

Latest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health data highlights both progress and shortfalls to achieving health equity

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The Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet has released the latest edition of their annual evidence-based publication, the [Overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health status 2022](#). By reviewing and translating all the available data into one publication, the 2022 Overview provides a 'snapshot' of the most recent indicators of health.

New Census data has provided fresh insights, as well as detailed findings from the latest Australian Burden of Disease study which revealed that mental and substance use disorders and injuries were the leading contributors to the overall burden of disease. In 2021, ischaemic heart disease was the leading specific cause of death of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in NSW, Qld, WA, SA and the NT. In 2020-21, the most common reason for hospitalisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia after care involving dialysis was injury, poisoning and certain other consequences of external causes (e.g., vehicle accidents). Sexually transmissible infections continue to be a health issue.

The data also showed positive changes with the proportion of women attending their first antenatal visit during the first trimester of pregnancy now at 71% - an increase from 50% in 2012. In 2020, 92% of pregnant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women self-reported not consuming alcohol during the first 20 weeks of pregnancy and mothers who reported smoking during pregnancy had decreased from 49% in 2010 to 43%. In 2022, the *Commonwealth Closing the Gap annual report* outlined that there is more to be done towards achieving parity in a range of indicators. With health targets, the gap in life expectancy while trending in a positive direction is not on track, however the target to increase the proportion of children with a healthy birthweight is showing progress with the latest figure of 90% - close to the 2031 target of 91%.

Professor Neil Drew, Director of the HealthInfoNet said 'COVID-19 has had a profound impact and the lessons learned provide a roadmap for future pandemic management and reinforce the importance of continuing to address the long-term impacts of the social and cultural determinants of health. These include support for the rights to self-determination, maintaining strong public health responses, building local workforce capability and capacity, continuing to build on the digital and telehealth resources mobilised during the pandemic and ensuring that robust evaluation and program development includes a commitment to Indigenous data sovereignty'. A [plain language infographic Summary version](#) and [PowerPoint presentation of key points](#) are also available.

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More information: The HealthInfoNet is a comprehensive Internet resource that informs practice and policy in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health by making, up to date research and other knowledge, readily accessible via any platform. It contributes to closing the gap in health between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians. For over 25 years, working in the area of knowledge exchange with a population health focus, the HealthInfoNet makes research and other information freely available in a form that has immediate, practical utility for practitioners and policy-makers in the area of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, enabling them to make decisions based on the best available evidence.
www.healthinfo.net.ecu.edu.au