

Summary of Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey

1. The survey was undertaken in 2001 and 2002 by the Telethon Institute for Child Health research in Western Australia and included 5,289 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from all over the state.
2. The survey focused on developmental and environmental factors that enable competency and resilience in Aboriginal children and young people.
3. The survey included 34% of children living in metropolitan Perth and a further 24% of children living in the rural and regional areas around Perth. The research will therefore be relevant to the Victorian indigenous population, where 45% of the population live in metropolitan Melbourne and a significant proportion of those living outside Melbourne live in rural or regional towns.
4. Of particular relevance to Victoria were the following findings for children living in Perth. Further results and details can be found within the full report.
 - 44.8% of carers had completed year 10, only 12.8% had completed year 12.
 - In metropolitan and regional areas virtually no children or their carers spoke their Aboriginal language
 - Nearly 33% of carers were unemployed (Unemployment rates were lower in regional areas)
 - Like Victoria a higher proportion of Aboriginal babies are born low birth weight and to younger mothers.
 - Breastfeeding rates were higher in more isolated areas (close to 100%) than in the metropolitan areas (80%)
 - In Perth during pregnancy nearly 50% of women smoked (higher than the general population), nearly 25% consumed alcohol (lower than the general population in WA), and approximately 10% used marijuana.
 - Birth weights were lower in the infants of mothers who had used tobacco in particular
 - Asthma prevalence was highest in the metropolitan areas (30%)
 - The proportion of children with adequate vegetable consumption was inadequate overall, but better in metropolitan areas and in younger children.
 - Injury rates for Aboriginal children varied little over areas of isolation and were generally the same or lower than the general population
 - Approximately 50% of children aged 4-17 years living in Perth or the surrounding area had experienced a dental problem
 - Overall just over one quarter of children in the survey were limited in one or more sensory functions (vision, hearing or speech) or experienced pain.
 - Use of emergency departments was higher in younger children. For example 22.5% of children aged 0-3 years had used the emergency department in the 6 months prior to the survey, compared to 16.5% for the general population.

The full report and summary can be downloaded from:

<http://www.ichr.uwa.edu.au/research/divisions/pop/projects/waachs/>