Long-term smoking trends among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, 1994 to 2014-15

Australian Bureau of Statistics,
Menzies School of Health Research and
Australian Government Department of Health
Demographic characteristics

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER POPULATION, 2016 (a)

649 171
2.8% of the Australian population

(a) Usual residence Census counts. Excludes overseas visitors. Includes Other Territories.
Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2016
### Indigenous Status by remoteness area, 2016 (a)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Remoteness Area</th>
<th>Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander</th>
<th>Non-Indigenous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Count of Persons (no.)</td>
<td>Proportion of Persons (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Remote</td>
<td>526 009</td>
<td>81.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remote</td>
<td>119 596</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Australia (b)</td>
<td>649 171</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) Usual residence, excludes overseas visitors.
(b) Includes Other Territories, comprising Jervis Bay Territory, Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Christmas Island and Norfolk Island, Migratory-Offshore-Shipping, and No Usual Address.

**Source:** ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2016

### Remoteness area by indigenous status, 2016 (a)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-remote</th>
<th></th>
<th>Remote</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Count of Persons (no.)</td>
<td>Proportion of Persons (%)</td>
<td>Count of Persons (no.)</td>
<td>Proportion of Persons (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander</td>
<td>526 009</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>119 596</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Indigenous</td>
<td>21 000 766</td>
<td>91.8</td>
<td>304 394</td>
<td>64.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Australia (b)</td>
<td>22 882 169</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>473 366</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) Usual residence, excludes overseas visitors.
(b) Includes Other Territories, comprising Jervis Bay Territory, Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Christmas Island and Norfolk Island, Migratory-Offshore-Shipping, and No Usual Address.

**Source:** ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2016
Tobacco smoking causes many health problems including chronic diseases such as ischaemic heart disease, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, asthma, diabetes and various cancers (for example, lung, throat, liver and colorectal cancers).
Health Gap

• Smoking is estimated to be responsible for 23% of the health gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians.
Tobacco control programs

• Indigenous Tobacco Control Initiative
• Tackling Indigenous Smoking and Healthy Lifestyle program
• ‘Break the chain’
• ‘Don’t make smokes your story’
• State and Territory programs
Sources of data on smoking habits

A total of 12 surveys were available for analysis – six for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population and six for the non-Indigenous population. The six surveys for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population were:

- 1994 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey (NATSIS),
- 2002, 2008, 2014–15 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Surveys (NATSISS),
- 2004–05 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS), and
- 2012–13 Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (AATSIHS).

The six surveys for the non-Indigenous population were:
- 1995, 2001, 2004–05 and 2007–08, 2014–15 National Health Surveys (NHS), and
- 2011–12 Australian Health Survey (AHS).
Smoking prevalence

• In 2014–15, 45% of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population aged 18 years and over were smokers. Of these:

  – the vast majority (93%) were daily smokers, and
  – the remainder (7%) smoked less than daily.

• One quarter (25%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples aged 18 years and over were ex-smokers, and almost one third (31%) had never smoked.
Smoking prevalence

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males were more likely than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females to be smokers (47% compared with 42%), and
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in remote areas were more likely than those in non-remote areas to be smokers (54% compared with 42%).
Smoking prevalence by remoteness, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons aged 18 years and over
Smoking prevalence by remoteness, non-Indigenous persons aged 18 years and over
Table 1.1 SMOKING TRENDS, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population, Selected Years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Smoker status</th>
<th>1994/2002(a)</th>
<th>2014–15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current smoker(b), 18 years and</td>
<td>64.5</td>
<td>41.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-remote</td>
<td>64.5</td>
<td>44.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remote</td>
<td>64.3</td>
<td>54.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>64.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current smoker(b), 15–17 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-remote</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remote</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>23.5(c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-smoker(d), 18 years and over</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-remote</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remote</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>35.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) Current smoker figures are for 1994. Ex-smoker figures are for 2002 due to limitations in the information collected in the 1994 NATSIHS.
(b) Current smokers as a proportion of the relevant total population.
(c) Estimate has a relative standard error of between 25% and 50% and should be used with caution. Data is subject to sampling variability too high for most practical purposes.
(d) Ex-smokers as a proportion of the number of people who have ever smoked (including current smokers).
Smoking initiation

• Most of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population (69% in 2012–13) and non-Indigenous population (58% in 2014–15) aged 18 years and over who have ever smoked daily, commenced smoking before 18 years of age.

• Young people who do not initiate smoking during this time are unlikely to do so later in life¹, and those who start earlier are more likely to smoke more heavily and less likely to quit as adults².
Figure 2.1 Smoking prevalence(a) by remoteness. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons aged 15-17 years
Quit ratio, 18 years and over

- Indicator of trends in successful quitting
- Quit ratio among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples has increased since 2002
- Increases in non-remote only
- Trends pre- and post-2008 less clear than for smoking prevalence
Smoking cessation

Quit ratio Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons aged 18 years and over
Attempts to quit smoking

Figure 4.1 Attempts to Quit Smoking(a), Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Persons aged 18 years & over

- Non-remote males
- Non-remote females
- Remote males
- Remote females

- 2008
- 2012-13
- 2014-15
Conclusions

• Closing the Gap target – halve smoking prevalence among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population between 2008 and 2018 – unlikely to be met, but significant progress being made.

• Possible that increased focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tobacco control since 2008 is having an impact.

• Improvements are faster in non-remote than remote — appears attempts to quit smoking in remote not being translated into successful quitting at same rate as for non-remote.
Upcoming

• National Health Survey Dec 2018
• National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey in field July 2018, results Dec 2019
• Census 2021 consultation
• Australian Health Survey
Questions?
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