youth justice supervision declined between 2008–09 and 2012–13 (from 203 to 188 per 10,000 young people).
- At 30 June 2014, 27% of the total adult prisoner population were Indigenous (9,264 people).
- The age-standardised imprisonment rate of Indigenous people increased between 2000 and 2014 (from 1,100 to 1,857 per 100,000 adults) while the non-Indigenous rate increased only slightly, resulting in an 82% increase in the gap over this period.

Comparison by remoteness

- Preschool attendance in the year before full-time schooling among Indigenous children in 2013 was higher in *Remote and very remote areas* (75%) than in *Major cities* (65%) and regional areas (71%).
- In 2014, the proportion of Indigenous students who met the national minimum standards in each of the 5 areas considered declined with increasing remoteness. For non-Indigenous students, the proportions were more similar across remoteness areas.
- In 2012–13, labour force participation for Indigenous Australians aged 15 to 64 was significantly higher in non-remote areas (61%) than remote areas (55%). However, there was little difference in unemployment rates for Indigenous people across remoteness areas—21% in non-remote areas and 20% in remote areas.
- Dwellings with structural problems were more commonly reported by Indigenous households in remote areas than in non-remote areas in 2012–13 (46% and 33%, respectively), as were dwellings with a lack of working facilities (31% and 12%).
- Indigenous households in remote areas were more likely to live in overcrowded conditions. In 2011, 20% of Indigenous households in *Remote areas* and 39% of those in *Very remote areas* were living in overcrowded conditions, compared with 10% to 12% of those in non-remote areas.

3.1 Introduction

Economic participation refers to an individual's engagement in work and/or education, and their access to economic resources that results from such participation. Since economic participation provides financial, health and social benefits, it is central to the wellbeing of a population. For example, higher levels of education and income are associated with lower prevalence of risk factors to health (such as smoking and lack of exercise), while access to economic resources is positively linked to mental health and wellbeing, and optimal child development (AIHW 2012a; VicHealth 2005).

The extent to which positive health and wellbeing outcomes associated with education and employment are due to direct (rather than indirect) benefits of participation is unclear. Indeed, access to participation may itself be influenced by health and wellbeing—for example, healthy people are better able to remain in the workforce or in formal education. Alternatively, education and employment may provide greater access to economic resources which, along with lower levels of financial stress, may provide much of the direct positive effect on wellbeing.

Housing also plays a critical role in the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Australians. The absence of affordable, secure and appropriate housing can result in a number of negative consequences, including homelessness, poor health, and lower rates of employment and education participation, all of which can lead to social exclusion.

Similarly, safe communities, where people feel protected from harm within their home, workplace and community, are also important for physical and mental wellbeing.

This chapter provides information on education, labour force participation, income, housing and community safety for Indigenous Australians. Information is provided on changes over time and differences compared with non-Indigenous Australians. Data on the relationship between education, employment and health status is presented in Section 4.5.

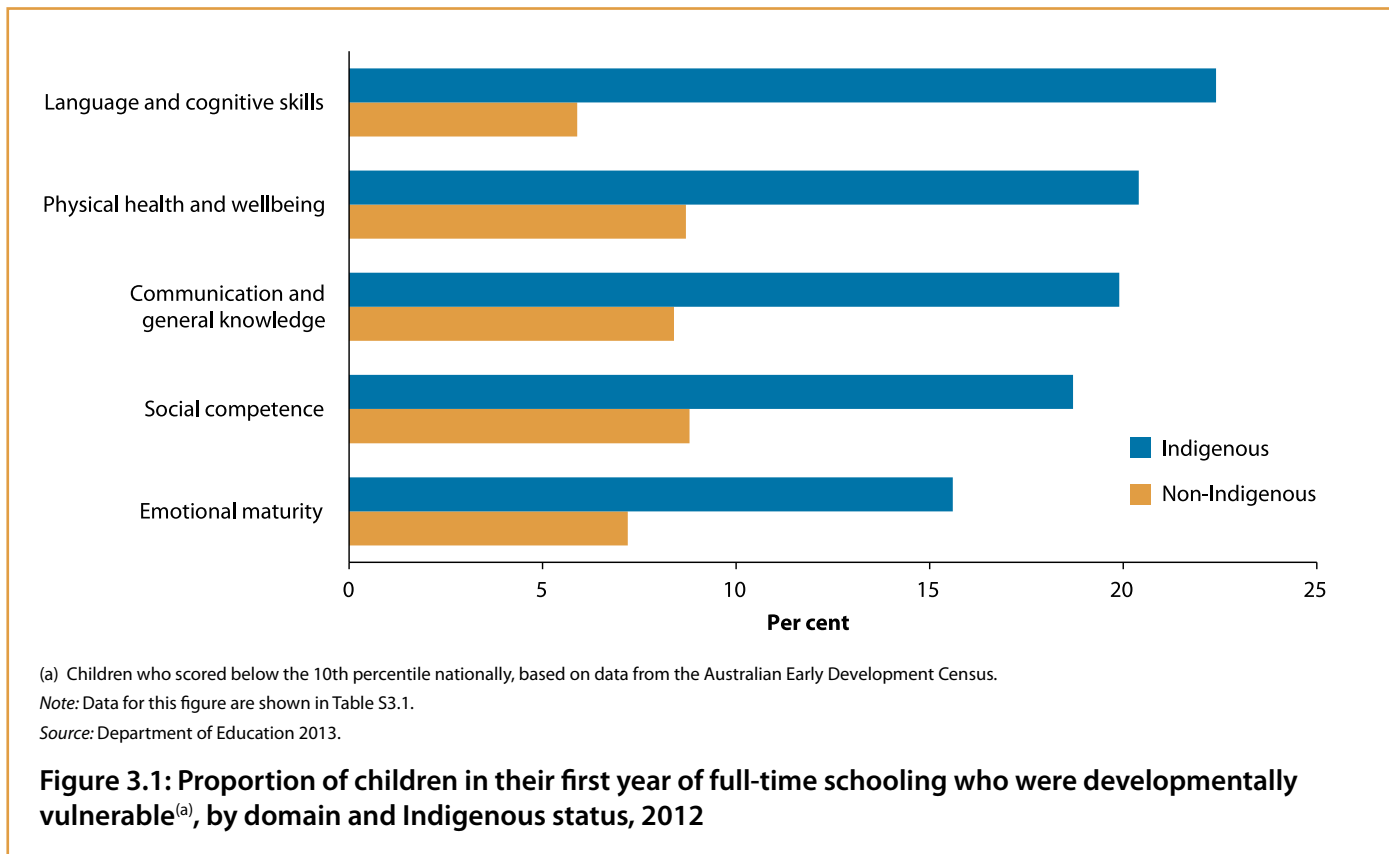
3.2 Education

COAG has highlighted the critical role of education and training in 'increasing the productivity of individual workers and the economy' (COAG 2012c). In 2008, COAG agreed to an education reform agenda, now being implemented across Australian schools. These reforms are directed across a range of areas directly relevant to Indigenous Australians, including improving literacy and numeracy levels, better outcomes for low socioeconomic status school communities, and helping students make the transition from school to further education, training or employment.

Early childhood development

Children entering school with basic skills for life and learning are more likely to experience a successful transition to primary school. According to data from the 2012 Australian Early Development Census, among children in their first year of full-time schooling:

- about 6 in 10 (57%) Indigenous children were developmentally on track in each of the 5 developmental domains considered—namely, physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills, and communication skills and general knowledge
- Indigenous children (43%) were twice as likely as non-Indigenous children (21%) to be developmentally vulnerable (that is, their score ranked in the lowest 10%) on 1 or more domains
- Indigenous children were nearly 4 times as likely to be developmentally vulnerable as non-Indigenous children on the language and cognitive skills domain (22.4% and 5.9%, respectively) (Figure 3.1; Department of Education 2013).



The proportion of Indigenous children in their first year of full-time schooling who were developmentally vulnerable on 1 or more domains declined between 2009 and 2012 (from 47% to 43%) (Brinkman et al. 2014).

Preschool plays an important role in early childhood education and preparing children for primary school. In 2013, 74% of Indigenous children were enrolled in an early childhood education program—referred to hereafter as a ‘preschool program’—in the year before full-time schooling; this compares with 91% of non-Indigenous children (SCRGSP 2014b).

It is a COAG target to improve access to, and attendance at, early childhood education among Indigenous children living in remote communities—see Box 3.1.

Box 3.1: COAG target for early childhood education

Target: Ensure all Indigenous children aged 4 in remote communities have access to quality early childhood education within 5 years (by 2013)

COAG’s target for early childhood education is further defined as ensuring 95% of Indigenous children are enrolled in preschool in the year before formal schooling.

In 2013:

- 74% of Indigenous children were enrolled in preschool in the year before full-time schooling—enrolment was higher in *Remote and very remote* areas (85%) than in *Major cities* (67%) and regional areas (74%)
- 70% of Indigenous children were attending preschool in the year before full-time schooling—attendance was also higher in *Remote and very remote* areas (75%) than in *Major cities* (65%) and regional areas (71%) (SCRGSP 2014b).

Comparable data to monitor trends over time in enrolment and attendance are not available.

School attendance

Regular school attendance is required for students to develop general life skills, as well as specific skills such as literacy and numeracy. Data on Years 1 to 10 attendance are available for each jurisdiction by Indigenous status and school sector (government, independent and Catholic); however, the data cannot be directly compared across jurisdictions or sectors.

The available jurisdictional data suggest that in 2013:

- Indigenous students generally had lower attendance rates than non-Indigenous students; for example, for Year 5 students in government schools, attendance ranged from 72% to 91% across the jurisdictions for Indigenous students, compared with 93% to 95% for non-Indigenous students (Table 3.1)
- attendance rates for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students were generally higher in Year 5 than Year 10 (Table 3.1)
- attendance rates at government schools for Indigenous students in Year 10 decreased between 2007 and 2013 (6 percentage points or less in each jurisdiction except the Northern Territory, which fell by 13 percentage points); however, there was little change for Indigenous Year 5 students
- there was no clear trend in attendance rates for Indigenous students in Catholic and independent schools over the period 2007 to 2013 (SCRGSP 2014b).

Table 3.1: Student attendance rates, by sector and Indigenous status, Years 5 and 10^(a), 2013 (range across jurisdictions)

Sector	Indigenous		Non-Indigenous	
	Year 5	Year 10	Year 5	Year 10
Government	72% to 91%	56% to 81%	93% to 95%	87% to 90%
Independent	74% to 94%	70% to 89%	94% to 95%	91% to 94%
Catholic	70% to 93%	66% to 89%	93% to 95%	90% to 93%

(a) Years 5 and 10 have been selected to represent the middle (primary) and later (secondary) years of schooling.

Source: SCRGSP 2014b.

A new target to close the gap on school attendance within 5 years was agreed to by COAG in May 2014; however, details on how this target will be measured were not available at the time of writing (SCRGSP 2014b).



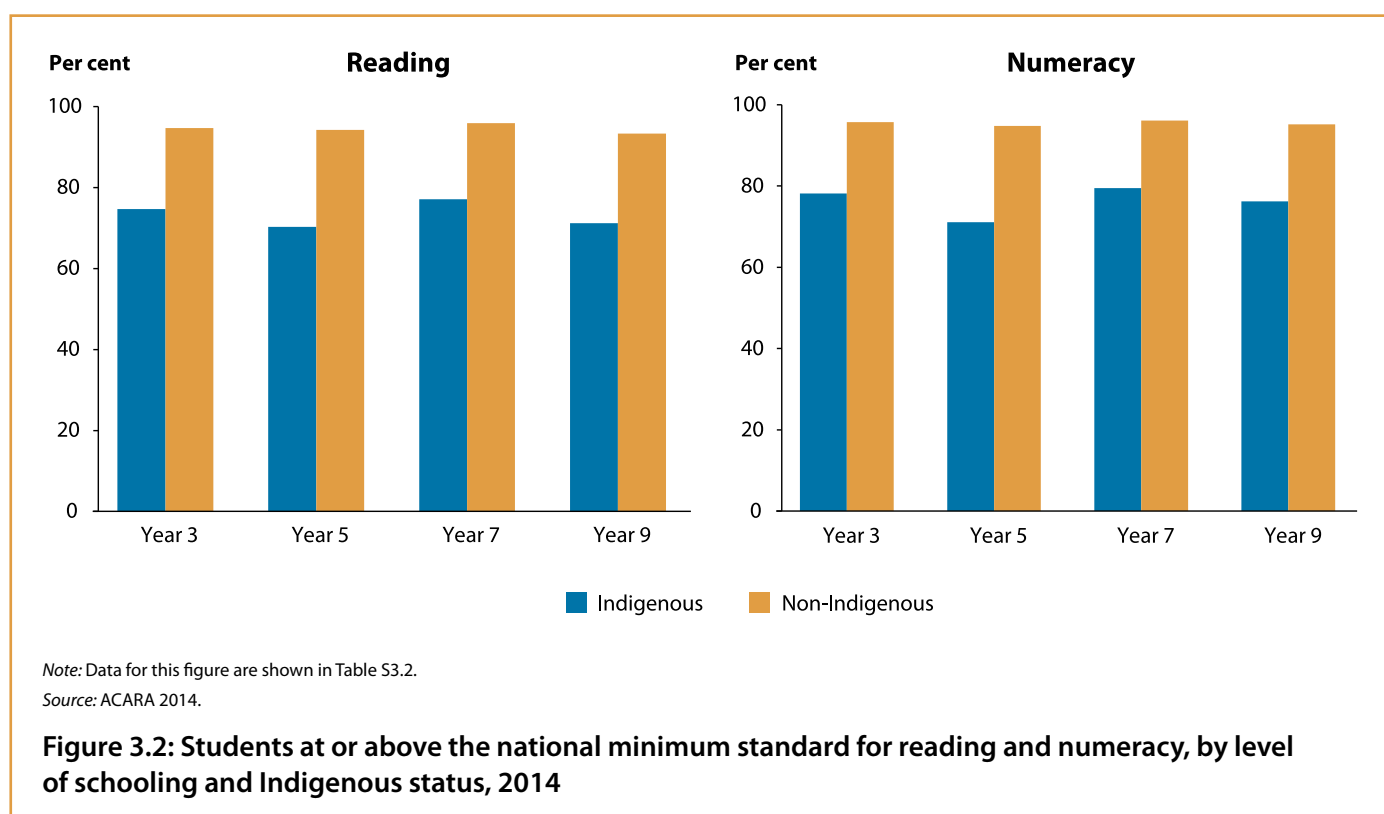
Literacy and numeracy

Literacy and numeracy are essential skills that prepare children for school, higher education and the workforce, as well as life at home and in the community. Students who attain the minimum standards for literacy and numeracy in the early years of schooling are more likely to succeed at school and enter higher education.

