

INTRODUCTION

Education is considered to be a key factor in improving the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Australians. Higher levels of educational attainment are thought to directly impact on health by improving a person's health-related knowledge and their ability to efficiently use this information. Educational attainment is also associated with better employment prospects and higher income which, in turn, may serve to increase access to health-related services and products. Being employed also enhances self-esteem, increases opportunities for self-development and reduces social alienation (SCRGSP 2007a) (for more information on how socioeconomic status influences health, see Chapter 8).

The first part of this chapter provides an overview of the educational attainment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from the 2006 Census of Population and Housing. The second explores the ways in which education, employment and health are interlinked. Previously, this report has outlined how health impacts on Indigenous children's participation and attendance at school (ABS & AIHW 2005). With the subsequent release of the 2004–05 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS), this chapter examines the related issue of how education impacts on economic and health outcomes in adulthood.

SCHOOL RETENTION

A major focus of Indigenous education initiatives has been to encourage students to continue their education beyond the compulsory years of schooling in order to increase their future employment prospects and opportunities for non-school education.

The National Schools Statistics Collection showed that, in 2007, the apparent retention rate for Indigenous full-time students from Year 7/8 to Year 10 was 91% and to Year 12 was 43% (see the Glossary for more information on apparent retention rates).

Indigenous retention to Year 10 and beyond has steadily increased over the last 10 years (table 3.1). This trend is particularly evident at the Year 11 level, where the apparent retention rate from Year 7/8 rose from 52% in 1998 to 70% in 2007.

3.1 APPARENT SCHOOL RETENTION RATES, by Indigenous status—1998–2007

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
To Year 9										
Indigenous	95.0	93.9	95.5	96.5	97.8	96.8	97.2	99.2	98.4	97.5
Non-Indigenous	99.7	99.9	99.8	99.9	99.9	99.9	99.9	99.9	100.0	100.4
Difference (percentage points)	-4.7	-6.0	-4.3	-3.4	-2.0	-3.1	-2.7	-0.7	-1.6	-2.9
To Year 10										
Indigenous	83.3	82.0	83.0	85.7	86.4	87.2	85.8	88.3	91.4	90.5
Non-Indigenous	97.4	97.9	98.0	98.4	98.5	98.9	98.5	98.6	98.9	99.7
Difference (percentage points)	-14.1	-15.9	-15.0	-12.7	-12.1	-11.7	-12.7	-10.3	-7.5	-9.2
To Year 11										
Indigenous	52.3	56.0	53.6	56.1	58.9	61.4	61.1	62.3	67.7	69.7
Non-Indigenous	85.4	86.4	86.2	87.6	88.7	89.5	89.0	88.3	88.8	89.4
Difference (percentage points)	-33.1	-30.4	-32.6	-31.5	-29.8	-28.1	-27.9	-26.0	-21.1	-19.7
To Year 12										
Indigenous	32.1	34.7	36.4	35.7	38.0	39.1	39.8	39.5	40.1	42.9
Non-Indigenous	72.7	73.2	73.3	74.5	76.3	76.5	76.9	76.6	75.9	75.6
Difference (percentage points)	-40.6	-38.5	-36.9	-38.8	-38.3	-37.4	-37.1	-37.1	-35.8	-32.7

Source: National Schools Statistics Collection, ABS 2008

SCHOOL RETENTION

continued

While Indigenous retention rates remain considerably lower than those for non-Indigenous school students, the disparity between the two groups is slowly lessening. In Year 11, the difference between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students decreased by 13 percentage points between 1998 and 2007. While the Year 12 differences decreased by 8 percentage points over this time period, Indigenous students were still much less likely than non-Indigenous students to progress to the final year of schooling in 2007.

EDUCATIONAL

ATTAINMENT

Highest year of school completed

Among those who reported their highest year of schooling, the proportion of Indigenous people aged 15 years and over who had completed school to Year 12 increased from 20% in 2001 to 23% in 2006 (table 3.2). Rates of Year 12 completion improved in all states and territories, with the largest increases recorded in Tasmania (17% to 22%), the ACT (42% to 46%) and Queensland (26% to 30%).

