
5 Police services

This chapter reports on the performance of police services. These services comprise the operations of the police agencies of each State and Territory government and the ACT community policing function performed by the Australian Federal Police (AFP) under the ‘Policing arrangement between the ACT and Commonwealth governments’. The national policing function of the AFP and other national non police law enforcement bodies such as the Australian Crime Commission (ACC) are not included in the Report.

Police services are the principal means through which State and Territory governments pursue the achievement of a safe and secure environment for the community through crime responses, the investigation of offences, the provision of services to the judicial process, and the provision of road safety and traffic management. Police are involved in a diverse range of activities aimed at reducing the incidence and effects of criminal activity. They also respond to more general needs in the community — for example, assisting emergency services, mediating family and neighbourhood disputes, delivering messages regarding death or serious illness, and advising on general policing and crime issues (CJC 1996).

Indigenous data

The police services chapter in the *Report on Government Services 2005* (2005 Report) contains the following data items on Indigenous people:

- Indigenous staffing (sworn and unsworn) as a proportion of the Indigenous population aged 20–64 years.
- Deaths in police custody and custody-related operations, 1998 to 2002.

Supporting tables

Supporting tables for data within the police services chapter of the compendium are contained in the attachment to the compendium. Supporting tables are identified in references throughout this chapter by an ‘A’ suffix (for example, table 5A.3 is table 3 in the in the police services attachment to the compendium). As the data are directly sourced from the 2005 Report, the compendium also notes where the original table, figure or text in the 2005 Report can be found. For example, where the compendium refers to ‘2005

Report, p. 5.15' this is page 15 of chapter 5 of the 2005 Report, and '2005 Report, 5A.2' is attachment table 2 of attachment 5 of the 2005 Report.

Indigenous staffing

This section focuses on the performance of mainstream services in relation to Indigenous Australians. One indicator of access and equity is 'Indigenous staffing' — that is, the proportion of police staff from Indigenous backgrounds relative to the proportion of the general population who are from Indigenous backgrounds (box 5.1). The process of identifying Indigenous staff member and clients poses challenges, particularly when relying on self-identification. Where Indigenous people are required to identify themselves, then the accuracy of the data will partially depend on how they perceive the advantages (or disadvantages) of identification and whether these perceptions change over time. For the purpose of this chapter, an Indigenous person is one who self-identifies as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Box 5.1 Indigenous staffing

'Indigenous staffing' is included as an output indicator of governments' objective to provide police services in an equitable manner. Indigenous people may feel more comfortable in 'accessing' police services when they are able to deal with Indigenous police staff.

The indicator is defined as the proportion of police staff from Indigenous backgrounds compared to the proportion of the general population aged 20–64 years who are from Indigenous backgrounds. These data are used because a significantly larger proportion of the Indigenous population falls within the younger non-working age groupings compared with the non-Indigenous population. Readily available ABS population estimates for people aged 20–64 years in 30 June 2001 provide a proxy for the estimated working population.

A proportion of police staff from Indigenous backgrounds closer to the proportion of the general population aged 20–64 years who are from Indigenous backgrounds represents a more desirable equity outcome.

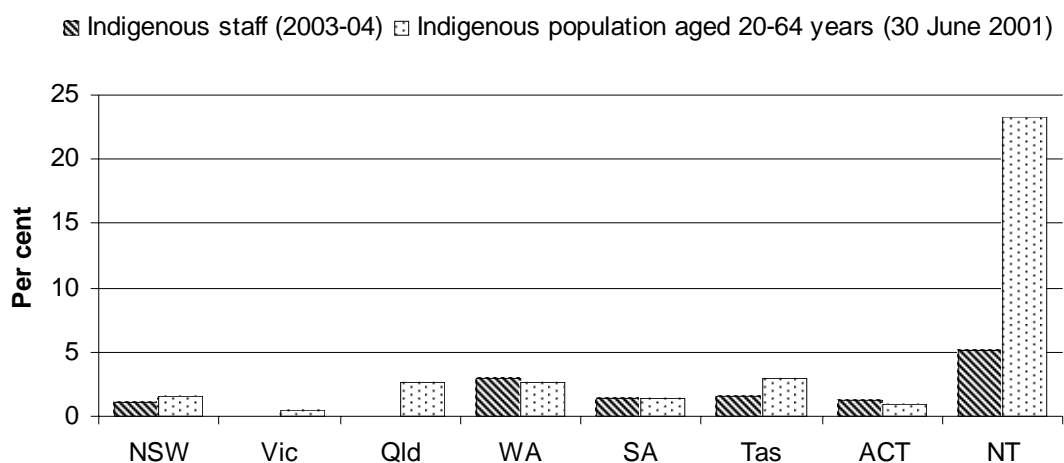
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Box 5.1 (Continued)

