

Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage

Key Indicators 2020

Report



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Steering Committee for the Review
of Government Service Provision

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The Steering Committee welcomes enquiries and suggestions on the information contained in this report. Contact the Secretariat by phone: (03) 9653 2100 or email gsp@pc.gov.au

Photographs

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this publication may contain images of deceased people.

Cover photos

Clockwise from top: Smoking Ceremony with Gilbert Laurie, STEM Camp, Lennox Head NSW, photo taken by Jamie James, courtesy of NSW AECG Inc.; Auntie Pattie Reid, Redfern Community Centre NSW, photo taken by Jamie James; STEM Camp lesson, Royal National Park, Sydney NSW, photo taken by Jamie James, courtesy of NSW AECG Inc.; Nevana Sines and Auntie Christine Hooper, Redfern, NSW for Native Title Services Corporation NSW/ACT (NTSCORP), photo taken by Jamie James.

This report generally uses the term 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people' to describe the First Peoples of Australia and 'non-Indigenous people' to refer to Australians of other backgrounds.

Foreword

This is the eighth report in the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage (OID) series and provides a public report card on the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

As with previous editions, the Report provides comprehensive data on key indicators across areas such as governance and culture, early childhood, education, health, economic participation, housing and safe and supportive communities.

But the Report is more than a collection of data. This edition seeks to identify the significant strengths and sources of wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It also illustrates the nature of the disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, focussing on key structural and systemic barriers that contribute to this disadvantage and what appears successful in approaches to overcoming these barriers.

Understanding the challenges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have faced, and continue to face, requires an understanding of our shared history. Chapter 1 provides a brief historical narrative from colonisation to the current day. For those readers unfamiliar with the history we hope this will provide a useful starting point.

Thanks go to the many organisations and individuals involved in the production of the Report. We record our gratitude to all members of the working group, representing the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations and each jurisdiction, that advised the Steering Committee. Our thanks also to the staff in the Secretariat at the Productivity Commission, led by Catherine Andersson.

Michael Brennan
Chair

Romlie Mokak
Convenor of the OID Working Group

December 2020

Terms of reference

Prime Minister
Canberra

Reference: B08/2004

11 Mar 2009

Mr Gary Banks AO
Chairman
Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision

Dear Mr Banks

I am writing in my capacity as Chair of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to convey to you updated Terms of Reference for the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage (OID) Report.

Since it was first published in 2003, the OID report has established itself as a source of high quality information on the progress being made in addressing Indigenous disadvantage across a range of key indicators. The OID report has been used by Governments and the broader community to understand the nature of Indigenous disadvantage and as a result has helped inform the development of policies to address Indigenous disadvantage. The OID report is highly regarded and I commend the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Services (the Steering Committee) for its efforts in preparing the report every two years.

In December 2007 and March 2008, COAG committed to six ambitious targets to close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage:

- closing the life expectancy gap within a generation;
- halving the gap in the mortality rate for Indigenous Children under five within a decade;
- ensuring all Indigenous four year olds in remote communities have access to quality early childhood programs within five years;
- halving the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements for children within a decade;

-
- halving the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 attainment rates or equivalent attainment by 2020; and
 - halving the gap in employment outcomes within a decade.

Without high quality data, it is impossible to understand where we are headed in terms of overcoming Indigenous disadvantage. Through the National Indigenous Reform Agreement, all Governments have committed to ensuring their data is of high quality, and moreover, is available for reporting purposes. This undertaking has been made with specific reference to the need for data to be provided for the OID report.

In August 2008, the Chair of the COAG Working Group on Indigenous Reform (WGIR), the Hon Jenny Macklin MP, wrote to you requesting the Steering Committee work with the WGIR to align the OID framework to the Closing the Gap targets.

As a result, on 29 November 2008, COAG agreed a new framework for the OID report which takes account of the six ambitious targets to Close the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage. The Steering Committee should take account of this new framework in preparing future OID reports thereby ensuring the report continues to provide Governments and the broader community with an understanding of the progress being made to overcome Indigenous disadvantage.

