

3.15 Regular GP or health service

Number and proportion of individuals who have a regular general practitioner (GP) or health service

Data sources

Data for this measure come from the ABS 2004–05 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS).

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS)

The 2004–05 NATSIHS collected information from 10,439 Indigenous Australians of all ages. This sample was considerably larger than the supplementary Indigenous samples in the 1995 and 2001 National Health Surveys. The survey was conducted in remote and non-remote areas of Australia and collected a range of information from Indigenous Australians. This included issues of health-related actions, health risk factors, health status, socioeconomic circumstances and women's health. The survey provides comparisons over time in the health of Indigenous Australians. It is planned to repeat the NATSIHS at 6-yearly intervals, with the next NATSIHS to be conducted in 2010–11. Selected non-Indigenous comparisons are available through the 2004–05 National Health Survey (NHS).

Analyses

Self-reported data

Whether visited same doctor/health service

- In 2004–05, 91% of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people surveyed reported that they usually went to the same GP or medical service (Table 3.15.1).
- If they had a problem with their health, the majority (60%) of Indigenous Australians went to a doctor/GP outside of Aboriginal medical services (AMSs) and hospitals. The next highest proportion attended an Aboriginal medical service (30%). Approximately 7.0% of Indigenous people reported that they went to hospital for their regular health care.

Whether visited same doctor/health service by age and sex

- A slightly higher proportion of Indigenous Australians aged 0–14 years and 55 years and over reported they usually went to the same GP or medical service than those of other ages (93% and 94%, respectively) (Table 3.15.1; Figure 3.15.1).
- Similar proportions of Indigenous males and females reported they usually went to the same GP or medical service (90% and 91%, respectively) (Table 3.15.2).
- Approximately 3.0% of Indigenous males reported they did not seek health care if they had a problem with their health, compared with 1.0% of Indigenous females (Table 3.15.2).

Table 3.15.1: Types of regular health care used by Indigenous Australians, by age, 2004–05

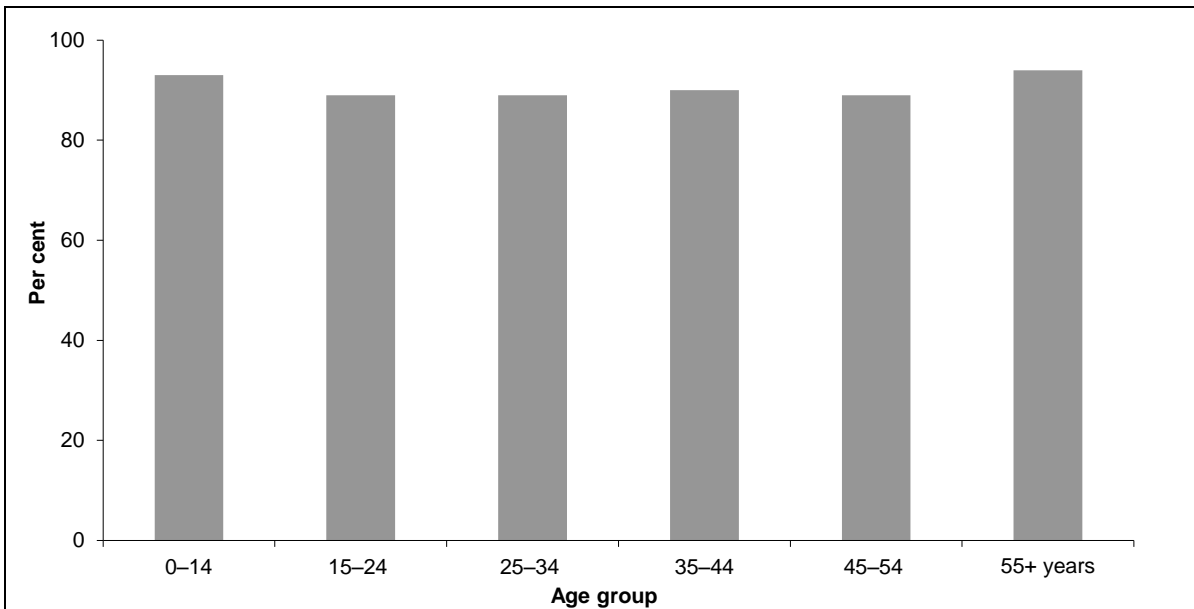
	0–14 years	15–24 years	25–34 years	35–44 years	44–54 years	55 years and over	Total
	Per cent						
Where usually go if problem with health							
Doctor/GP (outside AMS/hospital)	62	62	54	56	61	62	60
Aboriginal medical service	30	28	33	31	30	30	30
Hospital	7	6	8	6	7	7	7
Don't seek health care	1 ^(a)	2	3	3 ^(a)	2 ^(a)	— ^(b)	2
Total^(c)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Whether usually go to same GP/medical service							
Yes	93	89	89	90	89	94	91
No	7	11	11	10	11	6	9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total number	180,669	82,067	69,772	59,057	39,578	33,167	474,310