Highest year of school completed *continued*

3.2 HIGHEST YEAR OF SCHOOL COMPLETED, Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over(a)—2001 and 2006

	2001		2006	
	no.	%	no.	%
Year 12	41 233	19.5	53 490	23.0
Year 10/11	87 303	41.4	100 552	43.2
Year 9 or below(b)	82 481	39.1	78 826	33.9
Total	211 017	100.0	232 870	100.0
Not stated	20 113	..	32 951	..

.. not applicable

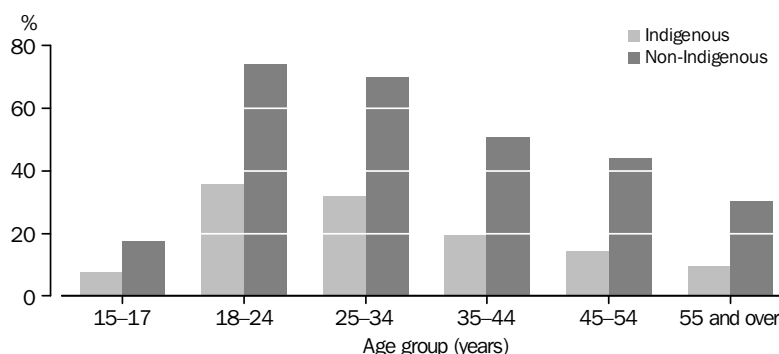
(a) Excludes persons still attending secondary school.

(b) Includes persons who never attended school.

Source: ABS 2001 and 2006 Censuses of Population and Housing

Younger Indigenous people were more likely than older Indigenous people to have completed Year 12. The proportion of Indigenous people who had completed Year 12, as shown in the 2006 Census, ranged from 36% of people aged 18–24 years to 9% of people aged 55 years and over (graph 3.3). Overall, Indigenous males and females reported similar rates of Year 12 completion (22% compared with 24%).

3.3 COMPLETED SCHOOL TO YEAR 12(a)(b), by Indigenous status—2006



(a) Persons who were not attending school.

(b) Excludes persons who did not state their highest year of school completed.

Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

Indigenous people living in rural or remote areas of Australia were less likely than those in urban areas to have completed Year 12. In 2006, 31% of Indigenous people living in major cities had completed school to this level, compared with 22% in regional areas and 14% in remote areas. With the exception of Queensland, this was reflected across the states and territories, with the ACT (46%) having the largest proportion of Indigenous people who had completed Year 12 and the Northern Territory the lowest (10%).

Despite the improvements in school completion within the Indigenous population, Indigenous people aged 15 years and over were still half as likely as non-Indigenous Australians to have completed school to Year 12 in 2006 (23% compared with 49%). They were also twice as likely to have left school at Year 9 or below (34% compared with 16%). In 2006, around 10,400 young Indigenous adults aged 18–24 years (22%) had left school

Highest year of school completed continued

at Year 9 or below compared with 58,100 non-Indigenous young people in the same age group (4%). These relative differences have remained unchanged since 2001.

Non-school qualifications

Non-school qualifications are attained through the successful completion of vocational education and training and/or higher education at universities. Some vocational education and training may be undertaken in conjunction with secondary school studies. At the broadest level, non-school qualifications are grouped as follows: Postgraduate degree; Graduate diploma/Graduate certificate; Bachelor degree; Advanced diploma/Diploma; and Certificate. Within the Certificate grouping, a distinction is made between Certificate levels I/II and Certificate levels III/IV due to significant differences in the skills and knowledge attained by students completing Certificates at these levels. While Certificate levels I/II can be generally characterised as providing a set of basic vocational skills with a narrow range of application, Certificate levels III/IV provide a broader knowledge base and the skills necessary to perform a wide range of skilled tasks, to provide technical advice of a complex nature, and to provide work group leadership when organising activities (ABS 2001).

Results from the 2006 Census of Population and Housing show that 47,600 Indigenous people aged 25–64 years had attained a non-school qualification. The proportion of Indigenous people who had a non-school qualification increased from 20% in 2001 to 26% in 2006. The majority of this increase was at the Certificate/Diploma level (14% to 20%). There was only a slight increase in the proportion of those with a Bachelor Degree or above (4% to 5%).