I have copied this letter to the Treasurer, Ms Macklin and the Chair of MCATSIA the Deputy Premier of the Government of Western Australia and Minister for Indigenous Affairs, the Hon Dr Kim Hames MLA.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Rudd

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Steering Committee

This report was produced under the direction of the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision. The Steering Committee comprises the following current members:

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Expert Reference Panel on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Environmental Health

Abbreviations

AACWA	Aboriginal Advisory Council of Western Australia
AATSIHS	Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ABS Census	Census of Population and Housing
ACAC	Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care
ACCOs	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations
ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
ACF	Aboriginal Children's Forum
ACCHO	Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
ACCHS	Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
ACIR	Australian Childhood Immunisation Register
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AEC	Australian Electoral Commission
AEDC	Australian Early Development Census
AHAC	Anindilyakwa Housing Aboriginal Corporation
AHMAC	Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council
AHS	Australian Health Survey
AIC	Australian Institute of Criminology
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
AIR	Australian Immunisation Register
AITSL	Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership
ALC	Anindilyakwa Land Council
ALCT	Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania
ALT	Aboriginal Lands Trust (of Western Australia)
ANAO	Australian National Audit Office
ANZSOC	Australian and New Zealand Standard Offence Classification

APY	Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
ASGC	Australian Standard Geographical Classification
ASGS	Australian Statistical Geography Standard
ATAR	Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank
ATSIHPF	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
ATWD	Australian Teacher Workforce Data
BMI	Body Mass Index
CAEPR	Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research
CDP	Community Development Program
CDEP	Community Development Employment Projects
CHINS	Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey
CNOS	Canadian National Occupancy Standard
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
COPD	Chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases
CPiCLAS	Children's Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities Survey
Cwlth	Commonwealth
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services
DHS	Department of Human Services
dmfs	Decayed, missing or filled primary (infant) tooth surfaces
DMFS	Decayed, missing or filled permanent (adult) tooth surfaces
dmft	Decayed, missing or filled primary (infant) teeth
DMFT	Decayed, missing or filled permanent (adult) teeth
DSP	Disability Support Pension
DPWG	Dampier Peninsula Working Group
EGWH	Equivalised Gross Weekly Household income
FASD	Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder
GP	General practitioner
GSS	ABS General Social Survey
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HPF	Health Performance Framework

ICD-10-AM	International Classification of Diseases, 10th Edition, Australian Modification
ICD-10-code	International Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems
IDN	Indigenous Data Network
ILSC	Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation
ISPHCS	Indigenous-specific primary health care service
ILUA	Indigenous Land Use Agreement
ISEC	Inner Sydney Empowered Communities
JJ NMDS	Juvenile Justice National Minimum Data Set
JJT	Juvenile Justice Team
ICGP	Indigenous Community Governance Project
ILSC	Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation
JJ NMDS	Juvenile Justice National Minimum Data Set
JJT	Juvenile Justice Team
LSD	Lysergic acid diethylamide
LSIC	Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children
MACR	Minimum age of criminal responsibility
MBS	Medicare Benefits Schedule
NACCHO	National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
NADOC	National Aborigines Day Observance Committee
NAIDOC	National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program — Literacy and Numeracy
NATSIHS	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey
NATSISS	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey
NBEDS	National Best Endeavours Data Set
NCARA	NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Regional Alliances
NECECC	National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NDSHS	National Drug Strategy Household Survey
NHMD	National Hospital Morbidity Database
NHMP	National Homicide Monitoring Program
NHMRC	National Health and Medical Research Council

NHS	National Health Survey
NIAA	National Indigenous Australians Agency
NILR	National Indigenous Languages Report
NILS	National Indigenous Languages Survey
NIRA	National Indigenous Reform Agreement
NMDS	National Minimum Data Set
NMDDP	National Maternity Data Development Project
NNAC	Narungga Nation Aboriginal Corporation
NNTT	National Native Title Tribunal
NPDC	National Perinatal Data Collection
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OID	Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage
PC	Productivity Commission
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
POI	Persons of Interest
Qld	Queensland
RA	Reconciliation Australia
RHD	Rheumatic heart disease
RJCP	Remote Jobs and Communities Program
RSE	Relative standard error
SA	South Australia
SCRGSP	Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision
SDAC	Survey of Disability Ageing and Carers
SE	Standard Error
SEW	ABS Survey of Education and Work
SEAM	School Enrolment and Attendance Measure
SLK	Statistical Linkage Key
SHS	Specialist Homelessness Services
SHSC	Specialist Homelessness Services Collection
SOWG	Senior Officers Working Group

