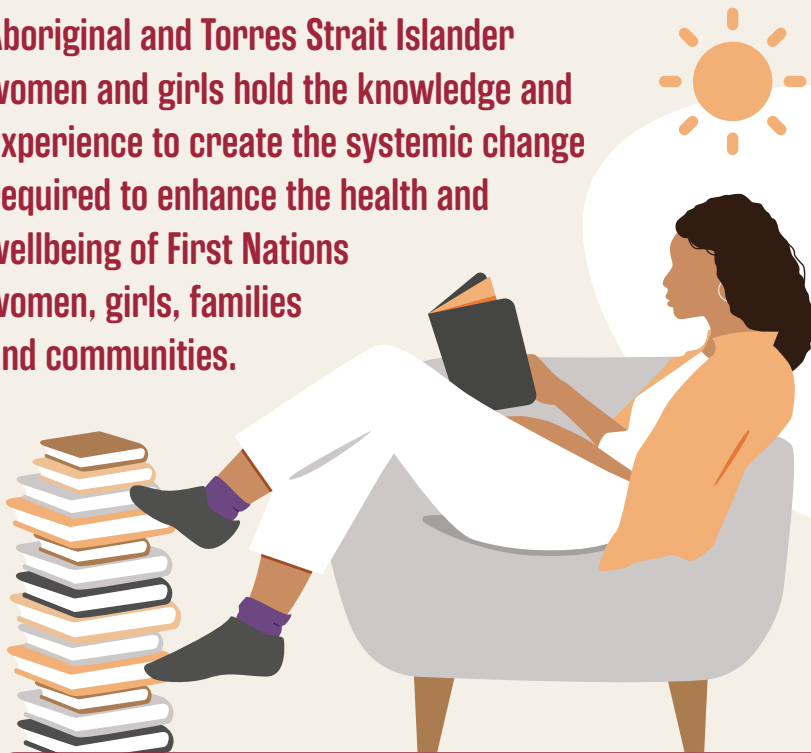


Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women and Girls

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls hold the knowledge and experience to create the systemic change required to enhance the health and wellbeing of First Nations women, girls, families and communities.



In Australia there are nearly

491,000

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.*

This represents **3.8%** of women in Australia.¹



*It is important to note that First Nations people are undercounted in census data, so this number may be higher.²

Country and Connection



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are vital to cultural continuity:

85%

participate in, watch or attend cultural events or activities.³



74%

aged 15 years and over recognise a geographic area as their homelands or Country.



63%

identify with clan, tribal or language groups.⁴



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women and Girls

Health and Wellbeing

Life expectancy for Indigenous women (75.6 years)⁵ is almost **8 years shorter** than non-Indigenous women in Australia.⁶

Among babies born to Indigenous women, **14% are born preterm** compared to 8% of babies born to non-Indigenous women.⁷



24%
live with a disability.⁹



Indigenous – 14% Non-Indigenous – 8%

Indigenous-led health programmes lead to dramatically better outcomes, like the **'Birthing On Our Country'** initiative which reduced the proportion of preterm birth for women in the programme from **14.3% to 8.9%**.⁸

14.3% → 8.9%



Within the Legal System Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls are:

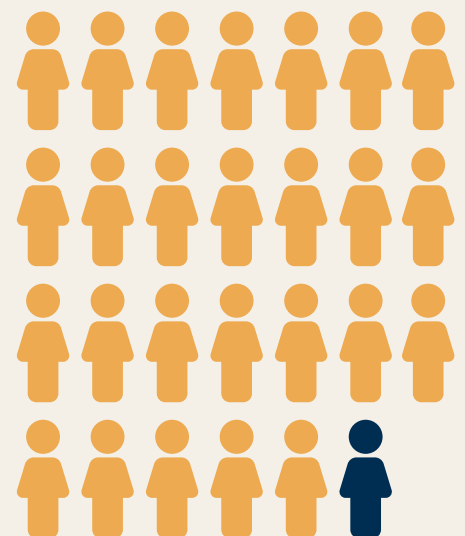
21.2x

The fastest growing prison population, imprisoned at 21.2 times the rate of non-Indigenous women.¹⁰

15.7x

more likely than non-Indigenous women to be held in custody while awaiting trial. **This is higher than the rate experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men.**¹²

First Nations children and young people are **imprisoned at 26 times the rate of non-Indigenous** children and young people.¹⁴



5x more likely to be charged for minor, non-violent offences and receive harsher sentences than non-Indigenous women.¹¹



Ongoing contact with the justice system drives cycles of re-incarceration.¹³



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women and Girls

Education, Employment and Carework

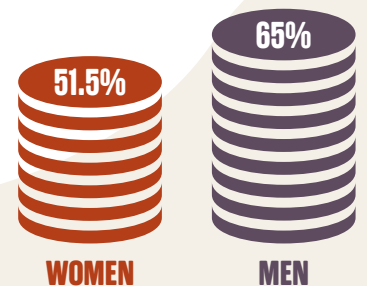
There are twice as many female Indigenous higher education students as male students.¹⁵