There was no difference in the proportion of Indigenous males and females who had a non-school qualification in 2006 (26%). Reflecting the location of tertiary institutions and the availability of jobs that utilise tertiary qualifications, the likelihood of having a non-school qualification was lower in remote areas than in non-remote areas. Overall, 30% of Indigenous people aged 25–64 years in non-remote areas had a non-school qualification compared with 15% of people in remote areas.

A relatively small number of Indigenous people did not report the level of their non-school qualification (2,200 or 5% of those with a non-school qualification). Of the 45,300 Indigenous people aged 25–64 years who reported their level of qualification in 2006, 62% had obtained a Certificate (48% had a Certificate level III/IV, 8% had a Certificate level I/II, and 6% had a Certificate, the level of which was unknown). Reflecting a greater tendency on the part of men to undertake study towards a trade qualification, Indigenous men had attained a Certificate level III/IV at almost twice the rate of Indigenous women (63% compared with 34%). Around one in six Indigenous people (17%) had an Advanced Diploma or Diploma and 21% had a Bachelor Degree or above. The majority of Indigenous people with higher level degrees (i.e. above the Certificate level) were female. Indigenous women were twice as likely as Indigenous men to have an Advanced Diploma or Diploma (22% compared with 12%) and more than one-and-a-half times as likely to have a Bachelor degree or above (26% compared with 15%).

Among the 42,400 Indigenous people aged 25–64 years who reported both the level of their non-school qualification and their main field of study, 18% had studied in the field of Management and Commerce, 17% in Society and Culture, and 16% in Engineering and

*Non-school qualifications
continued*

Related Technologies. Indigenous men were much more likely than women to have a qualification in the field of Engineering and Related Technologies and Architecture and Building, whereas women were more likely than men to have attained a qualification in the fields of Management and Commerce, Education, and Health.

Although there have been continued improvements in the educational attainment of Indigenous Australians in recent years, their levels of attainment remain below those of non-Indigenous Australians. Among those aged 25–64 years, non-Indigenous people were twice as likely as Indigenous people to have a non-school qualification in 2006 (53% compared with 26%). Non-Indigenous people were more than four times as likely to have a Bachelor Degree or above (21% compared with 5%) and twice as likely to have an Advanced Diploma or Diploma (9% compared with 4%).

EDUCATION,
EMPLOYMENT AND
INCOME

*The transition from
education to work*

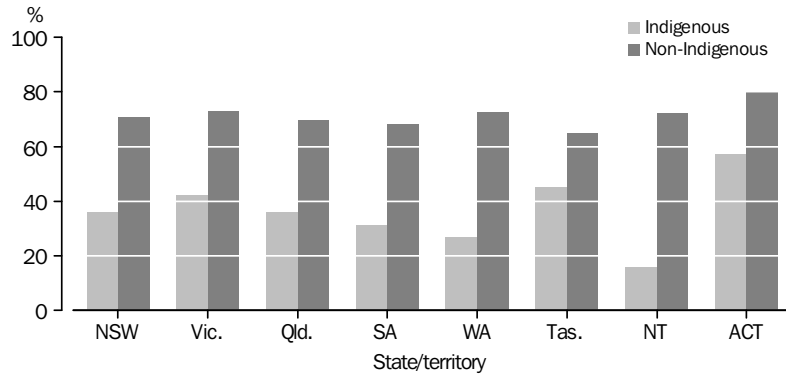
The transition from school to continued study or full-time employment can have long-term implications. For example, those who are not fully engaged in either education and/or work (i.e. not in full-time work, full-time education or in a combination of both part-time work and part-time study) during this period may be at risk of becoming long-term unemployed, underemployed or only marginally attached to the labour force (ABS 2006f).

One-third (33%) of all Indigenous young people aged 18–24 years were fully engaged in work and/or study in 2006, similar to the rate reported in 2001 (31%). Indigenous males were more likely than Indigenous females to be fully engaged (36% compared with 29%), while participation in full-time work and/or study was higher among people in non-remote than remote areas (38% compared with 18%).

In 2006, Indigenous young people aged 18–24 years were half as likely as non-Indigenous young people to be engaged in either full-time work, full-time study or in both part-time work and part-time study (33% compared with 71%). Across the states and territories, there was relatively wide variation in the proportion of Indigenous young people fully engaged compared with non-Indigenous young people. Reflecting increased access to educational institutions and mainstream employment opportunities in urban areas, the ACT had the highest proportion of Indigenous young people fully participating in education and/or work (57%), followed by Tasmania (45%) and Victoria (42%) (graph 3.4).

