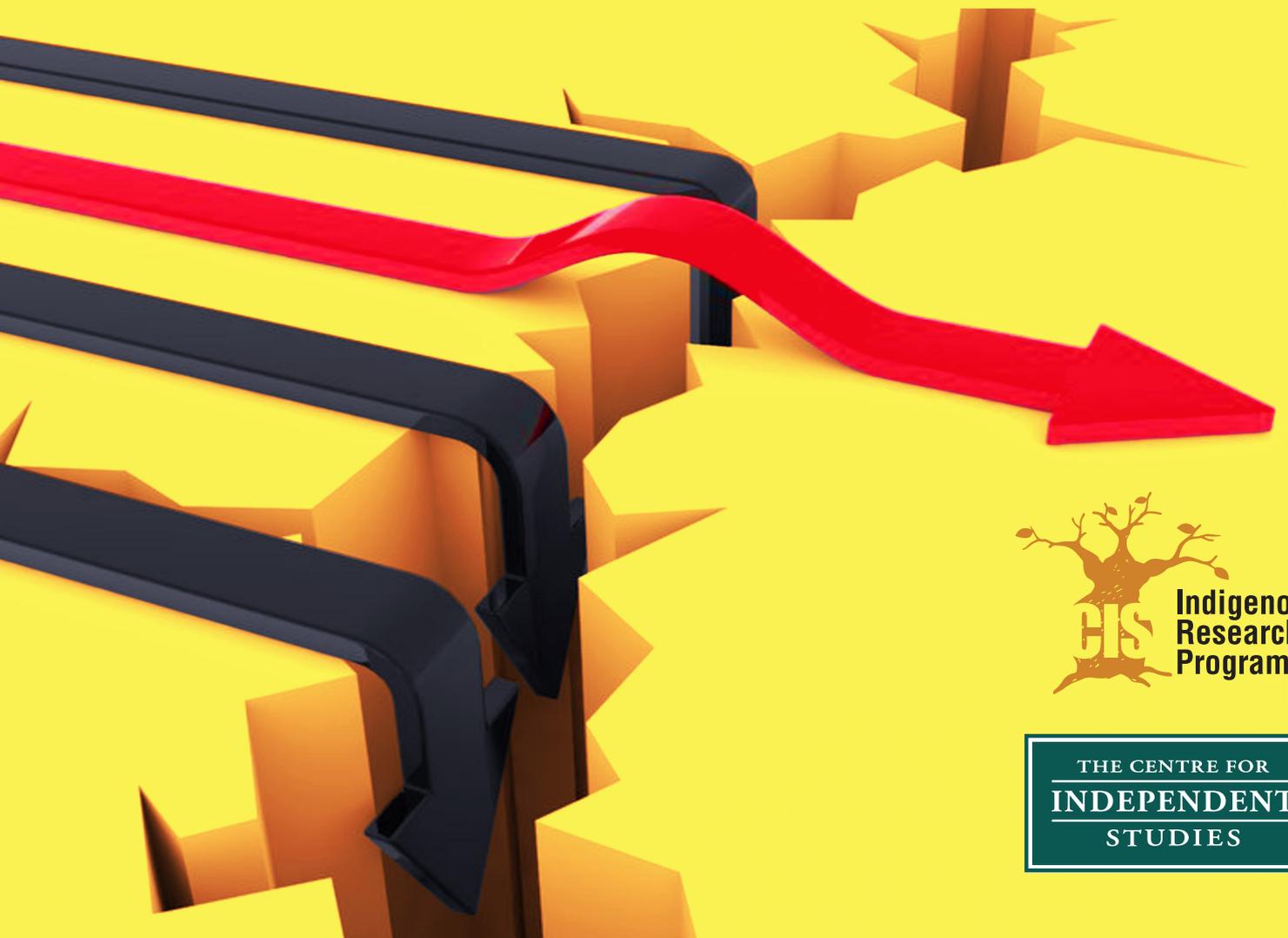


Worlds Apart: Remote Indigenous disadvantage in the context of wider Australia

Jacinta Nampijinpa Price





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**Worlds Apart:
Remote Indigenous
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POLICY Paper 34

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Introduction – ‘wicked’ problems in remote communities

A ‘wicked’ problem is one that is difficult or impossible to solve, often due to varying views, contradictory knowledge, knowledge gaps, an economic burden, and the problem’s interconnection with other problems — such as alcoholism contributing to domestic violence.

For decades State, Territory and Commonwealth governments have been trying (and failing) to solve the wicked problems besetting remote Indigenous communities.¹ Billions upon billions of taxpayer dollars have been spent with very little improvement. In some communities, the situation has regressed, with alcohol abuse, domestic violence and truancy plaguing townships that are on the verge of breaking point.

Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities are unique outliers in a nation otherwise known for its wealth, education and safety. Due to high Indigenous populations, these communities are immensely challenging to understand, and their challenges hard to address. Some critics argue that the nature of Indigenous cultures is inextricably linked to the social breakdown plaguing places like Tennant Creek, Ceduna and Aurukun. Others argue that such aspersions are unfair and racist.

Conditions in these towns are often more comparable to the third world than to one of the most prosperous countries on earth. The Productivity Commission estimates that governments spent approximately \$33.4 billion on Indigenous peoples in 2015-16.² Approximately \$4.1 billion (12.23%) of this was

spent on public order and safety alone. At \$6,300 per person, this is ten times the amount spent on the typical Australian.³

The purpose of this report is to demonstrate the wicked problems Regional and Remote Indigenous communities face. While no single cause can explain Indigenous disadvantage, the severe socio-economic disadvantage experienced by these communities can be demonstrated. This undoubtedly contributes to the astronomically high rates of alcohol abuse, crime, and domestic violence.

This paper will first map the socio-economic factors that shape many Regional and Remote Indigenous communities and compare them to wider Australia. It will then look at the nature of crime and domestic violence — factors that all combine to make these communities so very different to the typical Australian suburb. It will use data to highlight the severe conditions in these locations, pointing to the fact that these places are experiencing extremes that would not be tolerated anywhere else in Australia.

