

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between social and economic circumstances and overall health status is clearly established (see chapter 7). Since 1994 there have been a number of improvements in the social and economic circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. These include gains in educational attainment, improvements in employment (with associated reductions in unemployment) and increases in home ownership. Nevertheless, Indigenous people remain disadvantaged across a range of areas of social concern when compared to the social and economic circumstances of non-Indigenous Australians.

This chapter provides a context for the more detailed health and welfare information in later chapters. It presents information on the demographic, social and economic characteristics of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Indigenous demographic data presented here are experimental estimates based on the 2001 Census of Population and Housing. Socioeconomic data are drawn primarily from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) 2002 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS). Where possible, comparisons are made over time using data from the 1994 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey (NATSIS), and with the non-Indigenous population using the 2002 General Social Survey (GSS). Data on Indigenous prisoners are based on administrative records held by corrective services agencies in each state and territory.

DEMOGRAPHIC  
CHARACTERISTICS

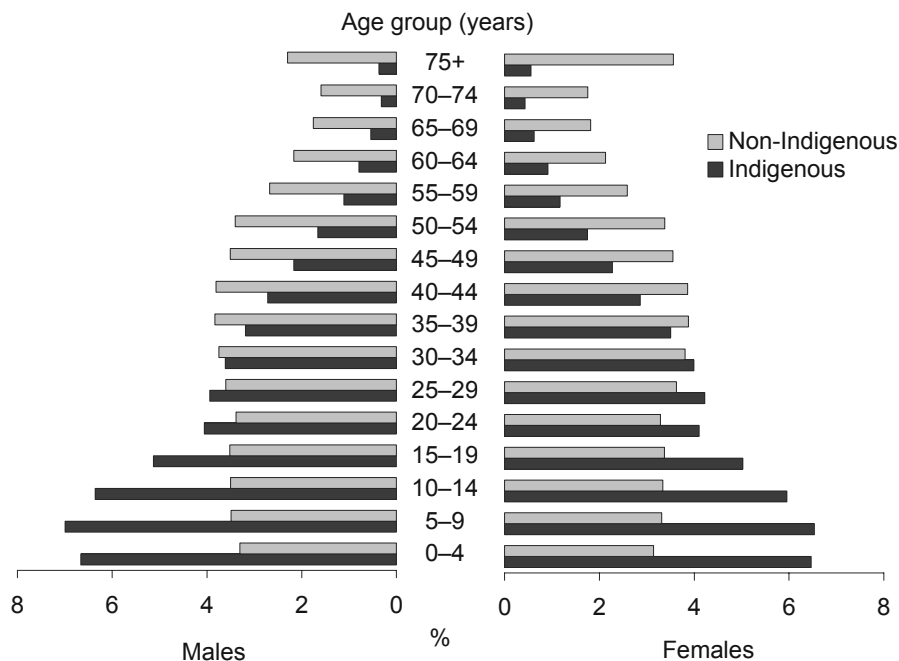
The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of Australia was estimated at 458,500 people at 30 June 2001, or 2.4% of the total Australian population. The Indigenous population is projected to have grown to between 492,700 (low-series projection) and 525,000 (high-series projection) by mid-2005 (Appendix 2).

In 2001, around 90% of Indigenous people were identified as being of Aboriginal origin, 6% were identified as being of Torres Strait Islander origin and 4% were identified as being of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin.

Age

The Indigenous population is relatively young, with a median age of 21 years compared with 36 years for the non-Indigenous population. The younger age structure of the Indigenous population is shown in the following age pyramid (figure 2.1). In 2001, 39% of Indigenous people were under 15 years of age compared with 20% of non-Indigenous people. People aged 65 years or over comprised 3% of the Indigenous population and 13% of the non-Indigenous population (Appendix 1). These figures reflect higher rates of fertility and deaths occurring at younger ages among the Indigenous population. Because age is closely associated with health status, comparisons between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations in this publication are age standardised or presented for separate age groups wherever appropriate.

**2.1** POPULATION PROFILE BY INDIGENOUS STATUS, AGE AND SEX—2001



*Life expectancy*

The latest available expectancies of life at birth for the Indigenous population are for the period 1996–2001. At the national level, experimental estimated of Indigenous life expectancy at birth for 1996–2001 were 59 years for males and 65 years for females. This is about 17 years below the 77 years and 82 years life expectancy for all males and females respectively, for the 1998–2000 period.

*Where Indigenous people live*

The states with the largest Indigenous populations in 2001 were New South Wales (134,900 people or 29% of the total Indigenous population) and Queensland (125,900 people or 27% of the total Indigenous population). Other states with large Indigenous populations were Western Australia (14% of the total Indigenous population) and the Northern Territory (12%). Indigenous people comprise 29% of the Northern Territory population.

