

2.12 Single-parent families

Household composition, in particular single-parent families, in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population

Data sources

Data for this measure come from the ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing and the 2008 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey.

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS)

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) conducted the 2002 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) between August 2002 and April 2003. The 2008 NATSISS was conducted between August 2008 and April 2009. The survey provides information about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations of Australia for a wide range of areas of social concern including health, education, culture and labour force participation. The 2008 NATSISS included for the first time children aged under 15. The NATSISS will be conducted every six years, with the next survey planned for 2013.

The 2008 NATSISS collected information by personal interview from 13,300 Indigenous Australians across all states and territories of Australia, including those living in remote areas. The sample covered persons aged 15 years and over who are usual residents in selected private dwellings. It collected information on a wide range of subjects including family and culture, health, education, employment, income, financial stress, housing, and law and justice.

Census of Population and Housing

The ABS conducts the Census of Population and Housing at 5-yearly intervals, with 2006 being the most recent, and it is designed to include all Australian households. The Census uses the ABS standard Indigenous status question for each household member.

Although the Census data are adjusted for under-count at the person level to arrive at the estimated resident population, no such adjustment is done at the household level. This affects the accuracy of the person counts at the household level to provide adjusted household estimates.

The 1996 and 2001 Census used the Australian Standard Classification of Occupations, the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations replaced this for the 2006 Census.

The Census collects data on family type, household type, household composition and relationships in the household. Indigenous households are defined as households with at least one Indigenous person of any age resident on Census night. One-parent (single-parent) families are defined as families containing a person who has no spouse or partner usually resident in the household but who forms a parent-child relationship with at least one child usually resident in the household. The child may be either dependent or non-dependent.

Care should be taken in interpreting information on relationships among people in a household, because the standard Census relationship classifications may not fully represent the complexity of family relationships in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Data analyses

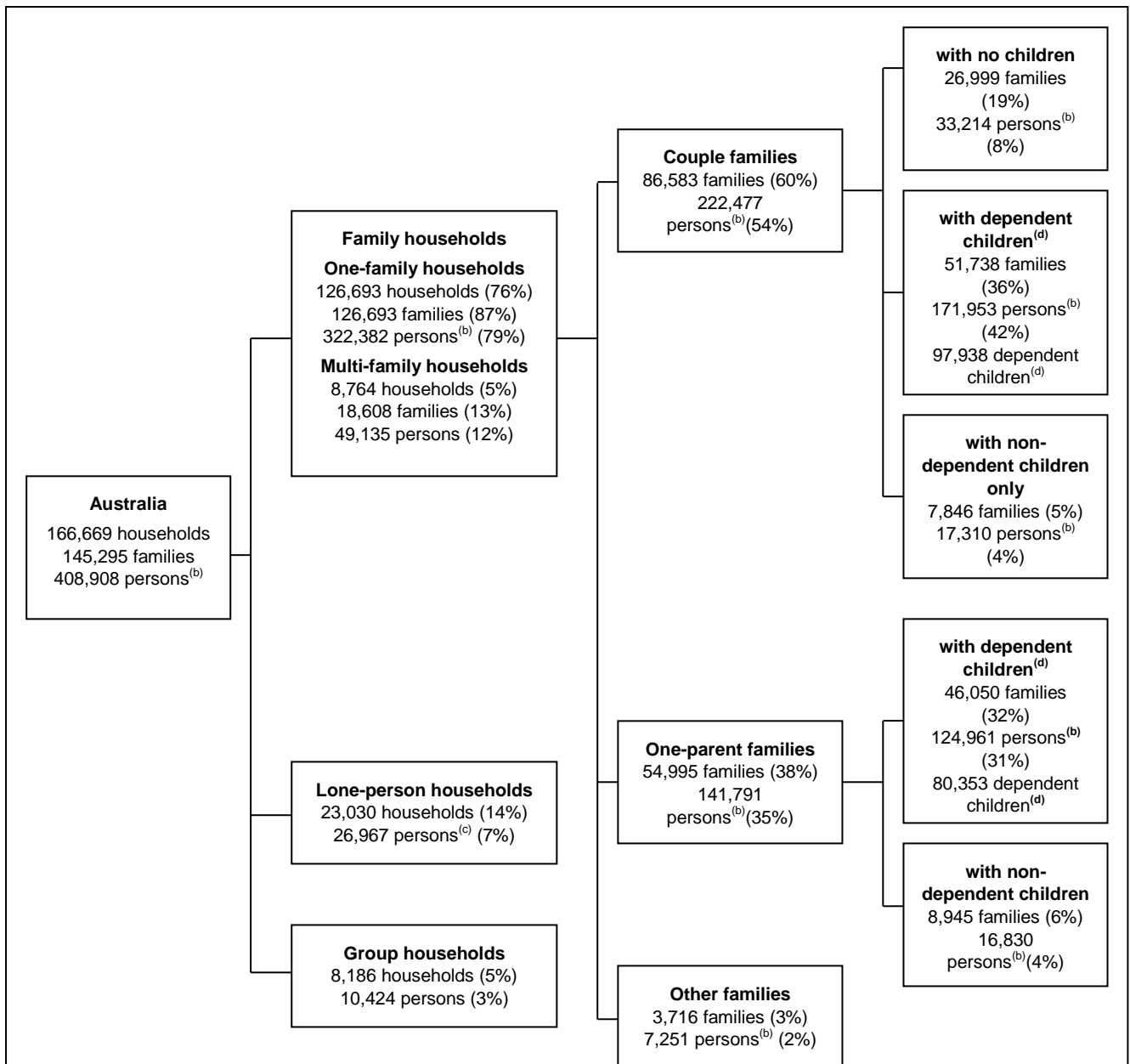
Household composition, family composition and persons