Information on student’s literary and numeracy levels are assessed in Australia annually through National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests. These tests are conducted in May for all students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 and they cover 5 areas: reading, numeracy, persuasive writing, spelling, and grammar and punctuation (ACARA 2014). In 2014, the proportion of Indigenous students who achieved at or above the national minimum standard in each of these areas was as follows:

- reading: ranged from a high of 77% among Year 7 students to a low of 70% among Year 5 students
- numeracy: ranged from 80% of Year 7 students to 71% of Year 5 students
- persuasive writing: ranged from 76% of Year 3 students to 49% of Year 9 students, with the difference between the Year 3 and Year 9 students (26 percentage points) being the largest of all of the areas tested
- spelling: ranged from 74% of Year 3 students to 70% of Year 9 students
- grammar and punctuation: ranged from 73% of Year 3 students to 63% of Year 9 students (Table S3.2).

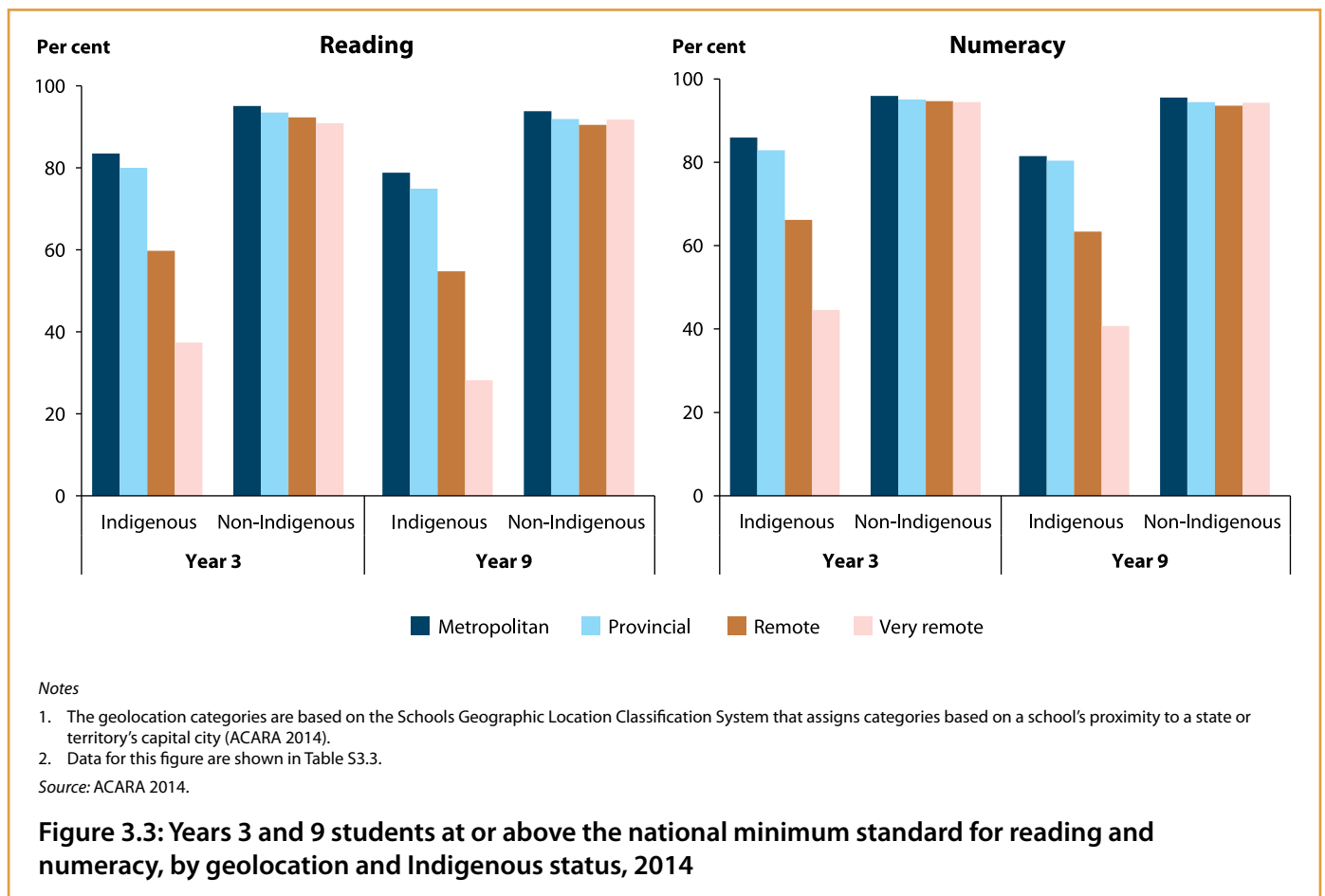
For each of the 4 school years tested and for each of the 5 areas, a lower proportion of Indigenous students than non-Indigenous students were at or above the national minimum standards (Table S3.2). This is illustrated in Figure 3.2 for 2 of the areas targeted for improvement by COAG—reading and numeracy.





The proportion of Indigenous students who met the national minimum standards in each of the 5 areas declined with increasing remoteness. In contrast, for non-Indigenous students, the proportions were more similar across remoteness areas (Figure 3.3). For example, in 2014:

- the proportion of Indigenous Year 3 students who were at or above the national minimum standard for reading ranged from 84% in *Metropolitan* areas to 37% in *Very remote* areas, whereas the corresponding proportions for non-Indigenous Year 3 students were 95% and 91%, respectively
- the proportion of Indigenous Year 9 students who were at or above the national minimum standard for numeracy was higher in *Metropolitan* (82%) than *Very remote* areas (41%), while there was a smaller difference for non-Indigenous Year 9 students (96% and 94%, respectively) (ACARA 2014).



It is a COAG target to reduce the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade (between 2008 and 2018)—see Box 3.2.

Box 3.2: COAG target for reading, writing and numeracy

Target: Halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy for Indigenous students within a decade (by 2018)

Between 2008 to 2014, the proportions of Indigenous students who achieved at or above the national minimum standard for reading and numeracy increased somewhat, although the changes were not statistically significant for any of the 4 school years tested. There were also no significant changes in the corresponding proportions for non-Indigenous students (ACARA 2014). Overall, there were no significant changes in the gap in reading or numeracy (AIHW analysis of ACARA 2014).

Due to changes in the writing test in 2011, comparisons over time from 2008 cannot be made (ACARA 2014).

School retention

In 2013, the apparent retention rate for Indigenous students from Year 7/8 to Year 10 was 98%—in other words, most Indigenous students who had begun secondary education at Year 7/8 in 2010/2011 completed Year 10 in 2013. However, apparent retention rates decreased with each additional year of schooling—81% for Year 11 and 55% for Year 12. Retention rates for Indigenous students were lower than those for other students at each Year level (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: Apparent retention rates^(a), by Indigenous status, 2013 (per cent)

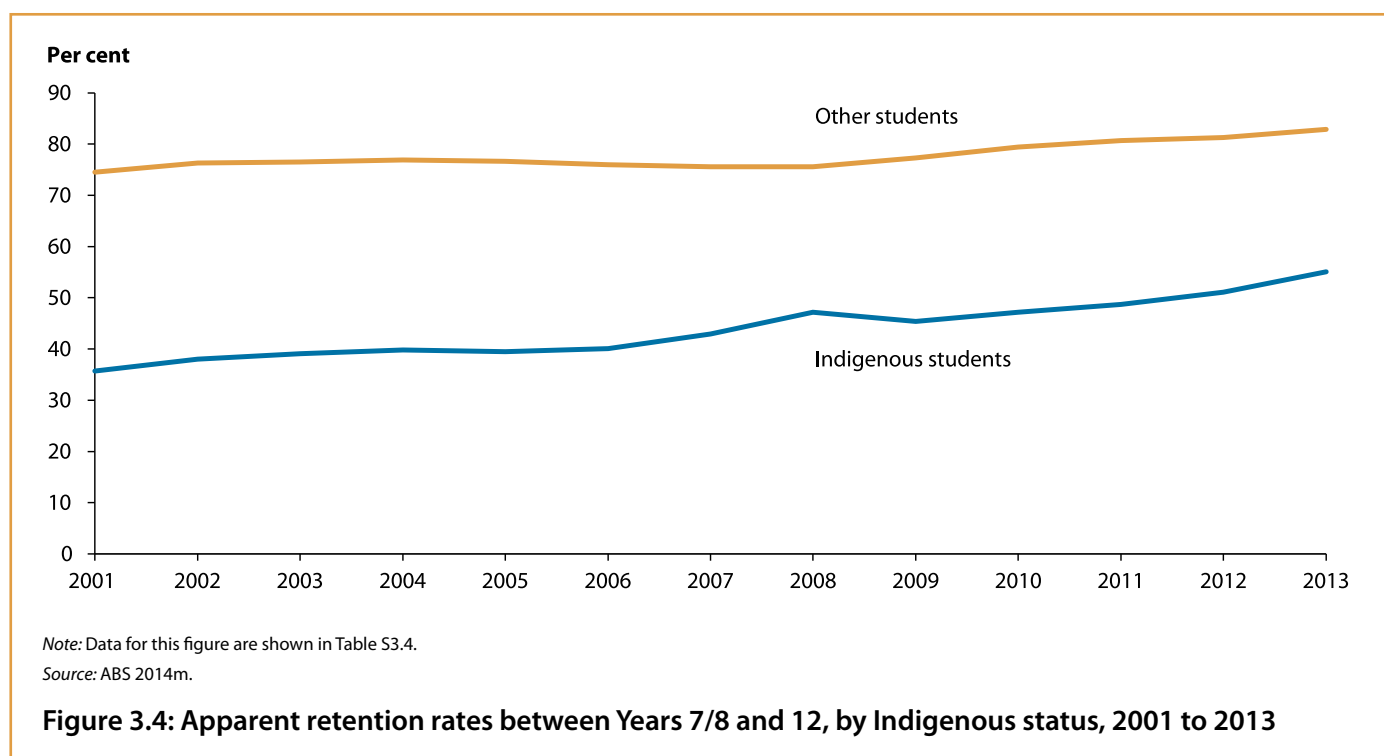
	Indigenous students	Other students ^(b)
Year 7/8 to Year 10	98.1	101.7
Year 7/8 to Year 11	81.3	96.2
Year 7/8 to Year 12	55.1	82.9

(a) Apparent retention rates are the number of Year 10/11/12 enrolments expressed as a percentage of Year 7/8 enrolments 3/4/5 years earlier. For example, the Year 7/8 to Year 12 apparent retention rate is the number of Year 12 enrolments expressed as a percentage of the number of Year 7/8 students enrolled 5 years earlier. These rates are crude approximations of actual retention rates because they do not track individual students, nor do they take into account students repeating Year levels, interstate and overseas migration, transfer of students between schools and returning students.

(b) 'Other students' includes non-Indigenous students and students whose Indigenous status was not stated.

Source: ABS 2014m.

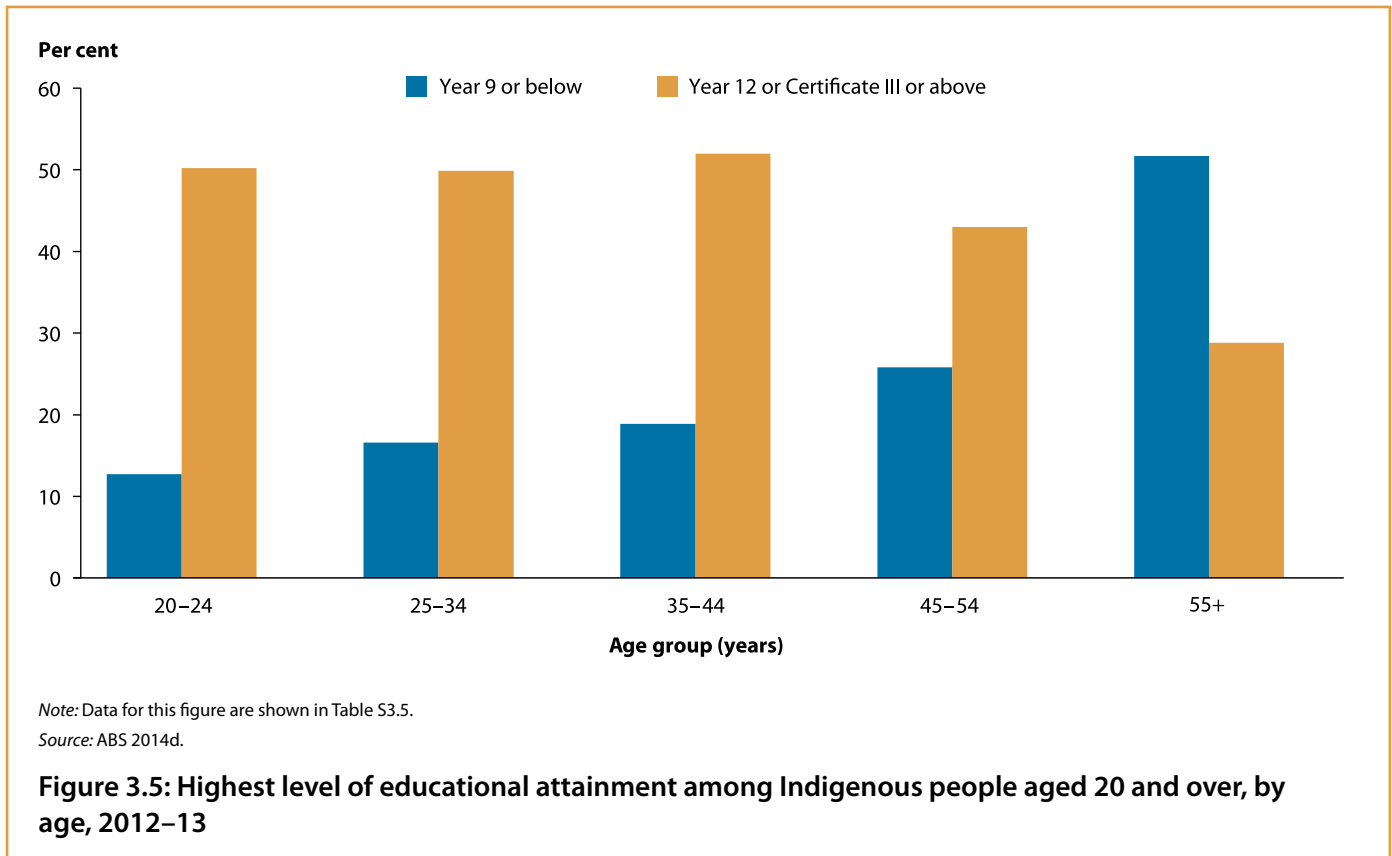
Year 12 retention rates for Indigenous students have increased substantially over time—rising from 36% in 2001 to 55% in 2013 (Figure 3.4). The gap between retention rates for Indigenous students and other students fell by 28% over this period.