Ultimately, as the data will demonstrate, the situation in these communities is in dire need of a radical solution. A solution that targets communities based on evidence, rather than assertions about race and culture, and focuses on establishing the safe communities that any Australian would rightfully expect on their doorstep.

The Socio-Economic Context of remote Indigenous communities

Several key socio-economic areas clearly demonstrate the extent to which Indigenous communities, especially remote communities, fall far behind Australian averages. In particular, it is worth focusing on education, employment and health and wellbeing.

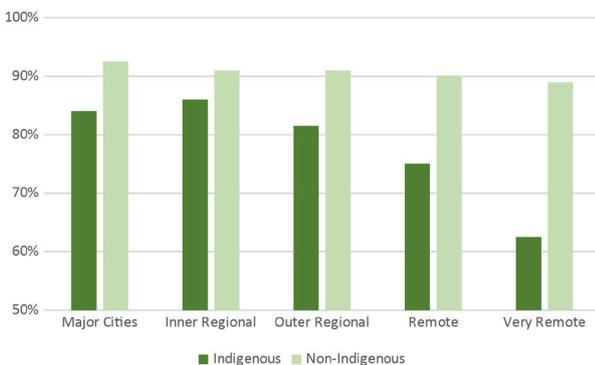
School Attendance

School attendance is an important component of personal development, and is linked to a wide range of outcomes, including better health, reduction in poverty and increased gender equality.⁴ As a result, the impact of poor school attendance in remote indigenous communities can be significant.

The quality of school attendance data across each state and territory is mixed. A core pillar of Closing the Gap targets since 2014, low levels of school attendance remains a major issue for Indigenous peoples. Nationally, school attendance rates for Indigenous peoples have not improved. In fact, they have declined two percentage points to 82% between 2018 and 2019. This is compared with 92% for non-Indigenous students.⁵ Notable declines in Indigenous school attendance have occurred in every state and territory between 2014 and 2019, with the Northern Territory declining by over seven percentage points to sit at approximately 63%.⁶

In Remote and Very Remote areas, Indigenous school attendance drops significantly (See Figure 1). In Very Remote areas the Indigenous school attendance rate is less than two-thirds. This puts them below countries such as Zambia (69%) and war-torn Iraq (76%).⁷

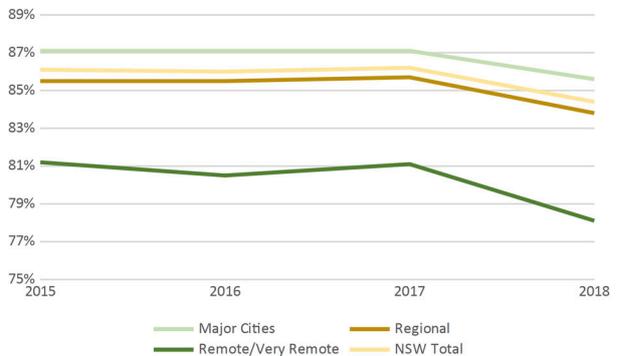
Figure 1: School Attendance Rates, Semester 1 2019 (Ages 5-16)



Source: Australian Government 2020, Closing the Gap Report - School Attendance

In New South Wales, one of the jurisdictions performing the best overall against the Closing the Gap targets, remote Indigenous students still fall well behind their urban and regional peers. Between 2015 and 2018, Indigenous attendance in Remote/Very Remote NSW schools declined by over three percentage points to 78.10% (See Figure 2).

Figure 2: Aboriginal School Attendance Rates by Indigenous 2015-18 – New South Wales

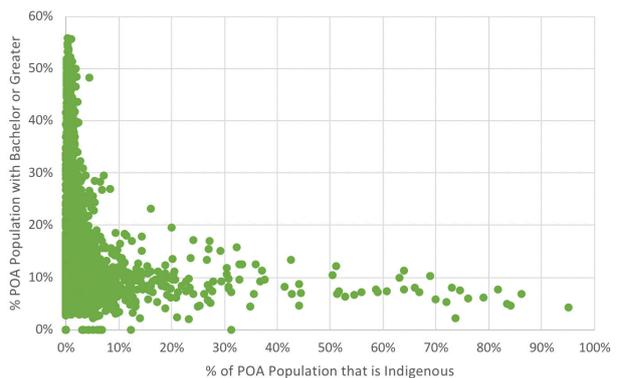


Source: Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation NSW 2019

Education Levels

Education levels in Outer Regional and Remote Indigenous communities are distinctly lower than those in inner regional ones. Poor school attendance rates and a wide range of other socioeconomic factors contribute to this divide. In the 28 postcodes across Australia with an Indigenous population of over 50%, an average of just 7% of people in these postcodes have a Bachelor's degree or higher qualification (See Figure 3). All these postcodes are Outer Regional, Remote, or Very Remote postcodes.

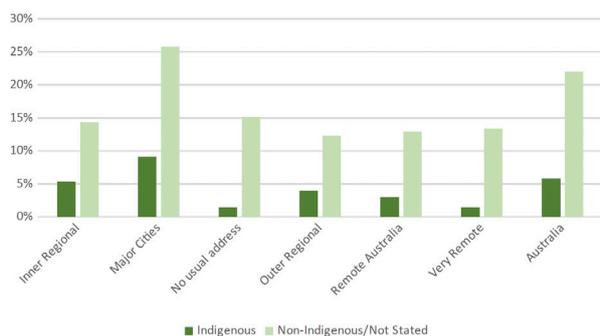
Figure 3: % with a Bachelor Degree or Greater vs Indigenous by POA



Source: 2016 ABS Census

According to the 2016 census, 3.3% of Australians were identified as of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin.⁸ This suggests that communities with at least 7.5% of residents or more, and likely 10% or more, of Indigenous origin would be a reasonable benchmark for Indigenous communities. Almost every one of those communities has below average numbers of degree holders.

