



FACTSHEET

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child safety

Who is at risk?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are overrepresented in various aspects of child safety. Compared to non-Indigenous children, they have higher rates of hospitalisations due to injury, higher rates of injury mortality and more frequently come into contact with child protection and juvenile justice systems.

How large is this overrepresentation?

Indigenous children were 1.3 times as likely as non-Indigenous children to be hospitalised due to some form of injury—most often due to assault (which was over 5 times higher for Indigenous children).

The Indigenous child death rate from external causes of injury was 3 times that of non-Indigenous children.

Indigenous children were nearly 8 times more likely to be the subject of substantiated child abuse or neglect; 9 times as likely to be on a Care and Protection Order; and 10 times as likely to be living in Out-of-Home Care.

On an average day Indigenous young people were 15 times as likely to be under juvenile justice supervision; and 24 times as likely to be detained as non-Indigenous young people.

Why are these rates high?

The relatively high rates of preventable injuries in Indigenous communities have been attributed to a range of factors including the ongoing effects of colonisation, social disadvantage, high rates of drug and alcohol misuse and of violence, high stress levels, residence in remote areas, poor safety standards, unsafe roads and lack of access to primary health care.

The reasons for the over-representation of Indigenous young people in the child protection system may include the legacy of past policies of the forced removal of some Aboriginal children from their families, intergenerational cycles of poverty, and cultural differences in child-rearing practices.

What's being done to reduce these rates?

The *National Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion Plan 2004–2014* identifies injury prevention in children and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as priority areas for action.

The *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020* aims to substantially reduce child abuse and neglect across Australia and to reduce the over-representation of Indigenous children in child protection systems. To focus effort and actions under the Framework six supporting outcomes have been developed, one outcome being that Indigenous children are supported and safe in their families and communities.

Australian state and territory governments have a number of initiatives targeted towards Indigenous young people in the criminal justice system. These include specialist Indigenous staff who work with young people in detention and post-release; programs and support services such as drug and alcohol programs, programs to reduce the incidence of family and intergenerational violence; and Indigenous and cultural specific programs including numeracy and literacy, Indigenous art and counselling.

More information

The observatory paper *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child safety* provides an overview of the safety and security of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, based on a framework adapted from key national indicators of child health, development and wellbeing. The paper provides key information relating to the level of overrepresentation of Indigenous children across this range of safety measures.

Media contact

Dr Fadwa Al-Yaman, Social and Indigenous Group,
AIHW
Tel: (02) 6244 1146, mob: 0407 068 033
Email: fadwa.al-yaman@aihw.gov.au