Educational attainment

Nearly 1 in 2 (46%) Indigenous adults aged 20 and over had completed Year 12 or a Certificate III or above according to the 2012–13 AATSIHS (equalling an estimated 155,200 people) (ABS 2014d). Indigenous women were significantly more likely to have attained this level of education than Indigenous men (47% compared with 44%).

In 2012–13, the proportion of Indigenous adults whose highest educational attainment was Year 9 or below increased with age, from 13% of those aged 20–24 to 52% of those aged 55 and over. Around half of Indigenous adults aged 20 to 44 had completed Year 12 or a Certificate III or above, compared with 29% of Indigenous adults aged 55 and over (Figure 3.5).



Educational attainment rates were lower among Indigenous adults than non-Indigenous adults. In 2012–13, Indigenous adults aged 20 and over were significantly less likely than non-Indigenous adults of the same age to have completed Year 12 or a Certificate III or above (age-standardised rates of 43% and 70%, respectively) (ABS 2014d).

It is a COAG target to halve the gap for Indigenous 20–24 year olds in Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates by 2020—see Box 3.3.



Box 3.3: COAG target for educational attainment

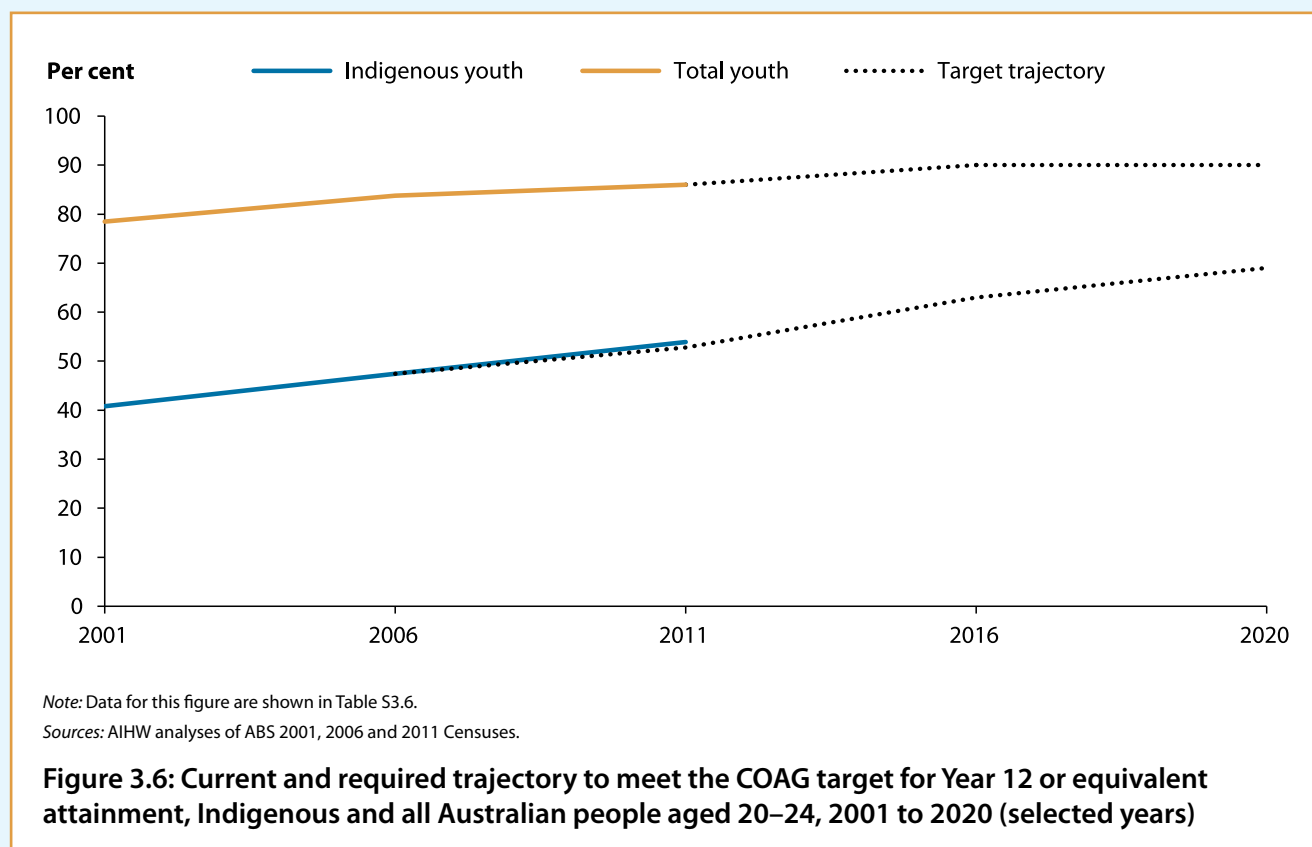
Target: Halve the gap for Indigenous people aged 20–24 in Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates by 2020

Data from the Census show that, in the decade to 2011, there was steady improvement in Year 12 or equivalent attainment for Indigenous people aged 20–24—increasing from 41% in 2001 to 47% in 2006 and 54% in 2011.

Between 2006 and 2011, there was a narrowing of the Year 12 or equivalent attainment gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people by 4 percentage points (SCRGSP 2014b).

Year 12 attainment milestones for Indigenous young people were agreed upon for 2016 (namely 63%) and 2020 (69%) (COAG 2012b). The 2011 results are 1 percentage point higher than the trajectory required to meet the 2020 target (Figure 3.6).

While the Census is the main data source for measuring progress towards the educational attainment target, data from the 2012–13 AATSIHS also indicate an increase since 2008 in the proportion of Indigenous people aged 20–24 who had completed Year 12 or Certificate II or above (SCRGSP 2014b). The corresponding attainment rates for non-Indigenous people, as sourced from national health surveys, remained stable over this period, resulting in a narrowing of the gap by 15 percentage points.



Post-secondary education

Indigenous Australians may be more likely than other Australians to face barriers to participation in higher education and training, such as financial barriers, family responsibilities, and living in areas without access to suitable educational institutions. Box 3.4 outlines barriers reported by Indigenous people wanting to participate in higher education or training.

Box 3.4: Barriers to education or training

In 2008, about 1 in 4 (26%) Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over reported that they had wanted to study in the previous 12 months but were unable to, with those aged in their 20s and 30s the most likely to indicate this. When asked why they had not studied:

- 37% of those aged 15–24 and 27% of those aged 25–49 reported education-related reasons, including course-related reasons, the cost of studying and the lack of availability of courses/educational institutions in the area
- 32% of those aged 15–24 and 35% of those aged 25–49 reported family or personal reasons, including caring responsibilities
- 23% of those aged 15–24 and 31% of those aged 25–49 reported work-related reasons or a lack of time (CAEPR analysis of 2008 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey).

In 2013, 13,781 university students identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin, which represented 1% of all university enrolments. One-third (33%) of Indigenous university students were enrolled in the field of society and culture, followed by 20% in health and 17% in education (Department of Education 2014).

In 2012–13, about 1 in 3 (34%) Indigenous people aged 20 and over had obtained a qualification through either vocational education and training, or tertiary studies at university. Indigenous people aged 20 and over were significantly less likely than their non-Indigenous counterparts to have:

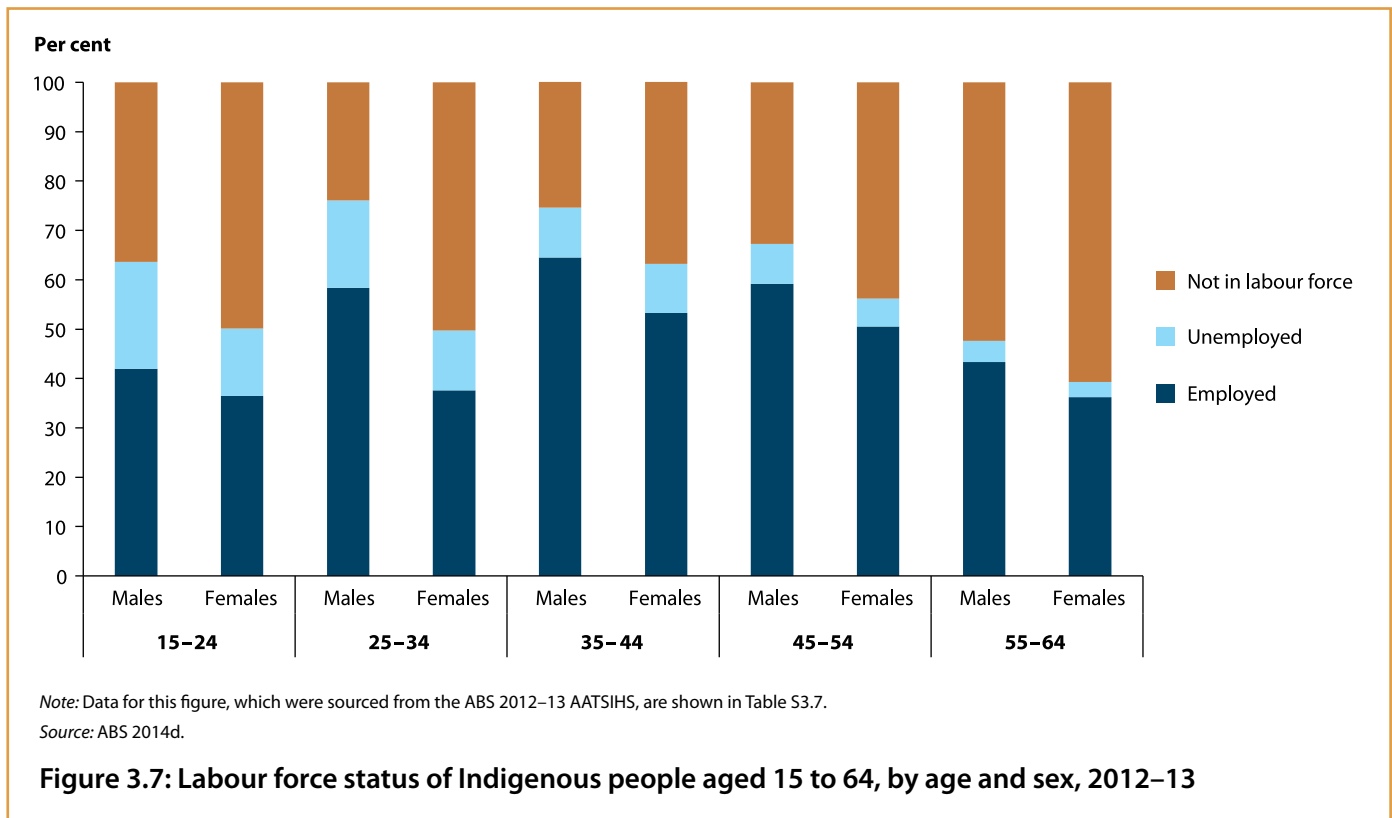
- obtained such a qualification (age-standardised rate of 34% compared with 57%)
- attained a Bachelor degree or above (age-standardised rate of 6% compared with 26%) (ABS 2014d).