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

(b) Estimate has a relative standard error greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use.

(c) Total includes 'traditional healer', 'other health care' and 'not stated'.

Source: ABS and AIHW analysis of 2004–05 NATSIHS.



Source: ABS and AIHW analysis of 2004-05 NATSIHS.

Figure 3.15.1: Whether Indigenous Australians usually go to the same GP/medical service, by age group, 2004-05

Table 3.15.2: Types of regular health care used by Indigenous Australians, by sex, 2004-05

	Male	Female	Persons
	Per cent		
Where usually go if problem with health			
Doctor/GP (outside AMS/ hospital)	60	59	60
Aboriginal medical service	29	31	30
Hospital	6	7	7
Don't seek health care	3	1	2
Total^(a)	100	100	100
Whether usually go to same GP/medical service			
Yes	90	91	91
No	10	8	9
Total^(a)	100	100	100
Total number	232,362	241,948	474,310

(a) Total includes 'traditional healer', 'other health care' and 'not stated'.

Source: ABS and AIHW analysis of 2004-05 NATSIHS.

Whether visited same doctor/health service by state/territory and remoteness

- A high proportion of Indigenous people used a doctor/GP (outside of AMSs and hospitals) for their regular health care across all jurisdictions, with the exception of the Northern Territory where only 14% reported using a doctor/GP, and 82% reported using an Aboriginal medical service. Nevertheless, significant differences existed between jurisdictions with regard to the type of service Indigenous people used for regular health care. The majority of Indigenous people (about two-thirds and over) in the Australian Capital Territory, South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania used a doctor (outside of AMSs and hospitals) for their regular health care (Table 3.15.3).
- A higher proportion of Indigenous persons used hospitals for regular health care in Queensland and Western Australia (12% and 14%, respectively) compared with other jurisdictions (Table 3.15.3).
- The proportion of Indigenous Australians using Aboriginal medical services for their regular health care increased with remoteness from 15% in *Major cities* to 76% in *Very remote* areas. The proportion of Indigenous Australians using a doctor/GP (outside of AMSs and hospitals) for their regular health care decreased with remoteness from 80% in *Major cities* and *Inner regional* areas to 6% in *Very remote* areas. Hospital use, however, was higher in *Remote* and *Very remote* areas (Table 3.15.4; Figure 3.15.2).

Table 3.15.3: Types of regular health care used by Indigenous Australians, by state/territory, 2004–05

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Australia
	Per cent								
Where usually go if problem with health									
Doctor/GP (outside AMS/hospital)	80	75	56	48	68	89	64	14	60
Aboriginal medical service	13	19	30	34	26	6	32	82	30
Hospital	3 ^(a)	3 ^(a)	12	14	3 ^(a)	3 ^(a)	1 ^(b)	2 ^(a)	7
Don't seek health care	3	2 ^(a)	2 ^(a)	1 ^(a)	2 ^(a)	— ^(a)	2 ^(a)	2 ^(a)	2
Total^(c)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total number	139,570	29,334	130,856	67,548	26,534	18,072	4,162	58,234	474,310
Whether usually go to same GP/medical service									
Yes	88	92	90	90	96	96	95	94	91
No	11	8 ^(a)	10	10	4	4	5 ^(a)	6 ^(a)	9
Total^(c)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total number	139,570	29,334	130,856	67,548	26,534	18,072	4,162	58,234	474,310

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

(b) Estimate has a relative standard error greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use.