STIs	Sexually Transmissible Infections
Tas	Tasmania
TIS	Tackling Indigenous Smoking
UN	United Nations
VACCA	Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency
VET	Vocational Education and Training
Vic	Victoria
WA	Western Australia
YBFS	Year Before Full time Schooling

Glossary

Aboriginal	A person who identifies as being of Aboriginal origin. May also include people who identify as being of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin. See also Torres Strait Islander people.
Age-specific rate	A rate for a specific age group. The numerator and the denominator relate to the same age group.
Age standardised rates	Age standardised rates enable comparisons to be made between populations that have different age structures. Age standardisation is often used when comparing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous populations because the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is younger than the non-Indigenous population. Outcomes for some indicators are influenced by age, therefore, it is appropriate to age standardise the data when comparing the results. When comparisons are not being made between the two populations, the data are not age standardised.
Confidence intervals	<p>Survey data, for example data from the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey, are subject to sampling error because they are based on samples of the total population. Where survey data are shown in charts in this report, error bars are included, showing 95 per cent confidence intervals. There is a 95 per cent chance that the true value of the data item lies within the interval shown by the error bars. See ‘statistical significance’.</p> <p>See also ‘Error bars’.</p>
Cultural safety	An environment that is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for people; where there is no assault challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience of learning together
Culturally safe services	Services that are culturally safe, as defined by those who receive the service.
ICD	ICD is the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, endorsed by the World Health Organization

	(WHO). It is primarily designed for the classification of diseases and injuries with a formal diagnosis. ICD-10 is the 10 th Revision of the ICD.
Error bars	<p>Survey data, for example data from the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, are subject to sampling error because they are based on samples of the total population. Where survey data are shown in charts in this report, error bars are included, showing 95 per cent confidence intervals. There is a 95 per cent chance that the true value of the data item lies within the interval shown by the error bars. See ‘statistical significance’.</p> <p>See also ‘Confidence intervals’.</p>
Hospitalisation separations	<p>Hospitalisations recorded in this report refer to ‘hospital separations’. A ‘separation’ is an episode of care, which can be a total hospital stay (from admission to discharge, transfer or death), or a portion of a hospital stay beginning or ending in a change of type of care (for example, from acute to rehabilitation). It is also defined as the process by which an admitted patient completes an episode of care by being discharged, dying, transferring to another hospital or changing type of care. For measuring a hospital’s activity, separations are used in preference to admissions because diagnoses and procedures can be more accurately recorded at the end of a patient’s stay and patients may undergo more than one separation from the time of admission. Admitted patients who receive same day procedures are recorded in hospitalisation statistics.</p>
Indigenous region	Indigenous Regions (IREGs) are the highest level of disaggregation of the Australian Indigenous Geographic Classification (AIGC).
Indigenous status not stated/unknown	Where a person’s Indigenous status has either not been asked, or not recorded and is unknown.
Inner regional	See ‘remoteness areas’.
Intergenerational trauma	A traumatic event (catastrophic event that's so overwhelming it leaves that person unable to come to terms with it) that began years prior to the current generation and has impacted the ways in which individuals within a family understand, cope with, and heal from trauma.
Major cities	See ‘remoteness areas’.
Non-Indigenous	A person who does not identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.
Non-remote	See ‘remoteness areas’.