The transition from education to work continued

3.4 FULLY ENGAGED IN EDUCATION AND/OR WORK(a), Persons aged 18–24 years—2006



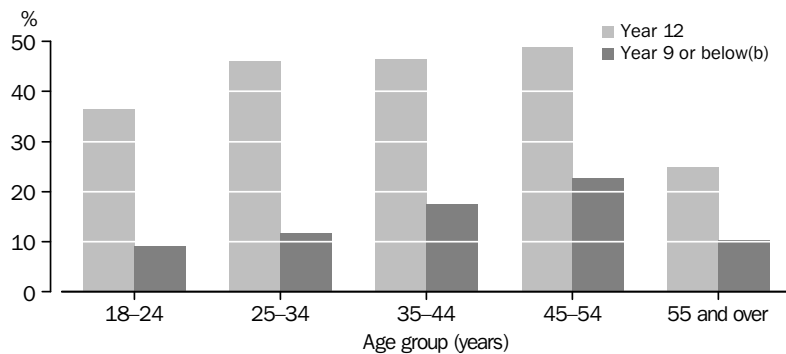
(a) Employed full-time, studying full-time or both employed part-time and studying part-time.

Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

Education and employment

The positive effect that education has on an individual’s economic outcomes, particularly employment and income, has been well established (Biddle 2005). Results from the 2006 Census show that Indigenous people aged 15 years and over with higher levels of schooling (who were not currently attending secondary school) were more likely than those with lower levels of attainment to be in full-time employment. In every broad age group, Indigenous people who had completed Year 12 were more than twice as likely as those who had completed school to Year 9 or below to have a full-time job (graph 3.5). This was particularly the case for young people aged 18–24 years, where the rate of full-time employment among those who had completed Year 12 was four times as high as among those who had left school at Year 9 or below (37% compared with 9%).

3.5 HIGHEST YEAR OF SCHOOL COMPLETED(a), Indigenous persons in full-time employment—2006



(a) Excludes persons still attending secondary school.

(b) Includes persons who never attended school.

Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

Among those who had completed Year 12, the proportion of people in full-time employment was lower in the Indigenous population than in the non-Indigenous population (42% compared with 49%). Rates of part-time employment and non-participation in the labour force were similar for both groups. However, among

*Education and
employment continued*

Australians who had completed Year 12, Indigenous people were more than twice as likely as non-Indigenous people to be unemployed (7% compared with 3%) (table 3.6).

3.6 LABOUR FORCE STATUS, by highest year of school completed—Persons aged 15 years and over—2006

		YEAR 12		YEAR 10/11		YEAR 9 OR BELOW(a)	
		Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
Employed							
Full-time	%	(b) 41.7	49.2	29.8	42.2	13.7	19.2
Part-time	%	20.5	20.6	18.7	17.9	14.0	9.5
Total(c)	%	68.2	74.1	53.6	64.2	31.3	31.3
Unemployed	%	7.1	3.2	10.3	3.6	8.5	2.8
Not in the labour force	%	23.3	22.2	34.1	31.4	57.1	64.2
Not stated	%	1.4	0.6	2.0	0.8	3.1	1.6
Persons aged 15 years and over	no.	53 491	6 549 115	100 552	4 693 351	78 827	2 104 152
Labour force participation rate	%	75.3	77.2	63.9	67.8	39.8	34.2
Unemployment rate	%	9.5	4.1	16.1	5.3	21.4	8.3

(a) Includes persons who never attended school.

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

(c) Includes persons for whom full-time/part-time status was not known and persons who were away from work in the last four weeks.

Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

The same pattern of association is evident among those who had completed a non-school qualification. Indigenous people aged 25–64 years who had a non-school qualification of a Certificate III or above were more than twice as likely as those without a non-school qualification to be employed full-time (52% compared with 23%). Indigenous women with a Certificate III or above were less likely than Indigenous men with the same level of qualification to be employed full-time, and were around twice as likely to be employed part-time or not be participating in the labour force. This reflects the fact that many women in this age group are likely to be caring for children full-time, or combining childcare with part-time employment (ABS 2006d).

