

INTRODUCTION

There is strong evidence from Australia and other developed countries that low socioeconomic status is associated with poor health and increased exposure to health risk factors (Blakely, Hales & Woodward 2004; Turrell & Mathers 2000). Recent statistics from the 2007 Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Report by the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (SCRGSP) have highlighted some improvements in the lives of Indigenous Australians in the areas of employment, educational attainment and income (SCRGSP 2007a). However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to experience relative disadvantage compared with non-Indigenous people.

This chapter provides an overview of the demographic characteristics of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. The data are primarily from the 2006 Census of Population and Housing, with supplementary information from the 2004–05 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS) and the 2002 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS). These data provide a context for the health and welfare information in later chapters, with topics including education, housing, income and labour force status. Some of the topics in this chapter are explored in more detail in later chapters within this report. For more information on the demographic characteristics of the Torres Strait Islander population, see Chapter 12.

DEMOGRAPHIC  
CHARACTERISTICS

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) provides two types of Indigenous population figures. The first are Census counts, which are taken from the five-yearly Census of Population and Housing. These figures represent the number of people enumerated by the Census without any adjustment. The second type of population figures are estimated resident population (ERP) figures, which are initially based on Census counts, and then adjusted to account for unknown Indigenous status and undercount from the Census (see box 2.3). In this chapter, Indigenous ERP data have been used to describe the age structure and distribution of the Indigenous population across states and territories. All other analyses (including those for Indigenous Regions) are based on Census counts.

*Preliminary estimated  
resident Indigenous  
population*

At 30 June 2006, the estimated resident Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of Australia was 517,200, or 2.5% of the total Australian population. The Indigenous population is estimated to have increased by 58,700 (13%) between 2001 and 2006 (ABS 2007e and table 2.1). Finalised ERP data will be available in mid-2008.

**2.1** ESTIMATED RESIDENT POPULATION (a), by Indigenous status—2006 (preliminary)

	Aboriginal	Torres Strait Islander	Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	Total Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	All persons	Proportion of total Indigenous population	Proportion of state/territory population
	no.	no.	no.	no.	no.	no.	%	%
New South Wales	140 000	5 100	3 100	148 200	6 669 000	6 817 200	28.7	2.2
Victoria	27 700	2 200	900	30 800	5 097 500	5 128 300	6.0	0.6
Queensland	113 300	21 100	12 000	146 400	3 945 100	4 091 500	28.3	3.6
South Australia	24 600	1 000	400	26 000	1 542 200	1 568 200	5.0	1.7
Western Australia	75 200	1 400	1 300	77 900	1 981 100	2 059 000	15.1	3.8
Tasmania	15 000	1 300	600	16 900	473 000	489 900	3.3	3.4
Northern Territory	64 100	800	1 700	66 600	144 100	210 700	12.9	31.6
Australian Capital Territory	3 800	200	100	4 000	330 200	334 200	0.8	1.2
<b>Australia</b>	<b>463 900</b>	<b>33 100</b>	<b>20 200</b>	<b>517 200</b>	<b>20 184 300</b>	<b>20 701 500</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2.5</b>

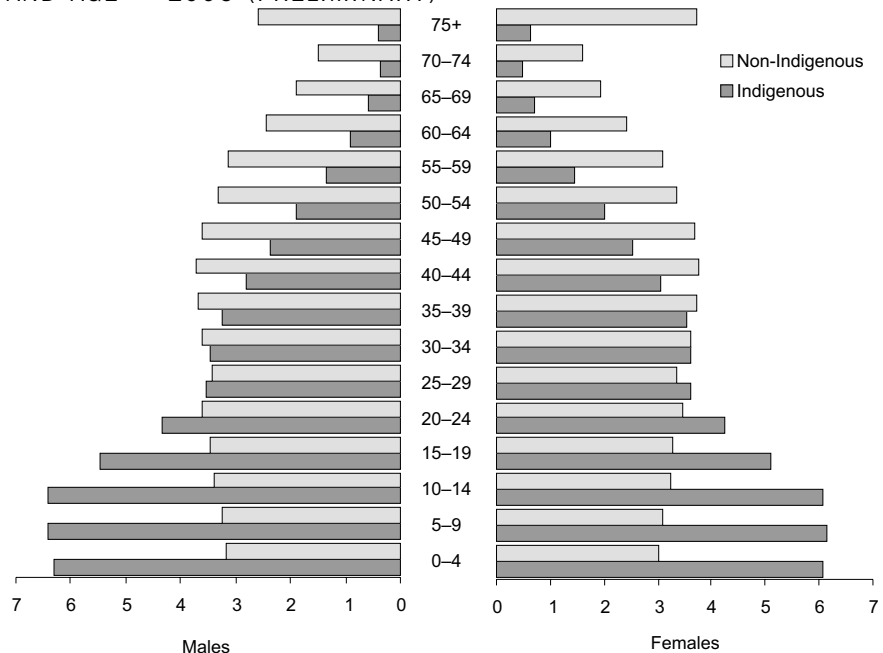
(a) Estimates are subject to revision once 2006 population estimates have been finalised and after analysis of growth in the Indigenous population (demographic and non-demographic factors) between 2001 and 2006.