Figure 4: Bachelor's degree or Greater (Aged 15+)



Source: 2016 ABS Census

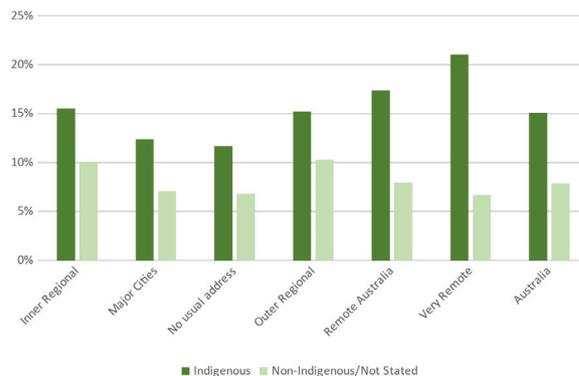
When Indigenous peoples are looked at in isolation, the issue becomes even starker (See Figure 4). In Very Remote areas, just 1.40% of Indigenous people have a Bachelor's degree or greater. The figure for Remote areas is 2.98%. Meanwhile, in major cities, 9.08% of Indigenous people have a Bachelor's degree or greater. The same is true for VET qualifications. According to the 2016 ABS Census, 19% of Indigenous people in Major Cities have a Certificate III or IV level qualification. In Very Remote areas, just 9% have this level of qualification.

The qualification figures for the non-Indigenous population in Remote and Very Remote areas vastly outperforms that of Indigenous people. Importantly, it must be noted that a significant proportion of the non-Indigenous population in these areas are degree holders working in service provision, which undoubtedly influences the data.

Once Indigenous people obtain a university degree, employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous are virtually the same.⁹ So a gap such as this in Remote and Very Remote areas suggests these places are very far behind. It is important to note, however, that most Indigenous students that enter University are already metro based and have attended mainstream schools. Thus, they already have significant advantages over students from Remote Indigenous communities.

When we look at the opposite end of the educational spectrum, Remote and Very Remote Indigenous communities once again stand out (See Figure 5). Over a fifth (21.04%) of Indigenous people in Very Remote locations have only completed school to the level of Year 9 or lower. This is more than three times greater than the number for non-Indigenous people. The figure improves slightly in Remote and Outer Regional areas, however the gap still remains

Figure 5: Highest Level of Education to Year 9 or Below (Aged 15+)



Source: 2016 ABS Census

significant. Ongoing participation in secondary school is of vital importance to personal development, and has been linked to higher personal earnings and improved health and wellbeing outcomes.¹⁰

Employment

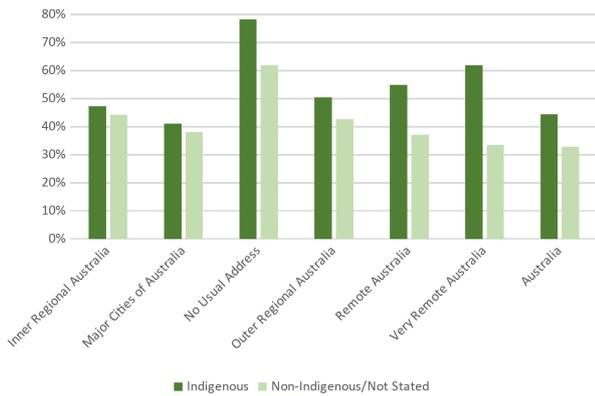
Unemployment is a major issue for Indigenous peoples across Australia, with the national figure three times that of the non-Indigenous population (See Figure 6). In Remote and Very Remote communities this divide is significantly more pronounced. In Very Remote areas, 29% of the Indigenous workforce is employed. This is opposed to just 3% of the non-Indigenous population in Very Remote areas.

Perhaps an even more important issue is workforce non-participation – the proportion of working aged people who aren't even trying to find work. In Very Remote locations nearly two thirds (62%) of the Indigenous people are classified as Not in the Labour force (See Figure 7). This is nearly double the non-Indigenous figure (33%) and 29% bigger than the Australia-wide figure for Indigenous peoples.

It is worth noting that many people are out of the workforce for valid reasons – for example pursuing higher education or caring for children. Of particular concern, especially in remote communities, are those who are not engaged in caring activities but also not otherwise engaged in employment, education or training.

In terms of welfare recipients and income management, unemployment and non-participation is obviously a major factor. With so many people in remote Indigenous communities falling into these categories, welfare dependency is unsurprisingly high. This can have a major impact on the fabric of a community.

Figure 6: Unemployment (% of Labour Force, Aged 15+)



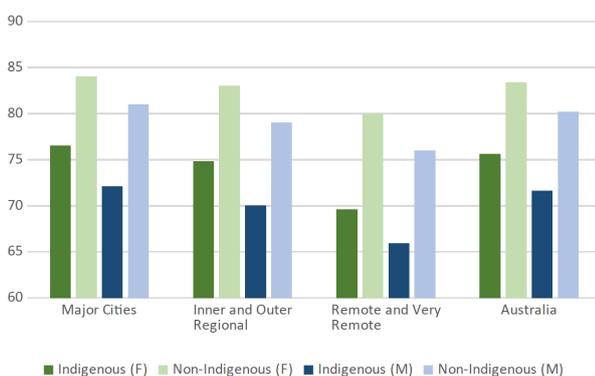
Source: 2016 ABS Census

Employment is a key indicator of a stable community, providing income, fulfilment, and a sense of self-esteem. Employment has also been directly linked to improvement in other crucial indicators, such as school attendance. With unemployment and non-participation so high in remote Aboriginal communities, they lose stability that employment brings. Research has shown that communities with high unemployment have significantly higher crime rates. When an area already has a high crime rate, an unemployed person is even more likely to become involved in crime.¹¹ This makes remote Indigenous communities particularly vulnerable. Perennial unemployment and consistently high levels of crime mean it is far more statistically likely for someone in these communities to become involved in crime.