(c) Total includes 'traditional healer', 'other health care' and 'not stated'.

Source: ABS and AIHW analysis of 2004–05 NATSIHS.

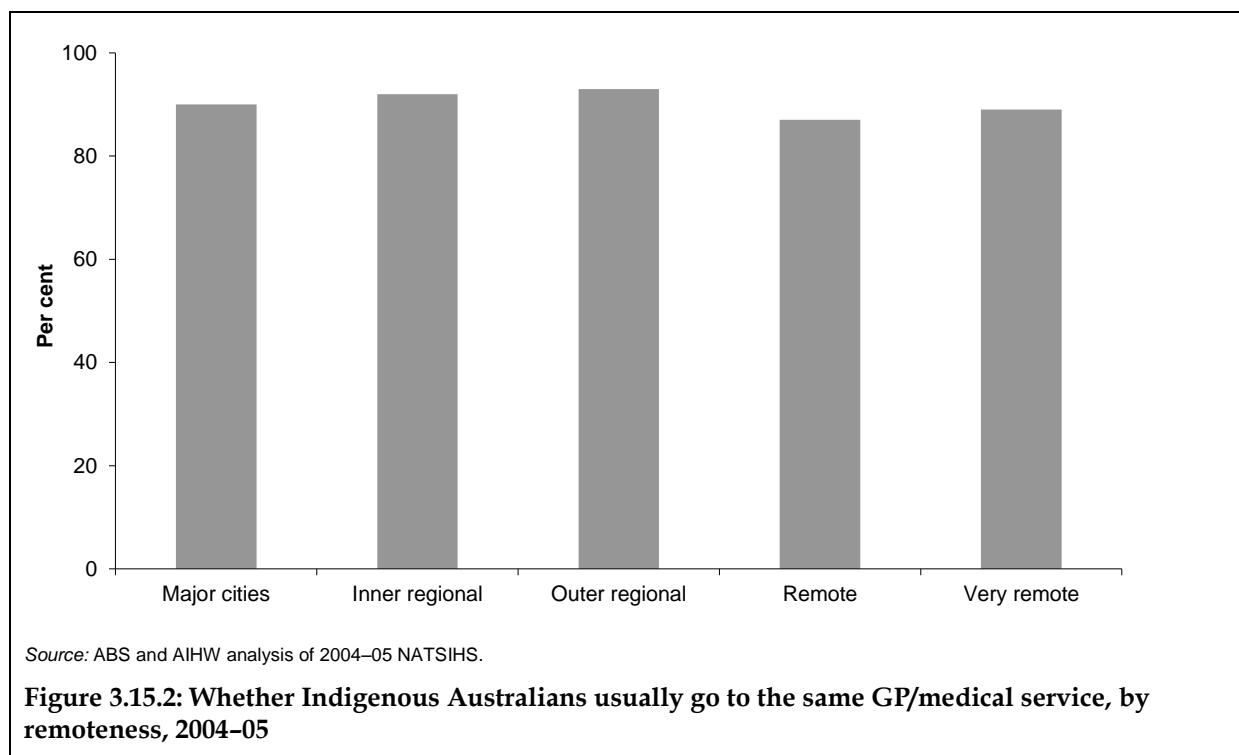
Table 3.15.4: Types of regular health care used by Indigenous Australians, by remoteness, 2004–05

	Major cities	Inner regional	Outer regional	Remote	Very remote	Australia
	Per cent					
Where usually go if problem with health						
Doctor/GP (outside AMS/hospital)	80	80	67	34	6 ^(a)	60
Aboriginal medical service	15	11	26	45	76	30
Hospital	1	6	5 ^(a)	15 ^(a)	16	7
Don't seek health care	3	2 ^(a)	1 ^(a)	1 ^(a)	34 ^(a)	2
Total^(b)	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total number	144,157	95,609	108,549	41,306	84,689	474,310
Whether usually go to same GP/medical service						
Yes	90	92	93	87	89	91
No	9	8	7	12	10	9
Total^(b)	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total number	144,157	95,609	108,549	41,306	84,689	474,310

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

(b) Total includes 'traditional healer', 'regular health care' and 'not stated'.

