

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in Local Government – Some evidence and questions

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Overview of presentation

- Key demographic, geographic and socioeconomic trends and patterns
- The future workforce
 - Occupation and education expectations of Indigenous youth
 - Indigenous experiences of disability and caring
- Practical implications of the applied behavioural sciences
 - Ongoing experiences and effects of discrimination
- Concluding comments and ongoing research
- A comparison of Indigenous Australians across government sectors
 - Counts, age distribution, occupation and education from the Census



Key demographic, geographic and socioeconomic trends and patterns

Indigenous definitions and identification

- A person is Indigenous if:
 - They are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent;
 - They identify as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander; and
 - They are accepted as an Aboriginal or a Torres Strait Islander by the community in which he or she lives.
- While Indigenous status question constant, people's response may differ
 - Lifecourse variation
 - One-off events like the *Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples*
 - Improvements in enumeration strategy
- There were 548,370 Indigenous Australians counted in the 2011 Census
 - Around 2.7 per cent of the Australian population who answered the Indigenous status question ...
 - ... and 20.5 per cent higher than the population count in 2006
- After adjusting for undercount, it is estimated that there were 669,736 Indigenous Australians as of June 30th 2011
 - Around 3.0 per cent of the Australian population ...
 - ... and 29.5 per cent higher than the population estimate from 2006

