

INTRODUCTION

It could be expected that, because of their higher rate of disabling conditions, such as injury, respiratory and circulatory diseases, rates of disability among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people would be higher than those of the general population. While this expectation has been supported by the limited data previously available, including some studies of service use by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the 2002 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) provided, for the first time, information on the prevalence of disability among Indigenous Australians.

The 2002 NATSISS included a short set of questions relating to disability. These questions asked people about problems that they have seeing, hearing and speaking among other things. People were also asked about everyday limitations related to these impairments. These questions are comparable with those asked in the 2002 General Social Survey (GSS) for the Australian population, although there may be differences in interpretations of questions about health problems and the need for assistance.

This chapter provides information on the prevalence of disability in the Indigenous population and examines the relationships between disability and a number of life areas, including health and housing, education and economic participation, families, and social participation. Where possible, the impact of patterns of disability at different ages for Indigenous people are discussed. Information on use of disability and aged care services can be found in Chapter 11.

ESTABLISHING DISABILITY

The 2002 NATSISS includes people aged 15 years or over. There are a number of questions used to establish disability status and disability type. A person was regarded as having a disability or long-term health condition if they had one or more of a number of conditions, which had lasted, or were likely to last, for six months or more and which limited or restricted that person's ability to perform everyday activities. People identified as having a disability or long-term health condition were then asked further questions to establish their level of limitation in one or more 'core activities' of daily living (self-care, mobility and communication; see Appendices 3 and 4 for further details).

Differences in the survey between remote and non-remote areas

In order to take account of language differences and life circumstances, the questions used in remote areas differed slightly from those used in non-remote areas. While some common criteria were used for both areas, some additional questions were used to identify people with a disability in non-remote areas. This slightly larger set of questions has been termed the 'broader' or 'additional' criteria (see Appendix 3 for details). Respondents in remote areas were not asked about conditions that restrict physical activity or work (e.g. back problems, migraines); disfigurement/deformity; mental illness requiring help or supervision; or restrictions due to a nervous or emotional condition(s). The omission of the first two questions may have resulted in an underestimate of Indigenous people with a physical disability in remote areas, while the omission of the

*Differences in the survey
between remote and
non-remote areas
continued*

second two questions means that the 2002 NATSISS did not explicitly identify persons in remote areas with a psychological disability. Some people in remote areas with a psychological disability will have been correctly identified as having a disability (and therefore included in the total of people with a disability) if they reported that they were receiving medical treatment or taking medication for a restricting health condition, but the type of disability cannot be determined from this information alone.

In order to include all respondents from the 2002 NATSISS (from remote and non-remote areas), the majority of tables in this chapter are based on the disability populations identified using the common criteria i.e. the more restrictive criteria used in remote areas (see Appendix 3 for details of criteria used).

In this chapter, where the common (more restrictive) criteria relating to measurements in remote areas have been used, whether for remote areas, non-remote areas or in total, the restricted scope of the measures should be kept in mind. In those sections of the chapter that examine the relationships between disability and various life areas, the patterns found would not differ substantially for the non-remote areas if the broader criteria were used instead of the common criteria.

The broader criteria are used in making comparisons with the non-Indigenous population (from the 2002 GSS), and in two sections that examine disability status for Indigenous people in non-remote areas in more detail.

PREVALENCE OF
DISABILITY

In 2002, 102,900 (36%) of Indigenous people aged 15 years or over had a disability or a long-term health condition according to the common criteria (table 5.1). Of these, 21,800 or 8% of the population aged 15 years or over had a profound or severe core activity limitation, meaning that they always or sometimes needed assistance with at least one activity of everyday living (self-care, mobility or communication).

Overall, the prevalence rate, or proportion of people with a disability or long-term health condition was similar in males (37%) and females (36%) (table 5.1). This rate increased with age for both sexes. The rates for people aged 15–44 years were similar for the two sexes, while the rates recorded for males were higher than females for people aged 45 years or over (the difference was not statistically significant). Almost three-quarters (72%) of people aged 65 years or over had a disability or long-term health condition.

The overall prevalence of profound or severe core activity limitation was similar for males and females, and generally increased with age. It was very high for people aged 65 years or over, with one-quarter (25%) of people in this age group having a profound or severe core activity limitation. Caution should be exercised when using the detailed information presented in table 5.1 to make specific comparisons, as many of the differences are not statistically significant.

PREVALENCE OF
DISABILITY *continued***5.1** DISABILITY STATUS BY SEX BY AGE, Indigenous persons aged
15 years or over—2002