In 2001, 30% of Indigenous people lived in major cities, about 43% in regional areas and about 27% in remote areas. By comparison, approximately two-thirds (67%) of non-Indigenous people lived in major cities and only 2% lived in remote areas. As a result of these differences in distribution, the proportion of the population who were Indigenous varied from less than 1% in major cities to 58% in remote areas.

In the Northern Territory, the majority of Indigenous people lived in remote areas (81%). In contrast, more than 90% of Indigenous people in New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory lived in major cities or regional areas (table 2.2).

Where Indigenous people  
live *continued*

**2.2** ESTIMATED RESIDENT INDIGENOUS POPULATION, by  
Remoteness Areas—30 June 2001

	INDIGENOUS					
	Major cities	Regional	Remote	Total	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
	%	%	%	%	no.	no.
New South Wales	42.1	51.6	6.3	100.0	134 900	6 440 300
Victoria	49.0	50.7	0.3	100.0	27 800	4 776 900
Queensland	24.8	51.1	24.1	100.0	125 900	3 503 000
South Australia	46.2	31.7	22.1	100.0	25 500	1 486 200
Western Australia	32.1	22.8	45.1	100.0	65 900	1 835 200
Tasmania	..	96.5	3.5	100.0	17 400	454 400
Northern Territory	..	18.8	81.2	100.0	56 900	140 900
Australian Capital Territory	100.0	..	..	100.0	3 900	315 400
<b>Australia</b>	<b>30.2</b>	<b>43.4</b>	<b>26.4</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>458 500</b>	<b>18 954 700</b>

.. not applicable

Source: ABS 2004e

POPULATION  
CHARACTERISTICS

*Culture and language*

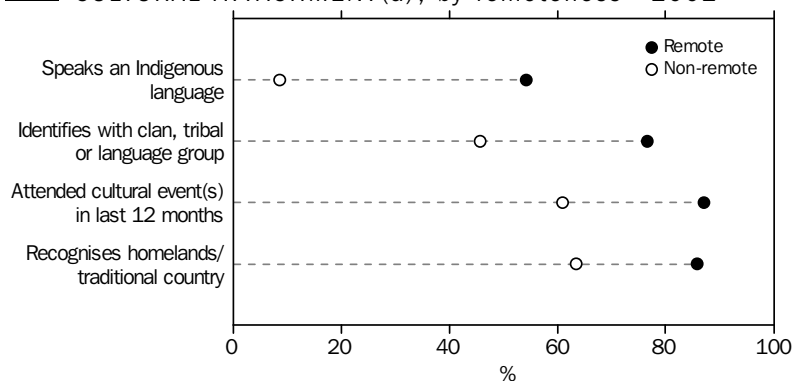
In both 1994 and 2002, just over half of Indigenous people aged 15 years or over reported that they identified with a clan, tribal or language group, while about seven out of ten had attended at least one cultural event in the previous year.

In 2002, 21% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 years or over spoke an Indigenous language. For about one in eight Indigenous people (12%), it was the main language spoken at home, the same as reported in 1994. Indigenous language use was more common among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in remote areas, with an Indigenous language being the main language spoken at home for 39% of Indigenous people in remote areas, and for just 2% in non-remote areas. A further 15% of Indigenous people in remote areas, and 7% in non-remote areas, spoke an Indigenous language but for them it was not the main language spoken at home (graph 2.3). More than three-quarters (77%) of Indigenous people living in the Northern Territory spoke an Indigenous language, reflecting the high proportion of Indigenous people living in remote areas.

In 2002, 70% of Indigenous people aged 15 years or over reported that they recognised homelands or traditional country (although they may not necessarily live there) compared with 75% in 1994. In 2002, Indigenous people in remote areas were more likely to recognise an area as their homelands or traditional country (86%) than those in non-remote areas (63%) (graph 2.3).

Culture and language  
continued

**2.3** CULTURAL ATTACHMENT(a), by remoteness—2002



(a) Indigenous persons aged 15 years or over.  
Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS

Family and community life

PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

In 2002, 90% of Indigenous people aged 15 years or over reported that they had been involved in social activities in the last three months; nearly half (49%) had participated in sport or physical recreation activities in the last 12 months; and 28% had undertaken voluntary work in the last 12 months. Participation in social activities and sport or physical recreation activities both declined steadily with age while voluntary work peaked among those aged 35–44 years (at 35%) (table 2.4).