Indigenous women make up the majority of Indigenous enrolments in higher degrees by research (such as doctorates or masters by research).¹⁶

However... this does not translate into long-term meaningful employment.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have substantially lower rates of workforce participation than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men.¹⁷



12,043
FEMALE

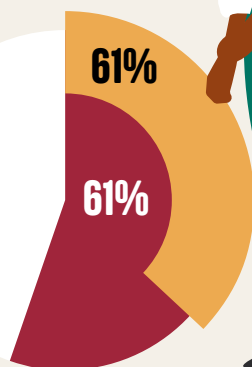
6,019
MALE

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are more likely to take time out of paid work to care for family than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and non-Indigenous Australians.¹⁸

2/3

Two-thirds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–14 years had a main carer who was an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander woman.¹⁹

- 61% provide support to someone living outside of their household
- 61% of these women live in a household with dependent children.²⁰



17%

15 years and over provide unpaid assistance to a person with a disability.²¹



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women and Girls

References

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, The health of Australia's females, Who are Australia's females? (Report, 7 June 2023) <<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/men-women/female-health/contents/who-are>>.
2. Ingeborg van Teeseling, 'The Census and Indigenous People: Undercounted and Underserved', Australia Explained (Web page, 10 August 2021) <<https://australia-explained.com.au/opinions/the-census-and-indigenous-people-undercounted-and-underserved/>>.
3. 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women Celebrated', Australian Bureau of Statistics (Web page, 9 July 2018) <<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-women-celebrated/latest-release>>.
4. 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women Celebrated', Australian Bureau of Statistics (Web page, 9 July 2018) <<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-women-celebrated/latest-release>>.
5. 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Life Expectancy Lowest in Remote and Very Remote Areas', Australian Bureau of Statistics (Web page, 29 November 2018) <<https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-life-expectancy-lowest-remote-and-very-remote-areas>>.
6. 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Life Expectancy Lowest in Remote and Very Remote Areas', Australian Bureau of Statistics (Web page, 29 November 2018) <<https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-life-expectancy-lowest-remote-and-very-remote-areas>>.
7. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Pregnancy and Birth Outcomes in Indigenous Women 2016-18*, (Report, 2021).
8. Yu Gao, 'Birthing on country service compared to standard care for First Nations Australians: a cost-effectiveness analysis from a health system perspective' (2023) 34 (100722) *The Lancet*, 1-14.
9. 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People with Disability', Australian Bureau of Statistics (Web page, 11 June 2021) <<https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people-disability>>.
10. Australian Law Reform Commission, *Pathways to Justice: Inquiry into the Incarceration Rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* (ALRC Report 133, 2018) Chapter 11.
11. Australian Institute of Criminology, *Indigenous Women's Offending Patterns: A Literature Review* (Review, 2010) 20-21.
12. Australian Law Reform Commission, *Pathways to Justice: Inquiry into the Incarceration Rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* (ALRC Report 133, 2018) Chapter 11.
13. Australian Law Reform Commission, *Pathways to Justice: Inquiry into the Incarceration Rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* (ALRC Report 133, 2018) Chapter 11.
14. 'Overrepresentation Explainer: First Nations Kids Are 26 Times More Likely to Be Incarcerated', Amnesty International Australia (Web page, 8 September 2022) <<https://www.amnesty.org.au/overrepresentation-explainer-first-nations-kids-are-26-times-more-likely-to-be-incarcerated/#:~:text=This%20shameful%20reality%20is%20even,in%20these%20statistics%20about%20prison>>.
15. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 'Educational participation and attainment of adults', Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework (Web page) <<https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/measures/2-06-educational-participation>>.
16. Australian Government Department of Education, *Indigenous Students in Higher Degrees by Research* (Report, August 2019).
17. Workplace Gender Equality Agency, *Gari Yala (Speak the Truth): Gendered Insights* (Report, 2021) 2.
18. Workplace Gender Equality Agency, *Gari Yala (Speak the Truth): Gendered Insights* (Report, 2021) 9.
19. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework 2021 (2023) <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4714.0> ; 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women Celebrated', Australian Bureau of Statistics (Web page, 9 July 2018) <<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-women-celebrated/latest-release>>.
20. 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women Celebrated', Australian Bureau of Statistics, (Web page, 9 July 2018) <<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-women-celebrated/latest-release>>.
21. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing: Reflecting Australia - Stories from the Census, 2016 2021.0 (27 March 2018) <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/census-population-and-housing-characteristics-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-australians/latest-release#unpaid-work>.

© Australian Human Rights Commission, 2024. This factsheet is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence except for the Commission's logo.

Infographics designed by Dreamtime Creative.