Age (years)	Profound or severe core activity limitation		Disability/ limitation not further defined		Total with a disability or long-term health condition		No disability or long-term health condition		Total	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
MALES										
15–24	*1 600	4.0	7 200	17.6	8 900	21.6	32 300	78.4	41 200	100.0
25–34	2 300	6.9	7 700	22.9	10 000	29.8	23 500	70.2	33 400	100.0
35–44	1 400	5.2	8 800	32.2	10 200	37.4	17 100	62.6	27 400	100.0
45–54	1 900	10.4	8 000	43.5	9 900	53.9	8 500	46.1	18 500	100.0
55–64	1 100	12.0	5 200	59.1	6 300	71.1	2 600	28.9	8 900	100.0
65 or over	1 700	28.7	2 800	48.0	4 500	76.7	1 400	23.3	5 900	100.0
Total	10 000	7.4	39 800	29.5	49 800	36.9	85 400	63.1	135 200	100.0
FEMALES										
15–24	*1 500	3.6	8 400	20.3	9 900	23.9	31 600	76.1	41 500	100.0
25–34	1 900	5.0	8 700	23.2	10 600	28.2	27 000	71.8	37 700	100.0
35–44	2 700	8.9	9 100	29.9	11 800	38.9	18 600	61.1	30 400	100.0
45–54	2 800	14.1	6 300	31.5	9 100	45.6	10 800	54.4	19 900	100.0
55–64	1 300	12.7	5 500	52.6	6 800	65.3	3 600	34.7	10 400	100.0
65 or over	1 600	22.3	3 300	46.6	4 800	68.8	2 200	31.2	7 000	100.0
Total	11 800	8.0	41 300	28.1	53 100	36.1	93 900	63.9	147 000	100.0
PERSONS										
15–24	3 100	3.8	15 700	19.0	18 800	22.7	63 900	77.3	82 700	100.0
25–34	4 200	5.9	16 400	23.1	20 600	29.0	50 500	71.0	71 100	100.0
35–44	4 100	7.2	17 900	31.0	22 000	38.2	35 700	61.8	57 800	100.0
45–54	4 700	12.3	14 300	37.3	19 000	49.6	19 400	50.4	38 400	100.0
55–64	2 400	12.4	10 700	55.6	13 100	68.0	6 200	32.0	19 300	100.0
65 or over	3 200	25.2	6 100	47.2	9 300	72.4	3 600	27.6	12 900	100.0
Total	21 800	7.7	81 100	28.7	102 900	36.5	179 300	63.5	282 200	100.0

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

Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS

While the difference between rates of profound or severe core activity limitation for total Indigenous females living in remote areas and non-remote areas is not significant (table 5.2), the difference for females aged 65 years or over (33% in remote areas and 17% in non-remote areas) is statistically significant. For males the difference between remote (39%) and non-remote areas (24%) for the same age group was not statistically significant (ABS, 2002 NATSISS).

5.2 DISABILITY STATUS BY SEX BY REMOTENESS, Indigenous persons aged 15 years or over—2002

	PROFOUND OR SEVERE CORE ACTIVITY LIMITATION						TOTAL WITH A DISABILITY OR LONG-TERM HEALTH CONDITION(a)					
	Males		Females		Persons		Males		Females		Persons	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Remote(b)	2 900	7.6	4 000	10.2	6 900	8.9	12 700	33.9	14 600	36.9	27 300	35.4
Non-remote(b)	7 200	7.3	7 800	7.2	14 900	7.3	37 100	38.0	38 500	35.8	75 600	36.9
Total	10 000	7.4	11 800	8.0	21 800	7.7	49 800	36.9	53 100	36.1	102 900	36.5

(a) Includes persons with a profound or severe core activity limitation.

(b) Differences between data for remote areas and non-remote areas are not statistically significant.

Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS

PREVALENCE OF DISABILITY *continued*

Using the common criteria, disabilities and long-term health conditions have been grouped into broad disability types: physical, sensory/speech (sight, hearing or speech) and intellectual. These disability types are derived from the screening questions used to establish disability (see Appendix 5) and so cannot be related to specific disabling conditions. Also people with a psychological disability cannot be separately identified using the common criteria. A person may have more than one type of disability.

Looking at people with different disability types as a proportion of the population, 24% of Indigenous people had a physical disability or long-term health condition, 14% had a sensory/speech disability and 7% had an intellectual disability (table 5.3). This order of frequency was the same in each of the three broad age groups and for males and females, with the distribution of the three disability types being generally similar for both sexes. One in six Indigenous people (16%) had an unspecified long-term health condition (requiring treatment) which could not be coded to a disability type. The proportions of people with a physical or sensory/speech disability were higher in the older age groups.

PREVALENCE OF
DISABILITY *continued***5.3** DISABILITY TYPE, Indigenous persons aged 15 years or
over—2002

	15–44 years		45–64 years		65 years or over		Total	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
MALES								
Sight, hearing, speech	11 000	10.8	6 200	22.7	2 700	45.8	19 900	14.7
Physical	16 000	15.7	11 400	41.9	2 900	50.1	30 400	22.5
Intellectual	8 900	8.7	1 700	6.1	**600	10.4	11 100	8.2
Type not specified	10 000	9.8	9 900	36.3	2 300	39.0	22 200	16.4
<i>Total with a disability or long-term health condition</i>	29 100	28.5	16 300	59.5	4 500	76.7	49 800	36.9
FEMALES								
Sight, hearing, speech	10 500	9.5	5 800	19.0	2 500	35.0	18 700	12.7
Physical	20 700	18.9	11 700	38.5	3 700	52.9	36 100	24.6
Intellectual	5 800	5.3	1 900	6.2	*800	11.7	8 500	5.8
Type not specified	11 700	10.7	9 000	29.5	3 100	44.5	23 800	16.2
<i>Total with a disability or long-term health condition</i>	32 400	29.5	15 900	52.4	4 800	68.8	53 100	36.1
PERSONS								
Sight, hearing, speech	21 500	10.2	12 000	20.7	5 100	39.9	38 600	13.7
Physical	36 800	17.4	23 100	40.1	6 600	51.6	66 600	23.6
Intellectual	14 600	6.9	3 500	6.1	*1 400	11.1	19 600	7.0
Type not specified	21 700	10.3	18 900	32.7	5 400	42.0	46 000	16.3
<i>Total with a disability or long-term health condition</i>	61 500	29.0	32 200	55.7	9 300	72.4	102 900	36.5

