



## 7.6 Use of disability and aged care services by Indigenous Australians

### Indigenous Australians with disability

Data from the Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC) show that, in 2015, one quarter (24%, 125,000 people) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians living in households reported living with disability—defined as any limitation, restriction or impairment which restricts a person's everyday activities, and has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least 6 months (see also Chapter 8.1 'People with disability') (ABS 2016a). After adjusting for differences in population age structure, Indigenous Australians were 1.8 times as likely as non-Indigenous Australians to be living with disability. Of Indigenous Australians with disability, 38,100 people (7.3% of the total Indigenous population) had severe or profound core activity limitation, meaning they sometimes or always need help with day-to-day activities related to self-care, mobility and communication (ABS 2016a).

Disability prevalence estimates are available from the 2014–15 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS), but only for Indigenous people aged 15 and over. These estimates are markedly higher (45%, 199,800 people) than those from the 2015 SDAC (29%, 101,000 people); however, the scope and collection methodology for these two surveys differed (ABS 2016a, 2016b). For example, the SDAC used a larger set of screening questions, which are more effective in differentiating between people with disability and people with long-term health conditions but no disability; this may have contributed to the higher estimates from the NATSISS (ABS 2016a). As well, the SDAC did not include people living in *Very remote* areas and discrete Indigenous communities. Excluding *Very remote* areas from the NATSISS data, however, does not change the estimated disability prevalence rate among Indigenous people aged 15 and over (45%, 173,200 people). Estimates of Indigenous people aged 15 and over with a profound or severe core activity limitation—which has a much narrower definition than overall disability—are similar across the two surveys (NATSISS—7.7%, 34,300 people; SDAC—7.6%, 26,300 people).

### Use of disability support services

Under the National Disability Agreement (NDA), government services are provided to people with disability to assist them with areas of daily living, such as accommodation, community involvement and employment. Data on the use of these services are collected and reported by the AIHW in the Disability Services National Minimum Data Set (DS NMDS).

In 2015–16, around 19,300 Indigenous Australians used disability support services under the NDA, accounting for 5.8% of service users. Indigenous service users were generally younger than non-Indigenous service users, with an average age of 28 compared with 35.





Intellectual disability was the most common primary disability reported by Indigenous and non-Indigenous service users (28% and 25%, respectively), followed by physical disability (19% for both) and psychiatric disability (18% and 20%, respectively).

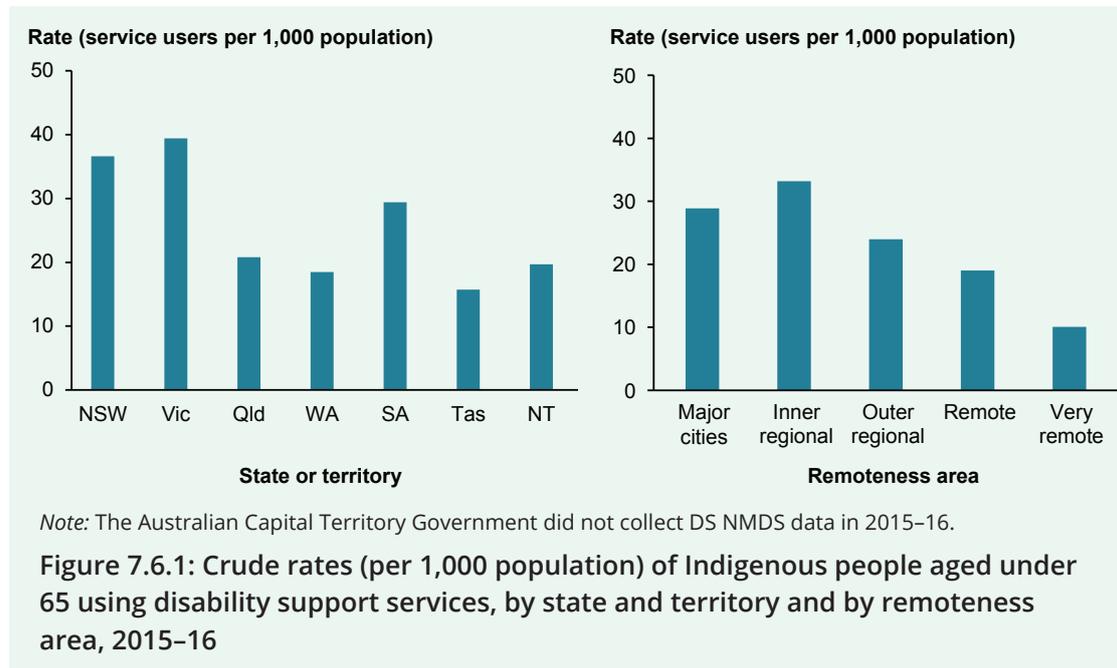
The most common service group used by Indigenous service users was community support (54%), followed by employment (37%), community access (13%), respite (12%) and accommodation support (11%). By comparison, the most common service group used by non-Indigenous service users was employment (46%), followed by community support (44%), community access (15%), accommodation support (12%) and respite (11%).

