# Appendix 2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations and language use

This appendix provides contextual data on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non‑Indigenous Australian populations, to aid interpretation of data elsewhere in the report. It complements the contextual information presented in chapter 3. This appendix also contains 2011 Census data on Indigenous language use. Data from the 2016 Census are anticipated to be available from late 2017.

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population

Population estimates in this report are based on 2011 Census of Population and Housing counts, adjusted for net undercount as measured by the ABS Post Enumeration Survey (ABS 2013).

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| Figure A2.1 Proportion of the population in each age group, 2011 |
| Figure A2.1 Proportion of the population in each age group, 2011  More details can be found within the text surrounding this image.  |
| *Source*: ABS 2013, *Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2011*, Cat. no. 3238.0.55.001; table A.1. |
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According to estimates of the Australian population in 2011:

* the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population had a very different age structure to the non‑Indigenous population. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population tended to be younger, with 35.9 per cent aged 0–14 years, compared to 18.4 per cent of the non‑Indigenous population (figure A2.1)
* the proportion of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population aged 75 years and over was 1.0 per cent, compared with 6.5 per cent of the non‑Indigenous population (figure A2.1)
* the different age structures of the populations was also reflected in their median (midpoint) ages. The median age of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population was 21.8 years, compared with a median age of 37.6 years for the non‑Indigenous population (table A.1).

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| Figure A2.2 Proportion of the population in each remoteness area, 2011 |
| Figure A2.2 Proportion of the population in each remoteness area, 2011  More details can be found within the text surrounding this image. |
| *Source*: ABS 2013, *Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2011*, Cat. no. 3238.0.55.001; table A.2. |
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The two populations also differed in their geographic distribution. In 2011, although the majority of both populations lived in major cities and regional areas, a much higher proportion of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population lived in remote and very remote areas (21.3 per cent, compared with 1.7 per cent of the non‑Indigenous population (figure A2.2).

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| Figure A2.3 Proportion of each State and Territory population who were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, 2011 |
| Figure A2.3 Proportion of each State and Territory population who were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, 2011  More details can be found within the text surrounding this image. |
| *Source*: ABS 2013, *Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2011*, Cat. no. 3238.0.55.001; table A.2. |
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The proportion of the population who were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander differed across jurisdictions. The NT had the highest proportion of its population who were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (29.8 per cent) and Victoria had the lowest (0.9 per cent) (figure A2.3).

The largest proportion of the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population lived in NSW (31.1 per cent). Other jurisdictions with relatively large Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations (greater than 10 per cent) were Queensland, WA and the NT (see chapter 3, figure 3.3.1; table A.2).

Data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population estimates and projections from 2001–2014 can be found in table A.3.

### Use of Indigenous languages

The use of Indigenous languages is relevant to many areas of the report, but particularly the ‘Governance, leadership and culture’ strategic area (chapter 5). It is estimated that around 250 languages were spoken by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians prior to European settlement, but today only around 120 languages are still spoken (AIATSIS and FATSIL 2005; Marmion, Obata and Troy 2014).

Although language revitalisation and maintenance is crucial to preserving and strengthening traditional culture and people’s identity and wellbeing (see section 5.5), a lack of proficiency in English can create barriers to education (section 7.1 and 7.3), employment (section 4.6) and access to services (section 8.1 on primary health care). The indicator on engagement with services (section 5.3) includes information on difficulty understanding, or being understood by, service providers.

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| Figure A2.4 Language spoken at home by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, 2011**a** |
| Figure A2.4 Language spoken at home by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, 2011  More details can be found within the text surrounding this image. |
| a Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who did not state what language they spoke at home are excluded from the analysis. |
| *Source*: ABS (unpublished) 2011 Census of Population and Housing; table A.4. |
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Nationally in 2011, 11.6 per cent of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population spoke an Indigenous language at home. This proportion varied across states and territories. The NT had the highest proportion (64.7 per cent) and Tasmania had the lowest (0.3 per cent) (figure A2.4).

The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians who spoke an Indigenous language at home also differed across remoteness areas and age groups. Very remote areas had the highest proportion of Indigenous language speakers (61.5 per cent) and inner regional areas had the lowest proportion (1.0 per cent) (figure A2.5).

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| Figure A2.5 Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who spoke an Indigenous language at home, by remoteness area and age, 2011**a** |
| Figure A2.5 Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who spoke an Indigenous language at home, by remoteness area and age, 2011  More details can be found within the text surrounding this image. |
| a Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who did not state what language they spoke at home are excluded from the analysis. |
| *Source*: ABS (unpublished) 2011 Census of Population and Housing; table A.5.  |
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| Figure A2.6 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who spoke an Indigenous language at home, by remoteness area and English proficiency, 2011 |
| Figure A2.6 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who spoke an Indigenous language at home, by remoteness area and English proficiency, 2011  More details can be found within the text surrounding this image. |
| *Source*: ABS (unpublished) 2011 Census of Population and Housing; table A.5. |
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The majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians who spoke an Indigenous language at home also spoke English well or very well (81.6 per cent). However, one in six Indigenous language speakers said they did not speak English well, or at all (figure A2.6). Children aged 0–14 years accounted for more than half (59.7 per cent) of all people who spoke an Indigenous language at home and who did not speak English well or at all (table A.5).

#### Attachment tables

Attachment tables are identified in references throughout this appendix by an ‘A’ prefix (for example, table A.2 is table 2 in the attachment tables for this appendix). These tables can be found on the web page (www.pc.gov.au/oid2016).

### References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 2013, *Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2011*, 30 August, Cat. no. 3238.0.55.001, Canberra, http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3238.0.55.001 (accessed 29 November 2013).

AIATSIS and FATSIL (Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages) 2005, *National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005*, Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, Canberra, ACT.

Marmion, D., Obata, K. and Troy, J. 2014, *Community, identity and wellbeing: the report of the Second National Indigenous Languages Survey*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra, ACT, http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/\_files/research/report\_of\_the\_2nd\_national\_indigenous\_languages\_survey.pdf (accessed 22 July 2014).