

INTRODUCTION

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians typically experience higher rates of disability and long-term health conditions and hospitalisation than do other Australians (ABS 2006c; ABS & AIHW 2005). In the 2006 Census of Population and Housing, a total of 19,600 Indigenous people (4%) were identified as needing assistance with core activities (self-care, mobility or communication) some or all of the time. After taking account of age differences between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, the level of need for assistance among Indigenous people overall was almost twice as high as that among non-Indigenous people.

These Census-based indicators of disability in the Indigenous population are consistent with the relatively high disability rates among Indigenous people aged 15 years and over reported in the 2002 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS). Results from that survey revealed that among adults in non-remote areas, Indigenous Australians were twice as likely as non-Indigenous Australians to have a profound/severe core activity limitation (ABS & AIHW 2005).

The Census 'Core Activity Need for Assistance' concept was developed, recognising the need to identify Australians at the more severe end of the disability spectrum. This supports analyses by geographic area, and other shared characteristics such as Indigenous status. The Census measure of disability is relatable to the ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC) and 2002 NATSISS concepts of profound/severe core activity limitation (see Glossary).

This chapter outlines some of the similarities and differences between rates of need for assistance with core activities (from the 2006 Census) and profound/severe core activity limitation (from the 2002 NATSISS) in the Indigenous population. The relationships between need for assistance and selected socioeconomic indicators such as educational attainment, labour force participation, income, language spoken at home, and social marital status are then explored using 2006 Census data, supplemented with information on social participation and support from the 2002 NATSISS.

The final section of this chapter examines some of the characteristics of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers—those who provided unpaid care, help or assistance to another person because of their disability, long-term illness or problems related to old age (see Appendix 1).

COMPARISON OF 2006
CENSUS AND 2002
NATSISS DISABILITY
MEASURES

The 2002 NATSISS included a short disability survey module comprising 12 questions (and associated prompt cards), and the 2006 Census need for assistance measure comprised a set of four questions—one for each of the core activity areas and an additional question to ascertain why assistance with core activities was needed (see ABS & AIHW 2005 and Appendix 1 of this report). In order to differentiate between the two measures, Indigenous people identified as meeting the criteria in the 2002 NATSISS are referred to as having a 'profound/severe core activity limitation' while in the 2006 Census, the corresponding population is referred to as 'needing assistance with core activities'. Results from the 2002 NATSISS and 2006 Census are based on relatable concepts, but are not suitable for direct comparison to provide an indication of change in the prevalence of disability over time.

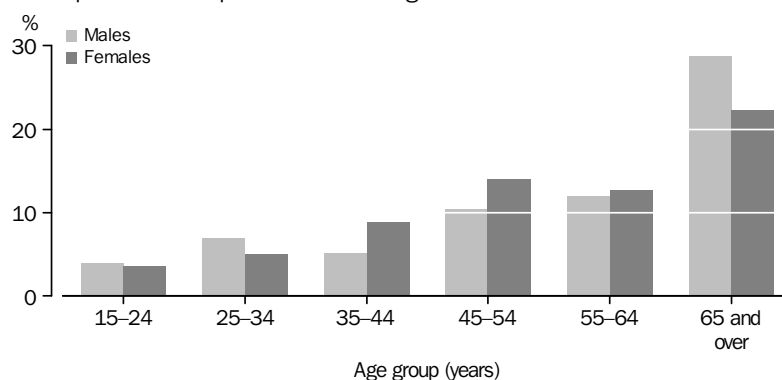
Prevalence by age and sex

The following analysis is restricted to persons living in private dwellings (i.e. excludes people in nursing homes and other cared accommodation) with further age and geographic restrictions to align the populations measured in the 2006 Census, the 2002 NATSISS and the 2002 General Social Survey (GSS).

According to the 2006 Census, around one in 20 Indigenous people aged 15 years and over in private dwellings (5%) needed assistance with core activities. In comparison, the overall rate of profound/severe core activity limitation among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders aged 15 years and over reported in the 2002 NATSISS was 8%. In both collections, the disability rate was higher in older age groups, ranging from 2% of those aged 15–24 years to 22% of those aged 65 years and over in the 2006 Census, and from 4% to 25% for the same age groups in the 2002 NATSISS.

The need for assistance rates from the 2006 Census were lower than the rates of profound/severe core activity limitation from the 2002 NATSISS for all groups apart from men aged 55–64 years and women aged 65 years and over, for whom survey and Census rates were similar (graphs 5.1 and 5.2). In interpreting other characteristics of people reporting need for assistance with core activities, or profound/severe core activity limitation, the differences in levels measured in the 2002 NATSISS and 2006 Census should be taken into account.

5.1 PROFOUND/SEVERE CORE ACTIVITY LIMITATION(a), Indigenous persons in private dwellings—2002

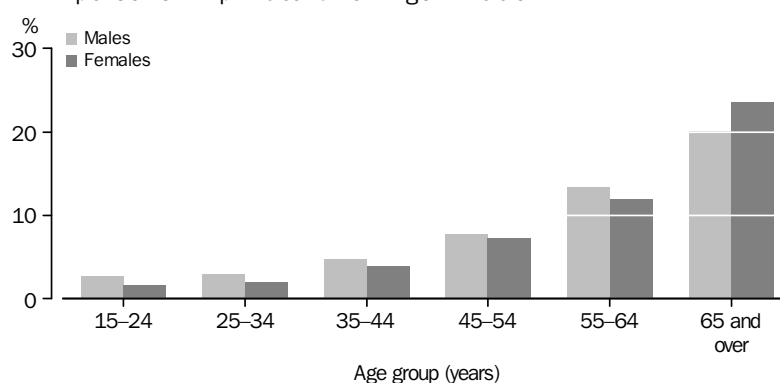


(a) Self-care, mobility and/or communication.