Health and Wellbeing

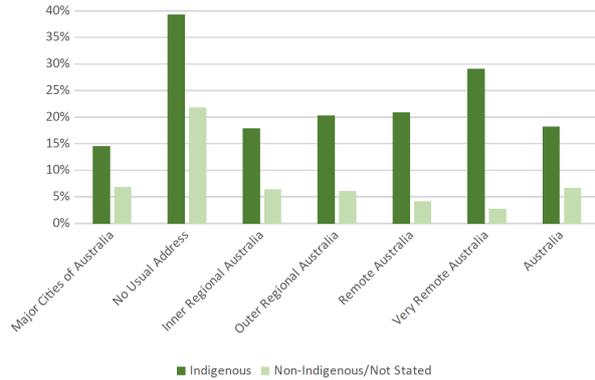
Health indicators for Indigenous Australians significantly trail the remainder of the Australian population. On a national level, the life expectancy gap has remained consistent since the establishment of Closing the Gap targets.¹² When remoteness is factored in, Indigenous people in Remote and Very Remote areas are well behind (See Figure 8).

Figure 8: Life Expectancy by Region Type & Indigenous Status (2015-2017)



Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2020

Figure 7: Not in Labour Force (Aged 15+)



Source: 2016 ABS Census

An Indigenous woman living in a Remote or Very Remote areas is expected to live to just 69.6 years. For an Indigenous man, the figure plummets to just 65.9 years. This is compared to 76.5 for Indigenous women living in major cities, and 72.1 for Indigenous men in these areas. Indigenous women in Remote and Very Remote areas are expected to live a stunning 13.8 less years than the typical non-Indigenous Australian woman. With a gap of 14.3 years, Indigenous men in Remote and Very Remote areas are expected to live nearly one and a half decades less than the typical Australian non-Indigenous male. These figures place Remote Indigenous communities on par with third world countries such as Yemen, Eritrea and The Gambia — all in the bottom quadrant of the global life expectancy rankings.¹³

A look at the factors behind these low life expectancy rates shows that Remote Indigenous communities are significantly over-represented in a range of statistics. Indigenous people in Remote and Very Remote areas have over twice the rate of diabetes compared with Indigenous people living outside of these areas, and are 64% more likely to have cardiovascular disease.¹⁴ They are also 75% more likely to have never visited a dentist.

An analysis of causes of deaths by LGA shows that locations with larger Indigenous populations have significantly higher rates of deaths from preventable and treatable causes (See Table 1). When LGAs with an Indigenous population of 50% or greater are compared with those with less than 50% Indigenous population, the rate of death per 100,000 increased substantially.¹⁵ Deaths caused by diabetes are the standout statistic, with someone in an LGA with a large Indigenous population 28 times more likely to die from the disease. Suicide is also a well known issue in Remote Indigenous communities, with 71% more suicides in LGAs with an Indigenous population greater than 50%.

Table 1: Rate of Average Annual Deaths per 100,000 by select Cause (By LGAs Indig Population, 2013-2017)

Cause of Death	Under 50% Indigenous Population	Over 50% Indigenous Population	% Difference
Cardiovascular diseases (aged 30 to 69 years)	64	296	363%
Cancers (aged 30 to 69 years)	139	256	84%
Respiratory system diseases (aged 30 to 69 years)	18	94	422%
Diabetes (aged 30 to 69 years)	7	195	2686%
Suicides (aged 0 to 74 years)	14	24	71%

Source: Australian Health Tracker, PHIDU 2020

Crime in remote Indigenous communities

One of the statistics that make remote Indigenous communities truly stand out from the rest of Australia is crime. Many of these communities have some of the highest rates of crime in the country. Crime occurs both on the streets, and in the home. Domestic violence is one of the leading problems for remote

Indigenous communities, and is something that has a major impact on a wide range of other outcomes — such as education and employment. This section will investigate crime more generally and will also delve into domestic violence and its prevalence in remote Indigenous communities.

A Note on Crime Statistics

Detailed crime statistics in Australia are collated at a State/Territory level by local authorities, and statistics can be reported differently depending on the jurisdiction.

Definitions and categorizations of crime may differ from state to state. Geographic reporting of crime also differs, with some States/Territories reporting as low as the postcode level, while others report in larger crime districts that encapsulate a wider area of a city or a whole region.

Occasionally, states totally restructure the way in which they report on crime, which can also affect statistics. For comparative purposes this report presents crime statistics of States/Territories adjacent to each other. However, the above caveats should be noted whenever comparing crime statistics across jurisdiction.

A breakdown of how crime has been analysed in this report is listed in Table 2.

For consistency, figures for all jurisdictions have been reported for 2014-2019, with rates per 100,000 calculated off the 2016 ABS Census population for the given area. The smallest reported geographic breakdown for the given State/Territory has been chosen, and rates should be considered as approximate only.

Please note that the Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania have been excluded from this analysis due to the small size of their Indigenous populations.

Indigenous Status

Detailed statistics on the Indigenous status of offenders is not always readily available at a localized level. For the purposes of this report, crime has been analysed based on the proportion of the Indigenous population within the reporting area for each State/Territory.

It is important to note that not all crimes committed in an area with a high Indigenous population are committed by Indigenous people. However, the distinct trends that will be discussed below suggest that crime becomes significantly more prevalent as Indigenous population increases.

Virtually all 39 reporting areas with an Indigenous population over 50% were located in Remote, Very Remote or Outer Regional locations, and the average Indigenous population was 80.38%.

A cumulative 67 reporting areas had an Indigenous population greater than 20%, with an average of 58.69% of people being Indigenous. Overall, 1,787 reporting areas were analysed.

