

## 7.4 Health behaviours of Indigenous Australians



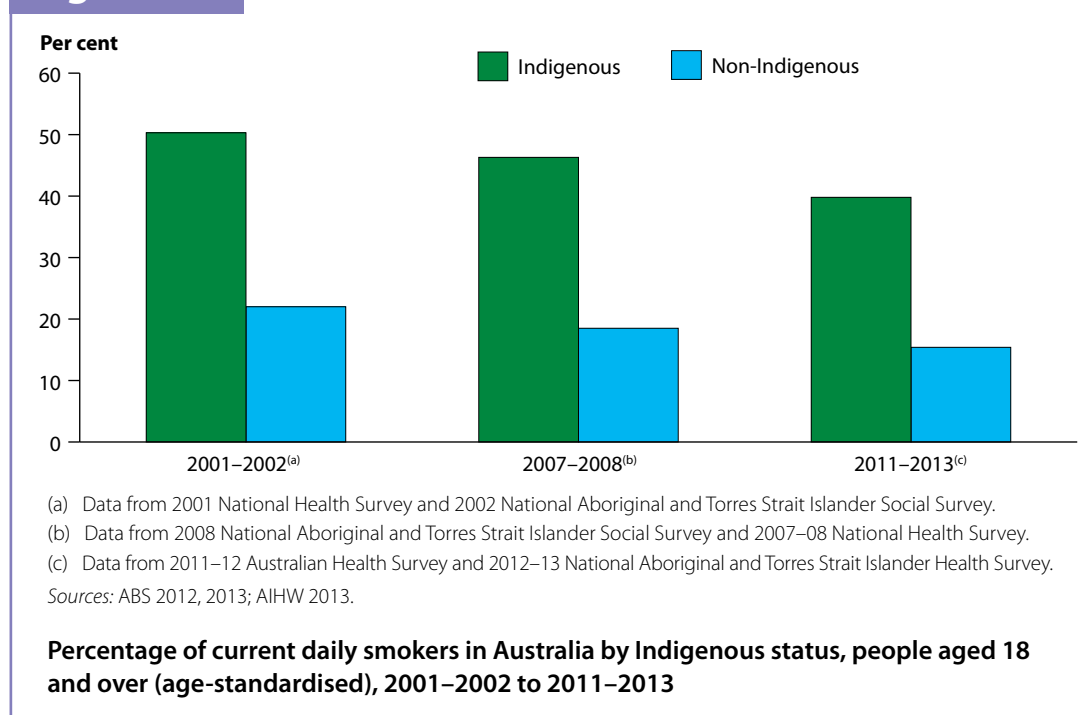
Health risk behaviours, such as smoking, poor nutrition, physical inactivity and alcohol consumption contribute to poorer health status (see Chapter 5 'Behavioural risk factors'). Of the behavioural risk factors covered here, smoking is the most concerning as rates are significantly higher in the Indigenous population than in the non-Indigenous population.

The following information is based on results from the 2012–13 Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (ABS 2013). Trends over time are available for smoking and long-term risky alcohol consumption; however, they are not available for the other risk factors presented here because of differences in the questions asked in the 2012–13 survey and previous surveys.