In 2006, the difference in the full-time employment rates for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people with a Certificate III or above was 8 percentage points (52% compared with 60%) (table 3.7). This disparity in full-time employment rates was considerably lower than the difference between the full-time employment rates for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people with a non-school qualification (35% compared with 56%) and between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people without a non-school qualification (23% compared with 41%).

Education and
employment *continued*

3.7 LABOUR FORCE STATUS, by non-school qualification—Persons aged 25–64 years—2006

		NON-SCHOOL QUALIFICATION				
		Certificate III or above (a)	Other	Total	No non-school qualification	Total
INDIGENOUS						
Employed						
Full-time	%	51.8	16.1	34.9	22.8	27.7
Part-time	%	18.7	11.7	15.4	17.4	16.6
Total (b)	%	76.2	32.3	55.4	44.6	49.0
Unemployed	%	5.7	5.6	5.7	8.4	7.3
Not in the labour force	%	17.1	39.2	27.6	45.1	38.0
Not stated	%	0.9	22.9	11.3	1.9	5.7
Persons aged 25–64 years	no.	38 939	35 067	73 998	108 786	182 791
Labour force participation rate	%	82.0	37.9	61.1	53.0	56.3
Unemployment rate	%	7.0	14.8	9.3	15.8	13.0
NON-INDIGENOUS						
Employed						
Full-time	%	60.3	38.3	56.5	41.1	50.0
Part-time	%	18.7	20.0	18.9	19.4	19.1
Total (b)	%	83.6	63.6	80.1	64.6	73.6
Unemployed	%	2.5	3.5	2.7	3.8	3.2
Not in the labour force	%	13.6	26.1	15.8	30.8	22.1
Not stated	%	0.3	6.7	1.4	0.7	1.1
Persons aged 25–64 years	no.	4 670 956	981 530	5 652 487	4 165 625	9 818 107
Labour force participation rate	%	86.1	67.2	82.8	68.5	76.7
Unemployment rate	%	2.9	5.3	3.2	5.6	4.1

(a) Comprises Certificate levels 3 and 4, Diplomas and Advanced diplomas, Bachelor degrees, Graduate diplomas, Graduate certificates and Postgraduate degrees.

(b) Includes persons for whom full-time/part-time status was not known and persons who were away from work in the last four weeks.

Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

Education and income

In 2006, Indigenous people who had completed secondary school had higher incomes than those who had left school at lower grades. Among those who were employed, Indigenous people aged 15 years and over who had completed Year 12 had a median gross individual income of \$620 per week compared with \$405 per week for those who left school at Year 9 or below. Nevertheless, employed Indigenous people who had completed Year 12 had a lower median weekly income in 2006 than did employed non-Indigenous people with Year 12 (\$620 per week compared with \$811 per week).

Likewise, among those aged 25–64 years who were employed, Indigenous people with a Certificate III or above had one-and-a-half times the weekly income of those without a non-school qualification (\$791 compared with \$510). However, they still had a lower median weekly income compared with non-Indigenous people with the equivalent qualification level (\$791 compared with \$965).

LINKS BETWEEN EDUCATION AND HEALTH

There is growing evidence that education leads to more than just better employment opportunities and higher income. International research has clearly established that higher levels of educational attainment are also associated with improved health outcomes (ABS & AIHW 2005). For example, strong positive correlations have been found between parental education, particularly that of the mother, and child health. It has also been shown that higher levels of educational attainment are associated with better self-assessed health and physical functioning, and lower levels of morbidity and mortality (Albano et al 2007; Ross & Wu 1995).

However, while there is general acceptance of a positive association between education and health, the full extent of this relationship has yet to be explained (see box 3.8). Likewise, while there is some evidence to suggest that the effect of education on health is similar for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Biddle 2005; Gray & Boughton 2001), there has been relatively little research overall.

3.8 EXPLAINING THE LINKS BETWEEN EDUCATION AND HEALTH

While the positive association between education and health has been well established, the explanations for the association have not. Generally, the most common explanations fall into two main categories. Firstly, education may lead to better health outcomes through increasing a person's health-related knowledge and information, or their ability to make efficient use of such information. Doing so may increase the likelihood of a person engaging in positive health behaviour (e.g. exercising, regular health check-ups), or alternatively not engaging in behaviour likely to be harmful to one's health (e.g. smoking).