**2.4** PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES—2002

		15–24 years	25–34 years	35–44 years	45–54 years	55 years or over	Total
<b>Males</b>							
Involved in social activities(a)	%	94.7	92.8	89.6	87.1	80.1	90.6
Participated in sport or physical recreation activities(b)	%	75.9	63.8	49.9	37.3	28.3	57.2
Had undertaken voluntary work(b)	%	25.7	24.2	32.4	28.3	22.1	26.6
<b>Females</b>							
Involved in social activities(a)	%	93.4	90.5	90.0	85.5	81.3	89.5
Participated in sport or physical recreation activities(b)	%	58.2	44.2	38.2	26.0	23.6	42.0
Had undertaken voluntary work(b)	%	24.4	25.0	37.7	29.5	28.9	28.5
<b>Persons</b>							
Involved in social activities(a)	%	94.1	91.6	89.8	86.2	80.8	90.0
Participated in sport or physical recreation activities(b)	%	67.0	53.4	43.8	31.5	25.7	49.3
Had undertaken voluntary work(b)	%	25.0	24.6	35.2	28.9	25.8	27.6
<b>Indigenous persons aged 15 years or over</b>	no.	<b>82 700</b>	<b>71 100</b>	<b>57 800</b>	<b>38 400</b>	<b>32 200</b>	<b>282 200</b>

(a) In the last 3 months.  
(b) In the last 12 months.

Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS

NEIGHBOURHOOD PROBLEMS

In 2002, nearly three-quarters (74%) of Indigenous adults reported the presence of neighbourhood or community problems. Those living in major cities were most likely to report problems (80%), with lower levels in regional areas (69%) and remote areas (74%). In major cities over half (52%) of all Indigenous adults reported theft and dangerous or noisy driving as problems in their neighbourhood. These were also the most commonly reported problems in regional areas. For Indigenous people living in

*Family and community life  
continued*

NEIGHBOURHOOD PROBLEMS *continued*

remote areas, the most commonly reported problems were alcohol (54%), problems involving youth (48%) and illegal drugs (46%) (table 2.5).

**2.5** NEIGHBOURHOOD OR COMMUNITY PROBLEMS—2002

Type of neighbourhood/community problem		Major cities	Regional	Remote	Total
Theft	%	52.0	37.4	41.5	43.0
Problems involving youth	%	28.7	24.8	47.9	32.3
Prowlers/loiterers(a)	%	15.8	14.2	..	..
Vandalism/graffiti/damage to property	%	37.0	23.1	43.5	32.9
Dangerous or noisy driving(a)	%	51.7	40.9	..	..
Alcohol	%	25.7	25.9	54.1	33.5
Illegal drugs	%	32.5	23.1	46.1	32.3
Family violence	%	13.4	14.0	40.9	21.2
Assault	%	14.1	10.2	41.1	19.9
Sexual assault	%	*5.0	4.7	16.7	8.1
Problems with neighbours(a)	%	16.3	12.2	..	..
Levels of neighbourhood conflict	%	9.4	8.5	30.8	14.9
Level of personal safety day or night(a)	%	14.0	8.4	..	..
Total reporting at least one neighbourhood/community problem(b)	%	79.6	68.8	74.2	73.6
No neighbourhood/community problems reported	%	18.9	30.3	24.9	25.3
<b>Indigenous persons aged 15 years or over</b>	no.	<b>86 400</b>	<b>118 600</b>	<b>77 100</b>	<b>282 200</b>

\* estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution

.. not applicable

(a) Data collected for non-remote areas only.

(b) Components do not add to total as people may have provided more than one response.

Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS

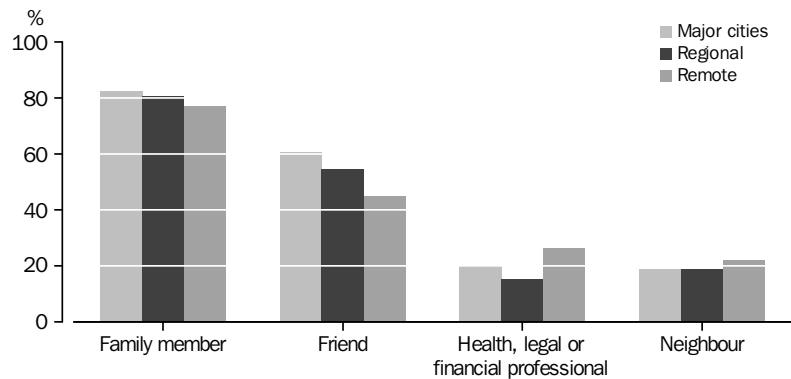
SUPPORT IN TIME OF CRISIS

In 2002, the overwhelming majority of both Indigenous (90%) and non-Indigenous (94%) adults aged 18 years or over were able to get support in a time of crisis from someone outside their household. Support could come from family members, friends, neighbours, work colleagues or various community, government or professional organisations and could take the form of emotional, physical or financial help. Availability of support was higher for Indigenous adults living in major cities and regional areas (around 92%) than for those in remote areas (87%). Family members and friends were the most commonly available sources of support for Indigenous people across all geographic remoteness areas (graph 2.6).

