



# Health status of population groups

Extracted from *Australia's health 2010*

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Influences on health affect our day-to-day lives. While the nature and impact of these influences vary from person to person, examining the health of population groups reveals distinct patterns within the community. These patterns help us understand how and why health is distributed unevenly, and guide us on how the health of different groups can be improved.

**Indigenous people** are generally less healthy than other Australians, die at much younger ages, and have more disability and a lower quality of life.

- One of the reasons for this poorer health is that Indigenous Australians are socioeconomically disadvantaged compared with other Australians.
- On average, they report having lower incomes than other Australians, higher rates of unemployment, lower educational attainment, and more overcrowded households.
- This socioeconomic disadvantage also places Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at greater risk of unhealthy factors such as smoking and alcohol misuse, as well as overweight and obesity.

**People living in rural and remote areas** tend to have higher levels of disease risk factors and illness than those in major cities.

- There can be many reasons for their generally poorer health, including the lower economic advantages of many rural communities (lower levels of education, income and employment), occupational risks from farm or mining work, greater levels of smoking and alcohol abuse, less access to health services and staff, and the hazards of driving over long road distances.
- Despite this general health picture, many people live in rural areas because of the areas' unique and enjoyable lifestyle. Compared with urban areas, personal safety, community connection and general wellbeing are higher in some rural areas. All these factors—positive and negative—affect health in various ways.

Compared with those who have social and economic advantages, **disadvantaged Australians** are more likely to have shorter lives.

- Health and wellbeing is influenced by broad but closely related socioeconomic factors, such as education, occupation and income. These factors help to explain many of the health inequalities in Australia today.
- In general, relatively disadvantaged members of the community live shorter lives and have higher rates of illness, disability and death than those relatively advantaged.

**People with disability** are more likely than others to have poor physical and mental health, and higher rates of risk factors such as smoking and overweight.

- There are an estimated 3.9 million Australians with disability. Although many enjoy good health many others may have poor health, either as a result of the underlying cause of their disability or for reasons unrelated to that cause.

*Note: For more detailed information see Chapter 5 in Australia's health 2010.*