

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander smoking rates and the NT

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A survey released yesterday by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) shows sustained improvement in the national smoking rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey found that the national daily smoking rate (aged 15 and over) has decreased to 37 per cent, down from 42 per cent six years ago.

Professor David Thomas, head of Menzies School of Health Research tobacco control research program, has welcomed this new evidence.

“The results demonstrate that sustained improvements are achievable and happening now, and that continued investment is justified both by the Australian Government in the Tackling Indigenous Smoking program and by all governments in tobacco control” Professor Thomas said.

“The findings also show increasing numbers of young Indigenous people (aged 15 - 17) are not taking up smoking, both in remote and non-remote areas.”

Nationally, 85 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the age group have never smoked. This is an increase from 77 per cent six years ago.

“Unfortunately, the other improvements have not been uniform. As with previous ABS surveys, we have seen strong improvements in non-remote areas but few improvements in remote areas” Professor Thomas said.

In non-remote areas, daily smoking prevalence fell to 35 per cent (down from 39 per cent six years ago) but in remote areas daily smoking prevalence has remained largely unchanged at 49 per cent.

The Northern Territory remains the worst performing jurisdiction, with the highest daily smoking prevalence rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (50 per cent of those 18 and over).

“Clearly, more needs to be done by the Northern Territory Government to help Indigenous Territorians, especially those in remote areas, to successfully quit” Professor Thomas said.

For further information, view the [Australian Bureau of Statistics National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey, 2018-19 – Smoking](#) statistics.

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Professor Thomas is available for interview. His profile is available [here](#).

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Menzies School of Health Research

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