Figures 2.12.1 and 2.12.2 show the household composition, family composition and number of persons in Indigenous households and non-Indigenous households.

- In 2006, of the 166,669 Indigenous households, 126,693 (76%) were one-family households, 23,030 (14%) were lone-person households, 8,186 (5%) were group households and 8,764 (5%) were multi-family households (Figure 2.12.1). The corresponding proportions for non-Indigenous households were 70%, 25%, 4% and 1% respectively (Figure 2.12.2).
- Of the 135,457 Indigenous family households, 86,583 (60%) were couple families, 54,995 (38%) were one-parent families and 3,716 (3%) were other families (Figure 2.12.1). The proportions for non-Indigenous households in Australia were 83%, 15% and 2% respectively (Figure 2.12.2).

One-parent families

- In 2006, there were 52,300 Indigenous households containing Indigenous one-parent families (31%), representing 54,995 families (38%) and 141,791 persons (35%). In comparison there were 759,370 other households containing non-Indigenous/other one-parent families (11%), representing 768,256 families (15%) and 2,012,830 persons (12%) (Table 2.12.1).
- Approximately 32% (46,050) of Indigenous families were one-parent families with dependent children, representing 124,961 persons (31%). Around 6% of Indigenous families (8,945) were one-parent families with non-dependent children, representing 16,830 persons (4%) (Figure 2.12.1). In comparison, 10% of non-Indigenous families were one-parent families with dependent children and 5% were one-parent families with non-dependent children (Figure 2.12.2).



- (a) Excludes Visitors only and other not classifiable households.
- (b) Excludes unrelated individuals living in the family household.
- (c) Includes persons not enumerated at home.
- (d) Children under 15 years of age and full-time dependent students aged 15–24 years.

Source: ABS and AIHW analysis of 2006 Census data.