Source: ABS 2007f

Age

The Indigenous population is relatively young, with a median age of 21 years compared with 37 years for the non-Indigenous population. This is largely the product of higher rates of fertility and deaths occurring at younger ages among the Indigenous population (ABS 2004c). At 30 June 2006, people aged 65 years and over comprised just 3% of the Indigenous population, compared with 13% of the non-Indigenous population. In comparison, 37% of Indigenous people were under 15 years of age compared with 19% of non-Indigenous people (figure 2.2).

**2.2** ESTIMATED RESIDENT POPULATION, BY INDIGENOUS STATUS AND AGE — 2006 (PRELIMINARY)



*Age continued*

Because age is closely associated with health status, some comparisons between Indigenous and non-Indigenous data in this report are presented for separate age groups, or otherwise age standardised. For more information on age standardisation, see the Glossary.

*Life expectancy*

The latest available data presenting estimated Indigenous life expectancy at birth are for the period 1996–2001. Nationally, experimental estimated Indigenous life expectancy was 59 years for Indigenous males (compared with 77 for all males) and 65 years for Indigenous females (compared with 82 years for all females). This is a difference of around 17 years for both males and females (ABS 2004b). Life expectancy data for the 2001–2006 period will be released in late 2008.

*Where Indigenous people live*

At 30 June 2006, the jurisdictions with the largest estimated resident Indigenous populations were New South Wales (148,200 or 29% of the total Indigenous population) and Queensland (146,400 or 28% of the total Indigenous population). The Northern Territory had a higher proportion of Indigenous residents (32%) than any other state or territory.

For Australians living in remote areas, distance can be a barrier to accessing services. While an estimated one-third of Indigenous Australians (32%) were living in major cities and a further 43% were living in regional areas at 30 June 2006, a much larger proportion of the Indigenous than non-Indigenous population were living in remote or very remote areas (25% compared with 2%). For more information on access to services, see Chapter 10 of this report.

## **2.3** 2006 CENSUS COUNTS

*Census undercount*

Each Census, some people are missed and others are counted more than once. In Australia, a greater number of people are missed than are counted more than once and the overall effect is called net undercount. In 2006, the Indigenous preliminary net undercount was estimated to be 11.5%, and this was not uniform across all states and territories (ABS 2007f).

*Census counts*

The number of people identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin in the 2006 Census was 455,000, representing 2.3% of the total Australian population. This is an increase of 11% since the 2001 Census, compared with an increase of 6% in the total Australian population over the same period. Among people identified as Indigenous in 2006, 90% were of Aboriginal origin only, 6% were of Torres Strait Islander origin only and 4% were of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin. Around three-quarters (76%) of the Indigenous population were living in major cities and regional areas in 2006, with the remaining 24% in remote areas.

Where Indigenous people  
live continued

INDIGENOUS REGIONS

Indigenous Regions (IREGs) are the highest level of the Australian Indigenous Geographical Classification (AIGC). IREGs are based on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) Regions (used in the 2001 Census of Population and Housing) but also reflect recent changes in both local government areas and in government administrative arrangements. Where possible and appropriate, the 2001 ATSIC boundaries were maintained to allow the characteristics of Indigenous people within a region to be compared across Censuses. The map below (figure 2.4) indicates the new Indigenous Region structure across Australia.