In some jurisdictions, the process of identifying Indigenous staff members relies on self-identification. Where Indigenous people are required to identify themselves, then the accuracy of the data will partly depend on how they perceive the advantages (or disadvantages) of identification and whether these perceptions change over time. More generally, many factors will influence the willingness of the Indigenous population to access police services, including familiarity with procedures for dealing with police, and confidence in the effectiveness of police services. For the purposes of this chapter, an Indigenous person is one who self-identifies as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Of the jurisdictions that provided data in 2003-04, the NT had the highest proportion of Indigenous police staff (5.2 per cent), while Victoria had the lowest proportion (0.1 per cent) (table 5A.9). In most jurisdictions, the proportion of Indigenous police staff was broadly in line with the representation of Indigenous people in the population aged 20–64 years. The exception was the NT, where the representation of Indigenous people in police staff was significantly lower than their representation in the general population aged 20–64 years (23.2 per cent) (figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1 Proportion of Indigenous staff (sworn and unsworn) and Indigenous population aged 20–64 years^{a, b, c}



^a Indigenous staff numbers relate to those staff who self-identify as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent. ^b Information on Indigenous status is collected only at the time of recruitment. ^c Queensland was unable to separate Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff.

Source: ABS, Cat. no. 3201.0, (unpublished); State and Territory governments (unpublished); table 5A.9; 2005 Report, p. 5.27, figure 5.21.

Deaths in police custody and custody-related operations

'Deaths in custody and custody-related operations', and 'Indigenous deaths in custody' are outcome indicators of governments' objective to provide safe custody for alleged offenders, and ensure fair and equitable treatment for both victims and alleged offenders (box 5.2). The data for both indicators are provided on a comparable basis.

Box 5.2 Deaths in custody and custody-related operations, and Indigenous deaths in custody

'Deaths in custody and custody-related operations', and 'Indigenous deaths in custody', are included as outcome indicators of governments' objective to provide safe custody for alleged offenders, and ensure fair and equitable treatment for both victims and alleged offenders.

The indicators are defined as the number of non-Indigenous and Indigenous deaths in police custody and custody-related operations.

For both indicators, a lower number of deaths in custody and custody-related operations is a better outcome.

Nationally, there were 19 deaths in police custody and custody-related operations in 2002 (down from 31 in 2001). This total comprised 13 non-Indigenous deaths and six Indigenous deaths. Across jurisdictions, the number of non-Indigenous deaths ranged from six deaths in NSW to no deaths in SA, the ACT and the NT (table 5.1). Three jurisdictions recorded Indigenous deaths in 2002 — NSW (three deaths), the NT (two deaths) and WA (one death). Nationally, the death rate per 100 000 people over the period 1998–2002 was 0.66. Across jurisdictions, the rate ranged from 4.62 in the NT to 0.21 in Tasmania (with the ACT recording no deaths over the period) (table 5.1).

Table 5.1 **Deaths in police custody and custody-related operations^a**

	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>Aust^b</i>
Non-Indigenous deaths									
1998	9	7	2	1	–	–	–	–	19
1999	4	4	3	2	2	–	–	4	19
2000	12	1	2	1	4	–	–	–	20
2001	15	5	4	1	1	–	–	–	26
2002	6	1	3	2	–	1	–	–	13
Indigenous deaths									
1998	2	–	1	1	–	–	–	2	6
1999	1	–	1	3	–	–	–	1	6
2000	2	–	1	1	1	–	–	–	5
2001	–	–	–	2	3	–	–	–	5
2002	3	–	–	1	–	–	–	2	6
Total deaths									
1998	11	7	3	2	–	–	–	2	25
1999	5	4	4	5	2	–	–	5	26
2000	14	1	3	2	5	–	–	–	25
2001	15	5	4	3	4	–	–	–	31
2002	9	1	3	3	–	1	–	2	19
Total 1998–2002	54	18	17	15	11	1	–	9	126
Rate per 100 000 people (1998–2002) ^c									
	0.83	0.38	0.48	0.80	0.73	0.21	–	4.62	0.66

^a Deaths in police custody include: deaths in institutional settings (for example, police stations/lockups and police vehicles, or during transfer to or from such an institution, or in hospitals following transfer from an institution); and other deaths in police operations where officers were in close contact with the deceased (for example, most raids and shootings by police). Deaths in custody-related operations cover situations where officers did not have such close contact with the person as to be able to significantly influence or control the person's behaviour (for example, most sieges and most cases where officers are attempting to detain a person, such as pursuits). ^b Includes one AFP death in custody in 1999. ^c Rate calculated by using the average population during 1998–2002. – Nil or rounded to zero.

Source: AIC (various years), *Deaths in Custody, Australia*; ; table 5A.10; 2005 Report, p. 5.77, table 5.3.

References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics), *Population by Age and Sex, Australian States and Territories*, Cat. no. 3201.0, Canberra.

AIC (Australian Institute of Criminology) 2002, *Deaths in Custody, Australia* (and various years), Canberra.

CJC (Criminal Justice Commission) 1996, *The Nature of General Police Work*, Research Paper Series, vol. 3, no. 2, Brisbane.