Figure 2.12.1: Household composition, family composition and persons^(a), Indigenous population, 2006

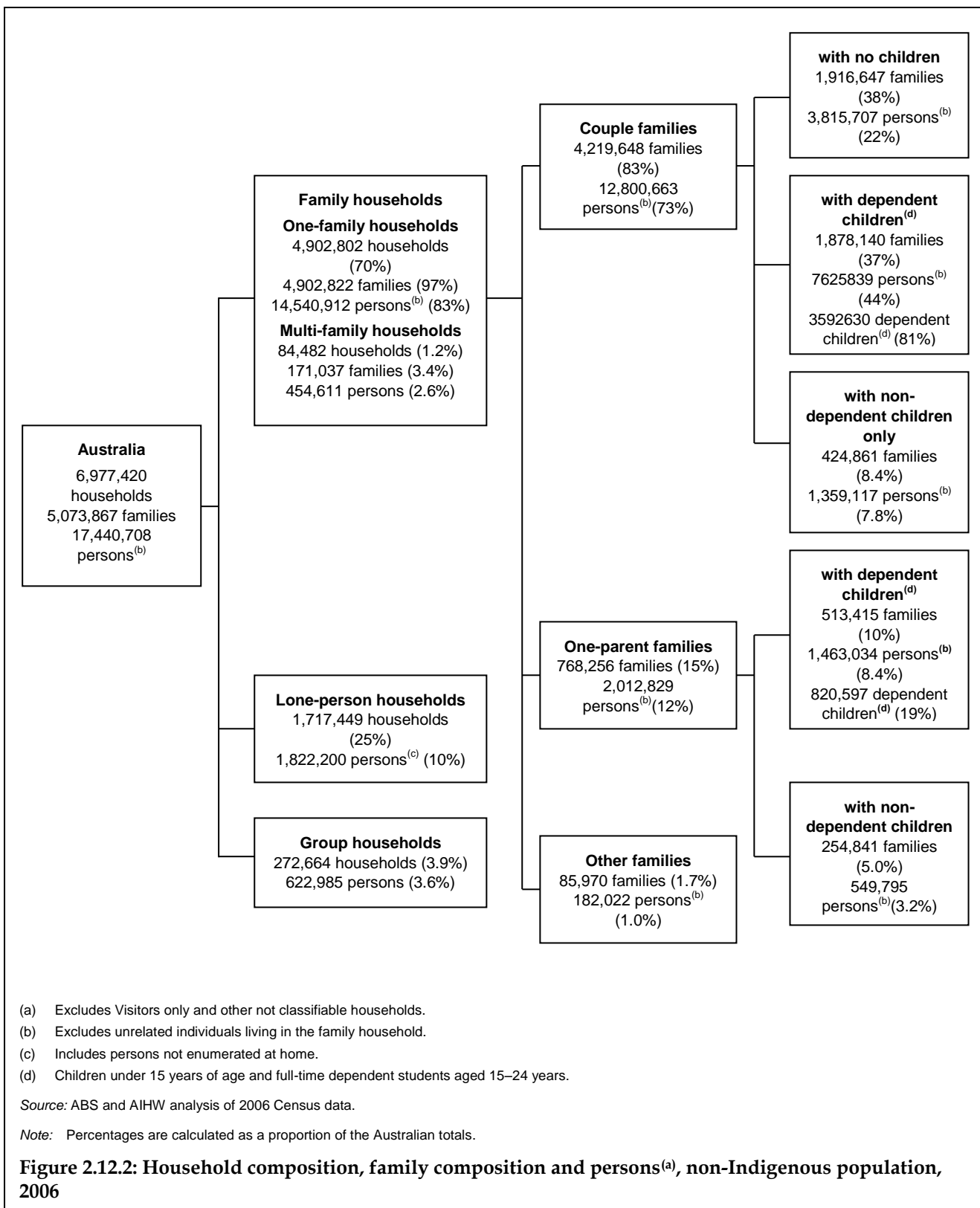


Table 2.12.1: One-parent families by Indigenous status, 2006

	Indigenous one-parent families ^(a)	Non-Indigenous/other one-parent families ^(b)	Total one-parent families
	Number		
Households	52,300	759,370	811,670
Families	54,995	768,256	823,251
Persons	141,791	2,012,830	2,154,620
	Per cent^(c)		
Households	31.4	10.9	11.4
Families	37.9	15.1	15.8
Persons	34.7	11.5	12.1

(a) One-parent families where the parent and/or child(ren) are Indigenous

(b) One parent families where neither the parent nor child(ren) is Indigenous

(c) Proportion of Indigenous households, families and persons; proportion of non-Indigenous households, families and persons; total one-parent families as a proportion of all households, families and persons.