**2.4** INDIGENOUS REGIONS 2006



In 2006, the Indigenous Regions with the largest populations were Sydney (41,800), Brisbane (41,400) and Coffs Harbour (40,000). The Indigenous Regions with the highest proportion of Indigenous residents, which were outside major population centres, included the Torres Strait Islander Region in Queensland (83%), and the Apatula and Jabiru Indigenous Regions in the Northern Territory (79% and 77% respectively). The highest regional increases in the Indigenous population between 2001 and 2006, based on 2006 AIGC boundaries, occurred in the Indigenous Regions of Coffs Harbour (25%),

*Where Indigenous people  
live continued*

#### INDIGENOUS REGIONS *continued*

Non-Metropolitan Victoria (25%), Wagga Wagga (21%) and Melbourne (20%) (ABS 2007f).

#### POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

##### *Language*

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages were spoken in the home by 12% of Indigenous Australians aged five years and over in 2006, the majority of whom (83%) were also proficient English speakers. The Indigenous languages most commonly spoken at home were Torres Strait Creole (5,800 speakers), Kriol (3,900), Arrernte (2,800), Djambarrpuyngu (2,700), Pitjantjatjara (2,600) and Warlpiri (2,500).

##### *Homelands*

In the 2002 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS), 70% of Indigenous people aged 15 years and over recognised an area as their homelands or traditional country, while 22% lived in homelands or traditional country. Almost half (46%) of the Indigenous population did not live in their homelands or traditional country, but were allowed to visit. Nationally between 1994 and 2002 the proportion of Indigenous people living in their homelands or traditional country decreased (from 29% to 22%) (ABS 2004d).

##### *Social networks*

In 2002, 90% of Indigenous people aged 15 years and over reported that they had been involved in social activities in the last three months; nearly half (49%) had participated in sport or physical recreation activities in the last 12 months and 28% had undertaken voluntary work in the last 12 months. In addition, the overwhelming majority of Indigenous people (90%) were able to get support in a time of crisis from someone outside their household; most commonly from family members and friends (ABS 2004d). For further information, see the 2005 edition of this report (ABS & AIHW 2005).

##### *Education*

The educational opportunities available to an individual can have a significant impact on their future health, wellbeing and socioeconomic status. Between 2001 and 2006, there was a slight increase in the proportion of Indigenous people aged 15 years and over (excluding those still at school) that had completed Year 12 (from 20% to 23%), with the largest increases in major cities and very remote areas (4% between 2001 and 2006). Indigenous males and females had similar rates of Year 12 attainment (22% compared with 24%). In comparison, almost half (49%) of non-Indigenous Australians had completed Year 12 in 2006.

In both 2001 and 2006, there were around 7,100 Indigenous people studying at a university. This represents a slight decrease in the proportion of Indigenous people attending university (from 5% to 4%). Among Indigenous people aged 25–64 years, 26% had a non-school qualification compared with over half (54%) of non-Indigenous people. One in five Indigenous people aged 25–64 years with a non-school qualification (20%) had a bachelor degree or above, and three-quarters had a certificate or diploma as their highest qualification.

#### REMOTENESS

Levels of educational attainment among Indigenous people aged 15 years and over (excluding those still at school) were lower in geographically remote areas. In 2006, almost one-third (31%) of those living in major cities had completed Year 12 compared

*Education continued*

with 22% of Indigenous people living in regional areas and 14% in remote areas (table 2.5).

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

		Major Cities	Regional	Total Remote	Australia(b)
Year 12 or equivalent	%	30.8	22.2	14.0	23.0
Year 10 or 11	%	44.4	46.4	36.2	43.2
Year 9 or below(c)	%	24.8	31.3	49.8	33.8
Total stated	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Highest year of school completed not stated	no.	9 345	14 950	8 444	32 951
<b>Persons aged 15 years and over(a)</b>	no.	<b>85 822</b>	<b>111 737</b>	<b>67 046</b>	<b>265 820</b>

(a) Excludes persons still attending school.

(b) Includes 'Offshore and migratory'.

(c) Includes persons who did not attend school.

Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

The attainment of non-school qualifications is also higher in urban locations. In the 2006 Census, one-third (34%) of Indigenous people aged 25–64 years living in major cities had attained a non-school qualification, compared with just over one-quarter (27%) of those living in regional areas and 15% of those in remote areas. Although a higher proportion of Indigenous Australians had attained a non-school qualification (26% in 2006 compared with 20% in 2001), Indigenous Australians were less than half as likely as non-Indigenous Australians to have a non-school qualification in 2006 (26% compared with 53%).

*Labour force status*

**2.6** LABOUR FORCE STATUS—CENSUS AND INDIGENOUS-SPECIFIC SURVEY DATA

Labour force estimates from the 2006 Census, 2002 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) and 2004–05 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS) are based on the same underlying concepts as those used in the monthly Labour Force Survey (LFS). However, there are differences in the collection methodologies, definitions, questions and estimation procedures which affect the comparability of data between collections. While the labour force estimates may differ, the broad trends are similar across collections.

*Collection methodologies*

The 2006 Census was collected by self-enumeration, except in Discrete Indigenous Communities where interviewers were used to assist respondents in providing the required data. These collection methodologies differed from those used in the 2002 NATSISS and the 2004–05 NATSIHS, both of which collected labour force data from selected persons aged 15 years and over via a personal interview.

*Scope and content*

*Labour force status  
continued*

The questions used to derive labour force status in the 2006 Census, 2002 NATSISS and 2004–05 NATSIHS were not as detailed or comprehensive as those used in the LFS. While NATSISS and NATSIHS both included the standard labour force module for household surveys, the 2006 Census used a shorter questionnaire module. In addition, the NATSISS and NATSIHS samples covered usual residents of private dwellings only, i.e. people in hotels, motels, hostels and hospitals, and visitors to private dwellings, were excluded.

*Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP)*

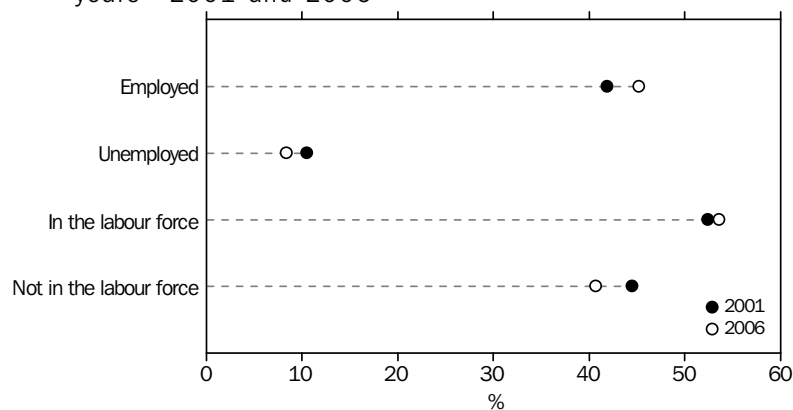
The NATSISS and NATSIHS labour force modules also differ from current LFS practices and the self-completion forms used in the 2006 Census in that they specifically asked respondents about participation in the CDEP programme. In the 2006 Census, consistent with recent changes in policy, coverage of CDEP participation was limited to people in Discrete Indigenous Communities, where it was collected by interviewers. As CDEP participants are categorised as employed, the absence of specific CDEP prompts on the 2006 Census self-completion forms has resulted in substantially lower counts of CDEP participants, and may also have resulted in a lower overall Indigenous employment rate than would have otherwise been obtained.

#### LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION

Labour force participation is the number of persons in the labour force (employed plus unemployed) expressed as a percentage of the total population aged 15–64 years. People who did not report their labour force status are excluded when calculating the participation rate.

There was an increase in the labour force participation rate for Indigenous people aged 15–64 years from 52% in 2001 to 54% in 2006 (graph 2.7). In 2006, Indigenous males were more likely than females to be participating in the labour force (63% compared with 51%). Consistent with data from the 2001 Census, Indigenous Australians aged 15–64 years were less likely to be participating in the labour force than non-Indigenous Australians (54% compared with 75%).