Table 2: Breakdown of Crime Statistics Sources

State/Territory	Reporting Area	Crime Statistics Source	Population Source
Western Australia	WA Police Districts	WA Police Force	2016 Census
New South Wales	Postcode	Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research	2016 Census
South Australia	Postcode	SA Government Data Directory	2016 Census
Victoria	Postcode	Crime Statistics Agency (Vic)	2016 Census
Queensland	Local Government Area	QLD Government Open Data Portal	2016 Census
Northern Territory	Region	NT Police, Fire & Emergency Services	2016 Census

Overall Crime

An analysis of overall crime rates¹⁶ in Remote Indigenous communities paints a bleak picture. In areas with an Indigenous population of greater than 50% (*50+ locations*) crimes typically occur at a rate at least double the state median and average. In New South Wales, 50+ locations have a crime rate over four times (403%) the state median and double (223%) the state average. This theme is consistent across all jurisdictions, with the Northern Territory the only exemption. Average and median crime rates in areas with high Indigenous populations are less separated from the overall figure for the Northern Territory. This is in some part due to the small number of collection areas (25 Regions) and the disproportionately high Indigenous population across the Territory.

Overall crime in 50+ locations is also significantly higher than in areas with an Indigenous population below 20%. The median crime rate for 50+ locations in NSW is 415% larger than areas with an Indigenous population below 20% (*U20 locations*). In Queensland, the average rate for 50+ locations (45,345 per 100,000) in 2019 is nearly triple that of U20 locations. The figure is double in South Australia.

In locations with Indigenous populations greater than 20% (*20+ locations*), there is still a distinct rise in crime rates compared with the state and U20 medians and averages. This provides firm evidence that Remote Indigenous communities do indeed experience significantly higher levels of crime. The rates of crime are so disproportionate with the rates for the rest of each state/territory that these communities need to be considered as extreme cases with 'wicked' problems. The section below will discuss the nature of overall crime further, before moving into an in depth discussion on domestic violence.

Table 3: Average rate of criminal incidents per 100,000 (across reporting areas)

State/Territory	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	% Difference to State (2019)	% Difference to U20 (2019)
Western Australia	10,125	11,573	11,697	10,922	11,288	11,191	-	-8%
WA Over 50% Indig	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
WA Over 20% Indig	25,178	27,858	32,159	31,454	33,398	35,590	218%	193%
WA Under 20% Indig	11,213	12,484	12,729	12,168	12,292	12,149	9%	-
New South Wales	8,870	9,289	9,369	9,292	9,142	9,388	-	12%
NSW Over 50% Indig	46,864	40,086	36,132	35,285	34,693	30,329	223%	263%
NSW Over 20% Indig	28,113	27,328	24,810	24,780	24,682	25,147	168%	201%
NSW Under 20% Indig	8,222	8,213	8,283	8,075	8,069	8,347	-11%	-
South Australia	6,160	6,253	6,481	6,300	6,328	6,654	-	30%
SA Over 50% Indig	9,450	11,064	9,438	8,196	9,218	10,501	58%	105%
SA Over 20% Indig	8,044	10,613	8,435	9,126	8,007	8,635	30%	69%
SA Under 20% Indig	4,914	4,664	5,193	4,957	4,836	5,116	-23%	-
Victoria	7,588	7,978	9,045	8,983	8,528	8,653	-	-
VIC Over 50% Indig	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
VIC Over 20% Indig	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
VIC Under 20% Indig	7,588	7,978	9,045	8,983	8,528	8,653	-	-
Queensland	9,351	9,746	10,664	10,465	10,979	11,521	-	4%
QLD Over 50% Indig	50,488	54,117	57,724	48,765	44,991	45,345	294%	311%
QLD Over 20% Indig	45,161	46,387	49,428	42,309	39,803	39,294	241%	256%
QLD Under 20% Indig	10,005	10,249	10,754	10,872	10,508	11,030	-4%	-
Northern Territory	12,228	12,085	12,554	13,211	13,482	12,706	-	43%
NT Over 50% Indig	13,032	12,463	13,192	14,770	15,723	15,628	23%	76%
NT Over 20% Indig	13,026	12,263	12,792	14,336	15,383	15,245	20%	72%
NT Under 20% Indig	8,808	9,208	9,116	10,001	9,825	8,868	-30%	-

Source: Various (See Table 2)

Table 4: Median rate of criminal incidents per 100,000 (across reporting areas)

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	% Difference to State (2019)	% Difference to U20 (2019)
Western Australia	12,661	12,791	14,194	13,089	12,719	12,830	-	1%
WA Over 50% Indig	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
WA Over 20% Indig	25,178	27,858	32,159	31,454	33,398	35,590	177%	180%
WA Under 20% Indig	11,531	12,457	13,183	12,206	12,640	12,698	-1%	-
New South Wales	6,665	6,579	6,542	6,291	6,449	6,462	-	2%
NSW Over 50% Indig	46,585	40,764	37,103	38,164	37,578	32,481	403%	415%
NSW Over 20% Indig	23,350	22,634	21,080	21,274	22,843	22,787	253%	261%
NSW Under 20% Indig	6,426	6,479	6,409	6,195	6,279	6,309	-2%	-
South Australia	3,327	3,313	3,572	3,377	3,255	3,424	-	0%
SA Over 50% Indig	8,159	7,267	8,159	9,799	9,842	6,761	97%	98%
SA Over 20% Indig	7,143	6,250	7,143	10,550	6,667	5,238	53%	53%
SA Under 20% Indig	3,318	3,307	3,560	3,362	3,242	3,413	0%	-
Victoria	4,863	4,834	5,592	5,881	5,454	5,665	-	-
VIC Over 50% Indig	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
VIC Over 20% Indig	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
VIC Under 20% Indig	4,863	4,834	5,592	5,881	5,454	5,665	-	-
Queensland	10,270	11,153	11,209	11,739	11,185	11,598	-	9%
QLD Over 50% Indig	44,607	50,634	47,278	41,361	35,079	33,599	190%	217%
QLD Over 20% Indig	35,038	33,861	34,494	33,950	32,022	27,710	139%	161%
QLD Under 20% Indig	9,470	9,863	10,450	10,131	10,165	10,605	-9%	-
Northern Territory	10,566	9,129	10,839	12,288	11,474	10,839	-	47%
NT Over 50% Indig	10,584	9,509	11,894	13,134	12,527	13,123	21%	78%
NT Over 20% Indig	10,602	9,910	11,348	12,678	11,571	13,132	21%	78%
NT Under 20% Indig	7,273	7,281	7,028	8,541	8,958	7,376	-32%	-

Source: Various (See Table 2). All figures are approximate.