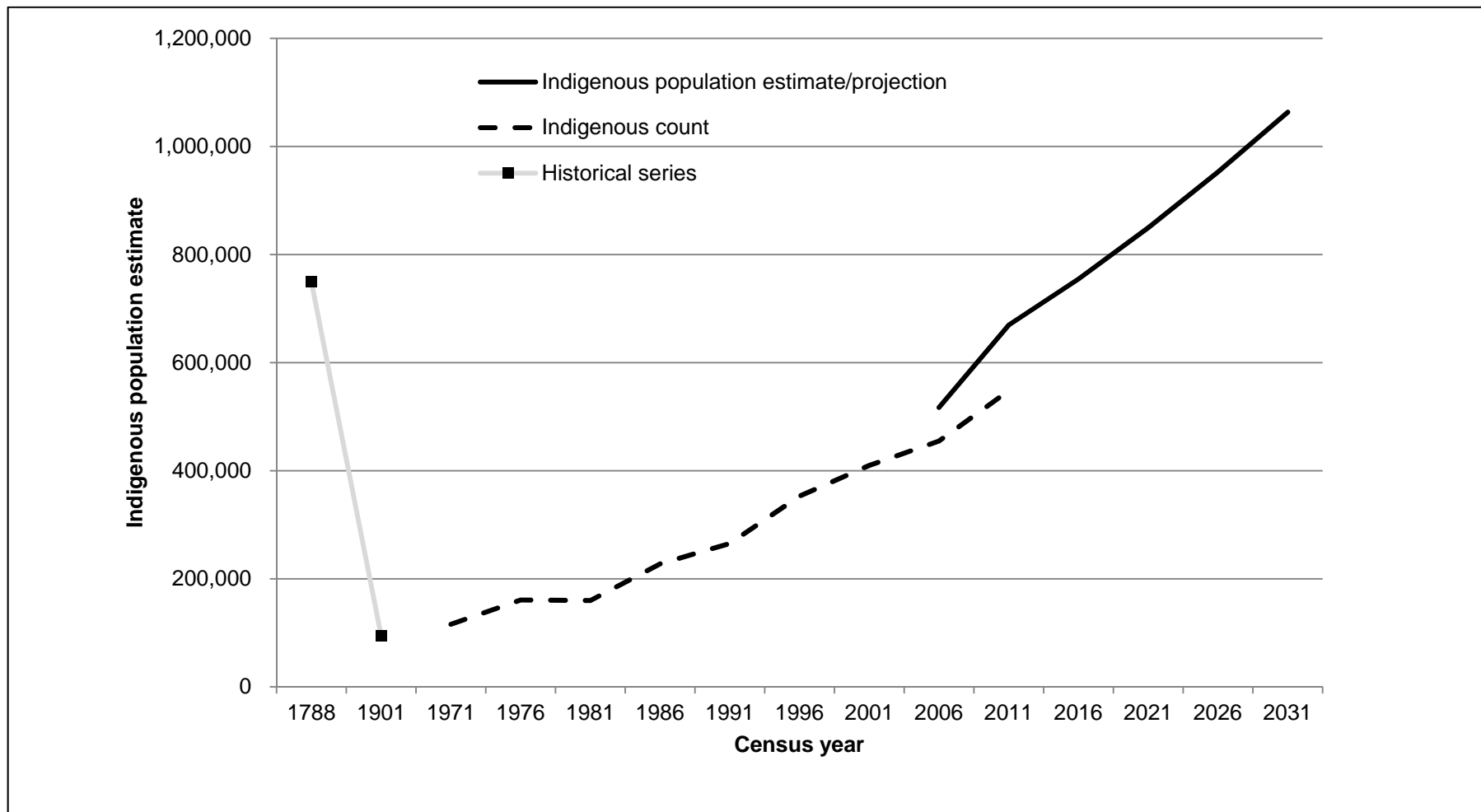


Key features of the Indigenous population

- The Indigenous population is relatively young...
- ...is growing at a much faster rate than the non-Indigenous population and projected to continue to grow.
- ... is ageing and projected to age even faster over the next few decades.
- ... has higher rates of temporary and long-term mobility
- ... is much more likely to live in remote and very remote Australia relative to the non-Indigenous population, but primarily an urban population.
- ... and is projected to become more urban over the next few decades.
- Indigenous Australians tend to have worse socioeconomic outcomes than the non-Indigenous population wherever they live, but the difference is greatest in remote areas

