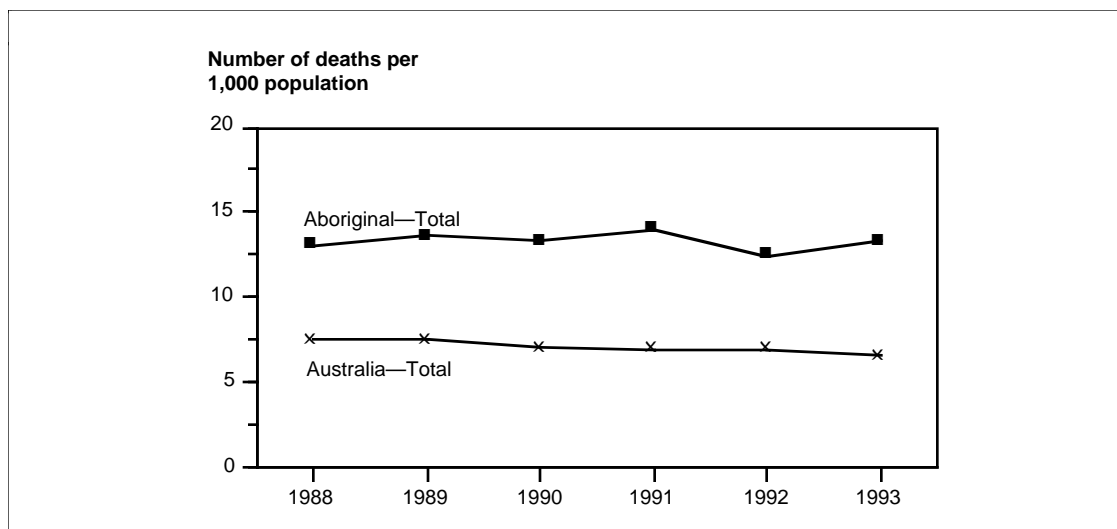


Aboriginal health

- ◆ *Mortality and survival*
- ◆ *Perinatal and infant health*
- ◆ *Chronic diseases*
- ◆ *Population trends*

Death rate for all causes of death per 1,000 Aboriginal population



	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Aboriginal rates						
Males	15.4	16.1	14.9	15.8	14.4	14.8
Females	10.4	10.9	11.6	12.1	10.5	11.8
Total	13.0	13.5	13.3	13.9	12.4	13.3
Australian rates						
Total	7.4	7.4	7.0	6.9	6.9	6.5

Notes: 1. Aboriginal data are for NSW, Vic, WA, SA and NT.

2. The death rates were age-adjusted using the total Australian population as at 30 June 1991.

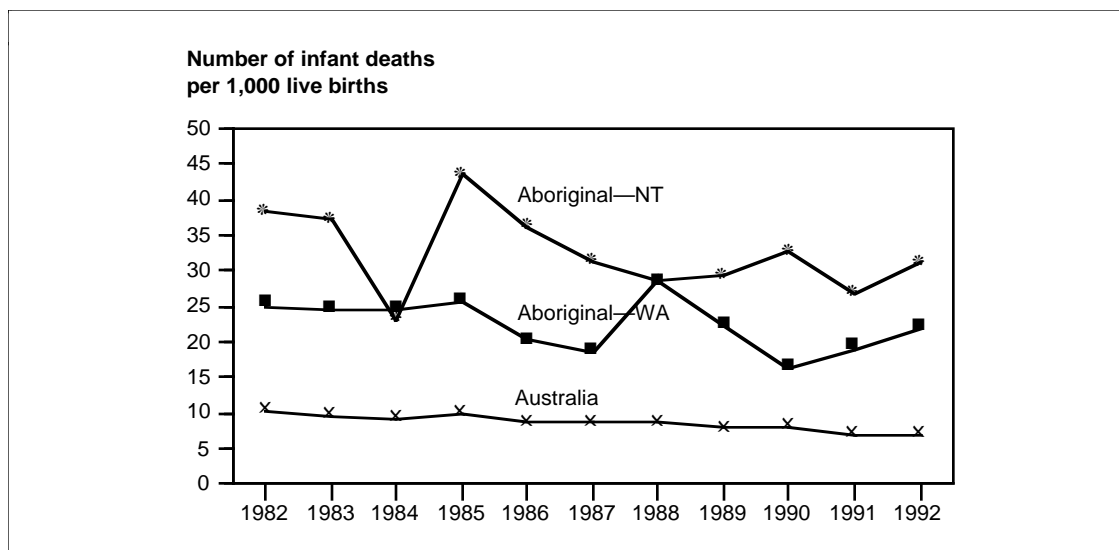
Source: Aboriginal and total Australian rates were based on data derived from AIHW Mortality database.