The nature of overall crime

It has been established that crime in Remote Indigenous communities is shockingly disproportionate to the remainder of Australia. A more detailed look at the data shows that certain types of crime are more prevalent, and thus contribute to these high crime rates.

Table 5 analyses the combined offence rates for all 50+ locations in Queensland.¹⁷ The crimes with the highest offence rates include: Breaches of Domestic

Violence Orders, Good Order Offences (Disobey Move-on Direction, Resist/Obstruct/Hinder Police, Fare Evasion, Public Nuisance), and Assault. Breaches of Domestic Violence Orders and assault occur at a considerably higher rate than the overall figure for Queensland. Liquor-related offences (excluding Drunkenness) occur at over 15 times the rate for the state overall. Interestingly, Drug and Theft related offences occur at well below the Queensland rate — as do a range of other crimes.

Table 5: Offence rates per 100,000 in QLD LGAs with 50% or higher Indigenous population (2019)

Offence Type	50+ Locations Rate	QLD Rate	50+ % Difference to QLD
Breach Domestic Violence Protection Order	2683	653	311%
Good Order Offences	2378	1106	115%
Assault	2202	507	334%
Other Property Damage	1676	797	110%
Unlawful Entry	1481	891	66%
Liquor (excl. Drunkenness)	1194	72	1563%
Drug Offences	1084	1850	-41%
Other Theft (excl. Unlawful Entry)	869	2921	-70%
Traffic and Related Offences	753	919	-18%
Unlawful Use of Motor Vehicle	232	336	-31%
Trespassing and Vagrancy	221	135	63%
Other Offences Against the Person	195	99	97%
Fraud	189	638	-70%
Sexual Offences	170	135	26%
Weapons Act Offences	164	177	-7%
Prostitution Offences	101	1	6956%
Miscellaneous Offences	80	85	-5%
Handling Stolen Goods	59	153	-62%
Arson	42	31	35%
Robbery	28	55	-49%
Homicide (Murder)	6	1	494%
Other Homicide	2	2	0%
Gaming Racing & Betting Offences	0	0	N/A
Interfere with Mechanism of Motor Vehicle	0	1	-100%
Stock Related Offences	0	1	-100%

Source: QLD Government Open Data Portal. All figures are approximate.

Figures for several other locations paint a similar picture, with crimes such as assault and liquor-related offences occurring at a far higher rate than the state/territory as a whole. In the Northern Territory, assault was the most common offence in 50+ locations (See Table 6). In 2019 it occurred at a 45% higher rate (4,165 per 100,000) than the Territory as a whole (2,869 per 100,000). This rate was 63% higher than locations in the Northern Territory with under 20% Indigenous population. In Tennant Creek, assaults occurred at approximately 9,276 per 100,000, nearly 4 times the territory average.

Theft, property damage and break-ins were also common in 50+ locations in the Northern Territory.

Attempted break-ins on commercial properties occurred at 1.5 times the territory rate, and nearly double that of U20 areas. In Tennant Creek, property damage offences occurred at approximately 13,580 per 100,000 — over four times the figure for the Northern Territory as a whole.

In New South Wales, assaults in 50+ locations occurred at approximately 265,828 per 100,000. This was nearly 13 times the rate for the state as a whole. Similarly, drug offences occurred at four times the New South Wales rate, and liquor offences at 23 times the state figure. Intimidation, stalking and harassment occurred at seven times the state figure, with theft occurring at just under three times the state rate.

Table 6: Offence rates per 100,000 in NT with 50% or higher Indigenous population (2019)

Offence Type	50+ Rate	NT Rate	Under 50 Rate	50+ % Diff to NT	50+ Diff to Under 50
Assault	4165	2869	2548	45%	63%
Property damage offences	3726	3194	3062	17%	22%
Theft and related offences (other than MV)	2241	3357	3632	-33%	-38%
Commercial break-ins actual	1913	909	661	111%	190%
House break-ins actual	1170	984	939	19%	25%
Illegal use of a motor vehicle	270	367	391	-26%	-31%
Commercial break-ins attempted	219	88	56	149%	293%
House break-ins attempted	150	99	87	50%	72%
Theft of motor vehicle parts or contents	150	411	475	-64%	-69%
Sexual assault	145	160	164	-10%	-12%
Threatening behaviour	127	91	82	40%	55%
Other dangerous or negligent acts endangering persons	76	56	51	35%	48%
Harassment and private nuisance	40	25	21	59%	87%
Deprivation of liberty /false imprisonment	33	15	10	123%	220%
Non-assaultive sexual offences	25	31	33	-22%	-26%
Robbery	22	69	80	-68%	-72%
Other acts intended to cause injury	7	6	6	8%	10%
Blackmail and extortion	2	1	1	68%	103%
Manslaughter	2	0	0	405%	-
Murder	2	2	2	1%	1%
Attempted Murder	0	0	1	-100%	-100%

Source: NT Police, Fire & Emergency Services. All figures are approximate

Domestic Violence

High rates of domestic violence are one of the key factors that separate Remote Indigenous communities from the rest of Australia. While domestic violence is a significant issue across all demographics and geographies, in 50+ locations it occurs at a rate well and truly above state/territory figures.