Almost all service users were aged under 65 (97% of Indigenous and 94% of non-Indigenous service users). After adjusting for differences in population age structure, Indigenous Australians aged under 65 used disability support services at almost twice the rate of non-Indigenous Australians aged under 65 (27 per 1,000 compared with 14 per 1,000 population).

## Location

In 2015–16, the rates of Indigenous people using disability support service were highest in Victoria and New South Wales (39 and 37 per 1,000 population, respectively) and lowest in Tasmania (16 per 1,000) (Figure 7.6.1).

The rate at which Indigenous people aged under 65 used disability support services was higher in non-remote areas than in remote areas (Figure 7.6.1).



## Labour force

In 2015–16, the proportion of disability support service users aged 15 and over who were in the labour force was similar for Indigenous (68%) and non-Indigenous (70%) people. Among those in the labour force, Indigenous service users were less likely to be employed (21%) than non-Indigenous service users (34%).





## National Disability Insurance Scheme

From 1 July 2013, users of disability support services in trial sites began moving to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) (see Chapter 8.1 'People with disability' for more information). The NDIS aims to provide Australians aged 65 and under who have permanent and significant disability with the reasonable and necessary support to participate in everyday life (NDIA 2016a). With the progressive roll out of the NDIS across Australia, it is expected that many existing NDA service users will move to it and cease to be counted in the DS NMDS collection over time.

Data on the NDIS are collected by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) (the independent statutory agency implementing the NDIS) and published in quarterly reports. As at 31 December 2016, Indigenous Australians represented 5.2% (3,200 people) of the 61,200 people with approved plans who are participating in the NDIS (NDIA 2016b).

In comparison, of the 4.1 million people with disability living in households in 2015 (based on SDAC data), 3.1% were Indigenous (125,000). Among people with severe or profound disability (1.2 million people), 3.2% were Indigenous (38,100 people) (ABS 2016a).

## Aged care services

Aged care support is available to older Australians through three main types of care—the Home Care Packages Program, residential aged care and the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) (see Chapter 5.1 'Ageing and aged care' for more information). Data on Indigenous status in the CHSP are not yet available for reporting; for more information see 'What is missing from the picture?' later in this chapter.

Information in this article relates to the use by Indigenous Australians of services in mainstream programs. Flexible care programs are also available, including one specifically aimed at older Indigenous people—the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program. As at 30 June 2015, 31 aged care services were funded to deliver 802 aged care places through this program (Department of Health 2015).

## Target population

The Indigenous population has a younger age structure and shorter life expectancy than the non-Indigenous population. Conditions associated with ageing may also affect Indigenous Australians earlier. Given these circumstances, the aged care target population comprises Indigenous Australians aged 50 and over and non-Indigenous Australians aged 65 and over. Of the 3.8 million Australians in the aged care target population in 2016, around 112,000 (3.0%) were Indigenous people.

## Home Care

The Home Care Packages Program is designed to provide clients with an individually tailored and coordinated package of services to support them in living independently in the community for as long as possible. Home Care Packages are available at four levels of care. Progressively higher levels of help are offered to support people with basic, low, intermediate, or high care needs.





It should be noted that more than one-third (36%) of home care client records in 2016 did not include Indigenous status (Table 7.6.1). Hence, these data should be used with caution.

As at 30 June 2016, 4.2% of Home Care clients with recorded Indigenous status in client records identified as Indigenous Australians. Of those clients with recorded Indigenous status, 3.9% of those receiving level 1 (basic) care and 5.3% of those receiving level 2 (low) care were Indigenous (Table 7.6.1).