Family and community life  
continued

SUPPORT IN TIME OF CRISIS *continued*

**2.6** SELECTED SOURCES OF SUPPORT IN TIME OF CRISIS (a), by remoteness area—2002



(a) Indigenous persons aged 18 years or over.  
Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS

Education

The proportion of Indigenous adults aged 18 years or over who had completed Year 12 increased from 10% in 1994 to 18% in 2002. Over the same period the proportion of Indigenous adults aged 25–64 years with a non-school qualification increased from 20% to 32%. While the increase in non-school qualifications was primarily for those with a certificate or diploma (from 13% to 24%), gains were also recorded in the proportion with a bachelor degree or above (from 1% to 5%).

Despite these gains in educational attainment, Indigenous adults still have lower levels of educational attainment than non-Indigenous adults. In 2002, 18% of Indigenous adults had completed Year 12 compared with 44% of non-Indigenous adults. Similarly, 32% of Indigenous adults aged 25–64 years had a non-school qualification compared with 57% of non-Indigenous adults.

Levels of Indigenous educational attainment declined with increasing geographic remoteness. In 2002, nearly one-quarter (24%) of Indigenous adults living in major cities had completed Year 12 compared with 18% of those living in regional areas and 14% in remote areas. Similarly, among Indigenous adults aged 25–64 years, 41% of those living in major cities had a non-school qualification compared with 32% in regional areas and 23% in remote areas (table 2.7).

**2.7** EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT—1994 and 2002

	INDIGENOUS					NON-INDIGENOUS	
	1994	2002			2002		
	Total (a)	Major cities	Regional	Remote	Total (a) (b)	Total (b)	
Highest year of school completed							
Year 12	%	9.6	23.6	17.9	13.7	18.5	43.5
Year 10 or Year 11	%	37.0	44.3	41.6	35.3	40.7	35.5
Year 9 or below(c)	%	52.5	32.0	40.5	50.9	40.8	21.0
<b>Persons aged 18 years or over who were not still at school</b>	no.	<b>190 000</b>	<b>75 700</b>	<b>105 200</b>	<b>69 100</b>	<b>249 900</b>	<b>14 292 100</b>
Highest non-school qualification							
Bachelor degree or above	%	1.2	8.4	3.5	2.1	4.6	20.6
Certificate III or above(d)	%	7.9	19.3	14.5	8.8	14.4	26.3
Certificate I/II	%	5.3	11.5	10.0	7.7	9.8	8.5
Total with a non-school qualification (e)	%	20.2	41.5	31.5	22.7	32.1	56.9
No non-school qualification	%	79.8	58.5	68.5	77.3	67.9	43.1
<b>Persons aged 25–64 years who were not still at school</b>	no.	<b>135 600</b>	<b>55 500</b>	<b>80 400</b>	<b>50 600</b>	<b>186 400</b>	<b>10 258 000</b>

(a) All differences between 1994 and 2002 Indigenous data are statistically significant.

(b) Apart from Certificate I/II, differences between 2002 Indigenous and non-Indigenous data are statistically significant.

(c) Includes persons who never attended school.

(d) Includes persons with a Diploma or Advanced Diploma.

(e) Includes level of non-school qualification not determined.

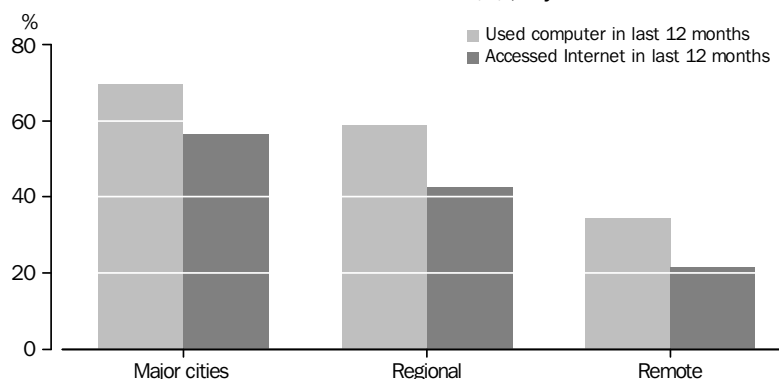
Source: ABS, 1994 NATSIS, 2002 NATSISS and 2002 GSS

*Information technology*

In 2002, 56% of Indigenous people aged 15 years or over reported that they had used a computer in the last 12 months and 41% reported that they had accessed the Internet in the last 12 months. The Internet was most commonly used for personal or private use (17%), followed by education or study (12%) and work or business (11%).