Table 7 (Average) and Table 8 (Median) analyse the rate of domestic violence-related offences in collection areas across each state/territory by the size of their Indigenous population. What is apparent is that in 50+ locations, domestic violence rates not only significantly outstrip the state/territory average, but in some jurisdictions the rates are more profoundly higher than their overall crime rates.

In New South Wales, the average domestic violence rate in 50+ locations is nearly 10 times (976%) higher than the state average. In South Australia the story isn't much different, with the median domestic violence rate for 50+ locations 676% higher than the state as a whole, and 678% higher than locations with an Indigenous population under 20%. In 50+ locations in the Northern Territory, domestic violence incidents occur at an 81% higher rate than the Territory average, and 246% higher rate than U20 locations.

Table 7: Average rate of domestic violence incidents per 100,000 (across reporting areas)

State/Territory	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	% Difference to State (2019)	% Difference to U20 (2019)
Western Australia	883	1121	1332	1205	1336	1190	-	-7%
WA Over 50% Indig	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
WA Over 20% Indig	5535	6673	8940	9440	11151	9347	686%	633%
WA Under 20% Indig	964	1151	1390	1288	1429	1275	7%	-
New South Wales	386	387	387	378	395	414	-	7%
NSW Over 50% Indig	6661	4449	4638	3562	3873	4456	976%	1055%
NSW Over 20% Indig	2855	2514	2128	2033	2162	2538	513%	558%
NSW Under 20% Indig	356	357	352	347	360	386	-7%	-
South Australia	374	601	663	635	644	631	-	44%
SA Over 50% Indig	1060	2131	3424	2881	2847	2887	358%	561%
SA Over 20% Indig	1035	2056	2921	2677	2772	2790	342%	539%
SA Under 20% Indig	266	415	472	435	433	437	-31%	-
Victoria	577	610	613	605	620	632	-	-
VIC Over 50% Indig	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
VIC Over 20% Indig	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
VIC Under 20% Indig	577	610	613	605	620	632	-	-
Queensland	330	410	532	544	583	652	-	-8%
QLD Over 50% Indig	5195	5475	5985	5601	6166	7390	1034%	940%
QLD Over 20% Indig	4372	4578	5007	4755	5061	6023	824%	748%
QLD Under 20% Indig	422	490	547	602	610	711	9%	-
Northern Territory	1902	1792	1730	1907	1871	1707	-	91%
NT Over 50% Indig	3953	3295	3741	4213	3307	3094	81%	246%
NT Over 20% Indig	3679	3013	3243	3625	3066	2808	64%	214%
NT Under 20% Indig	1184	1113	1025	1071	1033	894	-48%	-

Source: Various (See Table 2). Note that QLD offences are for Breach of Domestic Violence Order Only. All figures are approximate.

Table 8: Median rate of domestic violence incidents per 100,000 (across reporting areas)

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	% Difference to State (2019)	% Difference to U20 (2019)
Western Australia	804	1252	1471	1286	1362	1103	-	1%
WA Over 50% Indig	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
WA Over 20% Indig	5535	6673	8940	9440	11151	9347	747%	754%
WA Under 20% Indig	789	1102	1252	1118	1232	1094	-1%	-
New South Wales	305	314	298	302	317	343	-	2%
NSW Over 50% Indig	5517	3544	3399	2237	2487	3628	957%	977%
NSW Over 20% Indig	1683	1887	1563	1558	1668	2059	499%	511%
NSW Under 20% Indig	297	306	293	292	314	337	-2%	-
South Australia	193	314	370	339	328	334	-	0%
SA Over 50% Indig	534	1955	2966	3204	2801	2970	788%	791%
SA Over 20% Indig	984	1906	1914	2270	2622	2594	676%	678%
SA Under 20% Indig	190	308	357	338	325	334	0%	-
Victoria	1149	1114	1240	1270	1299	1292	-	-
VIC Over 50% Indig	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
VIC Over 20% Indig	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
VIC Under 20% Indig	1149	1114	1240	1270	1299	1292	-	-
Queensland	509	562	653	659	710	823	-	30%
QLD Over 50% Indig	4461	4270	5117	4202	5614	5000	507%	686%
QLD Over 20% Indig	3559	3529	3641	3203	4297	3700	349%	482%
QLD Under 20% Indig	365	398	454	537	508	636	-23%	-
Northern Territory	10566	9129	10839	12288	11474	10839	-	47%
NT Over 50% Indig	10584	9509	11894	13134	12527	13123	21%	78%
NT Over 20% Indig	10602	9910	11348	12678	11571	13132	21%	78%
NT Under 20% Indig	7273	7281	7028	8541	8958	7376	-32%	-

Source: Various (See Table 2). Note that QLD offences are for Breach of Domestic Violence Order Only

The types of domestic violence incidents that occur also point to a major issue in Remote Indigenous communities. In 50+ locations in South Australia, serious assaults resulting in injury occurred at over 18 times the rate for the state as a whole. Meanwhile, threatening behaviour occurred at nearly 11 times the figure for South Australia as a whole. Common assaults occurred at nearly three times the state rate. In the Northern Territory, alcohol was a factor in 39% of domestic violence incidents in 50+ locations. In the Barkly region, which has an Indigenous population of

77%, over three-quarters (77%) of domestic violence incidents involved alcohol. Meanwhile, 74% of cases in Tennant Creek were associated with the consumption of alcohol. Interestingly, across the Northern Territory as a whole, 55% of domestic violence offences involved alcohol. Whilst this figure is higher than that of 50+ locations, many urban centers feature Indigenous communities with well-known alcohol issues (for example: Katherine, Nhulunbuy and Alice Springs).

Extreme problems laid bare

This paper has analysed a wide range of data from locations and communities across Australia. While it cannot be said the issues identified are exclusive to Indigenous communities, it is clear that Indigenous communities are subject to them at a far greater proportion than almost every other location in Australia.