**Table 7.6.1: Proportion of people using Home Care Packages, by level of care and Indigenous status, 30 June 2016**

| Indigenous status                              | Home Care levels of care                            |                    |                             |                     | Total Home Care |
|--|---|--------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
|  | Level 1 (basic care)                                | Level 2 (low care) | Level 3 (intermediate care) | Level 4 (high care) |                 |
|  | <b>% of total clients</b>                           |                    |                             |                     |                 |
| Indigenous                                     | 1.7   | 3.3                | 1.4                         | 1.5                 | 2.7             |
| Non-Indigenous                                 | 42.9  | 58.2               | 60.3                        | 72.1                | 61.4            |
| <i>Not stated</i>                              | 55.3  | 38.6               | 38.3                        | 26.3                | 35.9            |
| <b>All clients</b>                             | <b>100.0</b>  | <b>100.0</b>       | <b>100.0</b>                | <b>100.0</b>        | <b>100.0</b>    |
|  | <b>% of clients with recorded Indigenous status</b> |                    |                             |                     |                 |
| Indigenous                                     | 3.9   | 5.3                | 2.2                         | 2.1                 | 4.2             |
| Non-Indigenous                                 | 96.1  | 94.7               | 97.8                        | 97.9                | 95.8            |
| <b>Clients with recorded Indigenous status</b> | <b>100.0</b>  | <b>100.0</b>       | <b>100.0</b>                | <b>100.0</b>        | <b>100.0</b>    |

*Note:* Columns may not add to 100% due to rounding.

## Residential aged care

As at 30 June 2016, there were 1,531 Indigenous Australians in permanent residential aged care. This represents 0.9% of permanent residential aged care residents and 0.2% of the total Indigenous population.

The age profile of Indigenous people in permanent residential aged care was substantially younger than that of non-Indigenous people. One-quarter (26%) of Indigenous permanent aged care residents were aged under 65 compared with only 3.3% of non-Indigenous aged care residents. Indigenous Australians had higher rates of aged care use in all age groups until age 85 (Figure 7.6.2).





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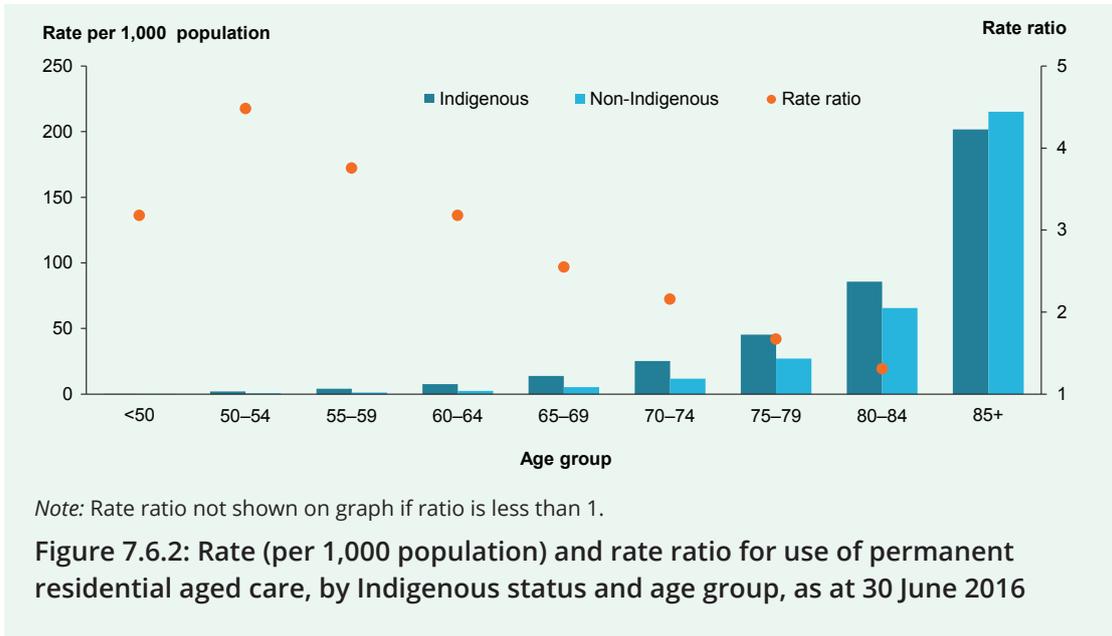


Figure 7.6.2: Rate (per 1,000 population) and rate ratio for use of permanent residential aged care, by Indigenous status and age group, as at 30 June 2016

As at 30 June 2016, the rate of Indigenous Australians in permanent residential aged care was highest in *Remote and very remote* areas and lowest in *Major cities* (Figure 7.6.3).