3.3 Labour force participation

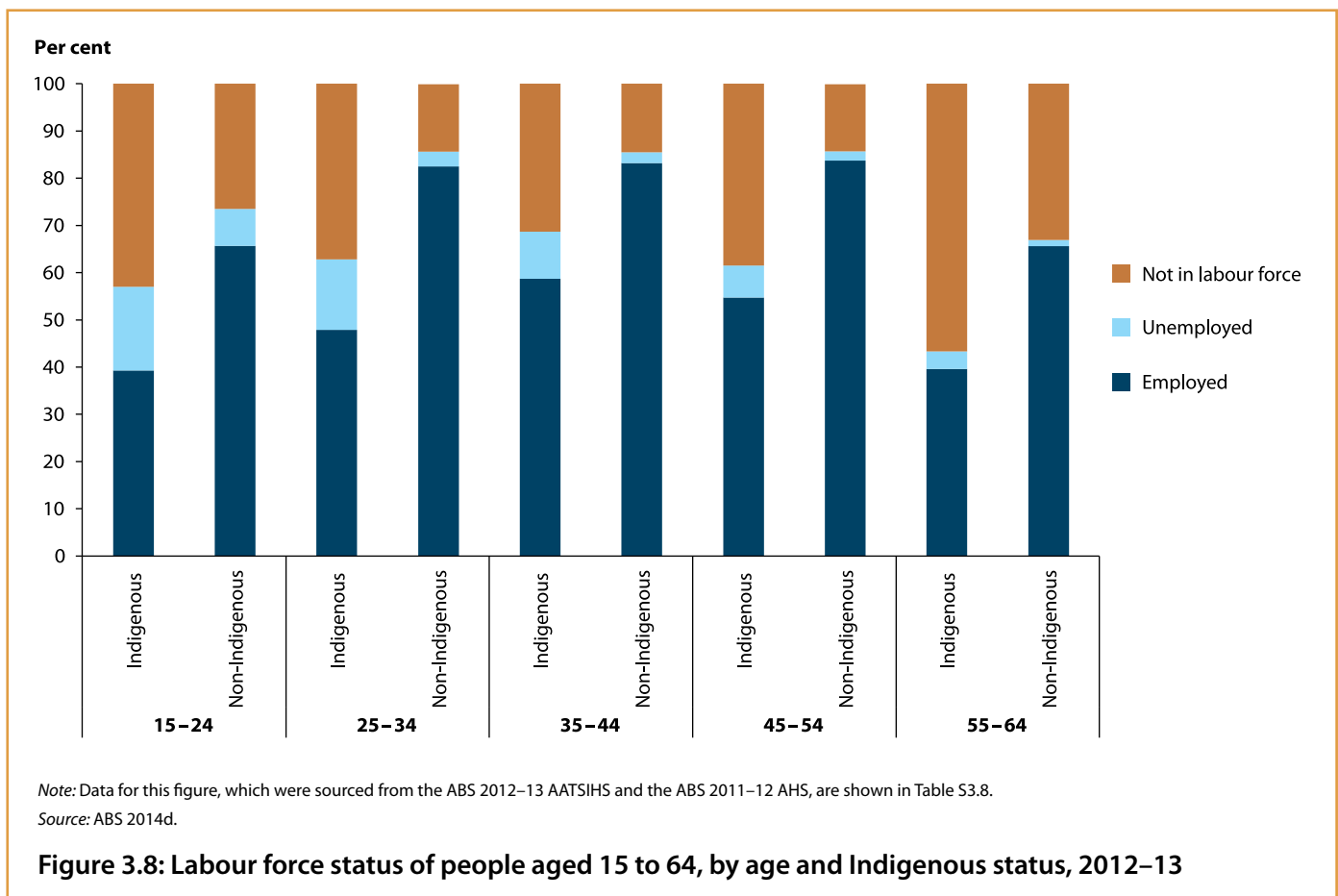
Indigenous Australians have relatively low levels of employment and relatively high levels of unemployment due to several factors, including education and skill levels, geographic location and labour market conditions (Gray et al. 2012).

In 2012–13, 60% of Indigenous Australians aged 15 to 64 (an estimated 232,700 people) were in the labour force (that is, employed or unemployed) (ABS 2014d). Participation rates were:

- highest among Indigenous people aged 35–44 (69%) and lowest for those aged 55–64 (43%)
- significantly higher among Indigenous men (68%) than Indigenous women (53%) across all age groups (Figure 3.7), but particularly so for those aged 25–34, at least partly reflecting the relatively high proportion of Indigenous women out of the workforce caring for young children
- significantly higher in non-remote areas (61%) than remote areas (55%) (ABS 2014d).



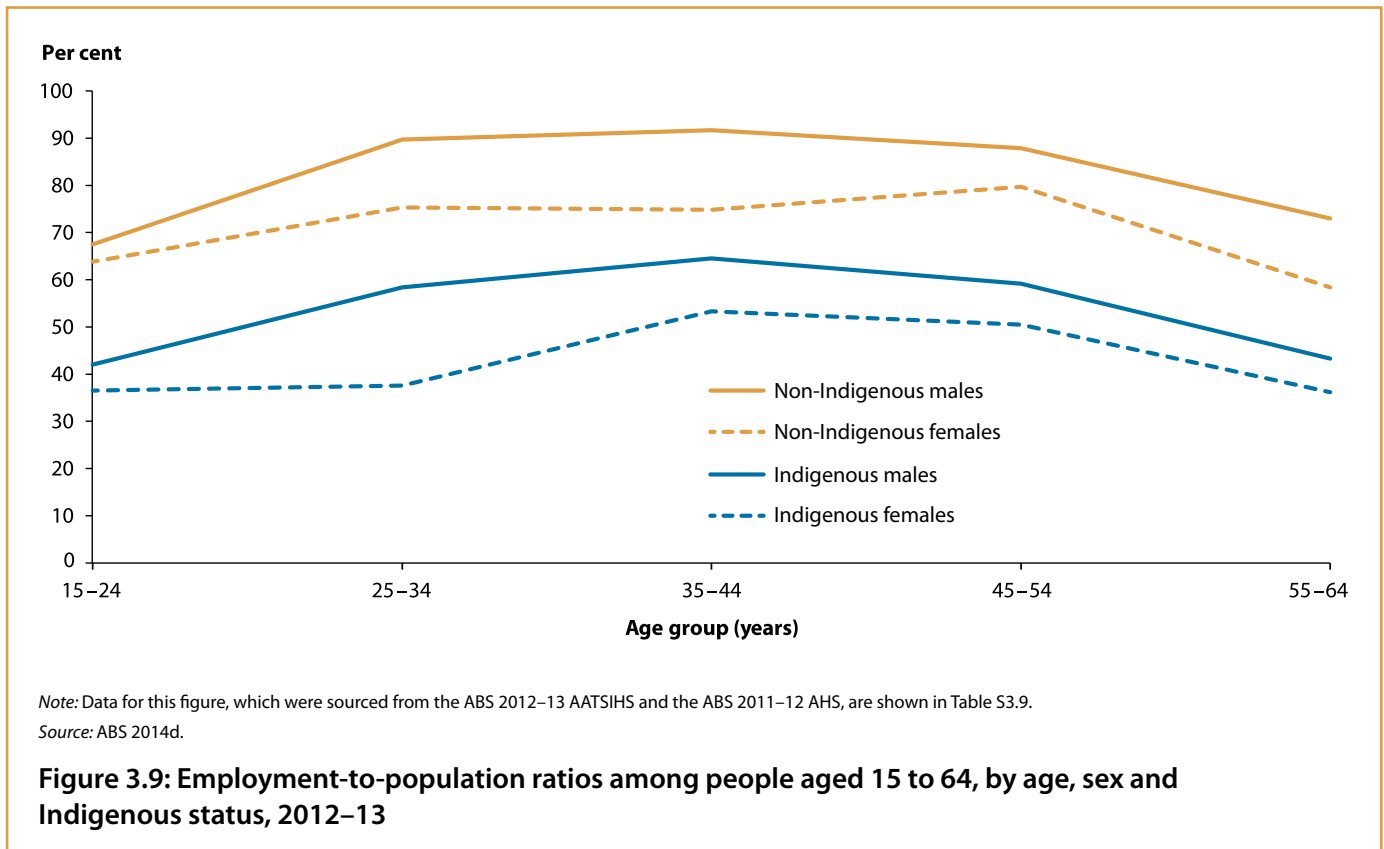
Indigenous Australians aged 15 to 64 were significantly less likely to be in the labour force than non-Indigenous Australians in 2012-13 (rate ratio of 0.7 based on age-standardised rates) (Table S3.8). As shown in Figure 3.8, this difference held across all age groups.





Another aspect to the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is the difference in levels of employment between men and women. Indigenous women of working age have significantly lower employment rates than:

- non-Indigenous men and women of the same age
- Indigenous men between the ages of 25 and 54 (Figure 3.9).



One barrier to employment for some Indigenous women is their greater level of caring responsibility. Indigenous women are more likely than the rest of the population to have unpaid caring responsibilities for their own children and the children of others, as well as for those with disability or illness related to old age (Yap & Biddle 2012).

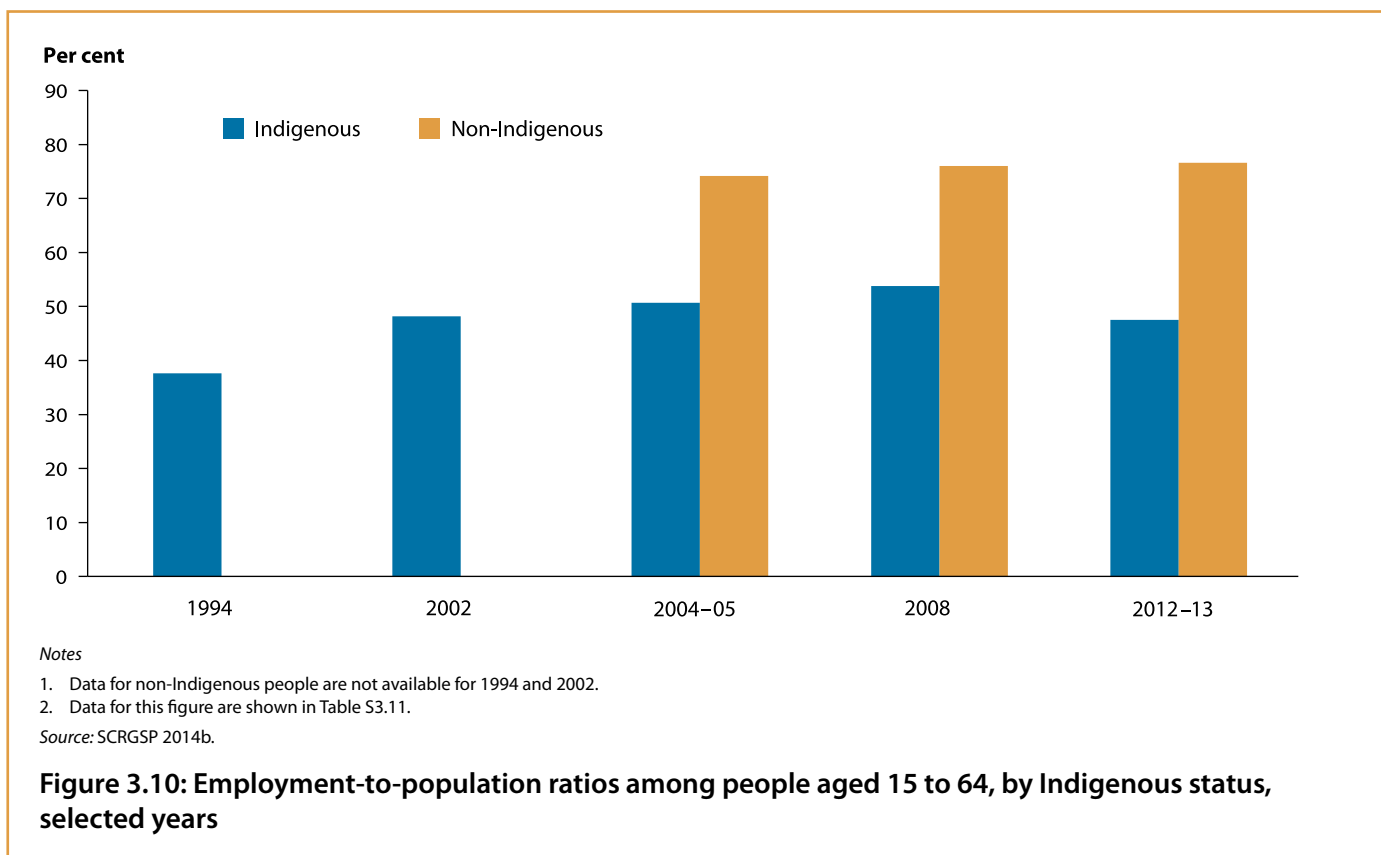
Unemployment rate

The unemployment rate indicates the number of unemployed people as a proportion of the labour force. In 2012-13, the unemployment rate for Indigenous people aged 15 to 64 was 21%, with the rate highest among those aged 15-24 (31%), followed by those aged 25-34 (24%). The unemployment rate for Indigenous people aged 15 to 64 was 4.2 times as high as the rate for non-Indigenous people, after adjusting for age differences in the 2 populations (Table S3.10; ABS 2014d). The largest difference was seen for adults aged 25-34, where the Indigenous unemployment rate was 6.6 times as high as the non-Indigenous rate.

There was little difference in unemployment rates for Indigenous people across remoteness areas—21% in non-remote areas and 20% in remote areas (ABS 2014d).

Change over time

The employment-to-population ratio for Indigenous people aged 15 to 64 increased from 38% in 1994 to 54% in 2008, and then declined to 48% in 2012-13 (Figure 3.10). In contrast, the employment-to-population ratio for non-Indigenous people remained fairly stable at about 76% between 2004-05 and 2011-12.



It is a COAG target to reduce the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians between 2008 and 2018—see Box 3.6.

Box 3.6: COAG target for employment

Target: Halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade (by 2018)

The gap in employment is measured through employment-to-population ratios, labour force participation rates and unemployment rates.

Between 2008 and 2012–13 and among those aged 15 to 64:

- The employment gap widened by 7 percentage points—in 2008, the employment gap was 22% compared with 29% in 2012–13 (when the proportion of the Indigenous population aged 15 to 64 who were employed was 48% in 2012–13, compared with 77% of the non-Indigenous working-age population).
- The labour force participation gap increased by 6 percentage points due to a fall in the Indigenous participation rate and a rise in the non-Indigenous rate.
- Both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous unemployment rates rose; however the Indigenous rate rose more, leading to an increase in the unemployment gap of 4 percentage points (Table S3.12).

