



FACTSHEET

Life expectancy and mortality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Life expectancy for the Indigenous population is much lower than non-Indigenous Australians across all age groups. However, there is considerable uncertainty about the magnitude of this difference because Indigenous status has not been reported accurately on death registrations.

What is the gap in life expectancy?

A recent study by the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated Indigenous life expectancy for 2005-07 to be 67.2 years for men, which was 11.5 years lower than for non-Indigenous men, and 72.9 years for women, which was 9.7 years lower than for non-Indigenous women.

For which age groups is Indigenous mortality higher?

Indigenous death rates are highest compared with non-Indigenous rates from ages 25-64 years.

What are the leading causes of excess Indigenous mortality?

The causes of death with the largest contribution to excess male Indigenous mortality are circulatory diseases (26%), external causes (20%), neoplasms (10%), respiratory diseases (10%) and endocrine, metabolic and nutritional disorders (9%).

For women, the causes of death with the largest contribution to excess Indigenous mortality are circulatory diseases (24%), endocrine, metabolic and nutritional disorders (18%), digestive diseases (10%), neoplasms (9%) and respiratory diseases (9%).

From ages 35-54, the ratio of Indigenous to non-Indigenous death rates is highest for diabetes, diseases of the liver, chronic lower respiratory disease and ischaemic heart disease.

What are recent trends in Indigenous mortality?

Indigenous death rates declined significantly from 1991-2008, but not quicker than falls in death rates for other Australians. There was also a decline in Indigenous death rates from circulatory diseases, and again this was matched by falls for other Australians.

What risk factors contribute to excess Indigenous mortality?

Previous research has revealed that a range of risk factors contribute to excess Indigenous mortality, including tobacco smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, high overweight/obesity, poor nutrition and lower utilisation of health services.

More information

The observatory paper *Life expectancy and mortality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people* shows that Indigenous Australians experience much higher death rates than the non-Indigenous Australians across all age groups and for all major causes of death.

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