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

** estimate has a relative standard error greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use

Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS

Table 5.4 illustrates the statistical effect of using different criteria (common and broader) to determine the numbers of Indigenous people in non-remote areas with a disability. The total number of people in non-remote areas who reported a disability or long-term health condition using the broader criteria was 96,900 (or 47%), compared with 75,600 (or 37%) using the common criteria, an increase of 21,300 or 10% of the Indigenous population in non-remote areas. The corresponding numbers for people with a profound or severe core activity limitation were 15,700 (or 8%) compared with 14,900 (or 7%), an increase of 800 people or 1% of the non-remote population.

PREVALENCE OF
DISABILITY *continued*

5.4 COMMON AND BROADER DISABILITY CRITERIA, Indigenous persons aged 15 years or over in non-remote areas—2002

Disability criteria	Profound or severe core activity limitation		Disability/ limitation not further defined		Total with a disability or long-term health condition		No disability or long-term health condition		Total	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Common	14 900	7.3	60 700	29.6	75 600	36.9	129 500	63.1	205 100	100.0
Broader	15 700	7.7	81 100	39.6	96 900	47.2	108 200	52.8	205 100	100.0

Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS

Thus some of the people categorised as having no disability or long-term condition, under the common criteria, did have a disability or long-term health condition under the broader criteria (and, in a small number of cases, had a profound or severe core activity limitation).

In non-remote areas, the inclusion of the two questions relating to psychological disability resulted in 18,700 Indigenous people reporting this disability type, 9% of the non-remote Indigenous population aged 15 years or over. The inclusion of the extra two questions relating to physical disability resulted in an additional 20,500 people reporting this disability type than under the common criteria. Since people may have disabilities of more than one type, some of the people in the above two groups may have already been identified under the common criteria as having a disability or long-term health condition of another type.

DISABILITY IN
NON-REMOTE AREAS

As noted above, the broader criteria that could be used to estimate psychological or physical disability in non-remote areas increased the number of people identified with a disability in those areas from 75,600 (using the common criteria) to 96,900 (using the broader criteria)—that is, the common criteria underestimated physical and psychological disability. Relatively few additional (less than 1,000) people were identified as having a profound or severe core activity limitation using the broader criteria. Therefore, overall, a smaller proportion (16%) of all people with a disability or long-term health condition in non-remote areas had a profound or severe core activity limitation using the broader criteria. A further 17% had a moderate or mild core activity limitation and 22% had a schooling or employment restriction only (table 5.5).

Among people in non-remote areas with a psychological disability, males were more likely to have a core activity limitation (93%) than females (76%) (table 5.5).

DISABILITY IN
NON-REMOTE AREAS
continued

5.5 DISABILITY TYPE BY DISABILITY STATUS(a), Indigenous persons aged 15 years or over in non-remote areas—2002

<i>Disability type</i>	<i>Profound or severe core activity limitation</i>	<i>Moderate or mild core activity limitation</i>	<i>Schooling or employment restriction only</i>	<i>No specific limitation or restriction</i>	<i>Total with a disability or long-term health condition</i>	<i>no.</i>
	%	%	%	%	%	
MALES						
Sight, hearing, speech	26.7	14.4	17.7	41.3	100.0	14 300
Physical	20.0	16.7	29.8	33.5	100.0	31 000
Intellectual	35.5	*16.6	30.4	*17.5	100.0	9 100
Psychological	31.5	24.7	37.3	*6.6	100.0	8 400
Type not specified	23.9	15.6	28.8	31.7	100.0	24 300
<i>Total(b)</i>	<i>16.2</i>	<i>14.0</i>	<i>27.9</i>	<i>41.9</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>45 000</i>
FEMALES						
Sight, hearing, speech	19.8	19.6	16.4	44.1	100.0	13 400
Physical	20.0	20.9	18.2	40.9	100.0	37 500
Intellectual	32.5	18.4	24.2	25.0	100.0	6 700
Psychological	28.1	27.3	20.8	23.9	100.0	10 400
Type not specified	26.3	20.0	16.8	36.9	100.0	26 400
<i>Total(b)</i>	<i>16.3</i>	<i>18.8</i>	<i>17.1</i>	<i>47.7</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>51 800</i>
PERSONS						
Sight, hearing, speech	23.3	16.9	17.1	42.7	100.0	27 700
Physical	20.0	19.0	23.4	37.6	100.0	68 500
Intellectual	34.2	17.4	27.7	20.7	100.0	15 800
Psychological	29.6	26.1	28.2	16.1	100.0	18 700
Type not specified	25.1	17.9	22.6	34.4	100.0	50 700
<i>Total(b)</i>	<i>16.2</i>	<i>16.6</i>	<i>22.1</i>	<i>45.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>96 900</i>

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

(a) Broader criteria used to identify persons with a disability in non-remote areas only.

(b) Components exceed total as a person may have more than one type of disability.

Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS

The prevalence of psychological disability in the non-remote Indigenous population was 9% and was highest in the 45–64 year age group (15% for males and 14% for females). Some 5,500 (or 30%) of Indigenous people with a psychological disability had a profound or severe core activity limitation.