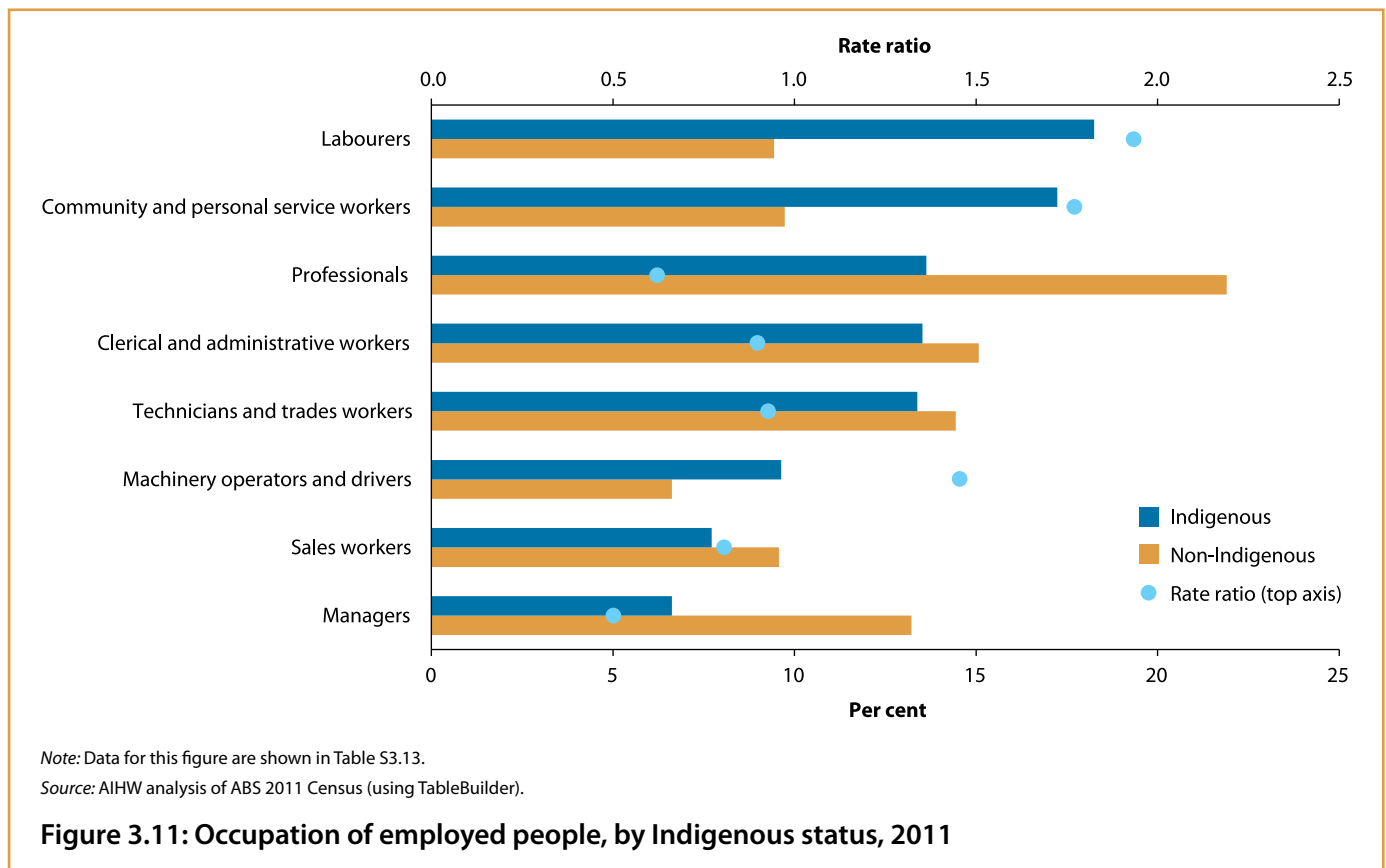
The fall in employment rates for Indigenous people over time may partly reflect changes to the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program in July 2009 (COAG Reform Council 2014). From 2009, new CDEP participants did not receive CDEP wages but standard Centrelink income support payments instead. This change led to a fall in the number of Indigenous Australians considered to be employed.

Occupation

Of the 142,100 Indigenous workers who stated their occupation in the 2011 Census, the most common occupations were: labourers (18%), community and personal service workers (17%), professionals (14%), clerical and administrative workers (14%), and technicians and trades workers (13%) (Figure 3.11).

Compared with non-Indigenous workers, Indigenous workers were:

- about twice as likely to work as labourers or community and personal service workers
- about half as likely to work as managers or professionals (Figure 3.11).



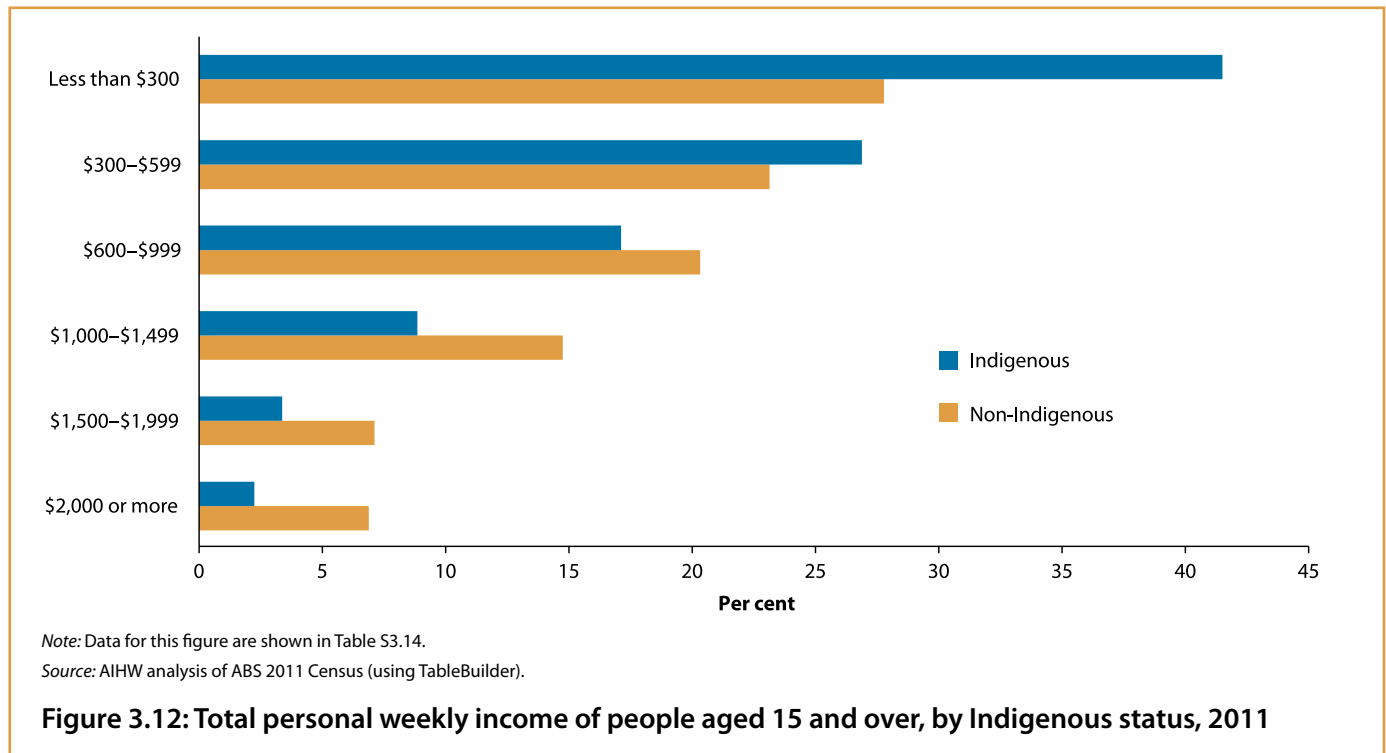
The proportion of Indigenous workers employed in various occupations in 2011 has changed from 2006. In 2011:

- a smaller proportion of Indigenous workers were employed as labourers (18% in 2011 compared with 25% in 2006)
- a larger proportion were employed as:
 - professionals (14% compared with 12%)
 - clerical and administrative workers (14% compared with 13%)
 - community and personal service workers (17% compared with 16%) (AIHW 2011b; AIHW analysis of 2011 Census).

3.4 Income

According to Census data, Indigenous people have relatively low average weekly incomes and are under-represented in the highest income bracket. Among those aged 15 and over in 2011:

- 2.2% of Indigenous people had a total weekly income of \$2,000 or more, compared with 6.9% of non-Indigenous people
- more than two-thirds (68%) of Indigenous people had a total weekly income below \$600, compared with 51% of non-Indigenous people (Figure 3.12).



On average, Indigenous people aged 15 and over living in *Major cities* had higher weekly incomes than their counterparts in regional or remote areas, with 61% of Indigenous people in *Major cities* having a personal weekly income below \$600 compared with 82% of Indigenous people in *Very remote* areas (Table S3.14).

Average disposable income for Indigenous people aged 15 and over increased from \$391 per week in 2006 to \$488 per week in 2011 (taking inflation into account); however, the ratio of Indigenous to non-Indigenous average income remained steady at 0.7 over the period (Biddle 2013).

Census data about household income indicate that in 2011, average total weekly equivalised household income for Indigenous households was \$691; this compared with \$941 for other households (ABS and AIHW analysis of 2011 Census).

Financial stress

Among Indigenous households in 2012–13:

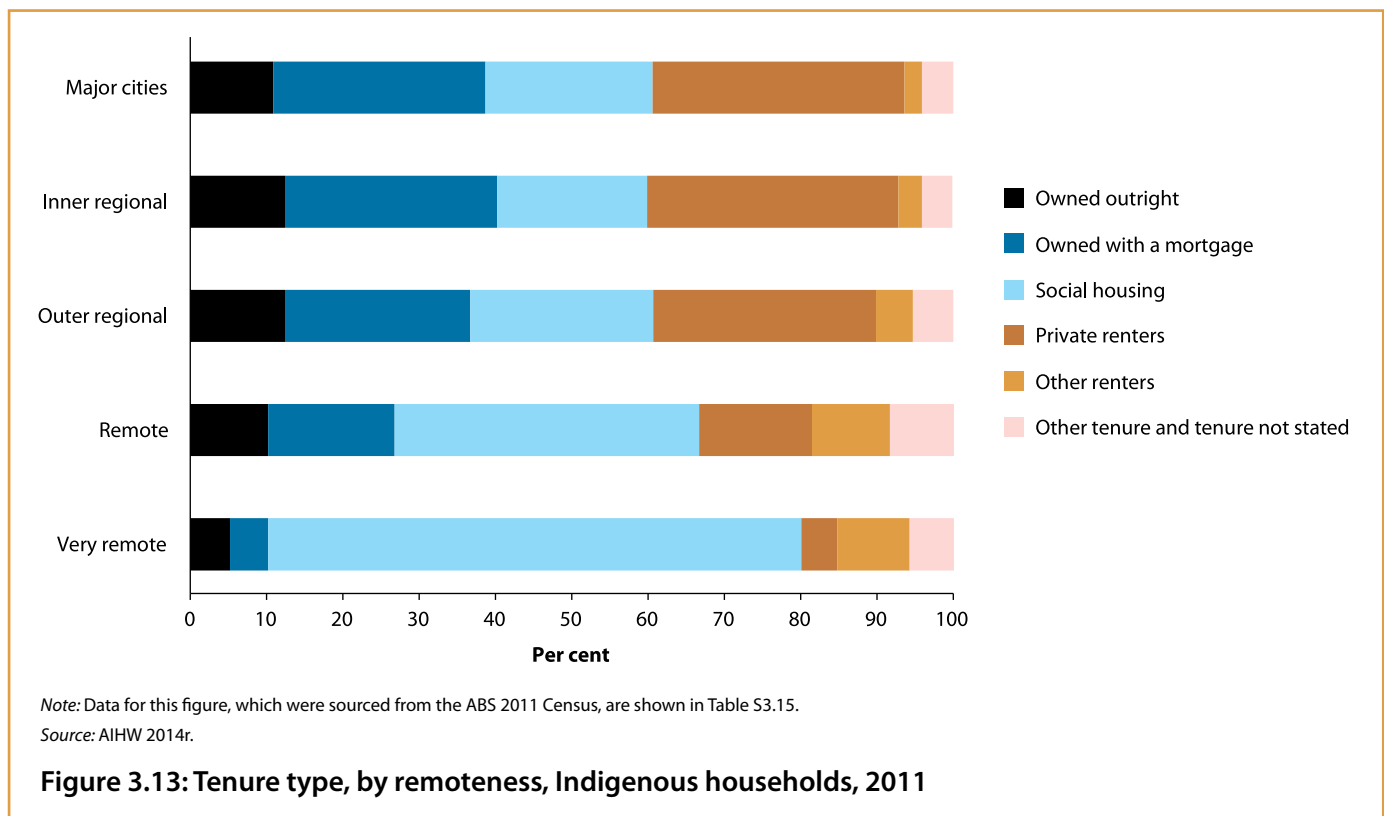
- 44% indicated that if household members had to raise \$2,000 in one week to pay for something important, they could not do it
- 39% reported that they had days without money for basic living expenses in the previous 12 months and, of these households, 47% had days without money for basic living expenses in the 2 weeks prior to the survey
- about 1 in 4 (23%) stated that they had run out of food in the previous 12 months and could not afford to buy more; of those who had run out of food, 41% reported that they went without food (AIHW analysis of 2012–13 AATSIHS).

3.5 Housing

Housing tenure

In 2011, 36% of Indigenous households owned their home (with or without a mortgage), 29% were private renters, and 26% rented from social housing (that is, they rented through either a state or territory housing authority, or community housing) (Table S3.15; AIHW 2014r).

Indigenous households in non-remote areas (39%) were more likely to own their home than those in remote areas (18%). The proportion living in social housing was highest in *Very remote* areas (70%), followed by 40% in *Remote* areas and between 20% and 24% in other areas (Figure 3.13).