The pattern of aged care residents by remoteness differed for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, with around one-third (31%) of Indigenous aged care residents in *Major cities*, compared with more than two-thirds (70%) of non-Indigenous residents. The observed patterns of aged care residents by remoteness closely mirrors the corresponding aged care target population patterns (Figure 7.6.3).

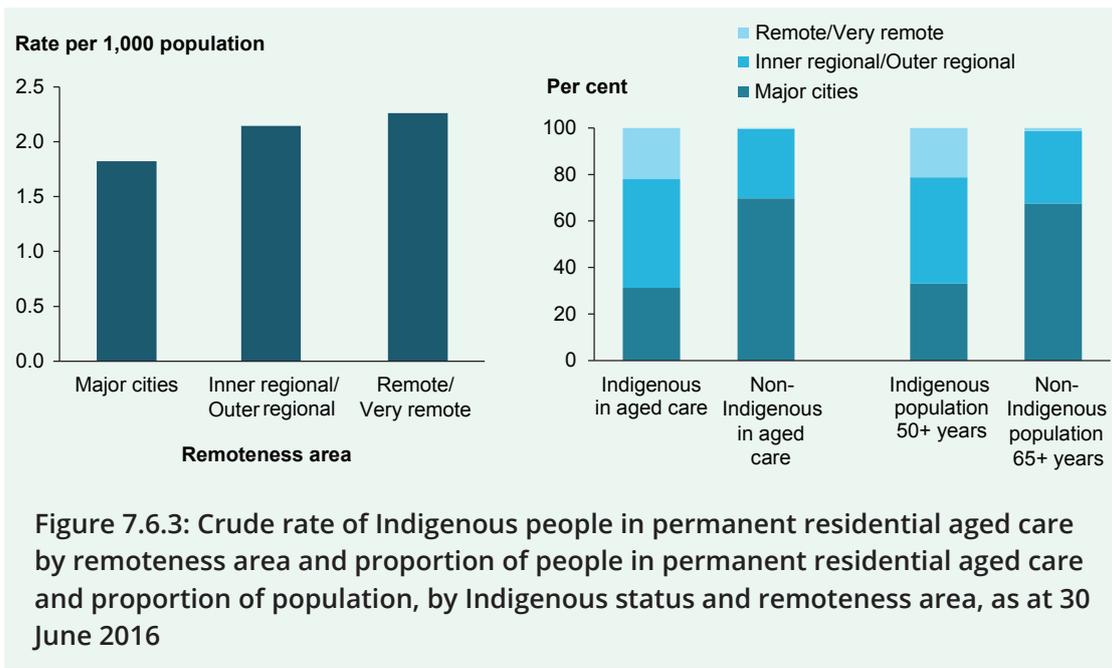


Figure 7.6.3: Crude rate of Indigenous people in permanent residential aged care by remoteness area and proportion of people in permanent residential aged care and proportion of population, by Indigenous status and remoteness area, as at 30 June 2016





## What is missing from the picture?

The CHSP was launched in July 2015. It incorporates Home and Community Care (HACC) and several smaller programs, and is the largest of the aged care programs. Because of the transition to a new system some data items, including Indigenous status, were unavailable for reporting in the first year (2015–16).

As self-identifying one's Indigenous status is not compulsory, the number of people presented who identified themselves as being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin may be an underestimate of the true number of Indigenous people using these programs.

Information about geographical location (remoteness) is based on the location of the service provider for all programs except HACC. Although the location of care recipients can be inferred from the location of service providers, some care recipients may live outside the geographical areas or jurisdictions of service providers.

Some socio-demographic characteristics of care recipients are recorded when they apply for care; these may have changed by the time recipients are receiving care. These include usual residence status and living arrangements.

## Where do I go for more information?

More information about use of disability support services by Indigenous Australians is available from [Disability support services: services provided under the National Disability Agreement 2015-16](#) and the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework](#).

More data about the use of aged care services by Indigenous Australians are available from the [AIHW National Aged Care Data Clearinghouse](#).

## References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 2016a. Disability, ageing and carers, Australia: summary of findings, 2015. ABS cat. no. 4430.0. Canberra: ABS.

ABS 2016b. National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2014–15. ABS cat. no. 4714.0. Canberra: ABS.

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