Source: ABS and AIHW analyses of 2006 Census data.

Relationship in household

- In 2006, among Indigenous persons in occupied private dwellings, approximately 39% were children under the age of 15 years. This compared with 20% among non-Indigenous persons. Indigenous persons were also almost twice as likely as non-Indigenous persons to be classified as a lone parent (9% compared with 5%) and half as likely to be classified as a husband, wife or partner in a couple relationship (24% compared with 48%) (Table 2.12.2).
- Approximately 6% of Indigenous persons were classified as extended family members (other related individual) living with relatives other than their spouse/partner or children compared with 2% of non-Indigenous persons (Table 2.12.2).
- There was a slight increase in the relationship composition in Indigenous households between 2001 and 2006 (Table 2.12.3; Figure 2.12.3).

Table 2.12.2: Indigenous persons in occupied private dwellings, relationship in household^(a), 2006

	Indigenous persons		Non-Indigenous persons		All persons ^(b)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Husband, wife or partner ^(c)	99,396	24.2	8,209,643	47.8	8,401,489	47.0
Lone parent	36,646	8.9	776,987	4.5	823,253	4.6
Child under 15 years	161,115	39.2	3,446,995	20.1	3,685,435	20.6
Dependent student (15–24 years)	17,177	4.2	876,873	5.1	906,122	5.1
Non-dependent child	33,219	8.1	1,104,538	6.4	1,159,209	6.5
Other related individual						
Brother/sister	7,403	1.8	178,877	1.0	188,961	1.1
Father/mother	2,950	0.7	92,077	0.5	96,631	0.5
Grandchild	2,898	0.7	19,259	0.1	22,655	0.1
Grandfather/grandmother	677	0.2	10,969	0.1	11,855	0.1
Cousin	2,135	0.5	12,988	0.1	15,370	0.1
Uncle/aunt	1,368	0.3	7,434	0.0	8,928	0.0
Nephew/niece	3,767	0.9	18,552	0.1	22,748	0.1
Other	2,763	0.7	19,024	0.1	24,392	0.1
<i>Total</i>	<i>23,961</i>	<i>5.8</i>	<i>359,180</i>	<i>2.1</i>	<i>391,540</i>	<i>2.2</i>
Unrelated individual	6,348	1.5	146,111	0.9	156,447	0.9
Group household member	9,211	2.2	563,699	3.3	581,600	3.3
Lone person	23,484	5.7	1,697,431	9.9	1,770,464	9.9
Total^(d)	410,557	100.0	17,181,457	100.0	17,875,559	100.0

(a) Based on place of enumeration, includes usual residents enumerated at home and excludes visitors and usual residents temporarily absent.

(b) Includes Indigenous status not stated.

(c) Includes people in tribal marriages and same-sex couples.