Indigenous households have lower rates of home ownership than other households. In 2011, about half as many Indigenous households owned their home as other households (36% and 68%, respectively) (ABS 2012b). This may be due to:

- the lower socioeconomic status of Indigenous households
- more limited access to loans
- lack of familiarity with the home buying process
- the substantial number of Indigenous households living on community-titled land in more remote areas, where individual land ownership is more difficult to obtain (AIHW 2014r).

Home ownership rates among Indigenous households have increased according to Census data: 32% of Indigenous households owned their own home (either with or without a mortgage) in 2001, 34% in 2006 and 36% in 2011. The overall increase in the home ownership rate among Indigenous households between 2001 and 2011 was 12% (AIHW 2014r).

For further information about housing tenure among Indigenous households, including how housing costs vary by housing tenure, see *Housing circumstances of Indigenous households: tenure and overcrowding* (AIHW 2014r).



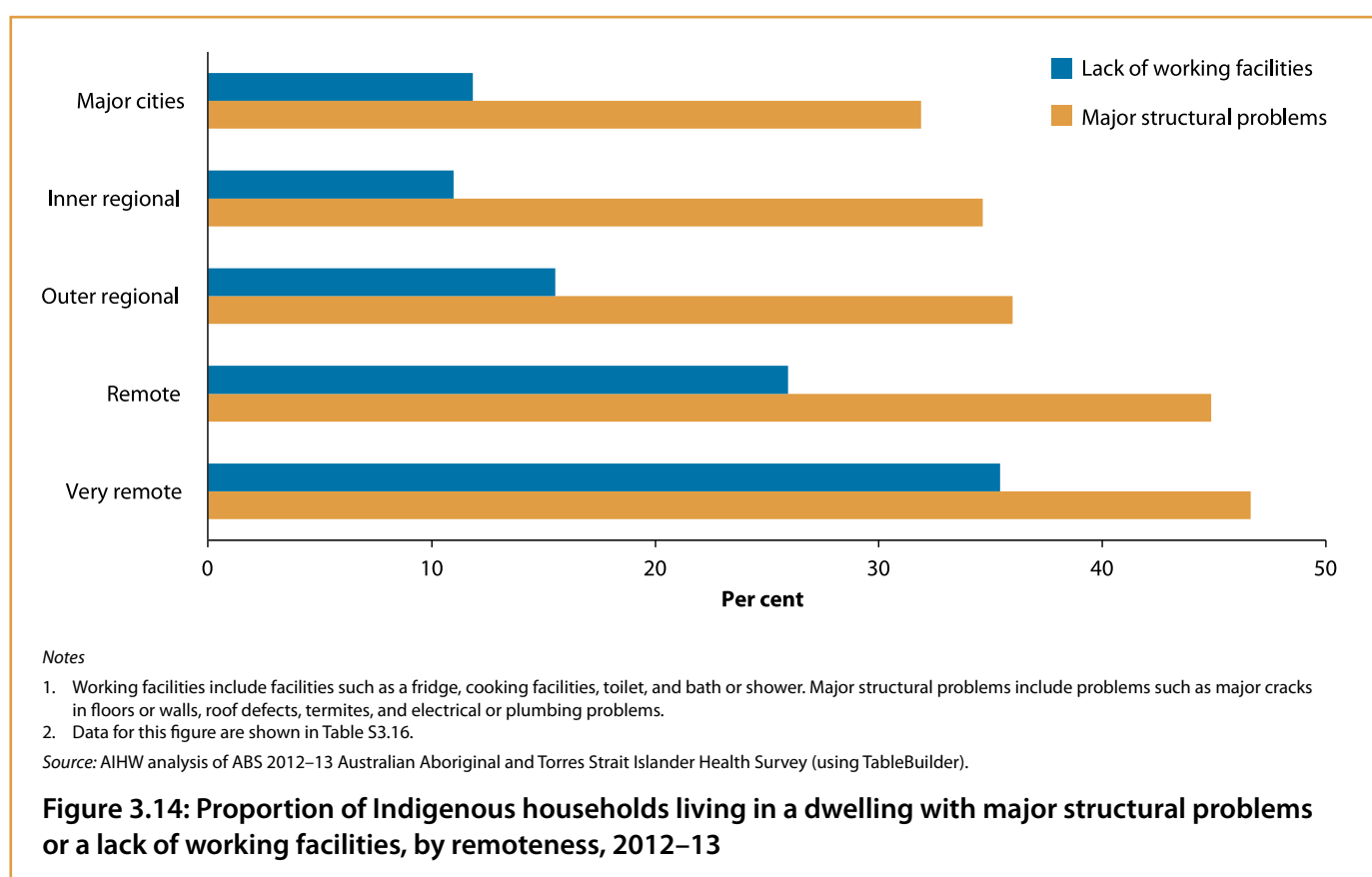
Functional housing

Among Indigenous households in 2012–13:

- more than 1 in 3 (35%) reported living in a dwelling with 1 or more major structural problems such as electrical or plumbing problems, major cracks in floors or walls, or roof defects
- more than 1 in 7 (15%) reported living in a dwelling that was lacking at least 1 working facility such as a fridge, cooking facilities, toilet, or bath or shower (AIHW analysis of 2012–13 AATSIHS).

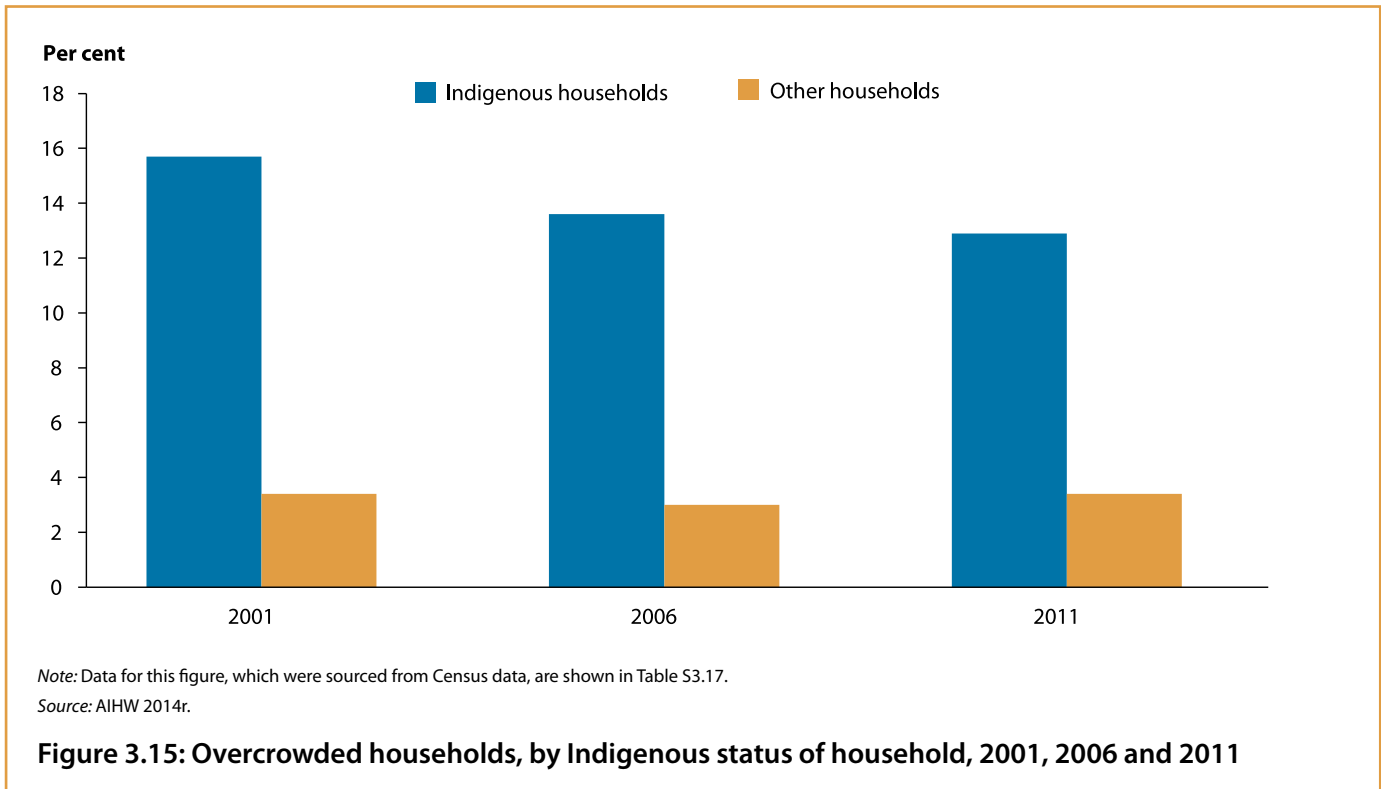
Dwellings with structural problems or a lack of working facilities were more common in remote areas than in non-remote areas (Figure 3.14). In 2012–13:

- 46% of Indigenous households in remote areas reported living in a dwelling with 1 or more major structural problems, compared with 33% of those in non-remote areas
- 31% of Indigenous households in remote areas reported living in a dwelling that was lacking at least one working facility, compared with 12% of those in non-remote areas (Table S3.16).



Overcrowding

Almost 24,700 Indigenous households were considered to be overcrowded on Census night in 2011 (that is, they required 1 or more extra bedrooms to meet the Canadian National Occupancy Standard—see AIHW 2014r for further information). Indigenous households were more than 3 times as likely as other households to be deemed overcrowded (12.9% compared with 3.4%) (Figure 3.15). The higher level of overcrowding among Indigenous households is associated with a number of factors, including cultural and social differences, higher levels of unmet demand for affordable housing, and lower income levels (ABS 2011c; SCRGSP 2011).



According to the 2011 Census:

- the rate of overcrowding varied according to housing tenure—Indigenous households living in social housing (23%) had the highest rate while Indigenous home owners had the lowest rate (7%)
- the proportion of Indigenous households living in overcrowded conditions was substantially lower in non-remote areas (between 10% and 12%) than in remote areas (20% in *Remote* areas and 39% in *Very remote* areas) (AIHW 2014r).

The proportion of Indigenous households living in overcrowded conditions fell from 16% in 2001 to 13% in 2011, indicating a total decrease of 18% over the decade. In contrast, for other households, the proportion living in overcrowded conditions was steady at 3% in each of the 3 Census years. This resulted in a narrowing of the gap in overcrowding by 3 percentage points over the decade (AIHW 2014r).

For further information about overcrowding, see *Housing circumstances of Indigenous households: tenure and overcrowding* (AIHW 2014r).

Homelessness

The definition of homelessness is multifaceted, and there is no internationally agreed definition. In 2012, the ABS developed a new definition of homelessness for statistical purposes, which considers someone homeless if they do not have suitable accommodation alternatives and their current living arrangement:

- is in a dwelling that is inadequate (unfit for human habitation or lacks basic facilities such as kitchen and bathroom facilities), or
- has no tenure, or their initial tenure is short and not extendable, or
- does not allow them to have control of, and access to, space for social relations (including personal—or household—living space, ability to maintain privacy and exclusive access to kitchen and bathroom facilities) (ABS 2012d).

The ABS definition of 'homelessness' includes people who are living in 'severely' crowded dwellings, with such a dwelling defined as one that needs 4 or more extra bedrooms to accommodate the people who usually live



there, according to the Canadian National Occupancy Standard (see AIHW 2014p for further information). People in these types of dwellings are considered homeless because they do not have control of, or access to, space for social relations.

Using the ABS definition, on Census night in 2011 an estimated 26,743 Indigenous people were experiencing homelessness in Australia—a rate of 1 in 20 Indigenous people. Of all homeless people who provided information on their Indigenous status, 28% were Indigenous.

Of the Indigenous people who were homeless in 2011, 3 in 4 (75%; 20,054 people) were living in severely crowded dwellings. The remaining Indigenous homeless people were in the following types of living situations:

- 12% (3,282 people) were living in supported accommodation for the homeless
- 6.3% (1,677 people) were staying in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out
- 3.8% (1,011 people) were staying temporarily with other households
- 2.5% were living in boarding houses while 0.2% were staying in other temporary lodgings (AIHW 2014p).

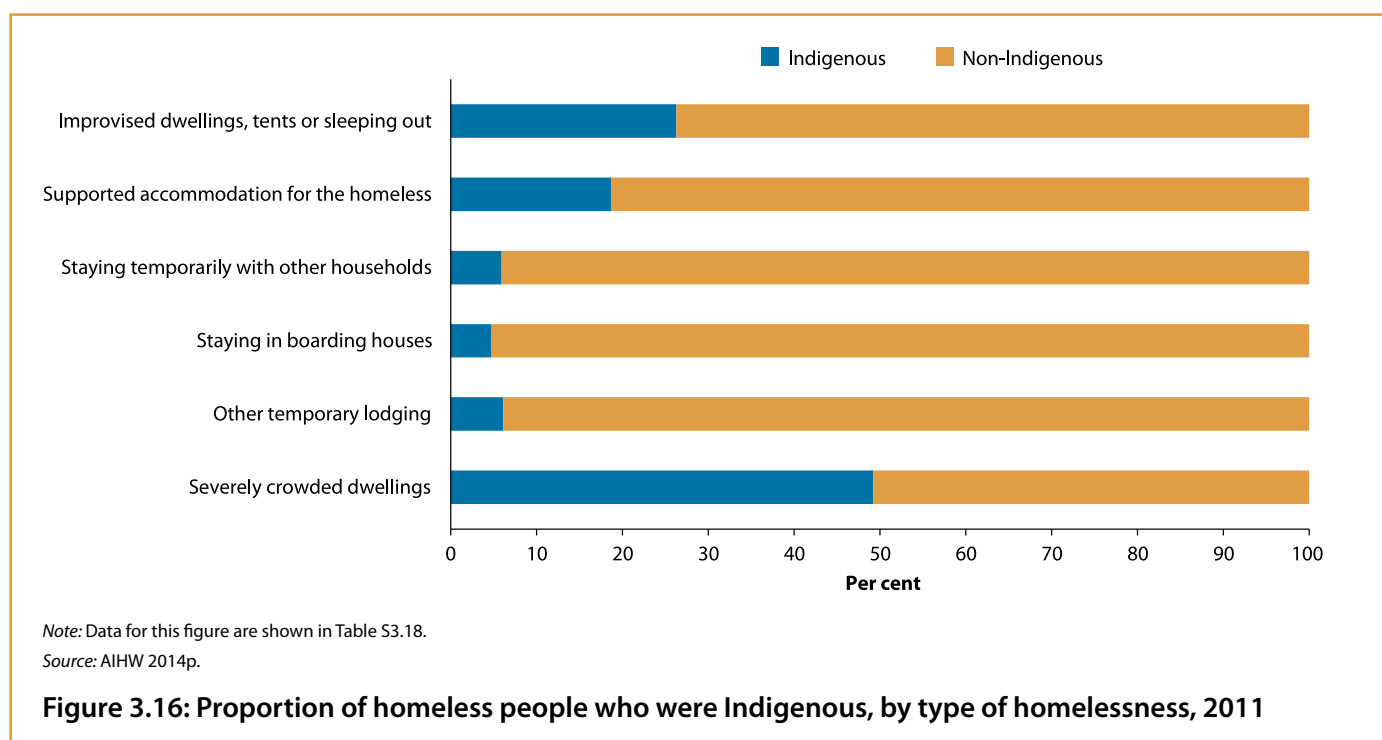
The Indigenous homelessness rate in 2011 was nearly 14 times the rate for non-Indigenous people (1 in 20 people compared with 1 in 284, respectively) (AIHW 2014p). Indigenous Australians are more likely to be homeless than non-Indigenous Australians for a range of reasons, including differing access to affordable and secure housing, greater mobility of some segments of the Indigenous population, and the need to travel to access services or observe cultural obligations (AIHW 2011b).