COMPARISONS WITH THE
NON-INDIGENOUS
POPULATION

General

The disability status of Indigenous people can be compared, using the broader criteria, to that of the non-Indigenous population aged 18 years or over in non-remote areas only. The Indigenous to non-Indigenous age standardised rate ratio for people in non-remote areas with a profound or severe core activity limitation was 2.1. This means that, if the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations had the same size and age structure as the total Australian population, the number of Indigenous people in non-remote areas with a profound or severe core activity limitation would be 2.1 times the corresponding number of non-Indigenous people.

General continued

The rate ratio for non-remote areas may be an underestimate for the total Indigenous to non-Indigenous comparison. If the rate of profound or severe core activity restriction in remote areas for Indigenous people had been measured using the broader criteria and was higher than that recorded in non-remote areas, and if a measure was also available for non-Indigenous people in remote areas, then the rate ratios would have probably been higher.

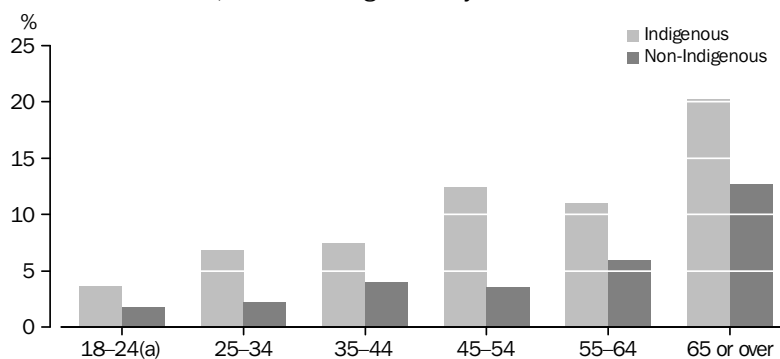
Different age patterns of disability

Table 5.7 shows age standardised rate ratios for non-remote areas for different levels of limitation by sex and age. Among people aged 18 years and over, the rate ratios for both males and females were generally greater than 1.0. Thus, Indigenous people had higher rates of disability at the different levels of limitation than non-Indigenous people. Among those with a profound or severe core activity limitation, the rate ratio was 2.5 for males and 1.8 for females.

Indigenous people had a higher rate of profound or severe core activity limitation than non-Indigenous people in all age groups. The rate ratio for profound or severe core activity limitation peaked for people aged 45–54 years (3.5), with a secondary peak for those aged 25–34 years (3.1).

The prevalence rates for profound and severe core activity limitation in the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations which underlie the trends in the rate ratios are shown in graph 5.6. The prevalence rates for profound and severe core activity limitation are significantly higher for Indigenous than non-Indigenous people in the middle age groups of 25–34 years, 35–44 years, 45–54 years and 55–64 years. The prevalence of profound and severe core activity limitation among Indigenous people aged 45–54 years was as high as that among non-Indigenous people aged 65 years or over. This suggests that there is a relatively higher need for service provision for Indigenous people with a disability at younger ages than for non-Indigenous people.

5.6 AGE-SPECIFIC RATES OF PROFOUND OR SEVERE CORE ACTIVITY LIMITATION, Persons aged 18 years or over—2002



(a) Estimates for Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons aged 18–24 years have relative standard errors of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution.

Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS and 2002 GSS.

In non-remote areas, the age standardised rate ratios for all people with a disability or long-term health condition for both males (1.4) and females (1.4) were lower than those for people with a profound or severe core activity limitation (table 5.7). These results reflect that among all people with a disability or long-term health condition, a higher

Different age patterns of disability continued

proportion of Indigenous than non-Indigenous people have a profound or severe core activity limitation. It may be the case that Indigenous people are generally less likely to report a condition if it is not associated with a profound or severe core activity limitation.

5.7 INDIGENOUS TO NON-INDIGENOUS RATE RATIOS FOR DISABILITY STATUS (a)(b), Persons aged 18 years or over in non-remote areas—2002

	<i>Profound or severe core activity limitation</i>	<i>Moderate or mild core activity limitation</i>	<i>Schooling or employment restriction only</i>	<i>No specific limitation or restriction</i>	<i>Total excluding profound or severe</i>	<i>Total with a disability or long term health condition</i>	<i>No disability or long-term health condition</i>
MALES							
Total (age standardised)	2.5	1.2	2.4	1.0	1.3	1.4	0.7
FEMALES							
Total (age standardised)	1.8	1.6	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.4	0.7
PERSONS							
18–24	*2.0	1.7	1.8	1.3	1.4	1.5	0.9
25–34	3.1	1.8	1.7	1.3	1.5	1.6	0.8
35–44	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.5	1.6	1.7	0.7
45–54	3.5	1.4	1.8	1.1	1.3	1.5	0.7
55–64	1.9	1.2	2.5	1.1	1.4	1.4	0.5
65 or over	1.6	1.2	—	1.0	1.0	1.1	*0.7
Total (age standardised)	2.1	1.4	1.9	1.2	1.3	1.4	0.7

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

— nil or rounded to zero (including null cells)

(a) Indigenous to non-Indigenous rate ratios are calculated by dividing the proportion of Indigenous people with a particular characteristic by the proportion of non-Indigenous people with the same characteristic.

