



OVERCOMING INDIGENOUS DISADVANTAGE 2016

The 2016 Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage (OID) report shows some positive trends in the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, but also shows outcomes have stagnated or worsened in some areas.

Two years on from the previous report there continues to be improvement in many areas of health, economic participation and aspects of education. But areas such as justice and mental health remain concerning, with increases in imprisonment rates and hospitalisations for self-harm.

“It is encouraging to see improvement over the last decade in rates of year 12 completion and post school education. But alarmingly the national imprisonment rate has increased 77 per cent over the last 15 years, and hospitalisation rates for self-harm have increased by 56 per cent over the last decade” said Peter Harris, Chair of the Productivity Commission and of the Steering Committee.

The OID report continues to provide comprehensive reporting, with a ‘strengths-based’ focus. It also includes some case studies on ‘things that work’ to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. “If we are to see improvements in outcomes we need to know which policies work and why. But the overwhelming lack of robust, public evaluation of programs highlights the imperative for Indigenous policy evaluation” said Deputy Chair Karen Chester.

The OID report should be compulsory reading for anyone interested in the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, including those working in service delivery or program design.

It is the most comprehensive report on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing produced in Australia. It covers areas including governance and culture, early child development, health, education, economic participation and safe and supportive communities as well as reporting on indicators related to the Closing the Gap targets.

The report is produced by the Productivity Commission for the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians involved in its development. This report is the seventh in the series.

The 2016 OID main report, Overview and short video can be found at: www.pc.gov.au/oid2016

[SEE OVER FOR KEY POINTS]



Key points

- This report measures the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, and was produced in consultation with governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Around 3 per cent of the Australian population are estimated as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin (based on 2011 Census data).
- Outcomes have improved in a number of areas, including some COAG targets. For indicators with new data for this report:
 - Mortality rates for children improved between 1998 and 2014, particularly for 0<1 year olds, whose mortality rates more than halved (from 14 to 6 deaths per 1000 live births).
 - Education improvements included increases in the proportion of 20–24 year olds completing year 12 or above (from 2008 to 2014-15) and the proportion of 20–64 year olds with or working towards post-school qualifications (from 2002 to 2014-15).
 - The proportion of adults whose main income was from employment increased from 32 per cent in 2002 to 43 per cent in 2014-15, with household income increasing over this period.
 - The proportion of adults that recognised traditional lands increased from 70 per cent in 2002 to 74 per cent in 2014-15.
- However, there has been little or no change for some indicators.
 - Rates of family and community violence were unchanged between 2002 and 2014-15 (around 22 per cent), and risky long-term alcohol use in 2014-15 was similar to 2002 (though lower than 2008).
 - The proportions of people learning and speaking Indigenous languages remained unchanged from 2008 to 2014-15.
- Outcomes have worsened in some areas.
 - The proportion of adults reporting high levels of psychological distress increased from 27 per cent in 2004-05 to 33 per cent in 2014-15, and hospitalisations for self-harm increased by 56 per cent over this period.
 - The proportion of adults reporting substance misuse in the previous 12 months increased from 23 per cent in 2002 to 31 per cent in 2014-15.
 - The adult imprisonment rate increased 77 per cent between 2000 and 2015, and whilst the juvenile detention rate has decreased it is still 24 times the rate for non-Indigenous youth.
- Change over time cannot be assessed for all the indicators — some indicators have no trend data; some indicators report on service use, and change over time might be due to changing access rather than changes in the underlying outcome; and some indicators have related measures that moved in different directions.
- Finally, data alone cannot tell the complete story about the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, nor can it fully tell us why outcomes improve (or not) in different areas. To support the indicator reporting, case studies of ‘things that work’ are included in this report. However, the relatively small number of case studies included reflects a lack of rigorously evaluated programs in the Indigenous policy area.