- Death rates for all causes among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples remained relatively stable between 1988 and 1993. In the same period, there was a 12% decline in death rates for all causes in the total Australian population.
- Aboriginal death rates greatly exceeded the corresponding total Australian rates at all ages. The greatest differences occurred in the middle age groups (25 to 54 years), particularly among males. These differences were also reflected in lower Aboriginal life expectancies. In the period 1990–1992, Aboriginal life expectancy was estimated to be between 16 and 18 years shorter than that for the total Australian male population (see *Life expectancy at birth* on page 13).
- Mortality data are only available for some States. Aboriginal people are not always identified on death certificates, particularly in NSW and Victoria where identification is estimated at about 60%. The Aboriginal death rates presented here are therefore likely to be underestimates.

For more information, see:

Bhatia K & Anderson P (1995) *An overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health: present status and future directions*. AIHW Information paper. Canberra: AGPS.

Infant mortality rate: number of Aboriginal infant deaths per 1,000 live births



	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Aboriginal rates											
Aboriginal—NT	38.3	37.5	23.2	43.7	36.2	31.6	28.7	29.3	32.7	26.9	31.5
Aboriginal—WA	25.2	24.7	24.7	25.9	20.3	18.8	28.7	22.4	16.3	19.2	22.0
Australian rates											
Total	10.3	9.6	9.2	10.0	8.8	8.7	8.7	8.0	8.2	7.1	7.0

Sources: 1. Aboriginal rates—NT: Northern Territory Perinatal Collection 1992; WA: Data for 1982–1991 from Gee 1994; data for 1992 from unpublished data provided by the Western Australia Department of Health.
2. Australian rates—ABS Cat. No. 3302.0.

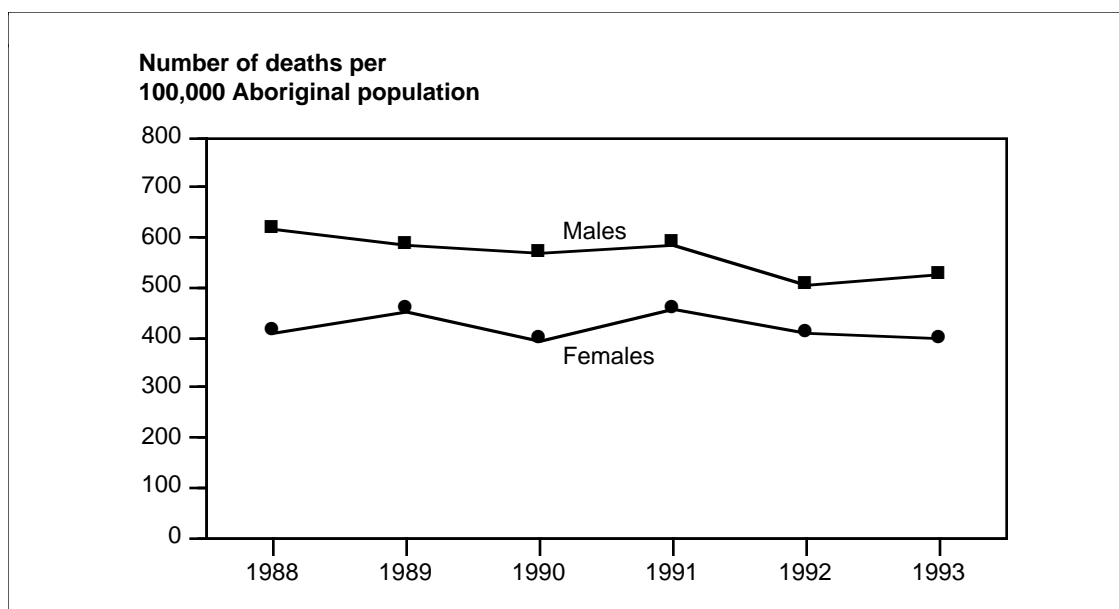
- The infant mortality rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples varies substantially between regions. Reasonably accurate information is available for Western Australia and the Northern Territory. In 1992, the rates were 22.0 and 31.5 infant deaths per 1,000 live births respectively, in these two regions. These rates were about three to four times higher than those for all Australians combined, which in 1992 was 7.0 infant deaths per 1,000 live births.
- Between 1982 and 1992, Aboriginal infant mortality rates remained relatively stable. (Yearly variations are primarily caused by the estimation of rates based on small numbers of deaths and births).
- A fall in neonatal deaths (death in the first 4 weeks of life) and a rise in postneonatal

deaths (death after the first 4 weeks but before the end of the first year of life) has contributed to the stability in the infant mortality rate. The fall in neonatal deaths was partly due to technological interventions which led to an increase in the survival rate of low birthweight and premature babies. The rise in postneonatal deaths was partly due to the increased mortality among those premature and low birthweight babies who survived the neonatal period but who subsequently died during the postneonatal period.

For more information, see:

ABS Deaths, Australia and Causes of death, Australia. Cat. Nos. 3302.0 and 3303.0.

Death rate for cardiovascular disease per 100,000 Aboriginal population



	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Males	618	586	568	587	505	527
Females	410	453	395	456	408	396
Total	519	523	482	520	461	460

Notes: 1. Data are for NSW, Vic, WA, SA and NT.