(b) Broader criteria used to identify people with a disability in non-remote areas only.

Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS

Different age patterns of disability continued

There was little variation with age in the rate ratio for all disabilities and long-term health conditions (table 5.7). This was because the overall rate of disability or long-term health condition showed a general increase with age for both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations.

Australia's national research and policy goals include the promotion of good health and wellbeing for all Australians throughout life. In particular, the specific goal of 'ageing well, ageing productively' is intended to stimulate efforts to improve the mental and physical capacities of ageing people. Achieving this goal for Indigenous people will be especially challenging.

Disability type

Indigenous people were more likely to have disabilities of all types than non-Indigenous people. In non-remote areas in 2002, age standardised rate ratios for disability types were similar for males and females, and for both sexes the disability type with the highest rate ratio was intellectual (4.0 for males and 3.7 for females; table 5.8). For each disability type the association with age differed for males and females.

5.8 INDIGENOUS TO NON-INDIGENOUS RATE RATIOS FOR EACH DISABILITY TYPE(a)(b), Persons aged 18 years or over in non-remote areas—2002

Age (years)	Sight, hearing, speech	Physical	Intellectual	Psychological	Type not specified	Total with a disability or long-term health condition(c)
MALES						
18–44	1.5	1.4	4.2	2.0	1.7	1.4
45–64	1.1	1.8	5.2	2.7	1.9	1.5
65 or over	1.1	1.5	**2.8	**0.9	1.3	1.1
Total (age standardised)	1.3	1.6	4.0	2.1	1.7	1.4
FEMALES						
18–44	2.3	1.9	4.6	2.1	1.7	1.7
45–64	1.8	1.6	2.9	2.0	1.4	1.4
65 or over	1.0	1.2	**3.2	*1.3	1.2	1.1
Total (age standardised)	1.5	1.6	3.7	1.9	1.5	1.4
PERSONS						
18–44	1.8	1.7	4.3	2.1	1.7	1.6
45–64	1.4	1.7	3.7	2.3	1.6	1.4
65 or over	1.1	1.3	*3.0	*1.1	1.3	1.1
Total (age standardised)	1.4	1.6	3.8	2.0	1.6	1.4

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

** estimate has a relative standard error greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use

(a) Indigenous to non-Indigenous rate ratios are calculated by dividing the proportion of Indigenous people with a particular characteristic by the proportion of non-Indigenous people with the same characteristic.

(b) Broader criteria used to identify persons with a disability in non-remote areas only.

(c) A person may have more than one type of disability.

Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS

Disability type continued

For females, the difference in prevalence between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people was greatest for younger people. The rate ratios for all disability types were generally higher for females aged 18–44 years, than for those in the older age groups. For males the rate ratio for sight, hearing and speech disabilities was highest for those aged 18–44 years while for the other disability types the rate ratio peaked at the middle age group of 45–64 years.

Indigenous people were more likely to have two or more disability types than non-Indigenous people. As a result, the disability rate ratio for the total number of people with a disability is generally lower than the rate ratios for each disability type separately.

For all disability types Indigenous people with a disability or long-term health condition were more likely to have a specific limitation of some kind than non-Indigenous people with a disability or long-term health condition. Therefore, the age standardised rate ratio for people who had a disability or long-term health condition but no specific limitation was less than 1.0 regardless of disability type (table 5.9).

Disability type continued

For all disability types except intellectual, Indigenous males were more likely than non-Indigenous males to have a profound or severe core activity limitation (table 5.9). The rate ratio was highest for sight, hearing and speech (2.4). Indigenous females were more likely than non-Indigenous females to have a profound or severe core activity limitation associated with a physical disability (1.2), psychological disability (1.3), or an unspecified disability (1.5).

5.9 INDIGENOUS TO NON-INDIGENOUS RATE RATIOS, DISABILITY TYPE BY DISABILITY STATUS (a)(b), Persons aged 18 years or over in non-remote areas—2002

<i>Disability status</i>	<i>Sight, hearing, speech</i>	<i>Physical</i>	<i>Intellectual</i>	<i>Psychological</i>	<i>Type not specified</i>	<i>Total with a disability or long-term health condition (c)</i>
MALES						
Profound or severe core activity limitation	2.4	1.6	0.9	1.3	1.5	1.8
Moderate or mild core activity limitation	1.0	0.8	*1.2	1.1	0.9	0.8
Schooling/employment restriction only	1.4	1.5	1.2	*1.6	1.9	1.7
No specific limitation or restriction	0.7	0.7	*0.8	*0.3	0.7	0.7
FEMALES						
Profound or severe core activity limitation	1.0	1.2	1.0	1.3	1.5	1.3
Moderate or mild core activity limitation	1.1	1.0	0.9	1.7	1.0	1.1
Schooling/employment restriction only	2.1	0.9	1.7	0.6	1.0	1.0
No specific limitation or restriction	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.9

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

(a) Indigenous to non-Indigenous rate ratios are calculated by dividing the proportion of Indigenous people with a particular characteristic by the proportion of non-Indigenous people with the same characteristic.

(b) Broader criteria to identify persons with a disability in non-remote areas only.

(c) A person may have more than one type of disability.

Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS

Health status

For all disability types, as well as for people with no disability or long-term health condition, the proportion reporting fair or poor health was much higher among people in older age groups (45 years or over) than at younger ages. In non-remote areas, 50% of Indigenous people with a disability or long-term health condition reported that their health was fair or poor compared to 10% of Indigenous people without a disability (table 5.10). The proportions for remote areas were 43% and 7% respectively.