Source: ABS and AIHW analysis of 2004–05 NATSIHS.



Whether visited same doctor/health service by selected population and health characteristics

- The proportion of Indigenous Australians who reported they usually went to the same GP or medical service was similar irrespective of language spoken at home or household income but was slightly higher among those in the 5th quintile (highest relative advantage) of the Socioeconomic Indexes of Areas (SEIFA) index of disadvantage (95%), those in non-remote areas (92%) and those with private health cover (93%) (Table 3.15.5).
- The proportion of Indigenous Australians who reported they usually went to the same GP or medical service was similar (around 90%) for those with reported excellent/very good/good health and those with fair/poor health, and for those with any number of long-term conditions (Table 3.15.6).

Table 3.15.5: Whether Indigenous Australians usually go to the same GP/medical service, by selected population characteristics, 2004–05

	Yes	No	Total
	Per cent		
Main language spoken at home^(a)			
English	89	11	100
Language other than English	90	9	100
Total ^(b)	89	10	100
Household income			
1st quintile (lowest income)	91	9	100
5th quintile (highest income)	90	10	100
Total ^(c)	91	9	100
SEIFA Index of disadvantage			
1st quintile (lowest relative disadvantage)	91	9	100
5th quintile (highest relative advantage)	95	5 ^(d)	100
Total ^(c)	91	9	100
Location			
Remote	89	11	100
Non-remote	92	8	100
Total	91	9	100
Private health insurance^(e)			
With private cover	93	7 ^(d)	100
Without private cover	90	10	100
Total ^(c)	90	10	100

(a) Persons aged 18 years and over.

(b) Total includes 'not stated', 'inadequately described' and 'non-verbal languages'.

(c) Total includes 'not stated' and 'not known' where applicable.

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

(e) Persons aged 15 years and over, non-remote areas only.

Source: ABS and AIHW analysis of 2004–05 NATSIHS.

Table 3.15.6: Type of regular health care used by Indigenous Australians, by summary health characteristics, 2004–05

Regular health care	Self-assessed health status ^(a)			Number of long-term conditions ^(b)				
	Excellent/very good/good	Fair/poor	Total ^(c)	0	1	2	3+	Total
Per cent								
Where usually go if problem with health								
Doctor/GP (outside AMS/ hospital)	59	58	59	58	58	59	65	60
Aboriginal medical service	30	31	30	31	31	33	27	30
Hospital	7	7	7	7	7	6 ^(d)	6	7
Don't seek health care	2	2 ^(d)	2	2	3 ^(d)	1 ^(e)	1 ^(d)	2
Total^(f)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Whether usually go to same GP/ medical service								
Yes	89	90	89	90	91	91	92	91
No	10	9	10	9	9	8	8	9
Total^(c)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total number	229,335	64,236	293,641	321,338	24,767	27,714	100,386	474,310

(a) Persons aged 15 years and over.

(b) All persons. Includes conditions identified as a national health priority area.

(c) Total includes 'not stated'.

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

(e) Estimate has a relative standard error greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use.

(f) Total includes 'traditional healer', 'other health care' and 'not stated'.

Source: ABS and AIHW analysis of 2004–05 NATSIHS.

Discrimination/treatment when visited doctor/health service

- Indigenous people who usually went to the same GP or medical service were more likely to report that they were treated the same as non-Indigenous people when seeking health care over the last 12 months (78%) than those without a usual GP or medical service (70%). A similar proportion reported that they were treated worse (4%) or better (5%) than non-Indigenous people (Table 3.15.7).
- Sixteen per cent of Indigenous Australians reported that they felt they were treated badly because they were Indigenous.
- Of the people who reported that they felt they were treated badly because they were Indigenous, the majority felt angry (68%). Others reported feeling sad (26%), sorry for the person who treated them badly (32%), ashamed or worried about it (16%) or sick (12%).
- Of the people who reported that they felt they were treated badly because they were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, 38% talked to family or friends about it, 34% reported that they tried to avoid the person/situation, and 27% just forgot about it.

