

# Tobacco smoking in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population

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## INTRODUCTION

In 2004–05, the Australian Bureau of Statistics conducted two nation-wide health surveys: the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey and the National Health Survey. These surveys were designed to enable comparisons between the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous people.

### What is tobacco smoking?

The information in this flyer is about regular smokers aged 18 years and over. Regular smokers are people who smoke one or more cigarettes a day, on average.

### Why is tobacco smoking an important health issue for Indigenous people?

Tobacco smoking is the largest single preventable cause of death and disease in Australia. Smoking tobacco increases the risk of numerous cancers (such as those of the mouth and lungs), heart and vascular diseases, respiratory diseases and a variety of other health conditions.

## TOBACCO SMOKING AMONG ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE

Half of Indigenous adults (50%) reported being a regular tobacco smoker in 2004-05.

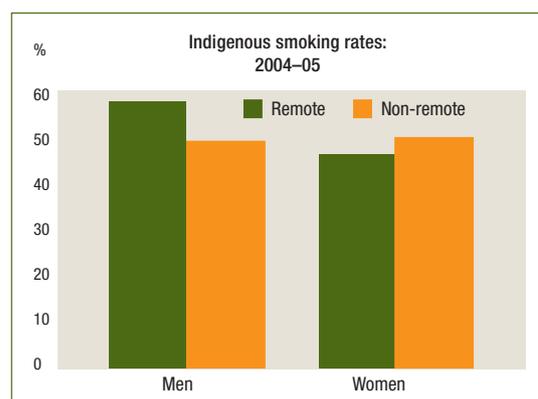
One in five Indigenous adults (or 20%) reported being an ex-smoker and 28% reported that they had never smoked. Indigenous adults living in remote areas had slightly higher rates of regular tobacco smoking (52%) than those in non-remote areas (49%).

Over the ten years to 2004-05 the rate of smoking in the Indigenous population remained about the same.

### Tobacco smoking rates for men and women

Overall, the rate of smoking is about the same for Indigenous men (51%) and Indigenous women (49%).

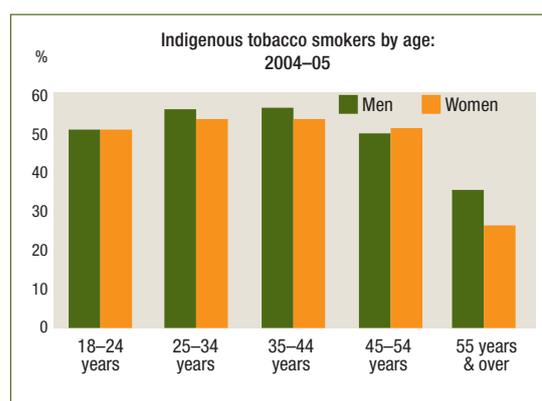
Indigenous men living in remote areas were more likely to be regular smokers (58%) than were those in non-remote areas (49%). The pattern for Indigenous women was different, with slightly higher rates of smoking in non-remote areas (50%) than in remote areas (47%).



### Tobacco smoking and age

Smoking rates were higher in younger age groups than in older age groups. Indigenous people in the age groups 25 to 34 years and 35 to 44 years had the highest smoking rates (both 55%). In contrast, those aged 55 years and over had the lowest rate (30%).

Indigenous men and women smoked at similar rates in all age groups except the 55 years and over group, where rates for women were lower than those for men (26% compared to 35%).

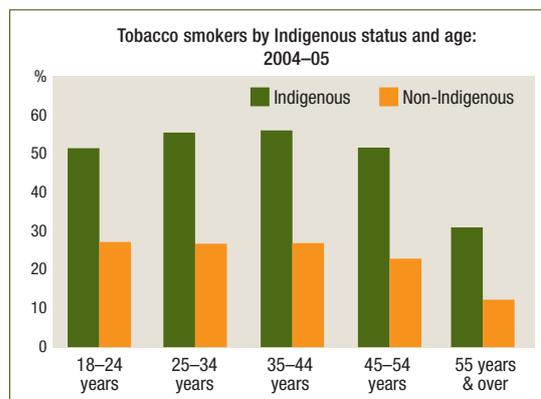


## COMPARING WITH NON-INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

The rate of tobacco smoking in the Indigenous population is about twice the rate in the non-Indigenous population.

In every age group, Indigenous people are about twice as likely as non-Indigenous people to smoke regularly.

The rate of regular tobacco smoking amongst Indigenous females was nearly three times that of non-Indigenous females. Similarly, the smoking rate for Indigenous males was twice that of non-Indigenous males.



## OTHER RISK FACTORS

Tobacco smoking is associated with risky drinking, poor diet and physical inactivity. In 2004-05, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults who smoked regularly:

- were more than twice as likely as non-smokers (includes ex-smokers) to report long-term risky to high risk levels of alcohol consumption (23% compared with 9%).
- were almost twice as likely as non-smokers to report that they did not eat fruit on a daily basis (19% compared with 10%).
- were more likely than non-smokers to have an inactive lifestyle (51% compared with 42% in non-remote areas).

Indigenous adults who had experienced more than one life stressor in the 12 months before the 2004-05 survey had higher rates of tobacco smoking (54%) than did those who reported that they had experienced only one or no stressful circumstances (46%).

Similarly, Indigenous people in households that had experienced financial stress in the past year were more likely to be daily smokers than those whose households had not experienced financial stress (58% compared with 41%).

**For more information about these and related statistics, please refer to the following publications:**

National Health Survey: Summary of Results: 2004-05

Catalogue number 4364.0

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey: 2004-05

Catalogue number 4715.0

Tobacco Smoking - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:  
A snapshot, 2004-05

Catalogue number 4722.0.55.004

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