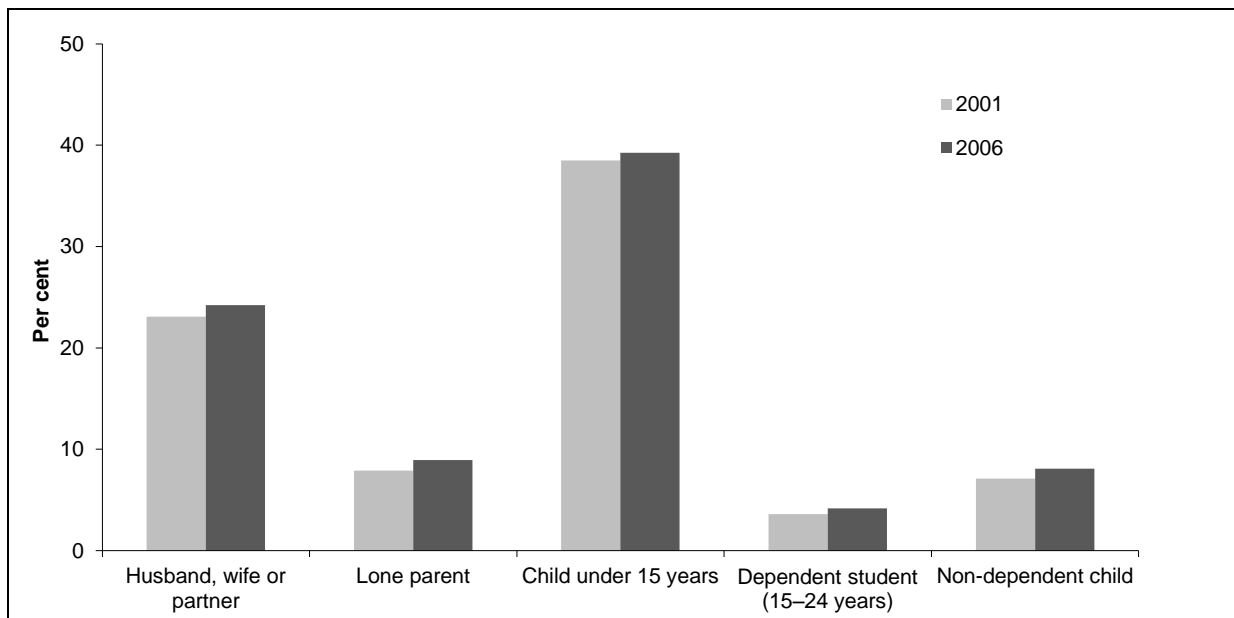
(d) Includes persons not at home on Census night, and those in other not classifiable households.

Source: ABS and AIHW analysis of 2006 Census data.

Table 2.12.3 Indigenous persons in occupied private dwellings, by selected relationships as a proportion of all Indigenous persons, 2001 and 2006

Relationship in household	2001	2006
Husband, wife or partner	23.1	24.2
Lone parent	7.9	8.9
Child under 15 years	38.5	39.2
Dependent student (15–24 years)	3.6	4.2
Non-dependent child	7.1	8.1

Source: ABS and AIHW analysis of 2001 and 2006 Census data.



Source: ABS and AIHW analysis of 2001 and 2006 Census data.

Figure 2.12.3: Indigenous persons in occupied private dwellings, by selected relationships as a proportion of all Indigenous persons, 2001 and 2006

Lone parents

Information on Indigenous lone parents is available from the 2008 NATSISS and is presented in tables 2.12.4, 2.12.5a and 2.12.5b below.

- In 2008, an estimated 51,000 Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over were lone parents (Table 2.12.4).
- Around three-quarters (72%) of Indigenous lone parents were living in one-family households with only the family members present, compared with 92% of non-Indigenous lone parents.

Table 2.12.4: Lone parents, by number of families in household and Indigenous status, 2008

	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Rate ratio
	%	%	
One-family household with only family members present ^(a)	71.9	91.8	0.8
One or more family household with non-family members present	4.4	3.7 ^(b)	1.2
Two or more family household with only family members present	23.8	4.4	5.4
Total	100.0	100.0	..
Total number^(c)	50,972	870,829	..

(a) Includes lone-person households.

(b) Estimate has a relative standard error between 25% and 50% and should be used with caution.

(c) Includes Group households.

Source: AIHW analysis of 2008 NATSISS & 2007–08 NHS.

Tables 2.12.5a and 2.12.5b present lone parents by selected population characteristics (for Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over). Table 2.12.5a presents the proportion of lone parents in the Indigenous population who have each of the selected characteristics and Table 2.12.5b presents the proportion of Indigenous persons with each of the selected characteristics who are lone parents.