Source: ABS 2002 NATSISS

Prevalence by age and sex
continued

5.2 NEEDS ASSISTANCE WITH CORE ACTIVITIES(a), Indigenous persons in private dwellings—2006



(a) Self-care, mobility and/or communication.

Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

COMPARISON WITH NON-INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

The proportions of Indigenous and non-Indigenous adults with a profound/severe core activity limitation in non-remote areas are available from the 2002 NATSISS and 2002 GSS (table 5.3). When Indigenous and non-Indigenous age-specific rates are compared, the resulting rate ratio provides an indication of the relative prevalence of profound/severe core activity limitation in the two populations. For more information on the calculation of rate ratios, see the Glossary.

The Indigenous to non-Indigenous rate ratios, based on age-specific profound/severe core activity limitation rates from the 2002 NATSISS and 2002 GSS, indicate that Indigenous people were between one-and-a-half and three-and-a-half times as likely as non-Indigenous people to have a profound/severe core activity limitation. When differences in the age structure of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations were taken into account, Indigenous people overall were twice as likely as non-Indigenous people to have a profound/severe core activity limitation (table 5.3).

Similarly, Indigenous to non-Indigenous rate ratios from the 2006 Census indicate that Indigenous adults in non-remote areas were between one-and-a-half and three times as likely as non-Indigenous adults to need assistance with core activities. When differences in the age structure of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations were taken into account, Indigenous adults in non-remote areas were twice as likely as non-Indigenous adults to need assistance with core activities (table 5.3).

Prevalence by age and sex
continued

COMPARISON WITH NON-INDIGENOUS PEOPLE *continued*

5.3 NEEDS ASSISTANCE AND PROFOUND/SEVERE CORE ACTIVITY LIMITATION, age-specific rates(a)(b)—2006 and 2002

Age group (years)	NEEDS ASSISTANCE WITH CORE ACTIVITIES (2006 CENSUS)		PROFOUND/SEVERE CORE ACTIVITY LIMITATION (2002 NATSISS AND GSS)		INDIGENOUS TO NON-INDIGENOUS RATE RATIOS	
	Indigenous %	Non-Indigenous %	Indigenous %	Non-Indigenous %	2006 Census ratio	2002 NATSISS and GSS ratio
18–24	2.5	1.3	3.6	1.8	2.0	2.0
25–34	2.8	1.2	6.8	2.2	2.3	3.1
35–44	4.9	1.7	7.5	4.0	2.8	1.9
45–54	8.2	2.7	12.4	3.5	3.1	3.5
55–64	13.2	4.8	11.0	5.9	2.8	1.9
65 and over	20.2	13.4	20.2	12.7	1.5	1.6
18 and over	6.1	4.2	8.1	4.9	1.5	1.7
Total - Age standardised	8.4	4.1	10.5	5.0	2.1	2.1

(a) Persons aged 18 years and over, living in private dwellings in non-remote areas.

(b) These data do not represent change in prevalence over time.

Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing, 2002 NATSISS, 2002 GSS

5.4 2006 CENSUS — CORE ACTIVITY NEED FOR ASSISTANCE

2006 Census - Need for assistance questions

The 2006 Census asked three questions about need for assistance with core activities of self-care, mobility and communication and then a further question about the reason(s) that help was needed. Responses to these questions were used to identify whether there was a Core Activity Need for Assistance (see Appendix 1). While conceptually consistent with the 'severe/profound core activity limitation' concept from the 2002 NATSISS, the Census criteria asked fewer questions to identify people with disability. Because of this, the number of people identified in the 2006 Census as needing assistance with core activities will generally be lower than comparable estimates of people with a profound/severe core activity limitation from the 2002 NATSISS (and other surveys using the standard short disability module).

Collection methodologies

While information in the 2002 NATSISS was collected via personal interview, Census data for more than three-quarters of the Indigenous population (77%) were provided by a household member filling in a Census form for themselves and/or on behalf of other usual household residents, without prompting or assistance. Data for 17% of Indigenous people (in discrete Indigenous communities) were collected via interview, on the Interviewer Household Form (IHF), and a further 5% (in non-private dwellings) were enumerated on a Personal Form which they may or may not have completed themselves.

*Prevalence by age and sex
continued*

Unlike household surveys, where missing values may be imputed using statistical techniques, Census data retain this non-response within separately identified 'not stated' categories, and this is a contributor to lower numbers of Indigenous people identified as needing assistance in the Census. In the Indigenous population, the non-response rate was 7% for the questions about need for assistance, and in the non-Indigenous population, non-response was 2%.

NEED FOR ASSISTANCE

Age

In the 2006 Census, around 19,600 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians (4%) were identified as needing assistance with self-care (eating, washing, dressing or toileting), physical mobility or communication.

Among those needing assistance, the median age for Indigenous males was 41 years, and for females, 49 years. The corresponding median ages for non-Indigenous males and females who needed assistance were 61 years and 75 years respectively. The prevalence of need for assistance with core activities increased noticeably from about 35 years of age onwards for both Indigenous men and women. This is consistent with the patterns for chronic long-term health conditions such as heart/circulatory diseases and diabetes which show onset some ten years earlier in the Indigenous population than in the non-Indigenous population (ABS 2006c).