Levels of information technology use were lowest in remote areas. Around one-third of Indigenous people living in remote areas had used a computer, compared with around two-thirds of those living in major cities. Similarly, 22% of Indigenous people in remote areas accessed the Internet compared with 42% of those in regional areas and 56% of those in major cities (graph 2.8).

**2.8** COMPUTER AND INTERNET USE(a), by remoteness area—2002



(a) Indigenous persons aged 15 years or over.

Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS

*Information technology  
continued*

After taking into account the different age structures of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, Indigenous people have lower levels of information technology use than the non-Indigenous population. In 2002, Indigenous people aged 18 years or over were about two-thirds as likely to have used a computer in the last 12 months and half as likely to have accessed the Internet in the last 12 months as non-Indigenous adults.

*Work*

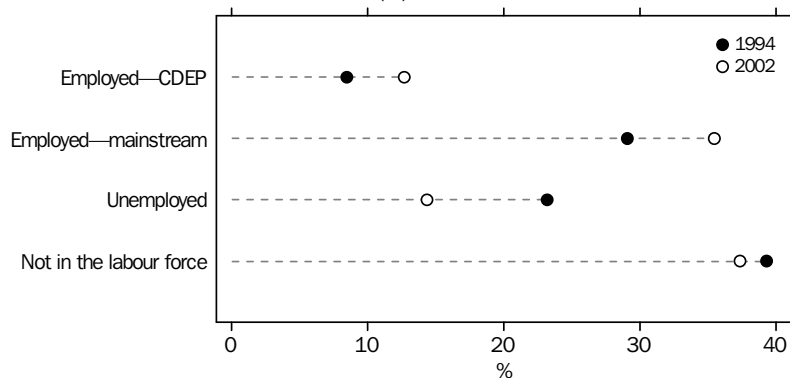
Between 1994 and 2002 the proportion of Indigenous people aged 18–64 years in mainstream employment (non-CDEP jobs) rose from 31% to 38%. Much of this gain was in part-time employment which increased from 8% to 12%.

In 2002, a further 13% of Indigenous people aged 18–64 years were employed in the CDEP scheme. Most CDEP participants were in remote areas, while in non-remote areas there was a higher proportion of people in mainstream employment.

Indigenous employment levels are strongly associated with educational attainment. In 2002, 69% of those aged 18–64 years who had completed Year 12 were employed, compared with 55% of those who had completed Year 10 or Year 11 and only 39% of those with lower levels of schooling.

Over the same period the proportion of Indigenous people who were unemployed fell from 24% to 13%. This translates to a decline in the unemployment rate from 37% in 1994 to 20% in 2002 and is consistent with the general decline in national unemployment over this period. Long-term unemployment among Indigenous people also fell between 1994 and 2002. In 1994, around half of those who were unemployed had been out of work for a year or more, compared with less than one-third in 2002 (table 2.10).

**2.9** LABOUR FORCE STATUS (a)—1994 and 2002



(a) Indigenous persons aged 18–64 years.  
Source: ABS, 1994 NATSIS and 2002 NATSISS

Despite these gains, Indigenous people continue to experience lower levels of labour force participation and employment and higher levels of unemployment than non-Indigenous people. In 2002, 64% of Indigenous adults aged 18–64 years were in the labour force, including 38% in mainstream employment. In comparison, 79% of non-Indigenous adults were in the labour force, including 74% who were employed. Indigenous adults were about two and a half times as likely as non-Indigenous adults to be unemployed (13% compared with 5%).



**2.10** LABOUR FORCE STATUS, by Indigenous status—1994 and 2002

		INDIGENOUS				NON-INDIGENOUS	
		1994	2002			2002	
		Total(a)	Major cities	Regional	Remote	Total(a)(b)	Total(b)
Employed							
CDEP	%	9.0	*4.1	5.5	36.4	13.5	. .
Mainstream							
Full-time	%	22.4	35.0	25.2	14.9	25.3	53.1
Part-time	%	7.7	15.4	13.9	6.8	12.4	21.2
Total(c)	%	31.1	50.4	39.0	21.8	37.8	74.4
Total employed	%	40.1	54.5	44.5	58.2	51.3	74.4
Unemployed							
Less than one year	%	10.9	10.8	10.8	3.5	8.8	na
One year or more	%	12.4	3.3	5.0	2.2	3.7	na
Total unemployed(d)	%	23.6	14.6	16.5	5.9	13.0	4.6
Not in the labour force	%	36.3	31.0	39.0	36.0	35.7	21.1
<b>Persons aged 18–64 years</b>	no.	<b>183 200</b>	<b>72 900</b>	<b>100 500</b>	<b>65 200</b>	<b>238 500</b>	<b>12 131 600</b>
Labour force participation rate	%	63.7	69.0	61.0	64.0	64.3	78.9
Unemployment rate	%	37.1	21.1	27.1	9.2	20.3	5.8

\* estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution

. . not applicable

na not available

(a) Apart from Not in the labour force and Labour force participation rate, differences between 1994 and 2002 Indigenous data are statistically significant.