5.10 DISABILITY TYPE BY AGE AND REMOTENESS, Indigenous persons aged 15 years or over with fair or poor self-assessed health—2002

Disability type		15–44 YEARS		45–64 YEARS		65 YEARS OR OVER		TOTAL	
		Non-remote	Remote	Non-remote	Remote	Non-remote	Remote	Non-remote	Remote
Sight, hearing, speech	%	34.1	31.5	66.0	54.0	67.1	*75.8	47.9	46.2
Physical	%	44.7	33.3	73.8	61.6	76.2	77.6	57.6	49.0
Intellectual	%	42.2	*32.7	82.7	*52.9	*86.6	**87.8	51.6	45.9
Type not specified	%	62.3	40.6	80.6	58.2	75.9	*73.3	71.1	53.2
Total with a disability or long-term health condition	%	37.9	31.4	69.5	53.4	69.9	69.4	50.1	43.1
No disability or long-term health condition	%	8.3	6.1	15.0	13.8	*22.6	*18.4	9.6	7.4
Total	no.	26 500	7 400	18 900	5 700	4 900	2 400	50 300	15 400

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

** estimate has a relative standard error greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use

Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS

DISABILITY, EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

Level of education

Among Indigenous people aged 18 years or over, those with a disability or long-term health condition had completed fewer years of education, on average, than people without a disability. In non-remote areas, 52% of people with a disability or long-term health condition had only completed Year 9 or below, compared with 28% of people without a disability or long-term health condition. In remote areas the corresponding proportions were 64% and 43% (table 5.11).

Indigenous people with a profound or severe core activity limitation in remote areas were the least likely to have progressed beyond Year 9, with 70% completing school education to this level or below.

5.11 HIGHEST YEAR OF SCHOOL COMPLETED BY DISABILITY STATUS, Indigenous persons aged 18 years or over(a)—2002

Educational attainment		NON-REMOTE				REMOTE			
		Profound or severe core activity limitation	Total with a disability or long-term health condition	No disability or long-term health condition	Total	Profound or severe core activity limitation	Total with a disability or long-term health condition	No disability or long-term health condition	Total
Year 12	%	*12.1	11.8	25.6	20.3	*6.2	8.3	17.0	13.7
Year 10 or 11	%	33.4	36.0	46.9	42.8	*23.3	28.2	39.7	35.3
Year 9 or below(b)	%	54.5	52.2	27.5	37.0	70.5	63.5	43.3	50.9
Total	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total (a)	no.	14 000	69 300	111 600	180 900	6 700	26 100	42 900	69 100

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

(b) Includes persons who never attended school.

Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS

(a) Excludes persons who were still at school.

A greater proportion of Indigenous people aged 25–64 years with a disability or long-term health condition in non-remote areas had a non-school qualification (36%) than those in remote areas (23%). In remote areas, only 15% of people with a profound or severe core activity limitation had a non-school qualification. In non-remote areas the

*Level of education
continued*

proportion of people with a non-school qualification was less strongly associated with disability status (ABS, 2002 NATSISS).

Employment

Disability status was strongly associated with employment status for Indigenous people aged 18–64 years (table 5.12). People with a disability or long-term health condition were much less likely to be employed, especially full-time, and less likely to be in the labour force, than people without a disability or long-term health condition. This was true for both males and females.

People with a profound or severe core activity limitation were the least likely to be employed, with only 30% of males and 23% of females being employed either full-time or part-time, compared with 70% of males and 49% of females with no disability or long-term health condition. Most people with a profound or severe core activity limitation were not in the labour force: 56% of males and 72% of females.

5.12 LABOUR FORCE STATUS BY DISABILITY STATUS, Indigenous persons aged 18–64 years—2002

	MALES					FEMALES				
		Profound or severe core activity limitation	Total with a disability or long-term health condition	No disability or long-term health condition	Total		Profound or severe core activity limitation	Total with a disability or long-term health condition	No disability or long-term health condition	Total
Employed full-time	%	*10.8	25.0	45.9	38.2	*4.2	12.6	21.9	18.5	
Employed part-time	%	*19.0	19.3	23.8	22.2	18.2	18.8	27.5	24.4	
Total employed	%	29.8	44.4	69.8	60.5	22.5	31.5	49.4	43.0	
Total unemployed	%	*14.3	15.5	16.3	16.0	*5.5	10.2	10.4	10.3	
Not in the labour force	%	56.0	40.1	13.9	23.5	72.0	58.3	40.2	46.7	
Total	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
Total	no.	7 700	41 600	71 700	113 400	9 800	44 900	80 300	125 200	

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

Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS

Income and financial stress

Disability status for Indigenous people has a strong association with their principal source of income, amount of household income and indicators of financial stress.

Overall, about 65% of Indigenous people with a disability or long-term health condition, including three-quarters (76%) of Indigenous people with a profound or severe core activity limitation, were receiving a government pension or allowance as their principal source of income, compared with 42% of people without a disability or long-term health condition (table 5.13). Indigenous people without a disability or long-term health condition were correspondingly more likely to have 'other wages and salary', or to a lesser extent, Community Development Employment Projects scheme (CDEP) payments as their principal source of income.