Table 3.15.7: Whether Indigenous Australians usually go to the same GP/medical service, by treatment when seeking health care, 2004–05

	Whether usually go to same GP/medical service		
	Yes	No	Total ^(a)
	Per cent		
Treatment when seeking health care in last 12 months compared with non-Indigenous people			
Worse than non-Indigenous people	4	5 ^(b)	4
The same as non-Indigenous people	78	70	77
Better than non-Indigenous people	5	4 ^(b)	5
Only encountered Indigenous people	2	— ^(c)	2
Did not seek health care in last 12 months	4	13	5
Don't know/not sure	7	7	7
Total^(d)	100	100	100
Total number^{(d)(a)}	230,491	26,946	258,297
Whether felt treated badly because Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander in last 12 months			
Yes	16	15	16
No	84	84	84
Total^{(d)(a)}	100	100	100
Total number^{(d)(a)}	230,491	26,946	258,297
How usually feel when treated badly because Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander			
Feel angry	68	64	67
Feel sad	26	39	28
Feel sorry for the person who did it	32	25 ^(b)	31
Feel ashamed or worried about it	16	18 ^(b)	17
Feel sick	12	10 ^(b)	12
Other feeling	12	11 ^(b)	12
No feeling	5 ^(b)	14 ^(b)	6
Total^{(e)(f)(a)}	100	100	100
Total number^{(f)(a)}	36,239	4,088	40,373
What usually do when treated badly because Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander			
Try to avoid the person/situation	34	24 ^(b)	33
Try to change the way you are or things that you do	9	9 ^(b)	9
Try to do something about the people who did it	30	23 ^(b)	30
Talk to family or friends about it	38	38	38
Keep it to yourself	17	26 ^(b)	18
Just forget about it	27	33 ^(b)	28
Do anything else	5	7 ^(b)	5
No action	4 ^(b)	6 ^(b)	4
Total^{(e)(f)(a)}	100	100	100
Total number^{(f)(a)}	36,239	4,088	40,373

(continued)

Table 3.15.7 (continued): Whether usually goes to the same GP/medical service, by discrimination, Indigenous Australians, 2004–05

- (a) Includes refusal to answer and 'not stated'.
- (b) Estimate has a relative standard error of between 25% and 50% and should be used with caution.
- (c) Estimate has a relative standard error greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use.
- (d) Total persons aged 18 years and over.
- (e) Components may not add to total because persons may have reported more than one type of action.
- (f) Persons who answered yes to 'whether treated badly in the last 12 months because Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander'.

Source: ABS and AIHW analysis of 2004–05 NATSIHS

Data quality issues

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS)

The NATSIHS uses the standard Indigenous status question. The NATSIHS sample was specifically designed to select a representative sample of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. It has therefore overcome the problem inherent in most national surveys with small and unrepresentative Indigenous samples. As with other surveys, the NATSIHS is subject to sampling and non-sampling errors. Calculations of standard errors and significance testing help to identify the accuracy of the estimates and differences.

Information recorded in this survey is essentially 'as reported' by respondents. The ABS makes every effort to collect accurate information from respondents, particularly through careful questionnaire design, pre-testing of questionnaires, use of trained interviewers and assistance from Indigenous facilitators. Nevertheless, some responses may be affected by imperfect recall or individual interpretation of survey questions.

Non-Indigenous comparisons are available through the National Health Survey (NHS). The NHS was conducted in Major cities and Inner and outer regional and Remote and very remote areas, but very remote areas were excluded from the sample. Time series comparisons are available through the 1995 and 2001 National Health Survey.

In remote communities there were some modifications to the NATSIHS content in order to accommodate language and cultural appropriateness in traditional communities and help respondents understand the concepts. Some questions were excluded and some reworded. Also, paper forms were used in communities in remote areas and computer-assisted interview (CAI) instruments were used in non-remote areas. The CAI process included built-in edit checks and sequencing.

Further information on NATSIHS data quality issues can be found in the NATSIHS 2004-05 publication (ABS 2006).

Doctor/health service

The NATSIHS does not separately identify whether persons would go to this doctor/health service if they are sick or need advice about their health; if they had new health problems; if they needed preventative health care; or if they needed referrals. In the United States, persons are determined to have a usual primary care provider if they reported that they would usually go the same health professional for all four of these situations.

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

ABS 2006. National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2004–05. ABS cat. no. 4715.0. Canberra: ABS

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