(b) All differences between 2002 Indigenous and non-Indigenous data are statistically significant.

(c) Includes people for whom full-time/part-time status was not stated.

(d) Includes people for whom length of unemployment was not stated.

Source: ABS, 1994 NATSIS, 2002 NATSISS and 2002 GSS

Work continued

**2.11** COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT EMPLOYMENT PROJECTS (CDEP)

In recognition of the limited employment opportunities in remote areas, the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme was established; it has since extended into some non-remote areas. By providing Indigenous community organisations with funds to pay participants working on community projects, the scheme provides jobs and training for people who agree to forego an unemployment benefits.

Between 1994 and 2002, administrative records held by the then Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission indicated that the number of participants in CDEP rose from 24,400 to 34,200. While the estimate of CDEP participation in the 2002 NATSISS (34,200) reflected the corresponding administrative records, CDEP participation was underreported in the 1994 NATSIS (17,700).

According to the 2002 NATSISS, around 70% of all CDEP participants worked 24 hours or less per week and half reported low incomes (that is, equivalised gross household income in the second or third deciles). Indigenous people on CDEP were more than twice as likely as those in mainstream employment to either report working part-time or to have low incomes.

CDEP is regarded as a successful program for developing the work skills of Indigenous people. One of the objectives of CDEP is to provide a stepping stone for participants to move into mainstream employment and the scheme includes a range of incentives and assistance to support this transition.

Source: ABS, 1994 NATSIS and 2002 NATSISS.

*Household income*

In 2002, the mean equivalised gross household income of Indigenous people aged 18 years or over was \$394 per week, with a higher level reported in major cities (\$474 per week) than regional (\$362 per week) and remote areas (\$354). The real mean equivalised gross household income of Indigenous people between 1994 and 2002 rose from \$374 to \$394 per week (after adjusting for increases in the cost of living using the Consumer Price Index). Despite this increase, the mean equivalised gross household income of Indigenous adults in 2002 was only 59% of the corresponding income of non-Indigenous adults (\$665 per week).

People with low incomes can be defined as those with mean equivalised gross household income in the second and third income deciles (box 2.12). While 20% of non-Indigenous people aged 18 years or over had incomes in the second or third income deciles, 37% of Indigenous people were in this low income group.

### **2.12** EQUIVALISED GROSS HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Equivalised gross household income is a standardised income measure, adjusted for the different income needs of households of different size and composition. It takes into account the greater income needs of larger households and the economies of scale achieved when people live together. For a lone person household, it is equal to gross household income. For a household comprising more than one person, it indicates the gross household income that would need to be received by a lone person household to achieve the same economic wellbeing as a household comprising more than one person.

**People in low income households** have mean equivalised gross household income that falls within the income boundaries of the second and third income deciles. People with income in the lowest decile (including those with negative income) have been excluded since they tend to have expenditure patterns more in common with higher income households than with other households at the bottom of the income distribution. For more information on this issue, see *Household Income and Income Distribution, Australia 2000–01* (cat. no. 6523.0)

*Financial stress*

In 2002, just over one-half (54%) of Indigenous people aged 15 years or over were living in households where the household spokesperson reported that household members would be unable to raise \$2,000 within a week in a time of crisis. This measure of financial stress was reported by a greater proportion of people in remote areas (73%) than in regional areas (52%) or major cities (40%) (table 2.13). Overall, Indigenous adults aged 18 years or over were almost four times more likely than non-Indigenous adults to be living in a household that reported this measure of financial stress (54% compared with 14%) (ABS 2004f: table 4).

In the 2002 NATSISS, respondents were asked if anyone in their household had taken actions in the previous 12 months because they needed money for basic living expenses (such as for food, clothing, or to pay bills). Almost half of all Indigenous people aged 15 years or over reported using strategies to deal with their cash flow problems, with similar rates for people living in remote and non-remote areas. The most commonly used strategy, regardless of location, was to seek assistance from friends and family (34% overall). Other commonly reported strategies in major cities and regional areas included seeking assistance from welfare or community organisations and pawning or selling something, while in remote areas, respondents were more likely to report running up a tab at a local store or going without meals (table 2.13).