Income and financial stress *continued*

5.13 PRINCIPAL SOURCE OF PERSONAL INCOME, Indigenous persons aged 15 years or over—2002

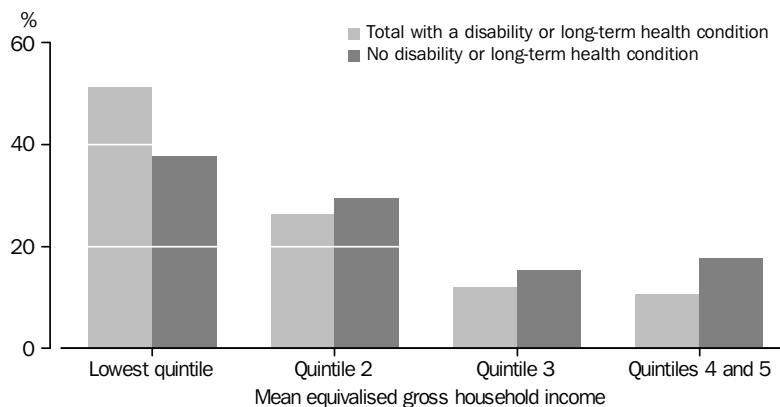
		Profound or severe core activity limitation	Total with a disability or long-term health condition	No disability or long-term health condition	Total
Received personal income					
CDEP	%	4.8	8.3	11.5	10.3
Other wages or salary	%	10.4	18.1	35.3	29.0
Government cash pensions and allowances	%	76.4	64.6	42.0	50.2
Other sources of income	%	*3.6	3.4	2.9	3.1
Total who received income	%	95.6	95.2	92.3	93.3
Did not receive personal income	%	*4.4	4.8	7.7	6.7
Total	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total	no.	21 800	102 900	179 300	282 200

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

Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS

Indigenous people with a disability or long-term health condition had household incomes lower than those without a disability or long-term health condition (graph 5.14).

5.14 HOUSEHOLD INCOME QUINTILE BY DISABILITY STATUS, Indigenous persons aged 15 years or over—2002



Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS

Indigenous people with a disability or long-term health condition were more likely to experience financial stress than Indigenous people without a disability (table 5.15).

Indigenous people with a disability or long-term health condition were more likely than those without a disability to be living in a household that: was unable to raise \$2,000 within a week for something important; had experienced days without money in the last 12 months; or had days without money in the last two weeks.

5.15 INDICATORS OF FINANCIAL STRESS(a), Indigenous persons aged 15 years or over—2002

	NON-REMOTE			REMOTE			
	Profound or severe core activity limitation	Total with a disability or long-term health condition	No disability or long-term health condition	Profound or severe core activity limitation	Total with a disability or long-term health condition	No disability or long-term health condition	
Unable to raise \$2,000 within a week for something important	%	58.7	57.0	41.7	81.3	77.2	70.7
Had days without money in last 12 months	%	60.6	52.2	40.1	49.5	49.3	37.2
Had days without money in last 2 weeks	%	47.7	38.7	27.3	41.2	39.8	28.7
Total	no.	14 900	75 600	129 500	6 900	27 300	49 800

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

Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS

DISABILITY AND FAMILIES

Care of children

Some 26,600 Indigenous people (32%) who had main caring responsibility for children aged 12 years or less had a disability or long-term health condition, and around one in six (4,500 or 17%) of them had a profound or severe core activity limitation. Looking at this from another perspective, in remote areas one-half (50%) of females with a disability or long-term health condition were carers of children aged 12 years or less compared with 36% in non-remote areas (table 5.16).

5.16 INDIGENOUS PERSONS AGED 15 YEARS OR OVER WITH MAIN CARING RESPONSIBILITY(a), by disability status, remoteness and sex—2002

		PROFOUND OR SEVERE CORE ACTIVITY LIMITATION			TOTAL WITH A DISABILITY OR LONG-TERM HEALTH CONDITION			NO DISABILITY OR LONG-TERM HEALTH CONDITION		
		Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons
Non-remote	%	*7.2	27.3	17.6	12.4	36.1	24.5	12.1	48.6	31.6
Remote	%	*5.8	42.2	27.1	6.5	49.7	29.5	10.3	55.4	32.9
Total	%	*6.8	32.4	20.6	10.9	39.8	25.8	11.6	50.4	31.9
Number of carers	no.	700	3 800	4 500	5 400	21 100	26 600	9 900	47 400	57 300
Total	no.	10 000	11 800	21 800	49 800	53 100	102 900	85 400	93 900	179 300

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

(a) For children aged 12 years or less within their household.
Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS

Removal from natural family

Indigenous people who had been removed from their natural family, were more likely than Indigenous people overall to have a disability or long-term health condition, and were more likely to have a profound or severe core activity limitation (table 5.17). Of Indigenous people who had been removed from their natural family, 54% had a disability or long-term health condition, including 14% with a profound or severe core activity limitation (table 5.17) compared with 36% and 8% of all Indigenous people (table 5.1).

Indigenous people aged 35 years or over, who had been removed from their natural family, had higher rates of profound or severe core activity limitation (19%) than younger people (7% of those aged 15–34 years). Rates of removal themselves varied with age group because of a large decrease in the rate of removal during the 1970s (HREOC 1997).