Indigenous communities have become victims of a 'wicked problem'. A combination of high impact factors that, when pooled together, can have devastating effects on communities. It is not news to anyone that Remote and Very Remote Indigenous communities lag well behind the rest of the nation. In fact, this has been well established over decades of research, interventions, and failed policies. However, what this paper demonstrates is the vast difference between Indigenous communities and the rest of Australia when it comes to these problems.

Education and employment rates in Remote and Very Remote Indigenous communities put them on par with countries such as Afghanistan, a nation devastated by over 19 years of war. Poor health outcomes and severe overcrowding in housing is more reminiscent of sub-Saharan Africa than one on the wealthiest nations on earth.

The situation is abhorrent and unacceptable. Were such conditions to exist in one of our major cities it

would be a national crisis. Think of the attention given to violence on the streets of Sydney's Kings Cross. A small but well publicised number of assaults and deaths were treated with the gravest of concern by the NSW government. The implementation of lockout laws to stem the violence saw long term economic damage inflicted on the Sydney CBD's night economy. While public opinion on the measures was mixed, it was generally agreed that drastic changes had to be implemented to get the situation under control.

The level of violence seen occasionally on the streets of Kings Cross is, however, a daily occurrence for many Remote and Very Remote Indigenous communities. As this paper has established, alcohol-fueled crimes occur at an abnormally high rate, petty crime is commonplace, and assaults are a regular occurrence. Within the home, the situation is just as bad. Domestic violence rates are so high that women and children do not feel safe in their homes. These factors then feed a vicious cycle that impacts school attendance, employment, and physical and mental health — leaving many communities at breaking point.

The dire situation presented by this data stresses the need for effective policy interventions more than ever before. Interventions that are not targeting communities because of their Indigeneity, but because of the host of problems besetting them that should be unacceptable in a country like Australia.

Endnotes

- 1 Note: For the purposes of this report the term 'remote' will be used as a collective reference to Remote, Very Remote and regional Indigenous communities. The exception to this rule is the specific discussion of statistics under the 5 ABS Remoteness Categories: Major Cities, Inner Regional, Outer Regional, Remote, Very Remote
- 2 Productivity Commission 2017, *2017 Indigenous Expenditure Report*, viewed 20 November 2020, <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/indigenous-expenditure-report/2017/ier-2017-indigenous-expenditure-report.pdf>, page 6
- 3 Productivity Commission 2017, *Report on Government Services 2017*, viewed 20 November 2020, <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2017>
- 4 World Bank, 2005, Expanding opportunities and building competencies for young people: a new agenda for secondary education. World Bank. Viewed 21 January 2020, <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/632411468149962592/expanding-opportunities-and-building-competencies-for-young-people-a-new-agenda-for-secondary-education>, Chapter 2
- 5 Australian Government 2020, *Closing the Gap Report - School Attendance*, viewed 20 November 2020, <https://ctgreport.niaa.gov.au/school-attendance>
- 6 *ibid*
- 7 UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2018, *School Attendance Rates*, viewed 20 November 2020, <http://data.uis.unesco.org/#>. NOTE: Data is the average of Primary School, lower secondary school and higher upper school attendance rates
- 8 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians*, released 31 August 2018
- 9 Universities Australia 2020, *Indigenous Strategy Annual Report*, viewed 20 November 2020, <https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Indigenous-strategy-second-annual-report.pdf>, page 22
- 10 World Bank, 2005
- 11 H. Entorf & P Sieger 2014, *Does the Link between Unemployment and Crime Depend on the Crime Level? A Quantile Regression Approach*, viewed 20 November 2020, <http://ftp.iza.org/dp8334.pdf>, page 3
- 12 Australian Government 2020, *Closing the Gap Report 2020*, viewed 20 November 2020, <https://ctgreport.niaa.gov.au/sites/default/files/pdf/closing-the-gap-report-2020.pdf>, page 78
- 13 Central Intelligence Agency 2017, *Country Comparison: Life Expectancy at Birth*, viewed 20 November 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2102rank.html>
- 14 Australian Institute of Health & Welfare 2015, *The health and welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: 2015*, viewed 20 November 2020, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/indigenous-australians/indigenous-health-welfare-2015/contents/differences-by-remoteness>
- 15 Please note that 27 of the 34 LGAs with an Indigenous population of 50% or greater are located in Very Remote areas and 5 are located in Remote areas. Cherbourg (Inner Regional) and Yarrabah (Outer Regional) both have an Indigenous population of nearly 100%. 74,000 Indigenous people live in LGAs with an Indigenous population of greater than 50%, with a combined Indigenous population of 82%.
- 16 Overall crime for each state and territory has been analysed as an average (See Table 3) of reporting areas (e.g. postcode, police district) and as a median (See Table 4) of these figures for each State/Territory.
- 17 There were 17 LGAs in Queensland with an Indigenous population greater than 50%, with an overall Indigenous population of 89%. These were: Aurukun, Cherbourg, Doomadgee, Hope Vale, Kowanyama, Lockhart River, Mapoon, Mornington, Napranum, Northern Peninsula Area, Palm Island, Pormpuraaw, Torres Shire Council, Torres Strait Island, Woorabinda, Wujal Wujal, Yarrabah.

About the Author



Jacinta Nampijinpa Price

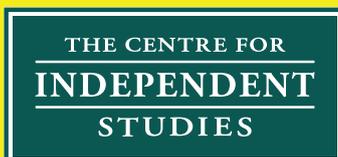
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Jacinta and her mother, former NT Government Minister Bess Price, have for many years advocated against domestic violence and the need for positive cultural change. Throughout the platforms of television, visual art, music, women's AFL and local government, Jacinta has worked with a number of initiatives to empower young Indigenous children, girls and women.

Related Works

Nyunggai Warren Mundine, *It's The Economy, Stupid: Economic participation only way to Close the Gap* (CIS Analysis Papers 11, 14 July 2020)

Charles Jacobs, *Risky business: the problems of Indigenous business policy*, (CIS Research report 35, 29 November 2017)



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