Among Indigenous children aged 0–14 years, need for assistance was higher for boys than for girls. Male age-specific rates of core activity need for assistance were also higher than female rates for all five-year age groups from 15–69 years. A larger proportion of Indigenous females than males were aged 70 years or over in 2006 and Indigenous women were more likely than men in this age group to need assistance with core activities (table 5.5).

Age continued

5.5 INDIGENOUS PERSONS WHO NEEDED ASSISTANCE WITH CORE ACTIVITIES—2006

Age group (years)	INDIGENOUS				INDIGENOUS TO NON-INDIGENOUS RATE RATIOS	
	Males(a) (b)		Females(a) (b)		Males	Females
	no.	%	no.	%	ratio	ratio
0–4	388	1.4	238	0.9	1.2	1.3
5–9	963	3.3	525	1.9	1.2	1.3
10–14	970	3.3	556	2.0	1.3	1.5
15–19	697	2.8	422	1.8	1.6	1.5
20–24	461	2.5	318	1.7	1.8	1.6
25–29	381	2.6	308	1.9	1.9	1.8
30–34	482	3.2	351	2.1	2.1	1.8
35–39	572	4.0	562	3.4	2.2	2.3
40–44	711	5.6	689	4.8	2.6	2.5
45–49	742	6.9	786	6.6	2.7	2.7
50–54	773	9.0	817	8.7	2.8	2.8
55–59	796	12.7	787	11.3	2.6	2.8
60–64	688	16.3	717	15.1	2.5	3.0
65–69	500	18.5	578	17.4	2.8	2.8
70–74	382	21.6	581	25.0	2.4	2.5
75 and over	642	33.3	1 232	40.3	1.5	1.3
Total	10 147	4.5	9 468	4.1	1.2	0.9
Total - Age standardised(c)	..	7.5	..	7.2	1.9	1.7

.. not applicable

(a) Components may not add to total due to perturbation of component data.

(b) Rates are age-specific so will not add to 100%.

(c) Age standardised to the 2001 final estimated resident population (ERP).

Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

COMPARISON WITH NON-INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Indigenous people were more likely than non-Indigenous people to need assistance with core activities, regardless of age. Among Australian children aged 0–14 years in 2006, Indigenous children were 1.3 times as likely as non-Indigenous children to need assistance (i.e. more than would usually be required for a child of their age) with self-care, mobility or communication. The proportion of Indigenous people needing assistance then increased to at least one-and-a-half times the rate for non-Indigenous people for age groups from 15–29 years, and to at least twice the rate among Australians in age groups from 30–74 years (table 5.5).

After adjusting for differences in the age structures of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were almost twice as likely as non-Indigenous people to need assistance with core activities in 2006.

*Need for assistance by
Remoteness Areas*

In 2006, the proportion of Indigenous people identified as needing assistance with core activities ranged from 3% of the population in very remote parts of Australia to 5% of those living in major cities and inner regional areas. The lowest rates of need for assistance among Indigenous Australians occurred in outer regional (4%) remote (4%) and very remote (3%) areas.

Need for assistance by state/territory

Indigenous people living in Victoria, Tasmania, New South Wales and South Australia all recorded higher rates of need for assistance with core activities (around 5%) than the national rate (4%), while those in the Northern Territory recorded a lower rate (3%) (table 5.6).

5.6 NEED FOR ASSISTANCE, by state/territory and remoteness—Indigenous persons—2006

	NEEDS ASSISTANCE (a)			Does not need assistance	Total (b)(c)		Population in remote areas
	Non-remote	Remote	Total		%	no.	
	%	%	%		%	%	
New South Wales	5.0	4.0	5.0	88.7	100.0	138 508	5.1
Victoria	5.2	10.5	5.3	88.0	100.0	30 142	0.1
Queensland	4.1	2.7	3.8	90.1	100.0	127 581	22.2
South Australia	5.0	4.2	4.9	88.3	100.0	25 556	18.6
Western Australia	3.9	3.9	3.9	87.6	100.0	58 709	41.5
Tasmania	5.2	5.9	5.2	90.7	100.0	16 766	3.5
Northern Territory	3.6	3.2	3.3	86.8	100.0	53 662	80.2
Australian Capital Territory	3.9	—	3.9	92.9	100.0	3 875	—
Australia (d)	4.6	3.3	4.3	88.8	100.0	455 027	23.8

— nil or rounded to zero (including null cells)

(a) With core activities of self-care, mobility and/or communication.

(b) Includes Indigenous persons in each state/territory who did not answer the need for assistance questions.

(c) Components may not add to total due to perturbation of component data.

(d) Includes Other Territories.

Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

Living arrangements

In 2006, the majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people identified as needing assistance with core activities (17,700 or 90%) were living in private dwellings, with around one in five (3,300 people) in households that required at least one additional bedroom. For more information on overcrowding, refer to Chapter 4 and the Glossary. The remaining 1,900 Indigenous people needing assistance (10%) were living in non-private dwellings—primarily nursing homes, accommodation for the retired or aged, hospitals and hostels for the disabled. Reflecting the different age structures of the two populations, a much smaller proportion of Indigenous people who needed assistance were living in nursing homes or accommodation for the retired or aged (5%) compared with non-Indigenous people (15%) (table 5.7).