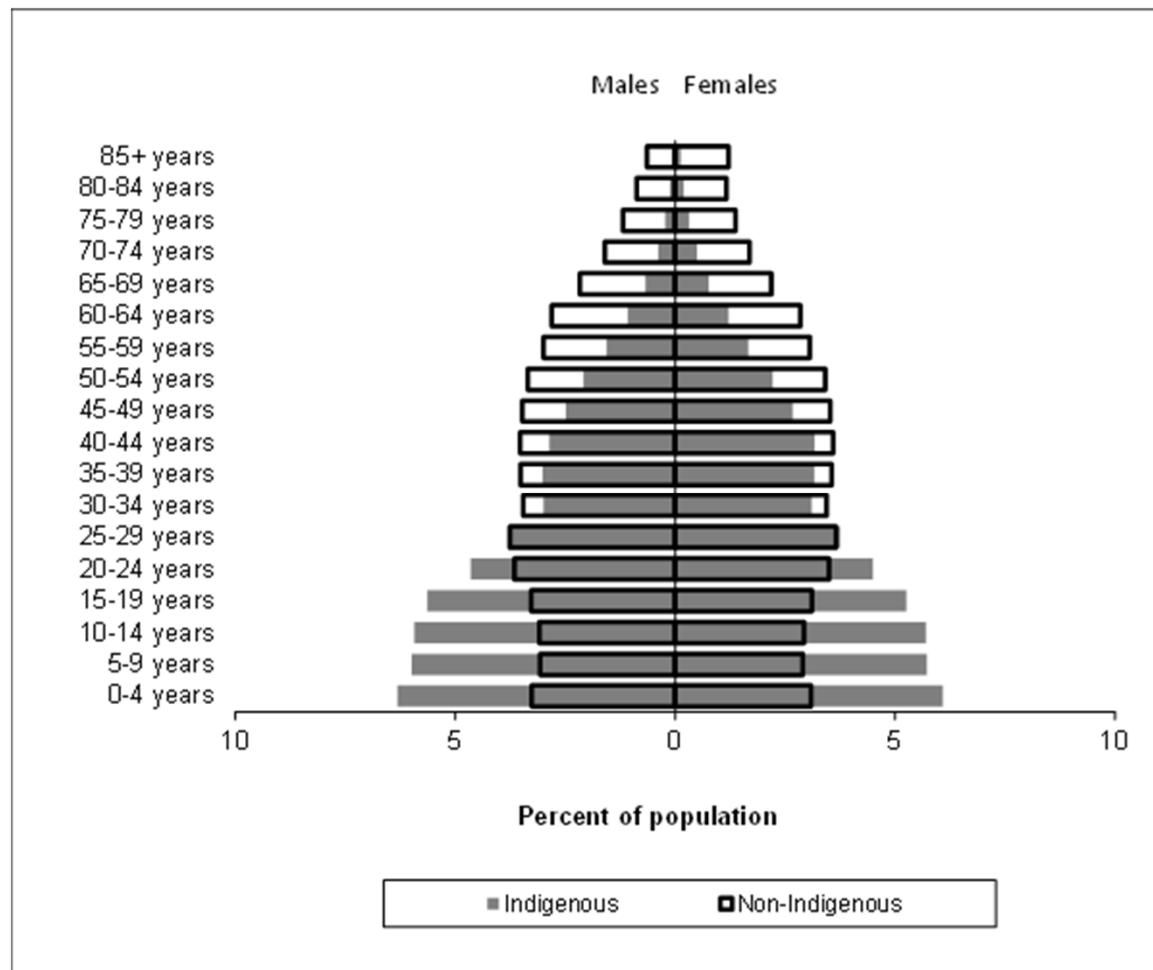


Population trends and projections



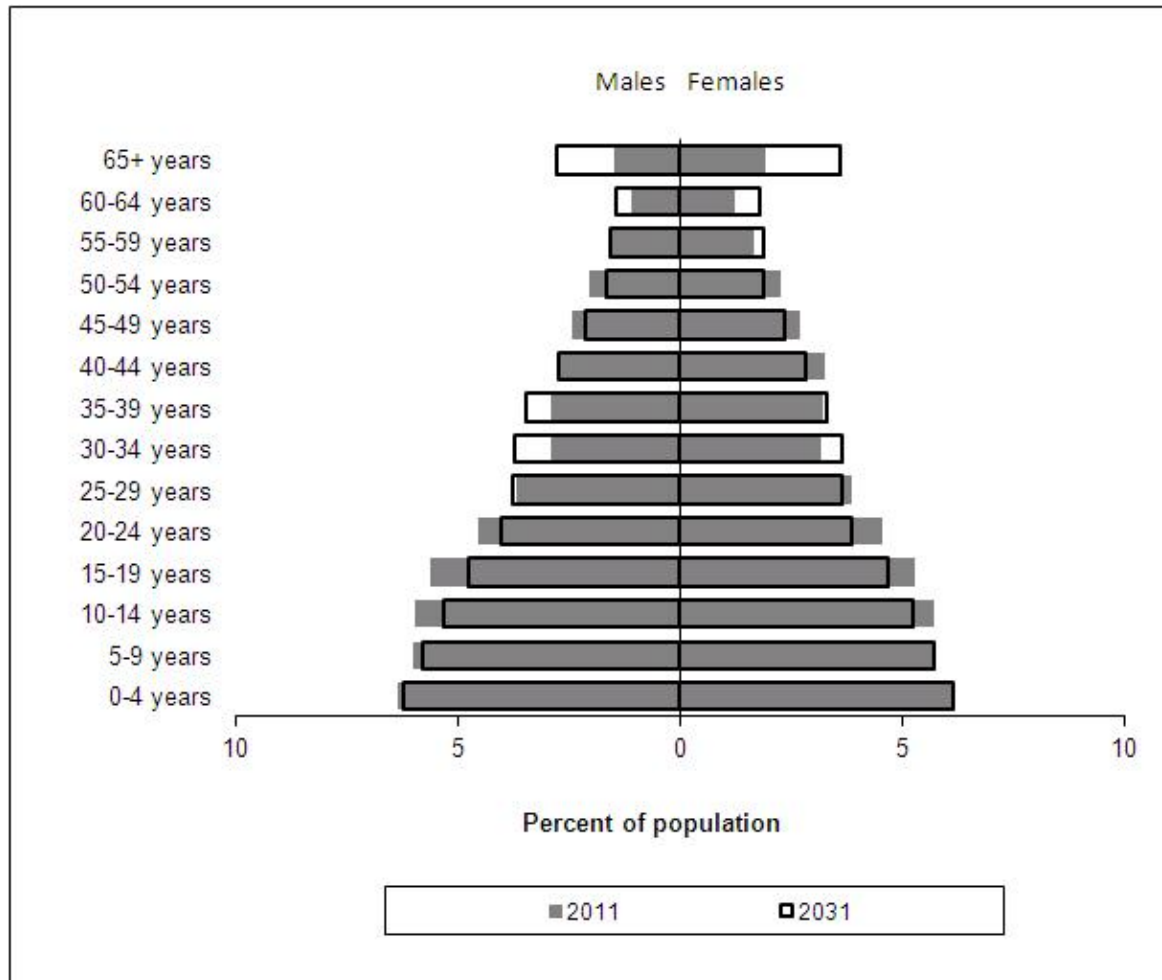


Age structure



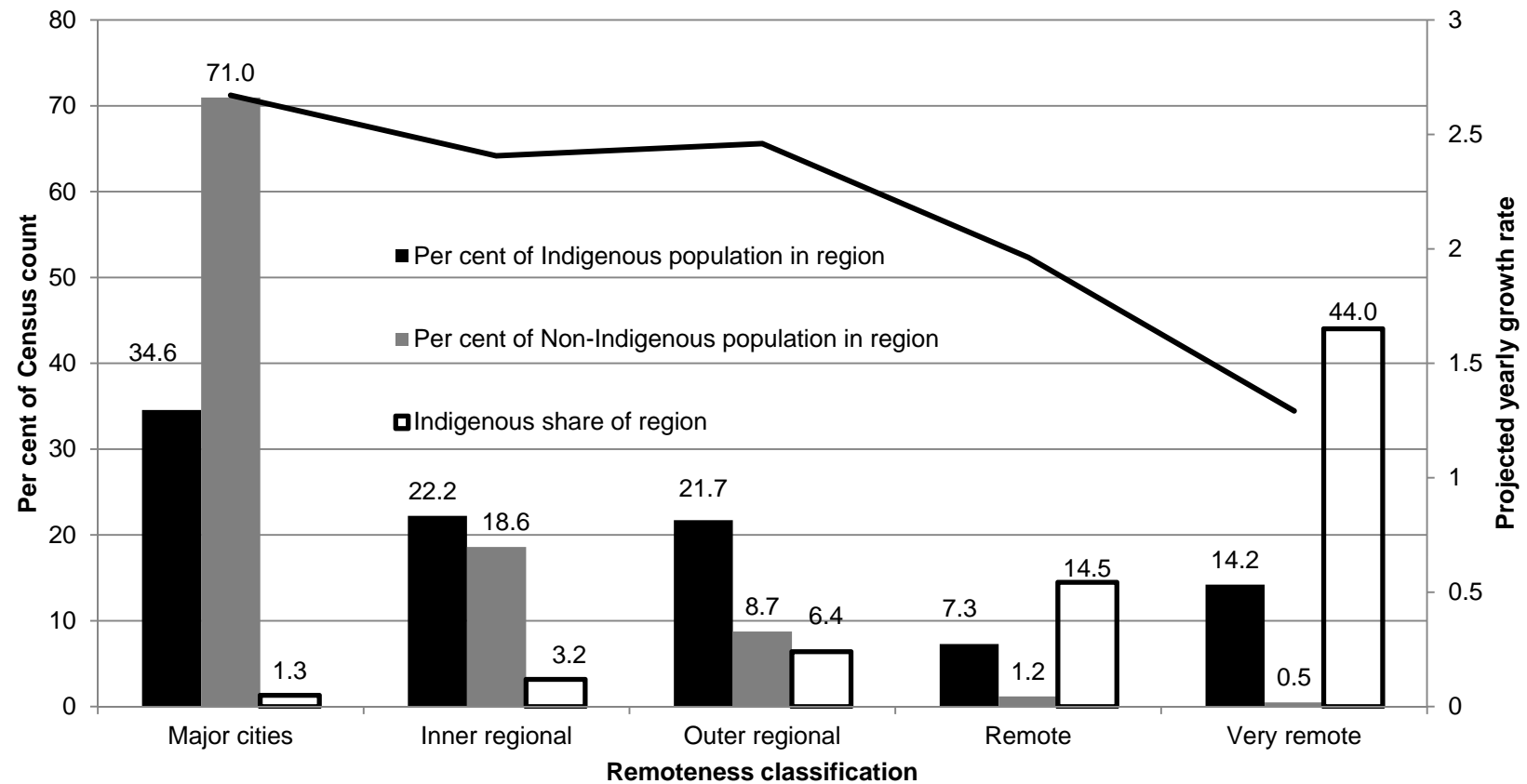


2011 and 2031 (projected) age structure





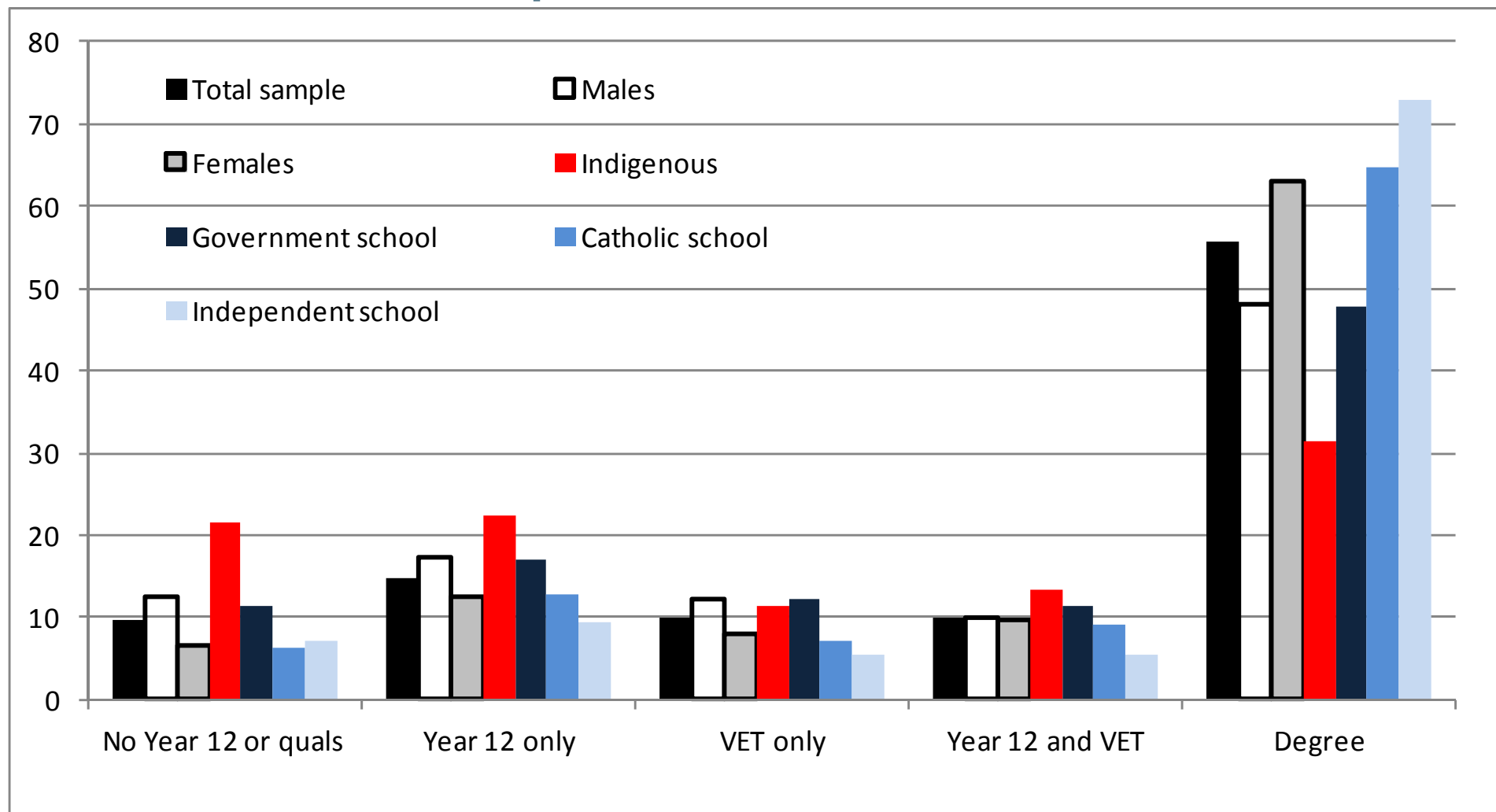
Geography





The future workforce – Occupation and education expectations of Indigenous youth