Furthermore, those with higher education levels are more likely to be employed and generally have access to better working conditions and higher incomes. These factors may in turn affect health by allowing a person to avoid some of the negative health consequences of 'low status' jobs, or through increasing the ability to pay for health or health related products, such as medication, health insurance, specialist services and so on. Well educated people may also feel a greater sense of control over their lives and their health, and have higher levels of social support.

Secondly, the association between education and health may be partly explained by the fact that healthy individuals are better able to undertake education in the first place. A child's health has a powerful impact on whether or not they attend school and on their ability to learn and participate in school activities. Therefore children with disability or chronic health conditions may be at risk of not completing their education (for more details on the impact of health on education, see Chapter 3 in the 2005 edition of this report). Similarly, poor health could manifest itself through relatively low life expectancy, thereby not allowing a person to enjoy the benefits of education for as long as they otherwise would. Poor health may also restrict a person's ability to make use of their enhanced earnings power derived from their education.

Source: Biddle 2005; Kennedy 2003; Ross & Wu 1995

Health and education correlations from the 2004–05 NATSIHS

This section explores the relationship between highest level of schooling and selected health indicators for Indigenous people aged 18 years and over using the results from the 2004–05 NATSIHS. However, it is important to note that the interactions between educational attainment and health outcomes are complex and are difficult to measure in household surveys. So while the NATSIHS can provide insights into the associations between school completion and health (and vice versa), it cannot determine the causal pathways that underlie them.

Furthermore, both level of education and health status are strongly related to age, meaning that younger people are much more likely than older people to be in good health and to be well educated. For example, in 2004–05, those aged 18–34 years comprised 71% of all Indigenous people who had completed Year 12 and 62% of all Indigenous people who reported excellent/very good health, although this age group represented slightly less than half the total adult population. Therefore to reduce the effect of age, the following analysis focuses on two broad age groups: young adults aged 18–34 years and older adults aged 35 years and over.

Results from the 2004–05 NATSIHS show that educational attainment was positively associated with health status. Table 3.9 shows that young Indigenous adults (aged 18–34 years) who had completed Year 12 were more likely than those who had left school at Year 9 or below to rate their health as excellent or very good (57% compared with 45%), and were less likely to rate their health as fair or poor (10% compared with 16%). They were also around half as likely to report high/very high levels of psychological distress in the last four weeks (19% compared with 35%). A similar pattern of association between educational attainment and health outcomes was also observed for Indigenous people aged 35 years and over.

The likelihood of engaging in health risk behaviours also decreased with higher levels of schooling. In 2004–05, young adults who had completed Year 12 were half as likely as those who had completed Year 9 or below to regularly smoke and to consume alcohol at long-term risky/high risk levels. In non-remote areas, Indigenous young people with higher educational attainment were also less likely to be sedentary or engage in low levels of exercise, and to have no usual daily intake of fruit or vegetables (table 3.9). However, among Indigenous people aged 35 years and over, only rates of smoking and low fruit consumption significantly decreased with higher levels of schooling.