*Living arrangements
continued*

5.7 PERSONS WHO NEEDED ASSISTANCE(a), by Indigenous status and living arrangements—2006

	INDIGENOUS		NON-INDIGENOUS	
	<i>no.</i>	%	<i>no.</i>	%
Private dwellings	17 691	90.2	630 208	80.7
Non-private dwellings				
Hospital	380	1.9	15 797	2.0
Nursing home or accommodation for the retired or aged (not self-contained)	954	4.9	119 157	15.3
Hostel for the disabled	194	1.0	7 655	1.0
Other non-private dwelling	391	2.0	7 934	1.0
Total	1 919	9.8	150 543	19.3
Total (b)	19 616	100.0	780 817	100.0

(a) With core activities of self-care, mobility and/or communication.

(b) Includes persons in offshore and migratory CDs.

Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

NEED FOR ASSISTANCE
BY SOCIOECONOMIC
INDICATORS

*Highest year of school
completed*

According to the 2006 Census, there were 228,200 Indigenous people aged 15 years or over (excluding those still at school) who provided information on both their highest level of schooling and whether or not they needed assistance with core activities. Around 6% of them (13,600 people) needed assistance with core activities (table 5.8). While it is possible to examine the relationship between the need for assistance and highest year of school completed, causality cannot be determined as the Census did not collect information on age of onset of disability. It is likely that a need for assistance in childhood contributes to lower levels of educational attainment, but also, that lower levels of schooling, together with other risk factors, increase the likelihood of a person requiring assistance with core activities in their adult years. For more information about the relationship between educational attainment and health risk factors, see Chapter 3 of this report.

In 2006, Indigenous people not needing assistance with core activities were more likely to have completed school to at least Year 10 than those needing assistance, regardless of age. When overall attainment rates were compared, Indigenous people not needing assistance were twice as likely as those needing assistance to have completed Year 12 (24% compared with 12%), and around one-and-a-half times as likely to have completed school to at least Year 10 (44% compared with 27%) (table 5.8).

Highest year of school
completed *continued*

5.8 HIGHEST YEAR OF SCHOOL COMPLETED, by age and whether
needs assistance—Indigenous persons(a)—2006

Age group (years)	Needs assistance with core activities		Does not need assistance with core activities	
	no.	%	no.	%
15–24				
Year 12 or equivalent	362	27.9	17 508	30.2
Year 10 or 11	440	33.9	25 889	44.7
Year 9 or below(b)	495	38.2	14 515	25.1
25–34				
Year 12 or equivalent	284	20.3	16 964	32.4
Year 10 or 11	511	36.5	23 232	44.4
Year 9 or below(b)	606	43.3	12 084	23.1
35–44				
Year 12 or equivalent	306	13.3	9 383	19.7
Year 10 or 11	930	40.4	25 268	53.0
Year 9 or below(b)	1 066	46.3	13 021	27.3
45–54				
Year 12 or equivalent	303	10.8	4 756	14.7
Year 10 or 11	935	33.3	14 751	45.5
Year 9 or below(b)	1 570	55.9	12 931	39.9
55–64				
Year 12 or equivalent	219	8.4	1 727	10.7
Year 10 or 11	515	19.8	4 316	26.8
Year 9 or below(b)	1 867	71.8	10 051	62.5
65 and over				
Year 12 or equivalent	141	4.4	742	9.0
Year 10 or 11	333	10.4	1 450	17.6
Year 9 or below(b)	2 727	85.2	6 045	73.4
15 and over				
Year 12 or equivalent	1 615	11.9	51 080	23.8
Year 10 or 11	3 664	26.9	94 906	44.2
Year 9 or below(b)	8 331	61.2	68 647	32.0
Total(b)	13 610	..	214 633	..

.. not applicable

(a) Aged 15 years and over excluding persons still at school and those for whom the highest year of school completed was not stated.

(b) Includes Indigenous persons who did not go to school.

Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

COMPARISON WITH NON-INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

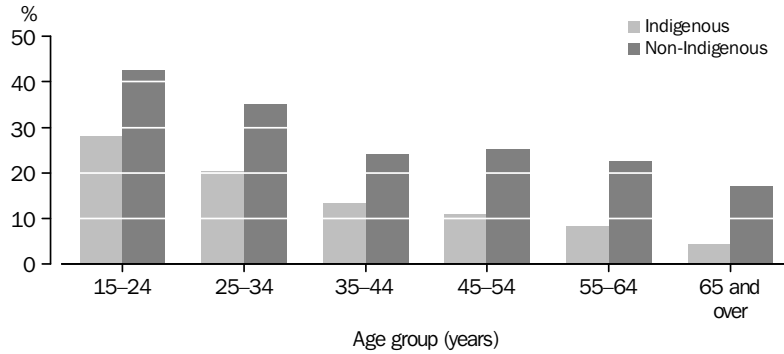
In both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, Year 12 completion rates were generally lower in older age groups. In addition, Indigenous people were considerably less likely than non-Indigenous people to have completed Year 12, regardless of whether or not they needed assistance with core activities.

After adjusting for differences in the age structures of the two populations, Indigenous people who needed assistance were less likely than non-Indigenous people who needed assistance to have completed Year 12 (age standardised rate ratio of 0.8). Unadjusted age-specific Indigenous to non-Indigenous rate ratios ranged from 0.7 for people aged 15–24 years to 0.3 for people aged 65 years and over (graph 5.9). For more information on the calculation of rate ratios, see the Glossary.