- A higher proportion of Indigenous lone parents (27%) reported fair/poor health status than other Indigenous persons (21%) (Table 2.12.5a).
- A higher proportion of lone parents (69%) reported they could not raise \$2,000 within a week than other Indigenous persons (48%) (Table 2.12.5a).
- Lone parents were less likely to be employed (36%) and more likely to not be in the labour force (55%) than other Indigenous persons (55% compared with 35%) (Table 2.12.5a).
- A higher proportion of lone parents were renters (86%) than other Indigenous persons (66%) (Table 2.12.5a).
- Approximately 66% of Indigenous lone parents had experienced stressors in the previous 12 months compared with 56% of other Indigenous persons (Table 2.12.5a).
- A higher proportion of Indigenous persons whose highest year of school completed was Year 11 or below was a lone parent (16%) than were Indigenous persons who completed Year 12 (13%) (Table 2.12.5b).

- Approximately 11% of Indigenous persons who were employed were lone parents whereas 22% of Indigenous persons who were not in the labour force were lone parents (Table 2.12.5b).
- A higher proportion of renters than home owners were lone parents (19% and 7% respectively) (Table 2.12.5b).

Table 2.12.5a: Lone parents, by selected population characteristics: Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over^(a), 2008

	Lone parent	Other Indigenous persons	Total
	Per cent		
Self-assessed health status			
Excellent/very good/good	73.3	78.6	77.8
Fair/poor	26.7	21.4	22.2
Financial stress			
Could raise \$2,000 within a week	30.8	52.5	49.2
Could not raise \$2,000 within a week	69.2	47.5	50.8
Location			
Remote	24.0	25.1	24.9
Non-remote	76.0	74.9	75.1
Highest year of school completed			
Year 12	17.0	21.0	20.4
Year 11 or below	83.0	79.0	79.6
Whether has non-school qualification			
Has a non-school qualification	31.6	32.4	32.3
Does not have a non-school qualification	68.4	67.6	67.7
Employment			
Employed	36.0	54.6	51.7
Unemployed	9.3	10.4	10.2
Not in the labour force	54.7	35.0	38.1
Housing			
Owner	13.2	32.5	29.5
Renter	85.7	65.8	68.9
Stressors in last 12 months			
Really bad illness	13.5	12.5	12.6
Other stressors	52.4	43.5	44.9
<i>Total experienced stressors</i>	65.9	56.0	57.5
No stressors	34.1	44.0	42.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number of persons aged 15 years and over	50,972	276,129	327,101

(a) Proportion of Indigenous persons with each of the selected characteristics who are lone parents.

Source: AIHW analysis of 2008 NATSISS.

Table 2.12.5b: Selected population characteristics, by lone parents: Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over^(a), 2008

	Lone parent	Other Indigenous persons	Total
	Per cent		
Self-assessed health status			
Excellent/very good/good	14.7	85.3	100.0
Fair/poor	18.7	81.3	100.0
Financial stress			
Could raise \$2,000 within a week	9.6	90.4	100.0
Could not raise \$2,000 within a week	20.9	79.1	100.0
Location			
Remote	15.0	85.0	100.0
Non-remote	15.8	84.2	100.0
Highest year of school completed			
Year 12	13.0	87.0	100.0
Year 11 or below	16.2	83.8	100.0
Whether has non-school qualification			
Has a non-school qualification	15.3	84.7	100.0
Does not have a non-school qualification	15.7	84.3	100.0
Employment			
Employed	10.9	89.1	100.0
Unemployed	14.2	85.8	100.0
Not in the labour force	22.4	77.6	100.0
Housing			
Owner	6.9	93.1	100.0
Renter	19.3	80.7	100.0
Stressors in last 12 months			
Really bad illness	16.7	83.3	100.0
Other stressors	18.2	81.8	100.0
<i>Total experienced stressors</i>	<i>17.9</i>	<i>82.1</i>	<i>100.0</i>
No stressors	12.5	87.5	100.0
Total	15.6	84.4	100.0
Total number of persons aged 15 years and over	50,972	276,129	327,101

(a) Proportion of Indigenous persons with each of the selected characteristics who are lone parents.

Source: AIHW analysis of 2008 NATSISS.