### Smoking

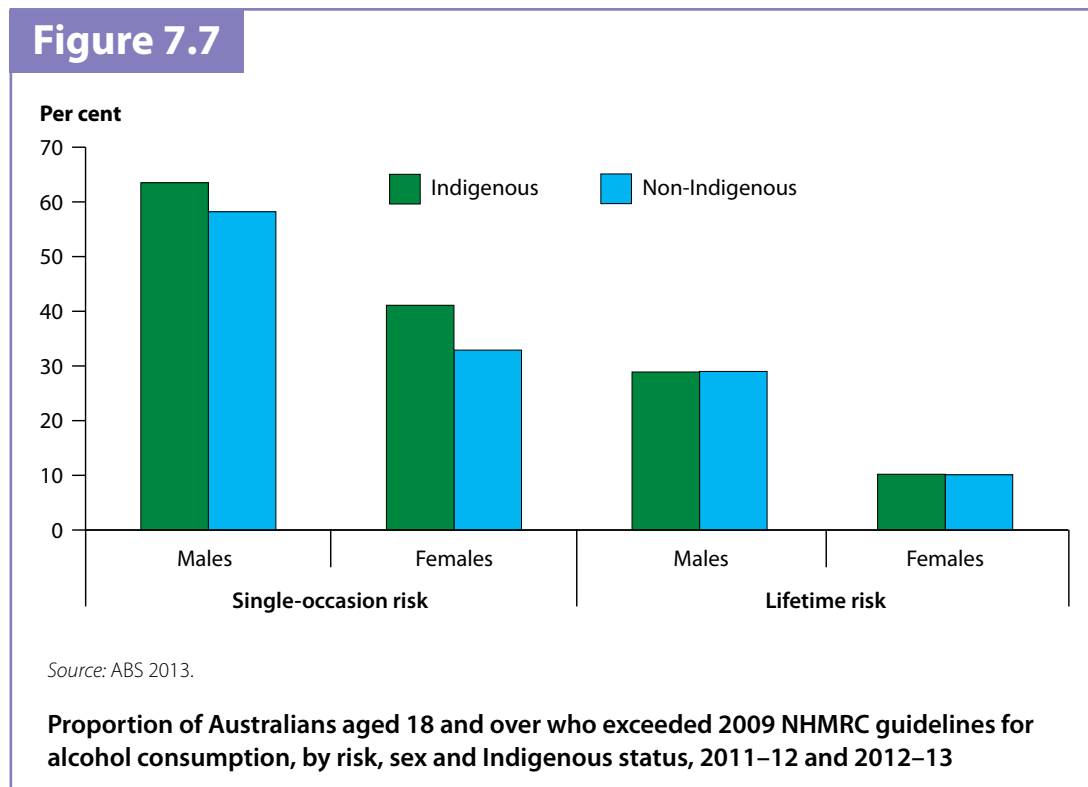
- Two out of 5 Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over (41%) were current daily smokers in 2012–13, which, after adjusting for age, was more than twice the rate of smoking among non-Indigenous Australians in 2011–12.
- Smoking rates are highest among Indigenous people aged 25–34.
- The proportion of Indigenous adults who smoke daily decreased between 2002 and 2012–13 from 51% to 44% (Figure 7.6).
- For non-Indigenous adults, the proportion fell from 22% in 2001 to 16% in 2011–12.
- After adjusting for age, the difference between the proportion of Indigenous and non-Indigenous smokers has narrowed from 27% in 2001 to 25% in 2012–13.

**Figure 7.6**



### Risky alcohol consumption

- A similar proportion of Indigenous Australians (in 2012–13) and non-Indigenous Australians (2011–12) reported drinking at lifetime risky levels in the week before being surveyed (19.2% compared with 19.5%).
- The proportion of Indigenous Australians who reported drinking at lifetime risky levels did not change significantly between 2001 and 2012–13 (19% and 20% respectively).
- Indigenous men reported drinking at levels exceeding the 2009 National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) guidelines in a single occasion (more than 4 standard drinks) at slightly higher rates (10% more) than non-Indigenous men. The rate for Indigenous women was 30% higher than for non-Indigenous women, which was found to be statistically significant (Figure 7.7).



### Illicit substance use

- In 2012–13, more than 1 in 5 Indigenous people aged 15 and over (22%) reported that they had used an illicit substance in the previous 12 months.

## Overweight and obesity

- Almost one-third (30%) of Indigenous children aged 2–14 and two-thirds (66%) of Indigenous people aged 15 and over were overweight or obese in 2012–13.
- Combined overweight/obesity rates were similar for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people aged 15 and over; however, the more concerning obesity rates among Indigenous people were 1.5 times higher than among non-Indigenous people.

## Nutrition

- Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over were 10% less likely than non-Indigenous Australians to report eating an adequate amount of fruit each day, which was statistically significant. There was no significant difference in vegetable consumption between the 2 groups (7% and 8% respectively consumed 5 or more serves of vegetables daily).

## Physical activity

- About 3 in 5 Indigenous Australians aged 18 and over (62%) reported no or low-level physical activity, which was 10% higher than the rate among non-Indigenous Australians.

### What is missing from the picture?

The information presented here is based on preliminary data from the 2012–13 Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey. The Australian Bureau of Statistics plans to release further data in the second half of 2014 that will incorporate the results from the sample of respondents who also participated in the 2012–13 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey and the 2012–13 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Measurements Survey. This means that the preliminary data will be revised and the results updated.

### Where do I go for more information?

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

## References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 2012. Australian Health Survey: first results, 2011–2012. ABS cat. no. 4364.0.55.001. Canberra: ABS.

ABS 2013. Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey: first results, Australia, 2012–13. ABS cat. no. 4727.0.55.001. Canberra: ABS.

AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) 2013. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework 2012: detailed analyses. Cat. no. IHW 94. Canberra: AIHW.