**2.13** FINANCIAL STRESS (a)—2002

		Major cities	Regional	Remote	Total
Unable to raise \$2000 within a week for something important	%	40.3	52.4	73.0	54.3
Had days without money in last 12 months	%	44.5	44.6	41.5	43.7
Strategies used to meet basic living expenses in last 12 months(b)					
Sought assistance from friends or family	%	35.3	32.5	35.1	34.1
Sought assistance from welfare/community organisations	%	15.1	15.6	7.2	13.1
Pawned or sold something	%	16.6	12.2	2.6	10.9
Used short term loans	%	12.5	8.2	5.7	8.8
Ran up a tab (book up) at a local store	%	2.6	6.5	17.0	8.2
Did not have meals	%	6.4	6.3	9.1	7.1
Total reporting at least one strategy(c)	%	48.5	47.9	49.6	48.5
<b>Indigenous persons aged 15 years or over</b>	no.	<b>86 400</b>	<b>118 600</b>	<b>77 100</b>	<b>282 200</b>

(a) Information provided by a household spokesperson on behalf of household members.

(b) Not all strategies are shown.

(c) Components do not add to total as people may have provided more than one response.

Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS

*Housing*

In 2002, the majority (70%) of Indigenous people aged 18 years or over were living in rented dwellings. The proportion renting was lower in major cities and regional areas (around 64%) than in remote areas (85%). In remote areas, three out of four renters were living in accommodation provided by Indigenous Housing Organisations or in other community housing (table 2.14).

Overall, about one-quarter (27%) of Indigenous people were living in dwellings that were either fully owned or being purchased. The proportion of people in dwellings that were being purchased rose from 11% in 1994 to 17% in 2002.

**2.14** TENURE AND LANDLORD TYPE(a), by Indigenous status—2002

		INDIGENOUS					NON-INDIGENOUS
		1994	Major cities	Regional	Remote	2002	2002
		Total(b)				Total(b)(c)	Total(c)
<b>Owner</b>							
Owner without a mortgage	%	10.9	9.9	14.1	4.0	10.0	38.5
Owner with a mortgage	%	10.6	24.3	18.6	4.6	16.5	34.6
<b>Renter</b>							
State or Territory Housing Authority	%	33.3	26.5	22.9	12.6	21.2	3.8
Indigenous Housing Organisation/ Community housing	%	16.5	*5.0	11.7	64.2	24.2	0.4
Private and other renter	%	21.1	31.4	29.3	8.5	24.2	20.1
Total renters	%	71.5	63.1	64.1	85.3	69.6	24.3
<b>Persons aged 18 years or over</b>	no.	<b>190 800</b>	<b>76 000</b>	<b>106 000</b>	<b>69 300</b>	<b>251 400</b>	<b>14 353 800</b>

\* estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution

(a) Some tenure types are not shown in this table.

(b) Apart from Owner without a mortgage and Total renters, differences between 1994 and 2002 Indigenous data are statistically significant.

(c) All differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous data are statistically significant.

Source: ABS, 1994 NATSIS, 2002 NATSISS and 2002 GSS

*Access to transport*

Overall, Indigenous people are less likely to have access to transport than non-Indigenous people. In 2002, 60% of Indigenous people aged 18 years or over had access to a motor vehicle to drive compared with 85% of non-Indigenous adults. They were also three times more likely (12% compared with 4%) to report that they had a high level of difficulty getting to the places needed (that is they could not get to, or often had difficulty getting to) the places needed.

Indigenous people living in remote areas had more limited access to transport than those in non-remote areas. A lower proportion in remote areas had access to a motor vehicle to drive while a greater proportion reported a high level of difficulty getting to the places where they needed to go. Public transport use was also more limited in remote areas (14%) compared with regional areas (20%) and major cities (45%) (table 2.15). In remote areas, almost three-quarters (73%) of those who did not use public transport reported the lack of an available service as the main reason for not using public transport.

**2.15** ACCESS TO TRANSPORT, by Indigenous status—2002

		INDIGENOUS				NON-INDIGENOUS
		<i>Major cities</i>	<i>Regional</i>	<i>Remote</i>	<i>Total (a)</i>	<i>Total (a)</i>
Difficulty with transport						
Can easily get to the places needed	%	77.0	71.1	65.2	71.2	84.4
Sometimes have difficulty getting to the places needed	%	14.8	17.5	17.7	16.7	11.8
Often have difficulty getting to the places needed	%	4.4	4.8	3.4	4.3	3.2
Cannot get to the places needed	%	3.7	6.3	13.0	7.3	0.4
Has access to motor vehicles to drive	%	66.6	62.8	47.5	59.7	85.2
Does not have access to motor vehicles to drive	%	33.4	37.2	51.3	39.9	14.8
Used public transport in last 2 weeks	%	44.8	20.3	13.8	25.9	..
Did not use public transport in last 2 weeks	%	55.2	79.7	86.2	74.1	..
<b>Persons aged 18 years or over</b>	no.	<b>76 000</b>	<b>106 000</b>	<b>69 300</b>	<b>251 400</b>	<b>14 353 800</b>

.. not applicable

Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS and 2002 GSS

(a) All differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous data are statistically significant.