**2.7** LABOUR FORCE STATUS, Indigenous persons aged 15–64 years—2001 and 2006



Source: ABS 2001 and 2006 Censuses of Population and Housing

*Labour force status  
continued*

#### EMPLOYMENT

In 2006, almost half (45%) of Indigenous people aged 15–64 years were employed (graph 2.7). Of those who were employed, half (53%) were employed full-time, compared with 65% of non-Indigenous people. Part-time employment accounted for a greater share of total employment among Indigenous people (37%) than non-Indigenous people (29%). The remaining employed Indigenous people (10%) were away from work at the time of the Census.

#### **2.8** COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT EMPLOYMENT PROJECTS (CDEP)

The following data on the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) programme are taken from the 2004–05 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS) as coverage of this topic in the 2006 Census was limited to people in remote areas.

The CDEP programme accounts for a significant proportion of employment for Indigenous Australians. This programme aims to create local employment opportunities in Indigenous communities (predominantly in remote and regional areas) where the labour market might not otherwise offer employment. CDEP employment is usually part-time work and income is received in place of an income support payment. In the 2004–05 NATSIHS, there were around 30,600 Indigenous CDEP participants aged 15–64 years, accounting for 21% of employed Indigenous people in this age group (SCRGSP 2007a).

#### UNEMPLOYMENT

Between 2001 and 2006, the unemployment rate (i.e. the unemployed as a proportion of the labour force) for Indigenous people aged 15–64 years decreased from 20% to 16%. However, the unemployment rate for Indigenous Australians was still three times the rate for non-Indigenous Australians (16% compared with 5%), similar to the rate ratios from the 2001 Census (20% compared with 7%) (table 2.9) (ABS 2003). As CDEP is considered a form of employment, those people who reported being employed under the CDEP programme are excluded from unemployment figures. This has a greater effect on the unemployment rate in remote areas than in non-remote areas.

#### NOT IN THE LABOUR FORCE

In the 2006 Census, 41% of Indigenous people aged 15–64 years were not in the labour force. Almost half (46%) of all Indigenous females aged 15–64 years were not in the labour force compared with just over one-third of Indigenous males (35%). Indigenous people in remote areas were more likely than those in major cities to not be participating in the labour force (43% compared with 37%) (table 2.9).

**2.9** LABOUR FORCE STATUS, by Indigenous status—2001 and 2006

		INDIGENOUS	INDIGENOUS 2006				NON-INDIGENOUS
		2001	2006				2006
		<i>Total</i>	<i>Major Cities</i>	<i>Regional</i>	<i>Remote</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Total</i>
Employed							
Full time	%	na	30.2	23.6	16.7	24.1	45.9
Part time	%	na	14.7	15.4	21.2	16.6	20.5
Total(a)	%	41.9	49.5	43.4	42.8	45.2	70.8
nemployed							
Looking for full time work	%	8.2	6.2	6.8	4.0	5.9	2.4
Looking for part time work	%	2.3	2.6	2.8	1.8	2.4	1.5
Total	%	10.5	8.8	9.6	5.8	8.4	3.8
Not in the labour force	%	44.5	37.2	42.0	43.1	40.7	24.2
Not stated	%	3.1	4.5	5.0	8.4	5.7	1.2
<b>Persons aged 15–64 years</b>	no.	<b>237 636</b>	<b>88 012</b>	<b>113 675</b>	<b>65 919</b>	<b>268 807</b>	<b>12 276 785</b>
Labour force participation rate	%	52.4	58.3	53.0	48.6	53.6	74.7
Unemployment rate	%	20.0	15.0	18.1	11.9	15.6	5.1

na not available

Source: ABS 2001 and 2006 Censuses of Population and Housing

(a) Includes persons employed but away from work.

*Income*

Nationally, the median weekly individual income of Indigenous Australians aged 15 years and over was \$278 in 2006; just over half the median income for non-Indigenous Australians which was \$473. Indigenous people in the ACT had higher median weekly personal income than those in any other state or territory, at \$508. Indigenous people in major cities had higher median personal weekly income (\$352) than those in regional areas (\$294) or remote areas (\$223).

*Household characteristics*

An Indigenous household is defined as a household in which there are one or more Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people usually resident. Households in which there are no identified Indigenous usual residents are referred to as 'other households' in this report. There were around 166,700 Indigenous households in 2006, representing 2.3% of all households in Australia.

