

Sexual health status of Australia's young Indigenous revealed

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The results are in for the latest Australia-wide sexual health survey of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The GOANNA Survey was led by SAHMRI researchers in partnership with Aboriginal community organizations and included more than 1,300 participants aged 16-29 from urban, regional and remote parts of mainland Australia.

The survey focused on relationships, sexual behaviors, use of [health](#) services and knowledge about sexually transmissible infections (STIs), HIV and hepatitis C.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research leader, Professor James Ward of the University of Queensland (formerly of SAHMRI) led the GOANNA survey for the second time. Prof Ward said rates of STIs, including chlamydia, gonorrhoea and syphilis as well as HIV and hepatitis C, remain unacceptably high in many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, particularly in remote Australia.

"These survey findings provide a snapshot on a range of factors that might contribute to risk for these infections" Prof Ward said.

"We need to make sure that up to date information is available to guide sexual health [clinical guidelines](#), policies and programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities."

Since the first survey (2011-13), the proportion of people who reported using a condom the last time they had sex has dropped from 52% to 40%. There's also been a significant rise in the number of people identifying as LGBTQI, more than doubling from 8% to 18%. Increasing gender and sexual diversity and declines in condom use have also been observed in other surveys of Australian young people in recent years.

STI testing remained stable, with two thirds of participants tested in their lifetime in both surveys. But only half of sexually active teenagers aged 16-19 had ever had an STI test and were considerably less likely to be offered one at a health check-up than young adults. Smoking rates dropped from 40% to 28%. About half of people reported [binge drinking](#) and marijuana was the most commonly used drug.

Overwhelmingly, Aboriginal medical services were where people chose to go for health checks, testing for STIs, HIV and hepatitis C, advice on sex and STIs and help for alcohol and drug use, highlighting the need for [sexual health](#) care based in Aboriginal medical services.

More information: The full report is available on the Young Deadly Free website: www.youngdeadlyfree.org.au

Provided by South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI)

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