



Employment and Income Fact Sheet

First Nations Australian workers are severely disadvantaged in terms of their access to decent jobs as well as to essential services such as education and health.¹

According to the ACTU in its policy on First Nations workers a large proportion face unfair barriers to employment because of a lack of skills, a lack of access to education and because of discrimination.

As a Union, good jobs with decent wages and conditions for First Nations workers is a “*goal which unions, governments, employers and the whole community must work towards*” (ACTU Indigenous Policy).

Policy and programs designed to respond to First Nations unemployment and underemployment will only be effective if they respond to the varying situations of Indigenous communities throughout Australia. These include established economies, emerging economies, hybrid economies and limited economies.

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First Nations Australians have lower average levels of employment and earnings from work and other private income sources than the general population, which can lead to higher levels of dependence on government assistance for income support (AIHW 2015:289; SCRGSP 2016).²

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Employment and Income Fact Sheet (cont'd)

Key points for First Nations Employment and Income



In 2018, the First Nations Australians employment rate was around 49 per cent compared to around 75 per cent for other Australians.

2008-18

Over the past decade (2008–2018), the employment rate for First Nations Australians increased slightly (by 0.9 percentage points), while for other Australians it fell by 0.4 percentage points. As a result, the gap has not changed markedly.

Major Cities 59%



Remote Areas 35%



The First Nations employment rate varied by remoteness. Major Cities had the highest employment rate at around 59 per cent compared to around 35 per cent in Very Remote areas. The gap in employment outcomes between First Nations Australians was widest in Remote and Very Remote Australia.



At 30 June 2018, 45% of First Nations Australians aged 15 and over were receiving some form of income support payment—around 234,600 recipients. The equivalent proportion for non-Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over was 23%.³



The unemployment rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were higher than those for non-Indigenous people, across all age groups. The difference was largest for young people aged 15 to 24 years (27% for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, compared with 14% for non-Indigenous people). The smallest difference was for those aged 65 years and over (7% compared with 3%).⁴



The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet Community Development Programme (CDP) Regions report¹ indicates that there are over 33,000 participants in CDP as at 30 September 2017. More than 80 percent of these participants identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.⁵



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Industry and Occupation

According to the 2016 Census, most employed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians aged 15 years and over worked in health care and social assistance (14%) or public administration and safety (11%). This may be relevant to the United Workers Union as many of our members may come from these industries.

The most prevalent occupations were community and personal service worker (17%) and labourer (15%).

TOP EMPLOYING INDUSTRIES, 15 YEARS AND OVER, ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS, 2016 ⁶

INDUSTRY	% OF EMPLOYED PERSONS
Health Care and Social Assistance	14%
Public Administration and Safety	11%
Construction	9%
Education and Training	9%
Retail Trade	9%
Accommodation and Food Services	7%

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2016

Reference List

- Australian Bureau of Statistics – AusStats ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2016
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare – Indigenous Income and Finance 11 September 2019
- Closing the Gap Report 2020
- <https://ctgreport.niaa.gov.au/sites/default/files/pdf/closing-the-gap-report-2020.pdf>

Bibliography

- ¹ <https://www.actu.org.au/our-work/policy-issues/indigenous-workers>
- ² <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/indigenous-income-and-finance>
- ³ <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/indigenous-income-and-finance>
- ⁴ <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/Abs@.Nsf/7d12b0f6763c78caca257061001cc588/5f17e6c26744e1d1ca25823800728282!OpenDocument>
- ⁵ <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/2900.0~2016~Main%20Features~CDPP%20Community%20Development%20Programme%20Participation~10144>
- ⁶ <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/Abs@.Nsf/7d12b0f6763c78caca257061001cc588/5f17e6c26744e1d1ca25823800728282!OpenDocument>