Education expectations - Distribution



Occupation expectations – Top 10 occupations (Total population)

Male	Per cent	Female	Per cent
Engineering professional	4.3	Solicitor	4.5
Defence force member	4.3	Primary school teacher	3.9
Electrician	4.1	Hairdresser	3.8
Carpenter and joiner	3.9	Nurse manager	3.5
Construction worker (nec)	3.2	Journalist	3.3
Architect and landscape architect	3.1	School teacher (nec)	3.3
Motor mechanic	3.0	Psychologist	3.2
Sportsperson	2.9	Veterinarian	3.2
Software and apps. programmer	2.7	Physiotherapist	2.7
Police	2.6	Child carer	2.5

Occupation expectations – Top 10 occupations (Indigenous)

Male	Per cent	Female	Per cent
Carpenter and joiner	8.2	Child carer	6.2
Motor mechanic	6.0	Hairdresser	5.6
Chef	4.9	Solicitor	4.2
Defence force member	4.9	School teacher (nec)	3.9
Police	4.1	Nurse manager	3.9
Construction and trade worker (nec)	3.7	Primary school teacher	3.3
Plumber	3.7	General clerk	3.0
Physiotherapist	3.4	Veterinarian	2.7
Sportsperson	3.0	Police	2.4
Driller, miner, shot firer	3.0	Physiotherapist	2.4