2. The death rates were age-adjusted using the total Australian population as at 30 June 1991.

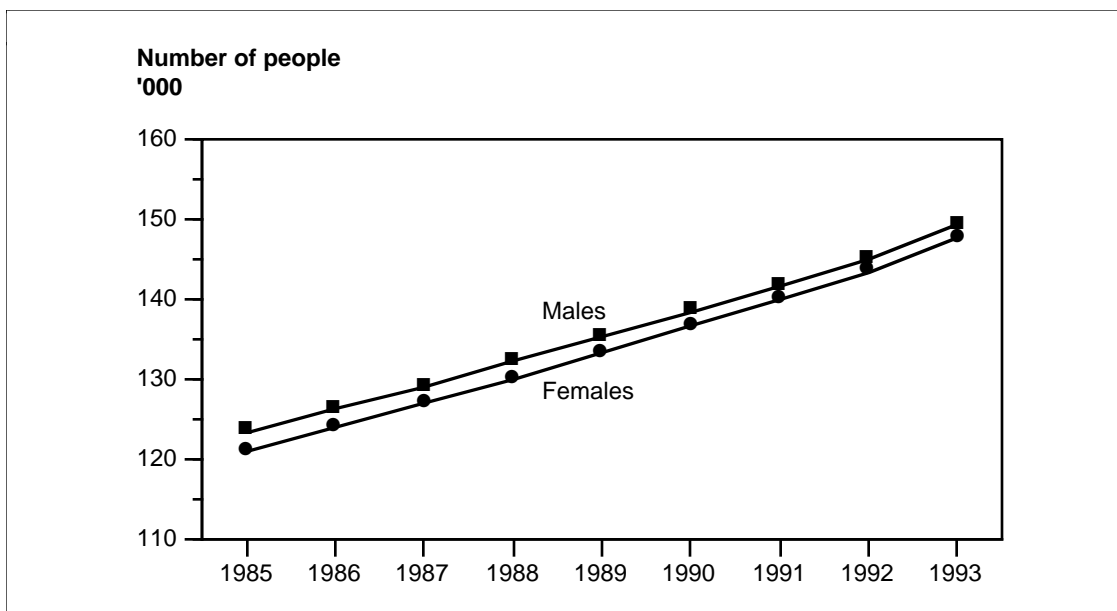
Source: Estimates based on data derived from AIHW Mortality database.

- Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. However, it accounts for a lower proportion of deaths than in the non-Aboriginal population due to the greater relative importance of other causes of death.
- Between 1988 and 1993, Aboriginal death rates for cardiovascular disease fell slightly among males, but remained fairly constant among females.
- Cardiovascular disease includes coronary heart disease, stroke and rheumatic heart disease. The major risk factors for the Aboriginal population are the same as for the general population. These include cigarette smoking, raised blood cholesterol and triglyceride levels, raised blood pressure, obesity, physical inactivity and diabetes.
- The much higher prevalence of diabetes among the Aboriginal population (possibly as high as 15–20% in some communities) compared with the non-Aboriginal population (2–3%) is a risk factor of considerable public health importance.
- Also of considerable concern is the higher rate of smoking among the adult Aboriginal population (almost 50%), which is about double the rate in the total Australian population.

For more information, see:

Bhatia K & Anderson P (1995) *An overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health: present status and future directions*. AIHW Information paper. Canberra: AGPS.

Size of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population



	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Males	123,372	126,693	129,658	132,818	135,956	139,281	142,528	145,910	149,368
Females	120,649	124,045	127,179	130,453	133,724	137,157	140,451	144,067	147,663
Total	244,021	250,738	256,837	263,271	269,680	276,438	282,979	289,977	297,031

Sources: 1. Data for 1985 were derived by linear extrapolation of 1986–1991 population estimates provided by the ABS.

2. Data for 1986–1991 from ABS Cat. No. 3230.0

3. Data for 1992–1994 derived from estimates of population provided by the ABS.

- Between 1985 and 1993, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population grew by 17.7% or an average 2.5% a year. In the same period, the total Australian population increased by 11.8% or an average 1.4% year (see *Annual rate of increase in the Australian population* on page 63). Some of this population increase is likely to be due to an increased willingness on the part of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander individuals to identify themselves as such.
- The Aboriginal population is fairly young when compared with the non-Aboriginal population. In 1993 just under 50% were under 20 years of age whereas only 2.5% were aged 65 years or over. In the non-Aboriginal population, 29.0% were under 20 years and 11.7% were aged 65 years or over.
- The spatial distribution of the Aboriginal population is quite different from that of the non-Aboriginal population. Only 28% of the Aboriginal population live in capital cities with easy access to all mainstream health services. One in five Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders reside in remote rural settings, away from centres with basic health facilities.

For more information, see:

ABS (1994) *Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population*.
Cat. No. 2740.0.