Removal from natural family continued

People with a disability or long-term health condition in both non-remote and remote areas were also more likely than other Indigenous people to have had relatives removed from their natural family (42% and 36% respectively for non-remote areas, 33% and 25% respectively for remote areas) (ABS, 2002 NATSISS).

5.17 PERSONS WHO WERE REMOVED FROM THEIR NATURAL FAMILY, Indigenous persons aged 15 years or over—2002

Age (years)	Profound or severe core activity limitation %	Total with a disability or long-term health condition %	No disability or long-term health condition %	Total removed %	Total removed no.	Total population no.
NON-REMOTE						
15-34	*7.2	44.1	55.9	100.0	9 500	111 700
35 or over	21.5	62.4	37.6	100.0	9 700	93 400
Total	14.4	53.4	46.6	100.0	19 200	205 100
REMOTE						
15-34	**7.5	33.4	66.6	100.0	1 300	42 200
35 or over	*11.8	62.2	37.8	100.0	3 300	35 000
Total	*10.6	54.2	45.8	100.0	4 600	77 100
TOTAL						
15-34	*7.3	42.8	57.2	100.0	10 800	153 900
35 or over	19.0	62.4	37.6	100.0	13 000	128 400
Total	13.7	53.5	46.5	100.0	23 800	282 200

* estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution
 ** estimate has a relative standard error greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use

Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS

DISABILITY AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

Participation in cultural events and social activities

Overall 61% of Indigenous people aged 15 years or over in non-remote areas and 87% in remote areas had attended a cultural event in the last 12 months. There was almost no difference in rates of attendance by disability status.

Overall 90% of Indigenous people aged 15 years or over had been involved in social activities within the last three months. There was very little difference in these rates of participation between remote and non-remote areas, and for people with different levels of disability. This result differs from findings for the general Australian population, in which people with a profound core activity limitation generally have lower community participation than other people (ABS, 2002 NATSISS and 2002 GSS).

Nearly one-quarter (23%) of Indigenous people with a profound or severe core activity limitation stated that they either could not get to, or often had difficulty getting to, the places they needed to go, compared with 14% of those whose disability or limitation was not further defined, and only 9% of Indigenous people with no disability or long-term health condition. Among people in non-remote areas who had a profound or severe core activity limitation, 28% of those aged 15-34 years and 34% of those aged 55 years or over

Participation in cultural events and social activities continued

stated that they either could not get to, or often had difficulty getting to, the places they needed to go.

Identification with Indigenous group and recognition of traditional country

The proportion of Indigenous people aged 15 years or over who identified with a clan, tribal or language group, or who recognised an area as homelands or traditional country varied between remote and non-remote areas (table 5.18). The differences by disability status were not statistically significant.

5.18 CULTURAL ATTACHMENT BY DISABILITY STATUS, Indigenous persons aged 15 years or over—2002

		PROFOUND OR SEVERE CORE ACTIVITY LIMITATION (a)		TOTAL WITH A DISABILITY OR LONG-TERM HEALTH CONDITION (a) (b)		NO DISABILITY OR LONG-TERM HEALTH CONDITION (a)	
		Non-remote	Remote	Non-remote	Remote	Non-remote	Remote
Identifies with a clan, tribal or language group	%	39.7	81.8	45.7	78.3	45.7	75.7
Recognises area as homelands or traditional country	%	61.6	88.2	65.8	87.4	62.1	85.0
Speaks an Indigenous language	%	11.9	61.6	10.3	53.9	7.6	54.4
Indigenous persons aged 15 years or over	no.	14 900	6 900	75 600	27 300	129 500	49 800

(a) Differences by disability status are not statistically significant.

Source: ABS, 2002 NATSISS

(b) Includes profound or severe core activity limitation.

Language

In the 2002 NATSISS, there was a substantial difference in the proportion of people in non-remote and remote areas for whom English was the main language spoken at home (98% and 55% respectively). However, there was no difference in English language use between people with a disability or long-term health condition and those without a disability within either non-remote or remote areas.

SUMMARY

The 2002 NATSISS provides, for the first time, information on the prevalence of disability in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. In 2002, 36% of Indigenous people aged 15 years or over had a disability or long-term health condition, including 8% with a profound or severe core activity limitation, meaning that they always or sometimes needed assistance with core activities of daily living (self-care, mobility and communication). Although these estimates are not strictly comparable with those for the general population, it is clear that disability and profound or severe core activity limitations are much more prevalent among Indigenous people than non-Indigenous people. It is estimated that Indigenous people were at least twice as likely to have a profound or severe core activity limitation as non-Indigenous people.

The prevalence of disability among Indigenous people is higher at all ages. In 2002, over two-thirds of people aged 55–64 years, and one-half of people aged 45–54 years had a disability or long-term health condition. The earlier onset of disability or long-term health condition with a profound or severe core activity limitation indicates the comparatively higher need for service provision for Indigenous people with a disability at younger ages.

SUMMARY *continued*

While Indigenous people are generally disadvantaged when compared with non-Indigenous people, those with disabilities were likely to experience a further degree of social and economic disadvantage. On average they had completed fewer years of formal education, were much less likely to be in the labour force or to be employed, had lower levels of income, and were more likely to be living in households that had experienced financial stress. The rate of profound or severe core activity limitation for Indigenous people who had been removed from their natural family was nearly twice that for all Indigenous people. Attendance at cultural events and involvement in social activities did not appear to be affected by a person's disability status.