Between 2006 and 2011, the rate of homelessness among Indigenous people fell by 14% (from 571 to 488 per 10,000 Indigenous people). In contrast, there was a 12% increase in the rate of homelessness among non-Indigenous people.

Indigenous homeless people were over-represented in all homelessness groups. While Indigenous people comprised 3% of the Australian population in 2011, Indigenous people accounted for:

- 49% of those living in severely crowded dwellings
- 26% of people in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out
- 19% of people staying in supported accommodation for the homeless (Figure 3.16).

Further information on homelessness can be found in *Homelessness among Indigenous Australians* (AIHW 2014p).



3.6 Community safety

Safe and supportive communities are positively associated with better health, education and employment outcomes; in addition, feeling safe is an important contributor to physical and mental wellbeing (SCRGSP 2011). Aspects of safety covered in this section include child abuse and neglect, and exposure to violence. Other topics covered are youth justice supervision and adult contact with the criminal justice system. The wide disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in these areas are another manifestation of Indigenous disadvantage.

Child abuse and neglect

In Australia, statutory child protection is primarily the responsibility of state and territory governments. Departments responsible for child protection provide support and assistance to the most vulnerable children and families, in collaboration with the non-government sector, which delivers a broad range of services. Children (defined as those aged under 18) generally come to the attention of the state and territory departments responsible for child protection when concern for their wellbeing is reported by community members, professionals (for example, police or teachers), organisations, the children themselves, their parent/s, or another relative (AIHW 2013c, 2014m).

Indigenous children are consistently and significantly over-represented across the child protection system. Child abuse and neglect can be a symptom of substance abuse, domestic violence or disadvantage in areas such as housing, employment and access to services (SCRGSP 2011).

In 2012–13:

- 36,656 Indigenous children received child protection services (that is, an investigation, care and protection orders, and/or out-of-home care) (AIHW 2014m)
- Indigenous children were 7 times as likely as non-Indigenous children to have received child protection services (127 and 18 per 1,000 children, respectively) (Table S3.19).

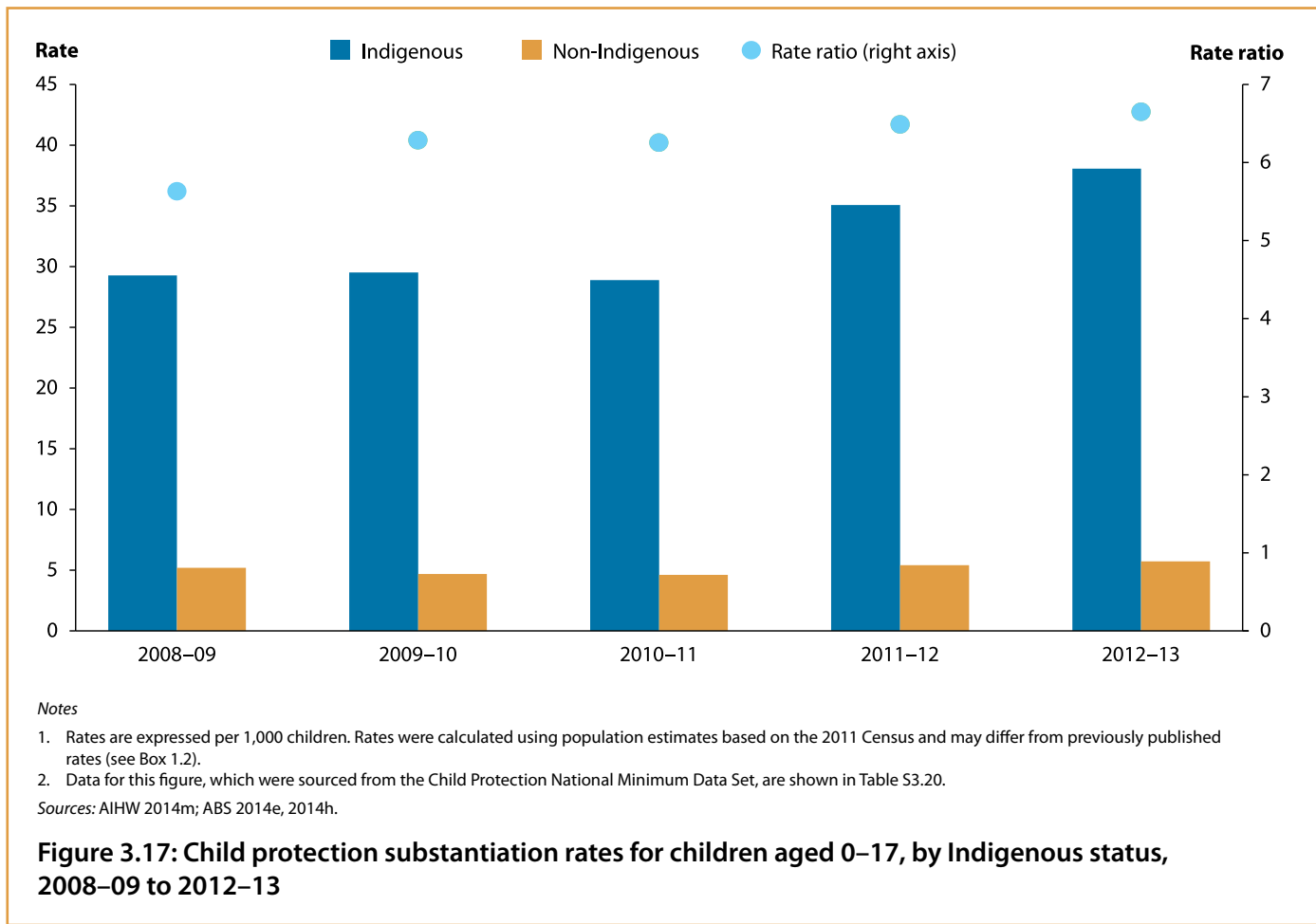
Child protection 'substantiations' are notifications that were investigated and a reasonable cause was found to believe that the child had been, was being, or was likely to be, abused, neglected or otherwise harmed (AIHW 2014m). In 2012–13:

- 10,991 Indigenous children were the subject of a child protection substantiation
- the rate of substantiated child protection notifications for Indigenous children was about 7 times the rate for non-Indigenous children (38.1 and 5.7 per 1,000 children, respectively)
- neglect was the most common type of substantiated abuse for Indigenous children, whereas for non-Indigenous children it was emotional abuse.

Between 2008–09 and 2012–13:

- substantiation rates increased for Indigenous children (from 29.3 to 38.1 per 1,000 children) as well as for non-Indigenous children (from 5.2 to 5.7 per 1,000) (Figure 3.17)
- the Indigenous to non-Indigenous gap in child substantiations rose by 38% between 2008–09 and 2012–13 (based on rate differences) (Table S3.20).

The increase in substantiation rates may reflect a number of factors, such as legislative changes, enhanced public awareness and inquiries into child protection processes, along with real increases in abuse and neglect (AIHW 2014m).



Care and protection orders are legal orders or arrangements that give child protection departments some responsibility for a child’s welfare. At 30 June 2013:

- 14,455 Indigenous children were on care and protection orders (AIHW 2014m)
- the rate of Indigenous children on care and protection orders was about 9 times the rate for non-Indigenous children (49.9 and 5.8 per 1,000 children, respectively).

Out-of-home care provides alternative overnight accommodation for children aged 0 to 17 where the jurisdiction makes a financial payment to the carer, or where a financial payment has been offered but declined by the carer (AIHW 2014m). At 30 June 2013:

- 13,952 Indigenous children were in out-of-home care
- the rate of out-of-home care for Indigenous children was 9 times the rate for non-Indigenous children (48.2 and 5.4 per 1,000 children, respectively).

For further information on Indigenous children in the child protection system, see *Child protection Australia 2012–13* (AIHW 2014m) and *Indigenous child safety* (AIHW 2014s).

Exposure to violence

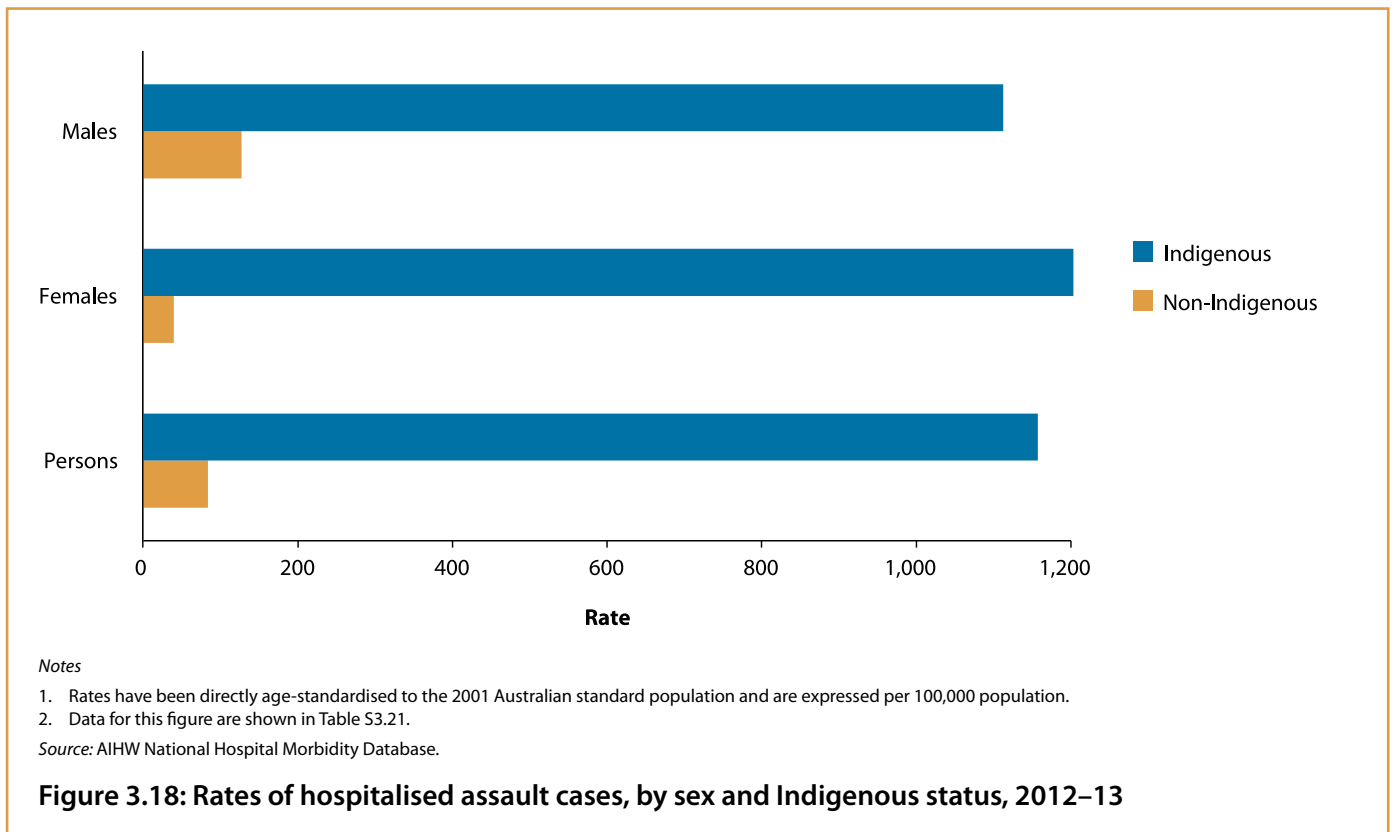
Violence not only has a negative impact on the physical and mental health of the victim, but it can also affect family members, friends and the broader community. In 2008, almost 1 in 4 (23%) Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over indicated that they had been a victim of physical or threatened violence in the previous 12 months (ABS 2009).

Assault

The extent to which Indigenous people experience assault can be gleaned from data relating to the number of hospitalisations for assault, as well as cases of assault reported to police. However, these data are likely to underestimate the true extent of assault because not all cases are reported to police and not all victims seek medical help (and those that do are not all subsequently hospitalised).