Occupations expectations – Dissimilarity index

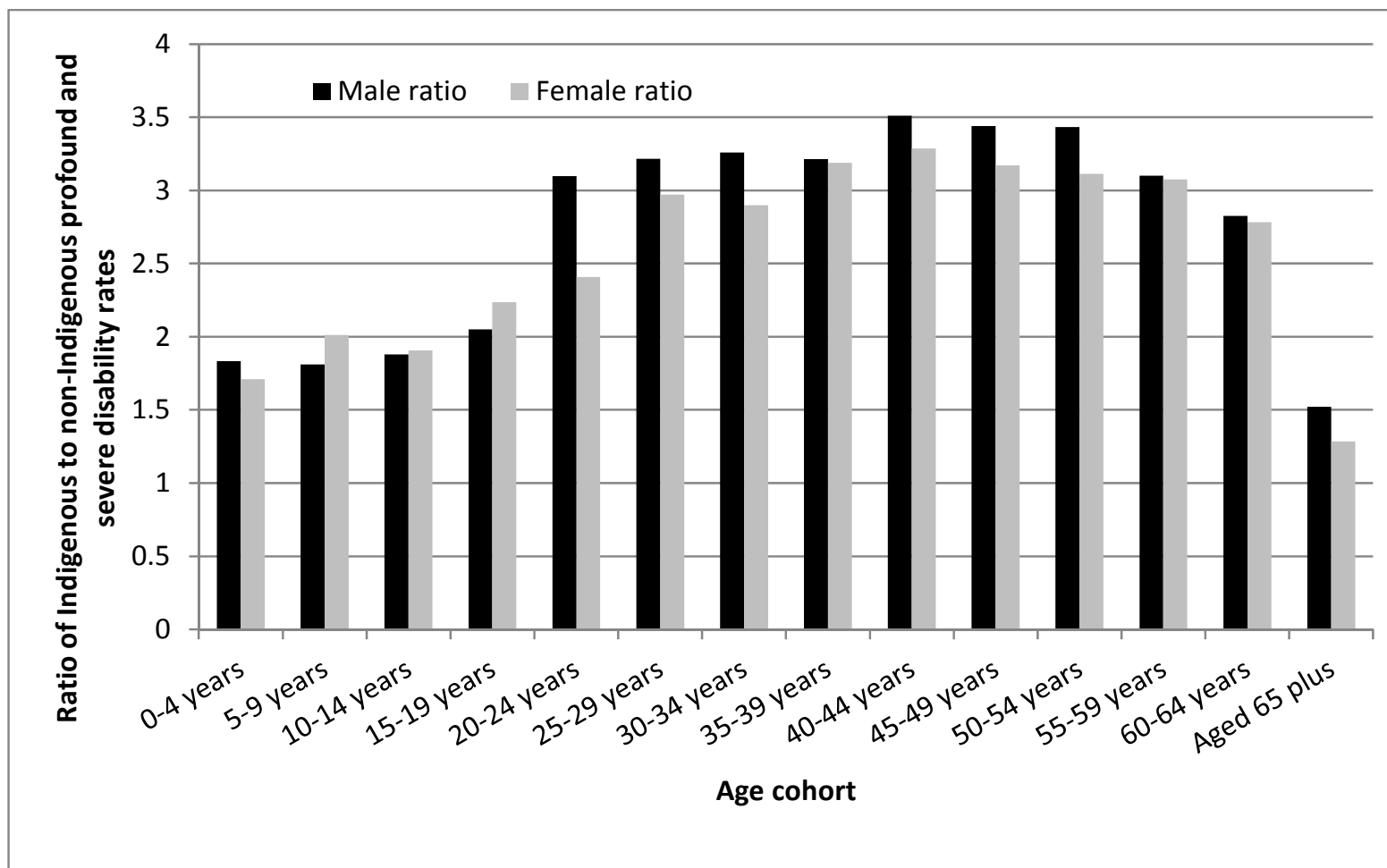
- Dissimilarity index:
 - Measures how evenly a population sub-group is spread across occupations relative to the rest of the population
- Index results – Males vs females
 - Student expectations at age 30 (aged 15 in 2009) – **0.545**
 - Actual distribution of 30-39 year olds (in 2011) – **0.528**
- Index results – Indigenous vs non-Indigenous
 - Student expectations at age 30 (aged 15 in 2009) – **0.277**
 - Actual distribution of 30-39 year olds (in 2011) – **0.327**