Dependent children

- In 2006, approximately 38,394 families in Indigenous households were one-parent families with dependent children. This was 41.6% of all Indigenous families with dependent children. Approximately 19.9% of other Australian families (non-Indigenous and status not stated) with dependent children were one-parent families (Table 2.12.6).
- Approximately 15% of Indigenous families with dependent children had four or more children compared with 5% of other households. Indigenous one-parent families with dependent children were 2.6 times as likely to have four children and 8.4 times as likely to have seven or more children as other one-parent families (Table 2.12.6).

Table 2.12.6: Number and percentage of households^(a) in occupied private dwellings, by number of dependent children^(b) and Indigenous status, 2006

Number of households							
Number of dependent children	One-family households			Total	Two-family households	Three-family households	All households with dependent children
	Couples with dependent children	One-parent families with dependent children					
Households with Indigenous person(s)							
1	14,609	15,485	30,094	1,543	33	31,670	
2	16,396	11,952	28,348	1,851	100	30,299	
3	9,204	6,395	15,599	1,192	155	16,946	
4	4,324	2,999	7,323	708	183	8,214	
5	1,466	1,068	2,534	366	134	3,034	
6	587	324	911	212	101	1,224	
7 or more	374	171	545	223	211	979	
Total	46,960	38,394	85,354	6,095	917	92,366	
Percentage	50.8	41.6	92.4	6.6	1.0	100.0	
Rate ratio^(c)	0.7	2.1	0.9	2.7	15.9	1.0	
Other households							
1	631,632	242,889	874,521	25,377	309	900,207	
2	798,694	157,329	956,023	20,910	454	977,387	
3	311,046	53,687	364,733	7,570	345	372,648	
4	77,606	14,061	91,667	2,501	203	94,371	
5	14,574	3,759	18,333	809	86	19,228	
6	4,189	764	4,953	280	48	5,281	
7 or more	2,041	250	2,291	210	33	2,534	
Total	1,839,782	472,739	2,312,521	57,657	1,478	2,371,656	
Percentage	77.6	19.9	97.5	2.4	0.1	100.0	
All households							
1	646,241	258,374	904,615	26,920	342	931,877	
2	815,090	169,281	984,371	22,761	554	1,007,686	
3	320,250	60,082	380,332	8,762	500	389,594	
4	81,930	17,060	98,990	3,209	386	102,585	
5	16,040	4,827	20,867	1,175	220	22,262	
6	4,776	1,088	5,864	492	149	6,505	
7 or more	2,415	421	2,836	433	244	3,513	
Total	1,886,742	511,133	2,397,875	63,752	2,395	2,464,022	
Percentage	76.6	20.7	97.3	2.6	0.1	100.0	

(continued)

Table 2.12.6 (continued): Number and percentage of households^(a) in occupied private dwellings, by number of dependent children^(b) and Indigenous status, 2006

Percentages and rate ratio							
Number of dependent children	One-family households			Total	Two-family households	Three-family households	All households with dependent children
	Couples with dependent children	One-parent families with dependent children					
Households with Indigenous person(s)							
1	31.1	40.3	35.3	25.3	3.6	34.3	
2	34.9	31.1	33.2	30.4	10.9	32.8	
3	19.6	16.7	18.3	19.6	16.9	18.3	
4	9.2	7.8	8.6	11.6	20.0	8.9	
5	3.1	2.8	3.0	6.0	14.6	3.3	
6	1.3	0.8	1.1	3.5	11.0	1.3	
7 or more	0.8	0.4	0.6	3.7	23.0	1.1	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
Other households							
1	34.3	51.4	37.8	44.0	20.9	38.0	
2	43.4	33.3	41.3	36.3	30.7	41.2	
3	16.9	11.4	15.8	13.1	23.3	15.7	
4	4.2	3.0	4.0	4.3	13.7	4.0	
5	0.8	0.8	0.8	1.4	5.8	0.8	
6	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.5	3.2	0.2	
7 or more	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.4	2.2	0.1	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
Rate ratio^(c)							
1	0.9	0.8	0.9	0.6	0.2	0.9	
2	0.8	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.4	0.8	
3	1.2	1.5	1.2	1.5	0.7	1.2	
4	2.2	2.6	2.2	2.7	1.5	2.2	
5	3.9	3.5	3.7	4.3	2.5	4.1	
6	5.5	5.2	5.0	7.2	3.4	6.0	
7 or more	7.2	8.4	6.4	10.0	10.3	9.9	
Total	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	

(a) Persons enumerated at home.