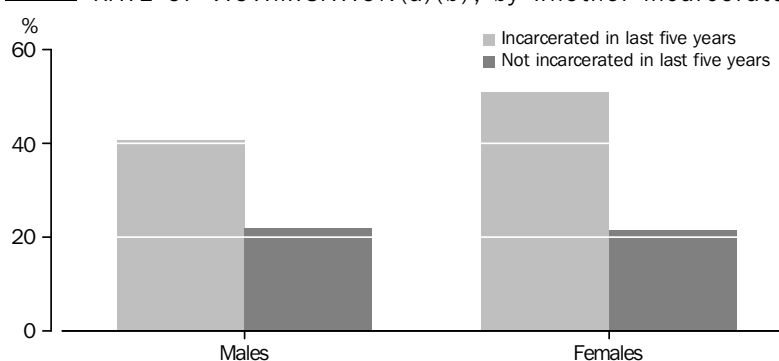
*Law and justice*

Between 1994 and 2002, the proportion of Indigenous adults aged 18 years or over who reported being a victim of physical or threatened violence in the previous 12 months almost doubled (from 13% to 24%). Different wording of victimisation questions used in the 1994 and 2002 surveys may account in part for the higher level of victimisation in 2002 compared with 1994.

In 2002, higher rates of victimisation were reported among Indigenous adults who had been arrested and/or incarcerated. For example, those who had been incarcerated at some time in the last five years were almost twice as likely to have been a victim of physical or threatened violence in the previous 12 months as those who had not been incarcerated (43% compared with 22%). The association between incarceration and a high level of victimisation was more pronounced for women than men (graph 2.16).

Law and justice  
continued

**2.16** RATE OF VICTIMISATION (a)(b), by whether incarcerated—2002



(a) In the last 12 months.

(b) Indigenous persons aged 18 years or over.

Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS

Based on administrative records held by corrective services agencies in each state and territory, there were 5,048 Indigenous prisoners in Australia at 30 June 2004 (representing 21% of the prisoner population). Of all Indigenous prisoners, 92% were men and 8% women. The crude imprisonment rate for the Indigenous population was 1,852 prisoners per 100,000 population (ABS 2004g).

After adjusting for age differences between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, Indigenous adults were 11 times more likely than non-Indigenous adults to be in prison. Western Australia had the highest age-standardised ratio of Indigenous to non-Indigenous rates of imprisonment, followed by South Australia (table 2.17).

**2.17** IMPRISONMENT RATES, by states and territories—30 June 2004

	NSW	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Australia
<b>Crude rate</b>									
Indigenous	2 012.2	1 068.8	1 572.2	1 623.7	3 114.4	597.2	1 589.4	1 094.7	1 851.9
Non-Indigenous	149.1	89.2	138.3	91.4	134.5	109.4	153.5	103.0	124.3
Ratio of crude rates	13.5	12.0	11.4	17.8	23.2	5.5	10.4	10.6	14.9
<b>Age-standardised rates</b>									
Indigenous	1 561.9	810.5	1 203.5	1 218.5	2 358.7	467.2	1 218.7	867.8	1 416.9
Non-Indigenous	153.6	91.1	141.4	100.1	136.6	121.3	141.0	88.9	129.0
Ratio of age-standardised rates	10.2	8.9	8.5	12.2	17.3	3.9	8.6	9.8	11.0

Source: ABS 2004g

Indigenous prisoners tend to be younger than non-Indigenous prisoners, with a median age of 30 years, three years less than the median age for non-Indigenous prisoners. Over one in twenty (6%) of all Indigenous males aged 25–29 years were in prison at 30 June 2004 (compared with 0.5% or about one in two hundred non-Indigenous males aged 25–29 years).

SUMMARY

Since 1994 there have been a number of improvements in the social circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. These include gains in educational attainment, improvements in employment (with associated reductions in unemployment) and increases in home ownership.

SUMMARY *continued*

Nevertheless, Indigenous people remain disadvantaged across a range of areas of social concern when compared with the social circumstances of non-Indigenous Australians. In addition, many Indigenous people in remote areas have limited access to services and mainstream labour markets.

Discussion of the association between socioeconomic circumstances and health status can be found in Chapter 7.