Reference No. 95

Summarising: Ross (2006), *Health*
Responsibility for the preparation of this research summary rests with the authors of the MCEETYA report *Education, Training and Indigenous Futures: CAEPR Policy Research 1990–2007* and not the original author(s) of the summarised material.

Title of Research:
Health

Research Publication:

Name of Researcher(s):
R. Ross (a participant in the CAEPR sponsored NATSISS seminar)

Time period:
2002

Geographic location:
Forecasts are presented at the national and State and Territory levels and in terms of remoteness.

Methodology:
Statistical analysis of the 2002 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) was undertaken with particular reference to establishing associations between health and location, income, age and gender, level of school completion and attainment of post-school qualifications. Non-Indigenous health information is derived from the 2002 General Social Survey.

Aims:
This paper seeks to identify relationships which may exist between health status of Indigenous people and their socio-economic circumstances.

Selected findings and insights:
Compared to the health of the non-Indigenous population, the state of Indigenous health was found to be still well behind:

- A majority (59%) of the non-Indigenous adult population reported ‘excellent’ or ‘very good’ health compared to 35% of Indigenous Australians. At the other extreme twice as many Indigenous people reported their health as ‘fair’ or ‘poor’ as non-Indigenous people (33% and 16% respectively).
- There was a small but significant tendency for those Indigenous Australians living in remote regions to report overall better health than those living in non-remote regions.

With regard to the possible relationship with educational attainment, the study found that:
those who had completed Year 12 were far healthier than those who had not, and had fewer disabilities; and

in turn, those who had completed Year 10/11 were healthier than those who had only completed Year 9, and had fewer disabilities.

However such a finding may itself reflect more the effect of age, with those in the population having completed Year 12 being a younger cohort than those who had not completed Year 12.

The study identified State and Territory differences in Indigenous health. Compared to the national average, Indigenous people:

- in the Northern Territory, Indigenous people were healthier and had fewer disabilities;
- in Victoria, Indigenous people were less healthy and had more disabilities;
- in the ACT, fewer Indigenous people were in poor health, but there was no difference in disabilities;
- in NSW, more Indigenous people were in poorer health, but this figure was only weakly significant;
- in Tasmania, there were no differences in health status but more disabilities; and
- Queensland reflected the national average for both health and disability measures.

Educational implications:

More detailed research is required to determine the causal links between education and health issues. However there is growing evidence of the value of educational interventions targeted at young women of child-bearing age and education programs for addressing substance abuse. [health]

Relevance:

Introductory Topic: The Health of Indigenous Australians

Related papers:

N. Biddle Health benefits of education in Australia: Indigenous/non-Indigenous comparisons The Economic and Labour Relations Review Vol. 17, No.1