(b) Under 15 years of age. Includes up to three temporarily absent children.

(c) Rate ratio Indigenous:other.

Source: ABS and AIHW analysis of 2006 Census data. Data quality issues

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS)

The NATSISS is conducted in all states and territories and includes remote and non-remote areas. The 2008 sample was 13,300 persons in 6,900 households, with a response rate of 82% of households. Up to three randomly selected Indigenous people were chosen from selected households to participate in the survey. Trained ABS interviewers conducted the survey using face-to-face interviews. In non-remote areas interviewers used a notebook computer to record responses, while in remote areas a paper questionnaire was used. Interviewers obtained the consent of a parent or guardian before interviewing those aged 15 to 17 years. Indigenous persons usually resident in non-private dwellings such as hotels, motels, hostels, hospitals, short-stay caravan parks, prisons and other correctional facilities were excluded.

The NATSISS uses the standard Indigenous status question. The NATSISS sample was specifically designed to select a representative sample of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

As with other surveys, the NATSISS is subject to sampling and non-sampling errors. Care has been taken to ensure that the results of this survey are as accurate as possible. Trained ABS officers conducted all interviews. However, some factors may affect the reliability of the data.

Information recorded in this survey is 'as reported' by respondents, and therefore may differ from information available from other sources or collected using different methodologies.

Data on health-related indicators have been age-standardised to the 2001 total Australian population to account for differences in the age structures of the states and territories and the Indigenous and non-Indigenous population.

Time series comparisons for the 2008 survey are available through the 1994 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey and the 2002 NATSISS. However not all data elements align across the three (1994, 2001 and 2008) NATSISS surveys, hence care is required when reviewing results across the three surveys. There are no strictly comparable non-Indigenous results available for the 2008 NATSISS because the latest General Social Survey (which has been used in the past to compare with Indigenous results from the NATSISS) was run in 2006, with the next being run in 2010-11. Data from other ABS surveys run in 2008 may, however, be used to obtain rough non-Indigenous comparisons for some data items. Where possible, the ABS has provided recommendations for non-Indigenous data comparisons and these have been adopted in this report.

The 2008 NATSISS has a relatively large level of under-coverage when compared to other ABS surveys. There was also an increase in under-coverage compared to previous ABS Indigenous surveys. For example, the estimated under-coverage in the 2004-05 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS) was 42%. The overall under-coverage rate for the 2008 NATSISS is approximately 53% of the in-scope population at the national level. This rate varies across the states and territories (ABS 2010).

Further information on NATSISS data quality issues can be found in the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey: Users' guide, 2008* (ABS 2010).

Census of Population and Housing

The Census uses the National health data dictionary standard Indigenous status question and it is asked for each household member. Measures that are drawn from Census data are subject to broad data concerns relating to the unexplainable growth in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population since the 1991 Census, and the limitations of self-identification. Other Census data issues relate to the accuracy of the Census count itself; for example, whether people are counted more than once, or are undercounted (ABS 1996).

For the 2002 NATSISS, it was estimated that there were 165,700 Indigenous households compared with 144,700 enumerated in the 2001 Census. Although the Census data are adjusted for undercounts at the person level to arrive at the estimated resident population, no such adjustment is done at the household level. This affects the accuracy of the person counts at the household level to provide adjusted household estimates.

Population data

The Census questions were designed to elicit population data according to Western social categories. Care should be taken when interpreting information as the standard Census relationship classifications used do not fully represent the complexity of family relationships in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures (ABS 2003).

List of symbols used in tables

- n.a. not available
- rounded to zero (including null cells)
- 0 zero
- .. not applicable
- n.e.c. not elsewhere classified
- n.f.d. not further defined
- n.p. not available for publication but included in totals where applicable, unless otherwise indicated

References

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