*Equivalised household  
income*

## **2.10** EQUIVALISED INCOME

Equivalised gross household income is a standardised income measure, adjusted for the different income needs of households of different size and composition. It takes into account the greater income needs of larger households and the economies of scale achieved when people live together. For a lone person household, it is equal to gross household income. For a household comprising more than one person, it indicates the gross household income that would need to be received by a lone person household to achieve the same economic wellbeing as a household comprising more than one person.

### *Low resource households*

In this publication, people in low resource households are defined as those with a mean equivalised gross household income within the income boundaries of the first quintile, or lowest 20%. People with mean equivalised gross household income in the first quintile who were living in a home that was owned outright or owned with a mortgage by a household member, or in which there was an owner/manager of an unincorporated business have been excluded from this definition.

Equivalised household income 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 2006, the median equivalised gross household income of Indigenous people was \$362 per week, with the highest median reported in major cities (\$439). The median weekly equivalised gross household income for Indigenous people was equivalent to just over half the corresponding income for non-Indigenous people, which was \$642. For more information on equivalised income, see the Glossary.

### PEOPLE IN LOW RESOURCE HOUSEHOLDS

In 2006, 39% of Indigenous people were living in low resource households, more than four times the rate of non-Indigenous people (8%). For more information on low resource households and income quintiles, see box 2.10 and the Glossary.

*Tenure type*

In the 2006 Census, one-third (34%) of Indigenous households were living in dwellings that were either owned outright or owned with a mortgage by a member of the household; half the rate of home ownership reported by other households (69%). The median monthly housing loan repayment being made by Indigenous households was \$1,127 compared with \$1,300 for other households.

More than half (59%) of Indigenous households were renting in 2006 (either privately or from state/territory or community housing providers), double the rate for other households (26%). Median weekly rent paid by Indigenous households was \$140, with those renting from private and other landlords paying the highest median weekly rent (\$190). Almost half (48%) of Indigenous households renting from state/territory housing authorities were paying less than \$100 per week.

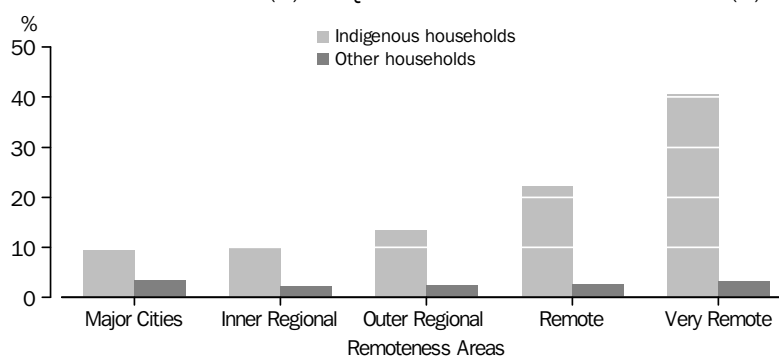
*Household size*

The Canadian National Occupancy Standard for housing appropriateness is an

internationally accepted measure of housing utilisation that is sensitive to both household size and composition. Using this measure, households that require at least one additional bedroom are considered to experience some degree of overcrowding. For more information on the criteria used in the Canadian National Occupancy Standard, see Chapter 4.

In the 2006 Census, the average number of bedrooms in all Australian dwellings was 3.1. However, the average number of persons per bedroom in Indigenous households was higher than in other households (3.4 compared with 2.6). Based on the Canadian National Occupancy Standard for housing utilisation, around one in eight Indigenous households (14%) were living in dwellings that needed one or more extra bedrooms compared with 3% of other households. In 2006, the proportion of Indigenous households experiencing overcrowding was higher in remote areas, with dwellings in very remote areas being the most likely to require one or more extra bedrooms (graph 2.11). Reflecting the generally higher rates of overcrowding in remote areas, some 34% of Indigenous households in the Northern Territory were living in overcrowded conditions, followed by 14% in both Western Australia and Queensland.

**2.11** HOUSEHOLDS (a) REQUIRING AN EXTRA BEDROOM (b)—2006



(a) In occupied private dwellings.

(b) Based on the Canadian National Occupancy Standard for housing appropriateness.

Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

#### Law and justice

In the 2002 NATSISS, around one-quarter (24%) of Indigenous people aged 15 years and over reported being a victim of physical or threatened violence in the 12 months prior to the survey (26% of males and 23% of females), nearly double the overall rate reported in 1994 (13%). In addition, one in five Indigenous people (19%) reported a family member having been sent to jail/currently in jail in 2002 (ABS 2004d).

Indigenous prisoners represented 24% of the total prisoner population at 30 June 2007. The proportion of prisoners that were Indigenous varied across states and territories. In the Northern Territory, which has the largest proportion of Indigenous residents, 84% of the prisoner population was Indigenous, while in Victoria, 6% of the prisoner population was Indigenous. After adjusting for differences in the age structure of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, the Indigenous imprisonment rate was 1,787 per 100,000 adult Indigenous population, 13 times the non-Indigenous rate at 30 June 2007 (table 2.12) (ABS 2007g). Indigenous people were 21 times more likely to be in prison

than non-Indigenous people in Western Australia; the highest age standardised ratio of Indigenous to non-Indigenous rates of imprisonment in Australia.

## 2.12 IMPRISONMENT RATES (a)(b), by Indigenous status and state/territory—30 June 2007

	NSW(c)	Vic.	QLD	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT(d)	Australia
<b>Crude rates</b>									
Indigenous	2 467.4	1 288.5	1 761.4	2 334.7	3 886.2	632.9	2 046.6	774.9	2 255.5
Non-Indigenous	155.0	99.1	132.0	113.6	141.8	124.4	126.1	83.8	129.2
Ratio of crude rates(e)	15.9	13.0	13.3	20.6	27.4	5.1	16.2	9.2	17.5
<b>Age-standardised rates</b>									
Indigenous	1 987.7	999.5	1 405.4	1 839.5	3 077.2	521.1	1 602.9	672.8	1 786.7
Non-Indigenous	161.8	100.8	136.1	124.9	146.1	140.6	117.0	80.5	133.5
Ratio of age standardised rates(e)	12.3	9.9	10.3	14.7	21.1	3.7	13.7	8.4	13.4
<b>All prisoners</b>	<b>195.4</b>	<b>104.6</b>	<b>174.0</b>	<b>143.9</b>	<b>241.9</b>	<b>140.6</b>	<b>595.2</b>	<b>90.6</b>	<b>169.4</b>

(a) Rate per 100,000 adult population.

(b) The data presented in this table have been confidentialised to prevent identification of individuals.

(c) Data for NSW excludes ACT prisoners held in NSW prisons.

(d) Data for ACT includes prisoners held in NSW prisons as well as ACT prisoners held in ACT prisons.

(e) The ratio of Indigenous to non-Indigenous imprisonment is calculated by dividing the Indigenous rate by the non-Indigenous rate.

Source: ABS 2007g

### Access to motor vehicles

In the 2006 Census, almost one-quarter (23%) of Indigenous households did not have ready access to a registered vehicle (i.e. garaged or parked at, or near, their dwelling), compared with 10% of other households. The Northern Territory had the highest proportion of Indigenous households without access to a registered vehicle (44%).

### SUMMARY

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of Australia was estimated to be 517,200 at 30 June 2006, or 2.5% of the total Australian population. The Indigenous population is relatively young, with a median age of 21 years, compared with a median age of 37 years in the non-Indigenous population.

At 30 June 2006, an estimated 32% of the Indigenous population were living in major cities, 43% in regional areas and one-quarter (25%) in remote areas. The jurisdictions with the largest estimated resident Indigenous populations were New South Wales (148,200 or 29% of the total Indigenous population) and Queensland (146,400 or 28% of the total Indigenous population). The Northern Territory had a higher proportion of Indigenous residents (32%) than any other state or territory.

Between the 2001 and 2006 Censuses, there was an increase in the proportion of Indigenous people completing Year 12 (from 20% to 23%). Over the same period, there was also a decrease in the Indigenous unemployment rate from 20% to 16% and an increase in the amount of household income available to Indigenous people. In 2006, the median weekly equivalised gross household income for Indigenous people (\$362) was equivalent to 56% of the corresponding income for non-Indigenous people (\$642). Despite these improvements, the unemployment rate was still much higher for Indigenous people than non-Indigenous people (16% compared with 5%), and rates of home ownership for Indigenous households were half those of other households (34% compared with 69%).