3.9 SELECTED HEALTH CHARACTERISTICS OF INDIGENOUS PERSONS, by highest year of school completed(a)—2004–05

	18–34 YEARS				35 YEARS AND OVER				
		Year 12	Year 10/11	Year 9 or below(b)	Total(c)	Year 12	Year 10/11	Year 9 or below(b)	Total(c)
Self-assessed health status									
Excellent/Very good	%	(d)57.4	48.5	(d)44.8	50.6	(e)38.9	35.8	(e)21.2	29.4
Good	%	32.9	36.6	39.4	36.0	34.4	40.2	34.1	36.6
Fair/poor	%	(d)9.7	14.8	(d)15.7	13.3	(e)26.7	24.0	(e)44.7	34.1
Long-term health conditions									
Has a long-term health condition	%	(d)75.5	70.4	(d)68.2	71.6	89.1	88.7	92.1	90.4
Diabetes/high sugar levels	%	*1.9	3.3	*3.5	2.8	(e)15.7	11.5	(e)25.9	18.8
Eyes/sight problems	%	(d)33.8	24.0	(d)18.5	26.0	(e)63.9	59.3	(e)75.9	67.7
Ear/hearing problems/diseases	%	(d)8.7	10.3	(d)15.7	11.0	20.0	15.9	21.8	19.2
Heart and circulatory problems/diseases	%	(d)5.4	9.1	(d)10.5	8.2	(e)27.0	23.8	(e)40.9	32.3
Asthma	%	18.0	17.2	13.8	16.7	15.8	14.2	18.1	16.3
Arthritis	%	5.4	5.9	5.7	5.7	24.0	23.2	30.7	26.8
Back pain/symptoms	%	14.8	20.9	19.7	18.6	28.3	28.1	27.0	27.7
Osteoporosis	%	np	np	np	*—	** (e)0.8	*2.2	(e)4.0	2.9
Kidney disease	%	**0.9	*2.4	*2.1	1.8	** (e)0.8	2.7	(e)5.9	3.9
Does not have a long-term health condition	%	(d)24.5	29.6	(d)31.8	28.4	10.9	11.3	7.9	9.6
Health risk factors									
Current daily smoker	%	(d)33.8	58.7	(d)70.1	53.0	(e)35.4	50.4	(e)48.2	47.4
Long-term risky/high risk alcohol consumption(f)	%	(d)9.8	19.8	(d)20.5	16.6	18.1	16.4	15.8	16.3
Short-term risky/high risk alcohol consumption(f)	%	(d)13.8	24.5	(d)27.3	21.6	*12.8	17.4	18.0	17.1
Overweight/obese(g)	%	50.0	52.2	54.7	51.9	73.1	67.7	67.1	68.2
Sedentary/low levels of exercise(h)	%	(d)69.0	74.8	(d)79.6	73.5	75.0	81.0	84.3	81.6
No usual daily fruit intake	%	(d)11.4	18.7	(d)19.5	16.5	(e)5.1	12.8	(e)15.9	13.3
No usual daily vegetable intake	%	*(d)3.5	6.1	(d)10.1	6.1	*4.6	3.1	7.0	5.1
High/very high psychological distress(i)	%	(d)19.2	28.1	(d)34.5	26.5	(e)20.9	26.0	(e)31.0	27.7
Indigenous persons aged 18 years and over	no.	41 100	57 200	27 200	125 600	17 100	52 600	62 100	131 800

* 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

— nil or rounded to zero (including null cells)

np not available for publication but included in totals where applicable, unless otherwise indicated

(a) Excludes persons still attending secondary school.

(b) Includes persons who never attended school.

(c) Includes 'Highest year of school completed not stated'.

(d) Difference between Year 12 and Year 9 or below for persons aged 18–34 years is statistically significant.

(e) Difference between Year 12 and Year 9 or below for persons aged 35 years and over is statistically significant.

(f) See Glossary for more information.

(g) Proportions are calculated excluding 'Body mass index unknown'.

(h) Non-remote areas only.

(i) In the last four weeks.

Source: ABS 2004–05 NATSIHS

Health and education correlations from the 2004–05 NATSIHS continued

Education level has also been shown to be associated with long-term health conditions, particularly heart disease and diet-related illnesses (MCEETYA 2001). In 2004–05, Indigenous people aged 35 years and over who had completed school to Year 12 were around half as likely to report having diabetes or cardiovascular disease as those who had left school at Year 9 or below. They were also less likely to report eye/sight problems, osteoporosis and kidney disease.

Poor health among young people may also impact on their opportunity to attend and succeed at school. As outlined in the 2005 edition of this report, health conditions such as otitis media (middle ear infection) and poor nutrition have been shown to negatively affect educational attainment. In 2004–05, young Indigenous people who had left school

Health and education correlations from the 2004–05 NATSIHS continued

at Year 9 or below were around twice as likely as those who had completed Year 12 to have ear/hearing problems and heart/circulatory diseases. These conditions—if present from childhood—may have had a significant impact on both school performance and attendance. However, because the NATSIHS did not collect information on age of onset of chronic conditions, causality cannot be determined.