Highest year of school completed *continued*

COMPARISON WITH NON-INDIGENOUS PEOPLE *continued*

5.9 COMPLETED YEAR 12 BY INDIGENOUS STATUS AND AGE, Persons(a) who needed assistance with core activities—2006



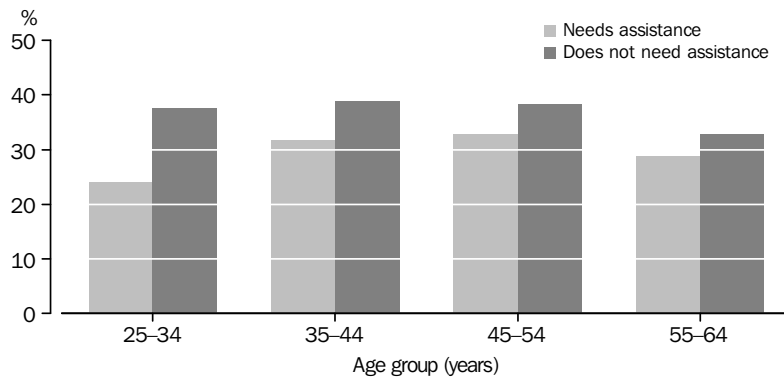
(a) Aged 15 years and over, excluding persons still at school and those for whom highest year of schooling was not stated.

Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

Non-school qualifications

Among the 10,200 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25–64 years identified as needing assistance in 2006, around 3,100, or 30% overall, reported that they had a non-school qualification. The proportion of Indigenous people with a non-school qualification was lower among those needing assistance than among those not needing assistance, for all age groups (graph 5.10).

5.10 NON-SCHOOL QUALIFICATION BY WHETHER NEEDS ASSISTANCE(a), Indigenous persons aged 25–64 years—2006



(a) With core activities of self-care, mobility and/or communication.

Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

COMPARISON WITH NON-INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Among Australians aged 25–64 years, Indigenous people were less likely than non-Indigenous people to have attained a non-school qualification. However, the difference in attainment rates between those who needed and didn't need assistance was much smaller among Indigenous people (30% compared with 38%) than non-Indigenous people (36% compared with 58%).

Labour force status

In the 2006 Census, around 12,100 Indigenous people aged 15–64 years (4%) needed assistance with core activities of daily living. Among those who needed assistance, 12% were employed, 3% were unemployed and looking for work, and 80% were not in the labour force. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who needed assistance were participating in the labour force at around one-quarter the rate of those not needing assistance (16% compared with 59%), and experienced higher unemployment rates (21% compared with 15%) (table 5.11).

5.11 LABOUR FORCE STATUS, by whether needs assistance—Indigenous persons aged 15–64 years—2006

	AGE GROUP (YEARS)					AGED 15–64 YEARS	
	15–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	Percent	Number
	%	%	%	%	%	%	no.
NEEDS ASSISTANCE WITH CORE ACTIVITIES							
Employed	13.3	16.9	16.2	12.2	6.7	12.5	1 502
Unemployed	6.5	5.1	3.8	2.2	0.9	3.3	394
<i>In the labour force</i>	19.8	22.0	20.0	14.4	7.6	15.7	1 896
Not in the labour force	77.3	75.4	77.1	81.7	86.5	80.4	9 698
Total(a)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	12 058
Unemployment rate(b)	33.0	23.0	18.9	15.6	11.8	20.8	. .
DOES NOT NEED ASSISTANCE WITH CORE ACTIVITIES							
Employed	39.8	53.3	57.2	59.3	41.9	49.7	118 318
Unemployed	11.4	9.9	8.8	6.2	3.6	9.1	21 690
<i>In the labour force</i>	51.2	63.2	66.0	65.4	45.5	58.8	140 008
Not in the labour force	45.7	33.9	31.2	31.5	50.9	38.1	90 714
Total(a)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	237 955
Unemployment rate(b)	22.2	15.6	13.3	9.5	7.9	15.5	. .

. . not applicable

(a) Includes persons for whom labour force status was not known.

(b) Unemployed persons as a proportion of those in the labour force.

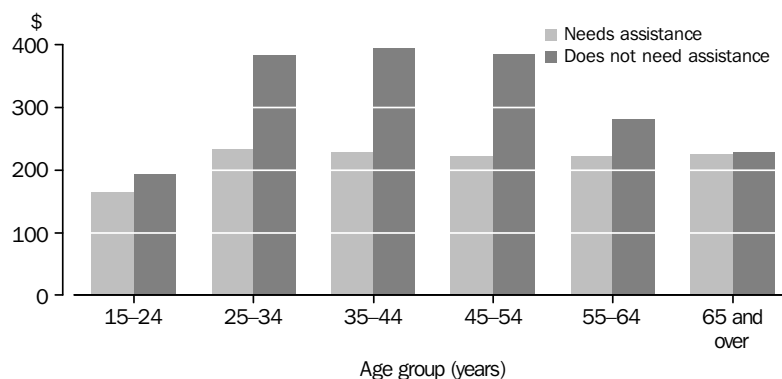
Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

Individual weekly income

Just under half (49%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who needed assistance in 2006 reported weekly income in the range \$150–\$249, with median weekly income for males of \$218, and for females, \$221. Median weekly incomes for Indigenous males and females who needed assistance were lower than the corresponding incomes for those not needing assistance, across all age groups. However, the difference in median incomes was most pronounced among people of prime working age (i.e. aged 25–54 years), reflecting significantly lower employment and labour force participation rates among those needing assistance with core activities. Within these age groups, the median income for Indigenous people who needed assistance was equivalent to around 60% of the median income for those who did not need assistance (graph 5.12).

Individual weekly income
continued

5.12 MEDIAN INDIVIDUAL WEEKLY INCOME BY WHETHER NEEDS ASSISTANCE(a), Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over—2006



(a) With core activities of self-care, mobility and/or communication.

Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

COMPARISON WITH NON-INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Among Australians needing assistance with core activities, the median individual weekly income was lower for Indigenous than non-Indigenous people (\$220 per week compared with \$240 per week). However, this difference in median incomes was much smaller than that between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people not needing assistance (\$291 per week compared with \$499 per week).

Low resource households

Another income measure—equivalised gross weekly household income on a per person basis—provides an indication of how much money is available to each individual, taking into account the combined income, size and composition of the household in which they live. In this report, Indigenous people whose equivalised gross weekly household income was in the lowest quintile, i.e. less than \$315 per week, were considered to be living in low resource households. For more information on the definitions of low resource households and income quintiles, see Glossary.

Data from the 2006 census show that Indigenous people who needed assistance with core activities were more likely than those not needing assistance to be living in a low resource household (44% compared with 38%).

COMPARISON WITH NON-INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Indigenous people overall were almost five times as likely as non-Indigenous people to be living in a low resource household (39% compared with 8%). After adjusting for differences in the age structures of the two populations, Indigenous people who needed assistance were twice as likely as non-Indigenous people who needed assistance, to be living in a low resource household.

Language spoken at home

In the 2006 Census, around 16,300 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who needed assistance with core activities (83%) spoke English at home and a further 2,200 people (11%) spoke an Australian Indigenous language. Prevalence of need for assistance was the same among Indigenous people who only spoke English and those who spoke an Australian Indigenous language at home (both 4%).

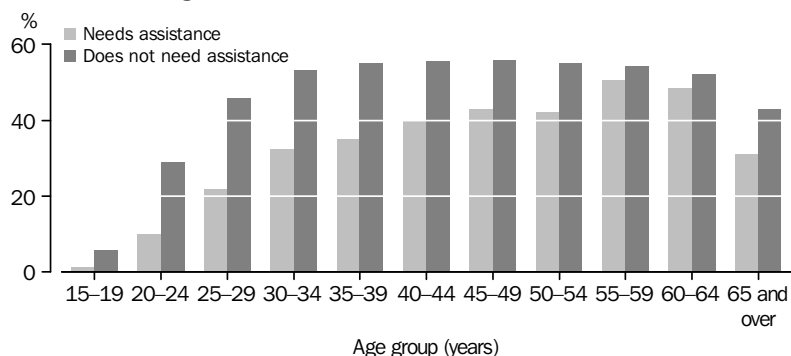
Social networks

Good support networks, friendships and relationships are positive social determinants of health. Conversely, disability and illness can lead to social exclusion and marginalisation (The Fred Hollows Foundation 2007). Information on the support provided by carers to people who need help because they are old and/or have disability is explored in some detail in later sections of this chapter. Complementary information about participation in social activities and sources of support for Indigenous people aged 15 years and over, including those with a profound/severe core activity limitation, are available from the 2002 NATSISS. These data show that Indigenous people with a profound/severe core activity limitation had been involved in social activities in the previous three months at similar rates to those without disability (88% compared with 92%). Similarly, access to support in times of crisis was reported by 87% of Indigenous people with a profound/severe core activity limitation, compared with 92% of those without disability.

SOCIAL MARITAL STATUS

While data from the 2002 NATSISS suggest that disability is not necessarily a barrier to social participation, a person's need for assistance with core activities may impact on their chances of partnering. According to the 2006 Census, Indigenous people aged 15 years and over who needed assistance with core activities were less likely to be in a registered or de facto marriage than were people of the same age who did not need assistance (graph 5.13). The same pattern was evident in the non-Indigenous population.

5.13 MARRIAGE RATES (a) BY WHETHER NEEDS ASSISTANCE (b), Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over in private dwellings—2006



(a) Registered or de facto marriage.
 (b) With core activities of self-care, mobility and/or communication.

Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

Living with a carer

In 2006, around 10,300 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (58% of those who needed assistance in private dwellings) were living in a household in which there was at least one identified carer (i.e. a person who provided unpaid care, help or assistance to another person because of their disability, long-term illness or problems related to old age). While the Census data do not link people who needed assistance to a specific caregiver, it may be reasonable to assume the existence of a caring relationship in most instances where both a person needing assistance and at least one carer were living in the same household.

*Living with a carer
continued*

The proportion of Indigenous people needing assistance who were living with a carer was lower in older age groups—51% of those aged 65 years and over, compared with 74% of children aged 0–14 years (table 5.14). It is possible that some people with disability had a carer outside their immediate household, and also likely that not all carers will have been identified (see box 5.16), so it should not be assumed that the lack of an identified carer within the household is a measure of unmet need for care.

5.14 INDIGENOUS PERSONS WHO NEEDED ASSISTANCE(a), by whether living with a carer—2006

Age group (years)	HOUSEHOLDS WITH A CARER(b)		HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT A CARER(b)		TOTAL(b)(c)	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
0–14	2 655	74.1	682	19.0	3 584	100.0
15–24	1 216	67.2	435	24.0	1 809	100.0
25–34	778	56.2	503	36.3	1 384	100.0
35–44	1 225	53.2	892	38.7	2 304	100.0
45–54	1 484	51.6	1 117	38.8	2 877	100.0
55–64	1 387	51.9	1 002	37.5	2 670	100.0
65 and over	1 557	50.8	1 103	36.0	3 064	100.0
Total	10 302	58.2	5 734	32.4	17 692	100.0

- (a) Living in private dwellings.
- (b) Components may not add to total due to perturbation of component data.
- (c) Includes persons living in households in which the carer status of resident(s) was not known.

Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

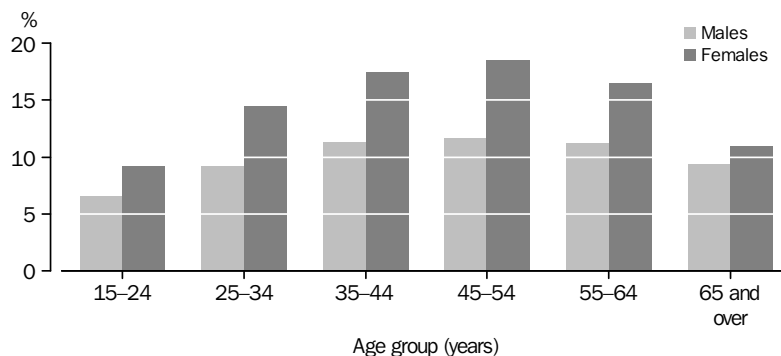
CARERS

Prevalence by age and sex

In 2006, for the first time, the Census collected information on the number of carers aged 15 years or over in Australia. The analysis that follows is based on carers of people with disability, living in private dwellings.

There were 11,600 Indigenous male carers (9%) and 20,000 Indigenous female carers (14%) in 2006. The proportion of Indigenous carers ranged from 8% of those aged 15–24 years, increased to a peak of 15% of those aged 45–54 years, and then decreased to 10% of those aged 65 years and over (graph 5.15).

5.15 INDIGENOUS CARERS(a), by age and sex—2006



- (a) Living in private dwellings. Persons who provided unpaid care, help or assistance to another person because of their disability, long-term illness or problems related to old age.

Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

*Prevalence by age and sex
continued*

5.16 2006 CENSUS—CARER STATUS

Carer status

The 2006 Census asked two questions about the provision of unpaid assistance which were then combined to produce the Unpaid Assistance to a Person with a Disability measure (see Appendix 1). Some carers may not have been identified as such due to the relative positioning of questions on Core Activity Need for Assistance and the provision of unpaid care (i.e. these question sets were not sequential). Appearing much later on the Census form, the carer questions used the word 'disability' to signify the Core Activity Need for Assistance concept, which may also have resulted in some people misunderstanding the intended connection between the two measures.

Non-response

It should be noted that the proportion of carers in the Indigenous population is likely to be understated as around 11% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 years and over in private dwellings did not answer these questions. The corresponding rate of non-response in the non-Indigenous population was 5%.

COMPARISON WITH NON-INDIGENOUS CARERS

After adjusting for differences in the age structures of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were more likely than non-Indigenous people to be caring for another person with disability, long-term illness or problems related to old age. The median age of Indigenous carers was 37 years; 12 years less than the median age of non-Indigenous carers (49 years). Reflecting higher birth rates at younger ages (younger parenting), and the earlier onset of many chronic diseases in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, the Indigenous to non-Indigenous carer rate ratio was greatest among people aged 15–34 years (table 5.17).

*Labour force status
continued*

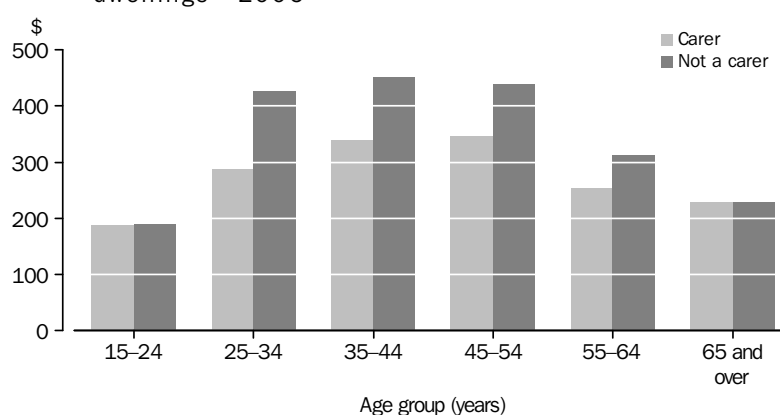
COMPARISON WITH NON-INDIGENOUS CARERS

After adjusting for differences in the age structures of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, non-Indigenous carers were around one-and-a-half times more likely to be employed than were Indigenous carers. Among those who were employed, rates of part-time work were similar for Indigenous and non-Indigenous carers.

*Median individual weekly
income*

In the 2006 Census, the median individual weekly income for male carers was \$248, and for female carers, \$289. While the 2006 Census did not ask people whether their caring role prevented them from working, age-specific information on weekly income shows that among Indigenous people aged 25–64 years, the median income of carers was lower than the median income of those who were not providing care. Among people in this age group, the median weekly income for Indigenous male carers was between \$60 and \$140 lower than the corresponding income for males who were not providing care, while among Indigenous females, the median weekly income for carers was up to \$25 lower than the corresponding income for those who were not providing care (graphs 5.18 and 5.19).