Outer regional	See ‘remoteness areas’.
Rate ratio	The rate ratio is the rate for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population divided by the rate for the non-Indigenous (or other) population.
Relative standard error (RSE)	The relative standard error (RSE) of a survey data estimate is a measure of the reliability of the estimate and depends on both the number of people giving a particular answer in the survey and the size of the population. The RSE is expressed as a percentage of the estimate. The higher the RSE, the less reliable the estimate. Relative standard errors for survey estimates are included in the attachment tables. See also ‘statistical significance’.
Remote	See ‘remoteness areas’.
Remoteness areas	<p>Remoteness areas are defined in the Australian Statistical Geographical Standard (ASGS) developed by the ABS. The ASGS remoteness classification identifies a place in Australia as having a particular degree of remoteness. The remoteness of each place is determined using the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA). The ABS generates an average ARIA score for each location based on its distance from population centres of various sizes. Locations are then added together to form the remoteness areas in each State and Territory. Remoteness areas comprise the following six categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • major cities of Australia • inner regional Australia • outer regional Australia • remote Australia • very remote Australia • migratory regions (comprising off-shore, shipping and migratory places). <p>The aim of the ASGS remoteness structure is not to provide a measure of the remoteness of a particular location but to divide Australia into five broad categories (excluding migratory regions) of remoteness for comparative statistical purposes.</p>
Social determinants of health	The social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life. These forces and systems include economic policies and systems, development agendas, social norms, social policies and political systems.
Statistical significance	Statistical significance is a measure of the degree of difference between data estimates. The potential for sampling error — that is, the

error that occurs by chance because the data are obtained from only a sample and not the entire population — means that reported responses may not indicate the true responses.

Using the relative standard errors (RSE) of survey data estimates, it is possible to use a formula to test whether the difference is statistically significant. If there is an overlap between confidence intervals for different data items, it cannot be stated for certain that there is a statistically significant difference between the results. See ‘confidence intervals’ and ‘relative standard error’.

Stolen Generations Term used for Aboriginal people forcefully taken away (stolen) from their families between 1890 and 1970.

Torres Strait Islander people People who identify as being of Torres Strait Islander origin. May also include people who identify as being of both Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal origin.

Very remote See ‘remoteness areas’.

Key points

- This report measures the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It provides comprehensive data across a range of outcome areas, along with supporting material on the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and the structural and systemic barriers that need to be addressed if outcomes are to further improve.
- In many areas outcomes have improved for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
 - Mortality rates for children improved between 1998 and 2018, particularly for 0<1 year olds, whose mortality rates more than halved (from 13 to 5 deaths per 1000 live births).
 - Education improvements included increases in the proportion of 20–24 year olds completing year 12 or above (from 2008 to 2018-19) and the proportion of 20–64 year olds with or working towards post-school qualifications (almost doubling from 2002 to 2018-19).
 - From 2014 to 2018, more people in the general community felt it was important to know about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures and more people rated their level of knowledge of both as high.
- But in some areas outcomes have not improved for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
 - Rates of children in out-of-home care have almost tripled in the past 15 years (60 per 1000 children in 2018-19).
 - The proportion of adults reporting high levels of psychological distress increased from 27 per cent in 2004-05 to 31 per cent in 2018-19, and the rate of deaths from suicide and self-harm increased by 40 per cent over the decade to 2018.
 - The adult imprisonment rate increased 72 per cent between 2000 and 2019, and whilst the youth detention rate has decreased it is still 22 times the rate for non-Indigenous youth.
- When outcomes have not improved they need to be understood with reference to the personal challenges and systemic and structural barriers that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have experienced and continue to face.
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a higher prevalence of the personal risk factors associated with poorer outcomes and are more likely to have multiple risk factors.
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are often disproportionately affected by structural barriers due to their particular circumstances or the disadvantage they experience.
- Connection to culture is a key to many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's identity and strength. These cultures are a foundation on which wellbeing can continue to be built.
- Common characteristics of approaches that appear to be successful in improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people include:
 - Addressing racism and discrimination in the Australian community, through structural changes, and building knowledge and education.
 - Enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to share in decision-making on things that affect them.
 - Addressing laws, policies, and practices that operate to the detriment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
 - Ongoing government investment, collaboration and coordination.
 - Ensuring access to effective culturally safe services, at the right time and suited to the local context.