



Chapter 6: Indigenous health

There were an estimated 787,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Australia in 2016. As a group, there have been some significant improvements in Indigenous health, but challenges still remain.

Key Points

There has been a significant decline in Indigenous child death rates, while Indigenous life expectancy continues to improve

- In 2016, there were 146 deaths per 100 000 Indigenous children aged 0–4. This is a fall from 217 deaths per 100 000 Indigenous children in 1998.
- Life expectancy at birth for Indigenous Australians was estimated to be 69.1 years for males and 73.7 years for females in 2010–2012.

Despite some notable improvements, challenges still exist

Compared with non-Indigenous Australians, Indigenous Australians are also:



2.9 times as likely to have long-term ear or hearing problems among children



2.7 times as likely to experience high or very high levels of psychological distress



1.7 times as likely to have a disability or restrictive long-term health condition

More than half the health gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians can be explained by social factors or health risk factors

- Social determinants such as education and employment are estimated to be responsible for 34% of the health gap and health risk factors such as smoking and obesity are responsible for 19% of the gap.
- If Indigenous adults had the same household income, employment rate and hours worked, and smoking rate as non-Indigenous Australians, the health gap would decrease by more than a third—from 27% to 17%.