Data on hospitalisations for assault suggest that rates of assault in the Indigenous population are relatively high, especially among females. In 2012–13:

- there were an estimated 7,296 hospitalisations of Indigenous people due to assault
- the age-standardised rate of hospitalisations for assault among Indigenous people was 14 times as high as for non-Indigenous people (1,157 compared with 83 per 100,000 population)
- the age-standardised rate of hospitalisations for assault among Indigenous females was 31 times as high as for non-Indigenous females (1,204 and 39 per 100,000 females, respectively) (Figure 3.18).





Rates of assault reported to police were also higher among the Indigenous population than the non-Indigenous population in the 3 states and territories for which data are available. In 2013, there were about 11,900 Indigenous victims of assault reported to police in New South Wales, South Australia and the Northern Territory combined. Based on these data, Indigenous people experienced assault victimisation at:

- 6 times the rate of non-Indigenous people in the Northern Territory (7,615 and 1,274 per 100,000 population, respectively)
- 5 times the rate of non-Indigenous people in South Australia (4,174 and 811 per 100,000 population, respectively)
- almost 3 times the rate of non-Indigenous people in New South Wales (2,258 and 795 per 100,000 population, respectively) (ABS 2014l).

Victims of alcohol-related and illicit drug-related incidents

According to data from the 2013 National Drug Strategy Household Survey, Indigenous Australians aged 14 and over:

- were significantly more likely than their non-Indigenous counterparts to have been a victim of an alcohol-related incident in the previous 12 months (38% and 26%, respectively); the difference was particularly large in terms of physical abuse (more than twice as likely—21% compared with 8.5%)
- were also significantly more likely to have been a victim of illicit drug-related incidents in the previous year (twice as likely—16% and 8.1%, respectively) (Table S3.22).

Youth justice supervision

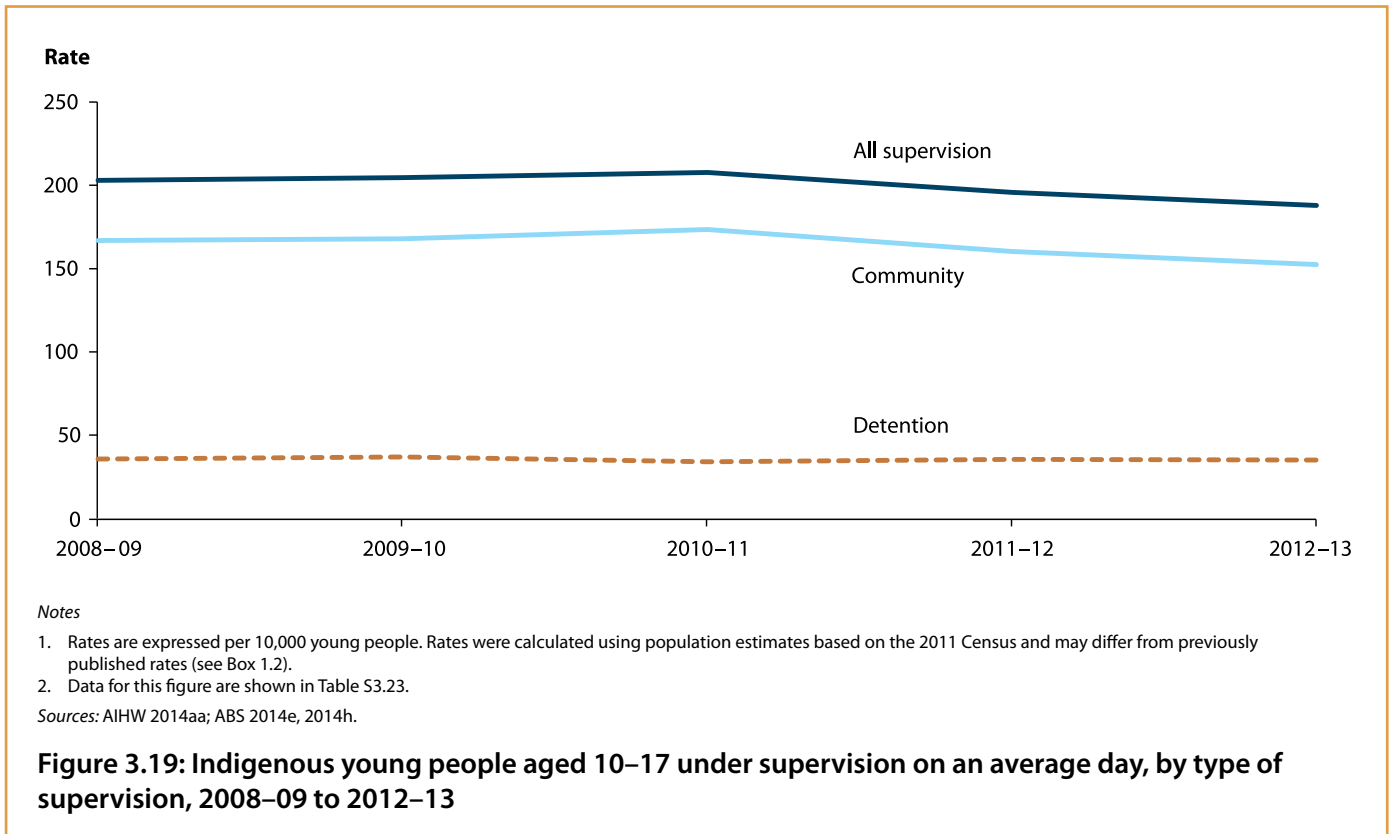
Indigenous children are over-represented in the youth justice system (AIHW 2014aa). As a result, they are likely to have poorer social, emotional and health outcomes (AIHW 2012e, 2013m). Indigenous young people are also more likely to reappear as adults in the justice system. A study in New South Wales found that of Indigenous young people aged 10 to 18 who first appeared in a juvenile court in 1995, 91% reappeared in the adult court system within the next 8 years (compared with 53% of non-Indigenous young people), and 36% ended up in an adult prison (compared with 10% of non-Indigenous young people) (Chen et al. 2005). Furthermore, data from the National Prisoner Health Data Collection indicate that, in 2012, 30% of Indigenous adult prisoners had previously been in juvenile detention, compared with 18% of non-Indigenous adult prisoners (AIHW 2013f).

On an average day in 2012–13, 44% of young people aged 10–17 under youth justice supervision were Indigenous; by comparison, 6% of all young people aged 10–17 are Indigenous. Of all Indigenous young people aged 10–17 under supervision, 81% were male.

Overall, on an average day in 2012–13, Indigenous young people aged 10–17 were:

- 14 times as likely as non-Indigenous young people to be under supervision (187.5 compared with 13.2 per 10,000 young people)
- 13 times as likely to be under community-based supervision (152.3 compared with 11.7 per 10,000)
- 23 times as likely to be in detention (35.3 compared with 1.5 per 10,000) (Table S3.23).

The overall rate of Indigenous young people aged 10–17 under supervision on an average day declined between 2008–09 and 2012–13 from 203 to 188 per 10,000 young people (Table S3.23). Most of this decrease was due to a fall in the rate of community-based supervision (rather than detention) (Figure 3.19).



Further information on Indigenous youth justice can be found in *Youth justice in Australia 2012–13* (AIHW 2014aa) and *Indigenous child safety* (AIHW 2014s).

Contact with the criminal justice system

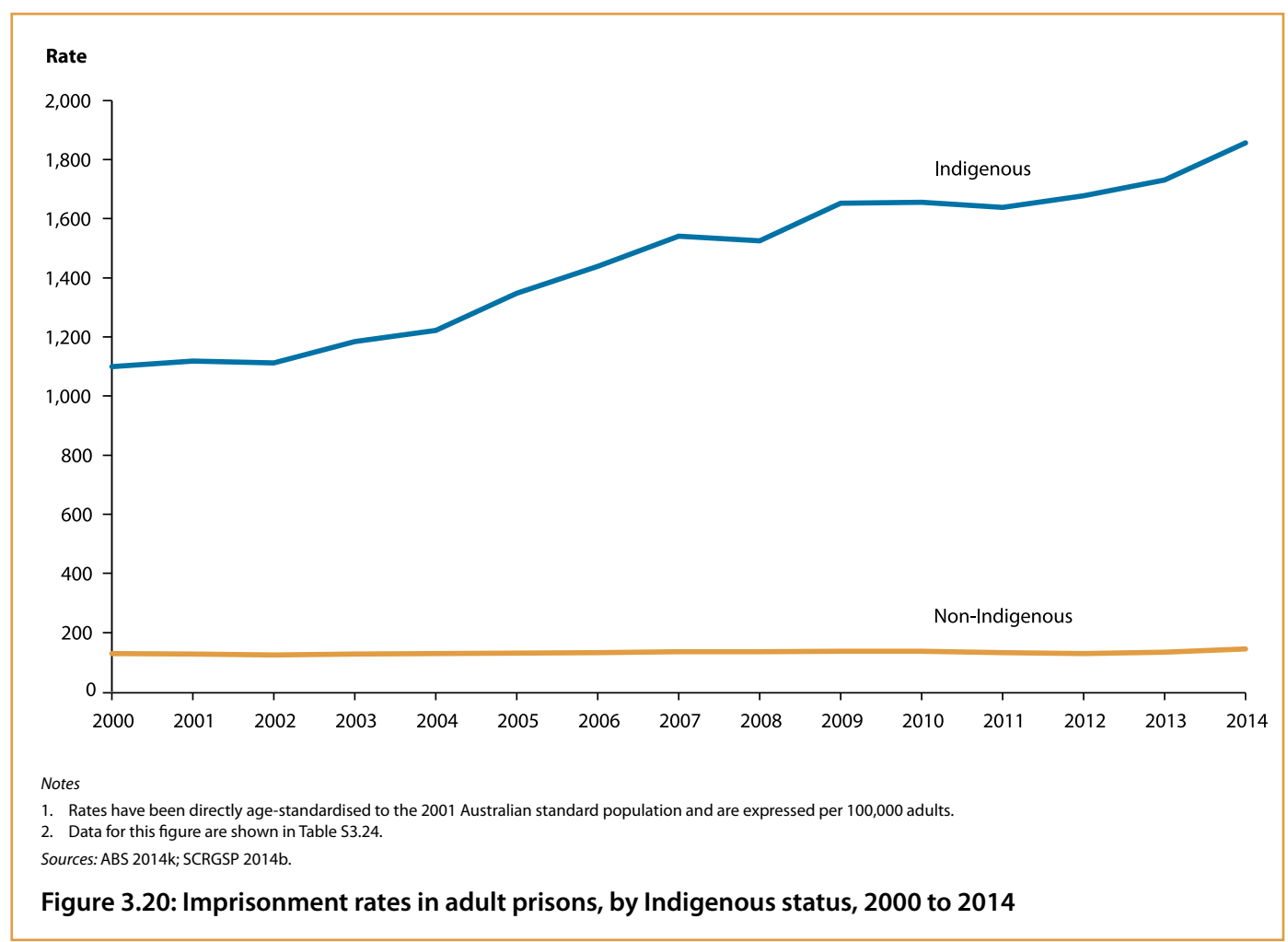
Incarceration not only affects the health and wellbeing of those imprisoned, but also the health and wellbeing of their families and children (Levy 2005). It also compromises community safety if there are high rates of crime and if ex-prisoners reoffend (Borzycki 2005).

At 30 June 2014:

- 27% of the total adult prisoner population were Indigenous (9,264 people)
- the most common offence or charge for which Indigenous prisoners were in custody was acts intended to cause injury (35%) followed by unlawful entry with intent (15%); in comparison, the most common offences or charges for which non-Indigenous prisoners were in custody were acts intended to cause injury, and illicit drug offences (both 16%)
- the majority (90%) of Indigenous prisoners were male, with the imprisonment rate for Indigenous men 9 times as high as the rate for Indigenous women (3,984 per 100,000 adult males compared with 420 per 100,000 adult females)
- the imprisonment rate of Indigenous people was 13 times as high as the rate for non-Indigenous people (age-standardised rates of 1,857 and 144 per 100,000 adults, respectively) (ABS 2014k).



The age-standardised imprisonment rate of Indigenous people increased significantly between 2000 and 2014 from 1,100 to 1,857 per 100,000 adults (Figure 3.20). The non-Indigenous rate increased slightly over this period. This resulted in an 82% increase in the gap in imprisonment rates between 2000 and 2014 (from a rate difference of 971 to 1,713 per 100,000 adults) (Table S3.24).



In 2012, three-quarters (75%) of Indigenous prisoner entrants had previously been incarcerated, compared with 71% of non-Indigenous entrants (AIHW 2013f). Indigenous prison entrants were more likely than non-Indigenous entrants to have an extensive history of incarceration—one-third (34%) had been in prison at least 5 times before, compared with one-quarter (25%) of non-Indigenous entrants.

As discussed in Box 3.7, the health profile of the Indigenous prison population differs in several ways from that of their non-Indigenous counterparts.

Box 3.7: Health of Indigenous prisoners

In 2012, Indigenous prisoner entrants were *more* likely than their non-Indigenous counterparts to:

- be current smokers (92% compared with 83%)
- report risky alcohol consumption (59% and 39%, respectively)
- test positive for Hepatitis B (27% compared with 15%)
- report ever having been diagnosed with diabetes (5% compared with 2%).

Indigenous prison entrants were *less* likely than their non-Indigenous counterparts to:

- have been diagnosed with asthma (18% compared with 28%) or arthritis (4% and 8%)
- report a history of mental health issues (29% and 43%, respectively).

While in prison, Indigenous prisoners were less likely than non-Indigenous prisoners to be taking antidepressants (11% and 15%, respectively), and slightly more likely to be taking antihypertensives (7% and 5%) and drugs used to treat diabetes (4% and 2%).

Indigenous prisoners about to be released were more likely than their non-Indigenous counterparts to report positive changes to their health while in prison—74% reported that their health had improved to be a little or a lot better, compared with 49% of non-Indigenous prisoners.

Source: AIHW 2013f.