ADDITIONAL EFFECTS OF EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME ON HEALTH

Overall, half (51%) of Indigenous people aged 18–34 years reported excellent or very good health in 2004–05. This proportion was higher among those who had completed Year 12 (57%) and among those who were employed (55%). Just under two-thirds (63%) of people who had completed Year 12 and who were also employed reported excellent/very good health. This proportion was only slightly higher among those who had completed Year 12, who were employed and who had access to higher household incomes (64%) (table 3.10).

3.10 SELECTED SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS, Indigenous persons aged 18–34 years with excellent/very good self-assessed health—2004–05

	Excellent/very good health.....	
	%	no.
Completed Year 12	57.4	23 600
Employed	55.1	38 400
Household income in third quintile or above(a)	57.8	20 600
Completed Year 12 and employed(b)	62.9	15 600
Completed Year 12 and household income in third quintile or above(c)	64.1	11 600
Completed Year 12 and employed and household income in third quintile or above(b)(c)	65.5	11 200
Indigenous persons aged 18–34 years with excellent/very good health	51.3	64 000

- (a) Based on equivalised gross household weekly income.
- (b) Excludes persons for whom information on highest year of school completed was not known.
- (c) Excludes persons for whom information on highest year of school completed and/or household income was not known.

Source: ABS 2004–05 NATSIHS

The 2004–05 NATSIHS used a modified five-item version of the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (known as the K5) to measure non-specific psychological distress. A high score indicates that the person may be experiencing feelings of anxiety or depression on a regular basis, whereas a low score indicates that the person is experiencing these feelings infrequently or not at all. In 2004–05, around three-quarters (73%) of all Indigenous people aged 18–34 years reported low levels of psychological distress in the four weeks prior to interview. Again, the proportion of Indigenous people reporting low levels of psychological distress was higher among those who had completed Year 12 (81%) and those who were employed (79%), but was only slightly higher for those who met both criteria (83%). The rate did not change significantly with inclusion of the income criterion (83%) (table 3.11).

*Health and education
correlations from the
2004–05 NATSIHS
continued*

ADDITIONAL EFFECTS OF EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME ON HEALTH
continued

3.11 SELECTED SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS, Indigenous persons
aged 18–34 years with low levels of psychological
distress—2004–05

	Low psychological distress(a).....	
	%	no.
Completed Year 12	80.6	32 800
Employed	79.3	54 800
Household income in third quintile or above(b)	79.7	28 300
Completed Year 12 and employed(c)	82.7	20 400
Completed Year 12 and household income in third quintile or above(b)(d)	82.5	14 900
Completed Year 12 and employed and household income in third quintile or above(b)(d)	83.1	14 200
Indigenous persons aged 18–34 years with low levels of psychological distress	73.0	91 100

(a) In the four weeks prior to interview.

(b) Based on equivalised gross household weekly income.

(c) Excludes persons for whom information on highest year of school completed was not known.

(d) Excludes persons for whom information on highest year of school completed and/or household income was not known.

Source: ABS 2004–05 NATSIHS

SUMMARY

Educational attainment among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continues to improve. Between 2001 and 2006, the proportion of Indigenous people aged 15 years and over who had completed Year 12 increased from 20% to 23%. There was also an increase in the proportion of people who had completed a non-school qualification (20% to 26%).

Higher educational attainment was associated with better employment prospects and higher income in 2006. In every broad age group, Indigenous people aged 15 years and over who had completed Year 12 were more than twice as likely as those who had completed school to Year 9 or below to be in full-time employment in 2006. Likewise, rates of full-time employment were twice as high among Indigenous people aged 25–64 years with a non-school qualification of a Certificate III or above compared with those without a non-school qualification.

Among employed Indigenous people aged 15 years and over, the median individual weekly income for those who had completed Year 12 (\$620 per week) was one-and-a-half times that of people who had completed Year 9 or below (\$405 per week). Similarly, employed Indigenous people aged 25–64 years who had a Certificate III or above had one-and-a-half times the median individual weekly income of those without a non-school qualification (\$791 compared with \$510).

Higher levels of schooling were also linked with improved health outcomes. In 2004–05, Indigenous people aged 18–34 years with higher levels of schooling were more likely than those with lower levels of schooling to report better self-assessed health and lower

SUMMARY *continued*

levels of psychological distress. They were also less likely to regularly smoke, drink alcohol at risky/high risk levels, be physically inactive and have no usual daily intake of fruit or vegetables.