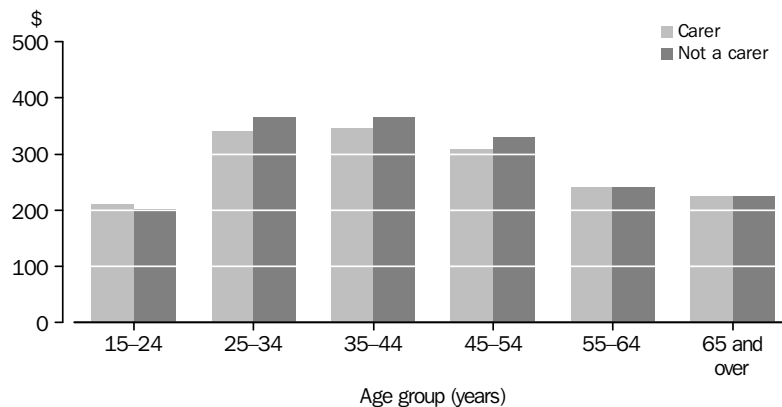
5.18 MEDIAN INDIVIDUAL WEEKLY INCOME BY CARER STATUS, Indigenous males aged 15 years and over in private dwellings—2006



Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

Median individual weekly income continued

5.19 MEDIAN INDIVIDUAL WEEKLY INCOME BY CARER STATUS, Indigenous females aged 15 years and over in private dwellings—2006



Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

COMPARISON WITH NON-INDIGENOUS CARERS

Reflecting lower employment rates, the median weekly income for Indigenous male carers was equivalent to 42% of the median weekly income for non-Indigenous male carers (\$248 compared with \$589). Although still considerable, the difference between the median weekly income for Indigenous and non-Indigenous female carers was much smaller (\$289 compared with \$356). The median weekly income for Indigenous male and female carers was lower than that for non-Indigenous carers of the same sex across all age groups.

Low resource households

In this report, Indigenous people whose equivalised gross weekly household income was in the lowest quintile, i.e. less than \$315 per week, were considered to be living in low resource households. Data from the 2006 Census show that Indigenous carers aged 15 years and over were more likely than those not providing care to be living in a low resource household (36% compared with 33%). For more information on the definitions of low resource households and income quintiles, see Glossary.

COMPARISON WITH NON-INDIGENOUS CARERS

After adjusting for differences in the age structures of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, Indigenous carers were four times as likely as non-Indigenous carers to be living in a low resource household. However, a similar degree of relative disadvantage was also evident between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people aged 15 years and over who were not carers.

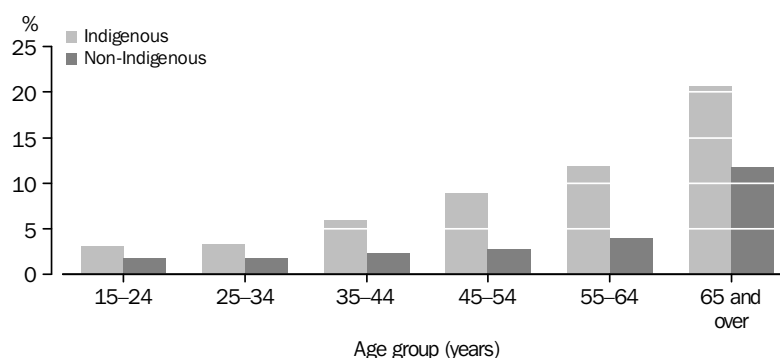
Language spoken at home

In 2006, around 5,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers (16%) reported speaking an Australian Indigenous language at home and 25,300 (80%) spoke English only. A majority of those who spoke an Indigenous language at home reported that they were also proficient English speakers.

Carers' need for assistance

In the 2006 Census, around 2,100 Indigenous carers needed help with core activities themselves, of whom more than two-thirds (68%) were under 55 years of age. Indigenous carers were between one-and-a-half and three times as likely as non-Indigenous carers to need assistance with core activities (graph 5.20).

5.20 CARERS (a) WHO NEEDED ASSISTANCE (b) BY INDIGENOUS STATUS—2006



(a) Aged 15 years and over, living in private dwellings.
(b) With core activities of self-care, mobility and/or communication.

Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

SUMMARY

In the 2006 Census, around 19,600 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians (4%) were identified as needing assistance with self-care (eating, washing, dressing or toileting), physical mobility or communication. After taking account of age differences between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, Indigenous people were almost twice as likely as non-Indigenous people to require assistance with core activities.

The prevalence of disability among Indigenous people is higher at all ages. Among those needing assistance, the median age for Indigenous males was 41 years, and for females, 49 years. The corresponding median ages for non-Indigenous males and females who needed assistance were 61 years and 75 years respectively. The prevalence of need for assistance with core activities increased noticeably from about 35 years of age onwards for both Indigenous men and women. This is consistent with the patterns for chronic long-term health conditions such as heart/circulatory diseases and diabetes, which show onset some ten years earlier in the Indigenous population than in the non-Indigenous population (ABS 2006c).

While Indigenous people are generally disadvantaged when compared with non-Indigenous people, those needing assistance with core activities were likely to experience a further degree of social and economic disadvantage. When compared with Indigenous people who did not need assistance, they were, on average, half as likely to have completed Year 12 (12% compared with 24%), participating in the labour force at around one-quarter the rate (16% compared with 59%), and more likely to be living on lower incomes. In addition, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who needed assistance were less likely to be partnered than were those not needing assistance.

In 2006, for the first time, the Census collected information on the number of Australians aged 15 years and over who provided unpaid care, help or assistance to another person because of their disability, long-term illness or problems related to old age. Around

SUMMARY *continued*

11,600 Indigenous male carers (9%) and 20,000 Indigenous female carers (14%) were identified in 2006. The median age of Indigenous carers was 37 years, 12 years less than the median age of non-Indigenous carers (49 years). Around 2,100 Indigenous carers needed help with core activities themselves, of whom more than two-thirds (68%) were under 55 years of age. Indigenous carers were between one-and-a-half and three times as likely as non-Indigenous carers to need assistance with core activities, similar to the overall Indigenous to non-Indigenous rate ratios for those needing assistance.