The future workforce – Indigenous experiences of disability and caring

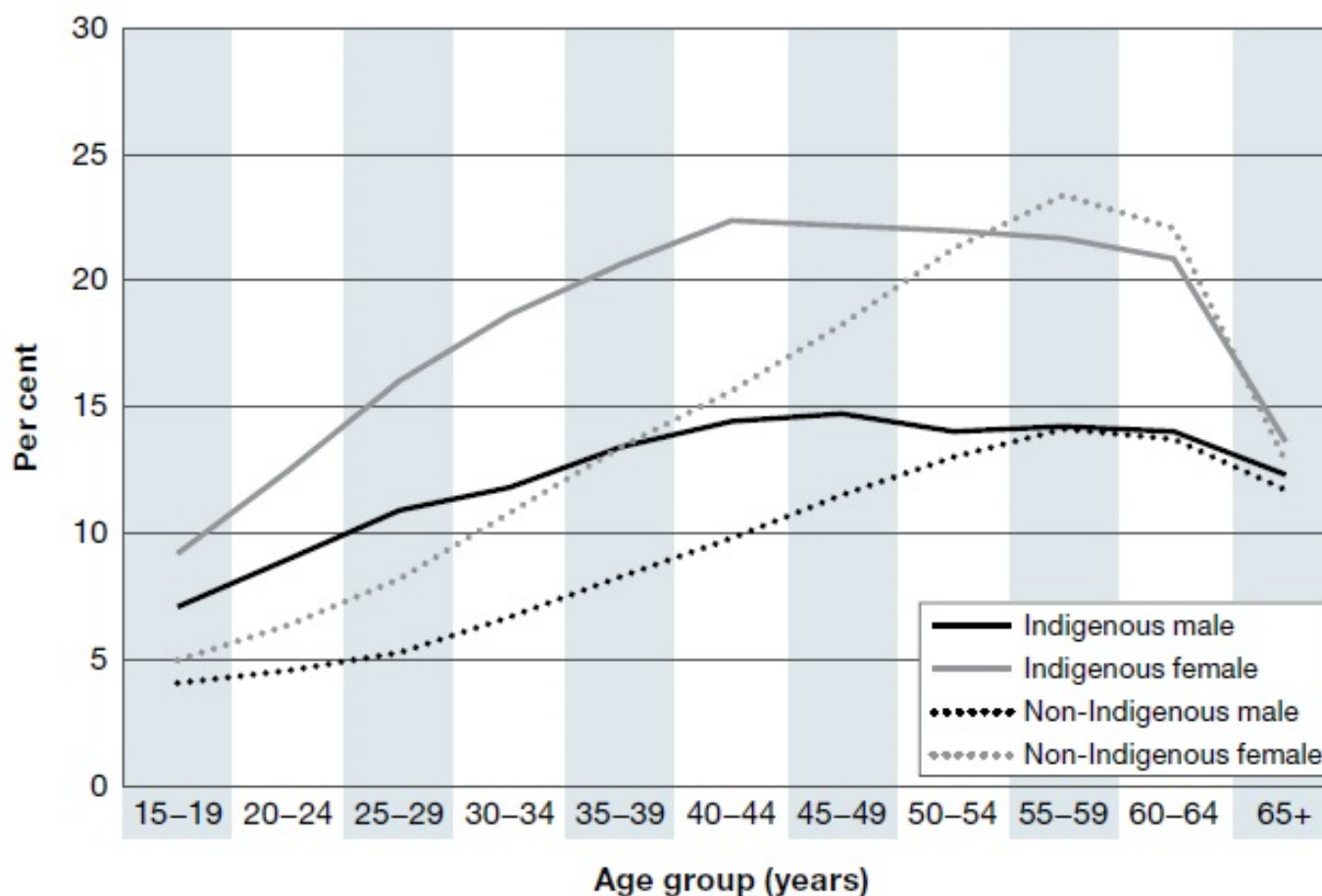


Ratio of Indigenous and non-Indigenous rates of profound/severe disability in large urban centres





Unpaid assistance for someone with a disability, illness or problem related to old age





Ongoing experiences and effects of discrimination

What are the applied behavioural sciences and why are they useful?

- Collection of disciplines that use observation and experiment to understand and predict people's choices and decisions under different circumstances and constraints
 - Include behavioural economics and social psychology, but also insights from sociology, political science, anthropology, etc.
 - Do not eschew theory, but attempt to build theoretical models that reflect and predict reality
 - (Usually) do not make normative assumptions, but rather describe reality
- Policy formulation and interventions that are not built on strong behavioural foundations will not achieve their aims or will have unintended consequences
 - (for example) criminal justice systems that focus on sentence length, rather than probability of arrest will not deter criminal activity



Key insights – Overview

- *Homo Economicus*
 - ‘Self-interested, rational agents: they analyze the costs and benefits of various options and choose the option that maximises their utility. They have stable, consistent preferences and the options they face are comparable to one another.’ (Koh 2012: 17)
- However, large body of research suggests that people are neither completely rational, nor completely random in their decisions.
- Rather, people exhibit predictable biases that not only make it less likely that they will achieve their own stated desires, but also complicate the design and efficiency of public policy.
- Covered in paper (presentation):
 - Bounded rationality and heuristics; Loss aversion and the endowment effect; Framing and construal; Hyperbolic discounting and the power of defaults; Happiness and subjective wellbeing; Identity and stereotype threat; Social interaction, fairness and the moral economy; Implicit prejudice and discrimination.



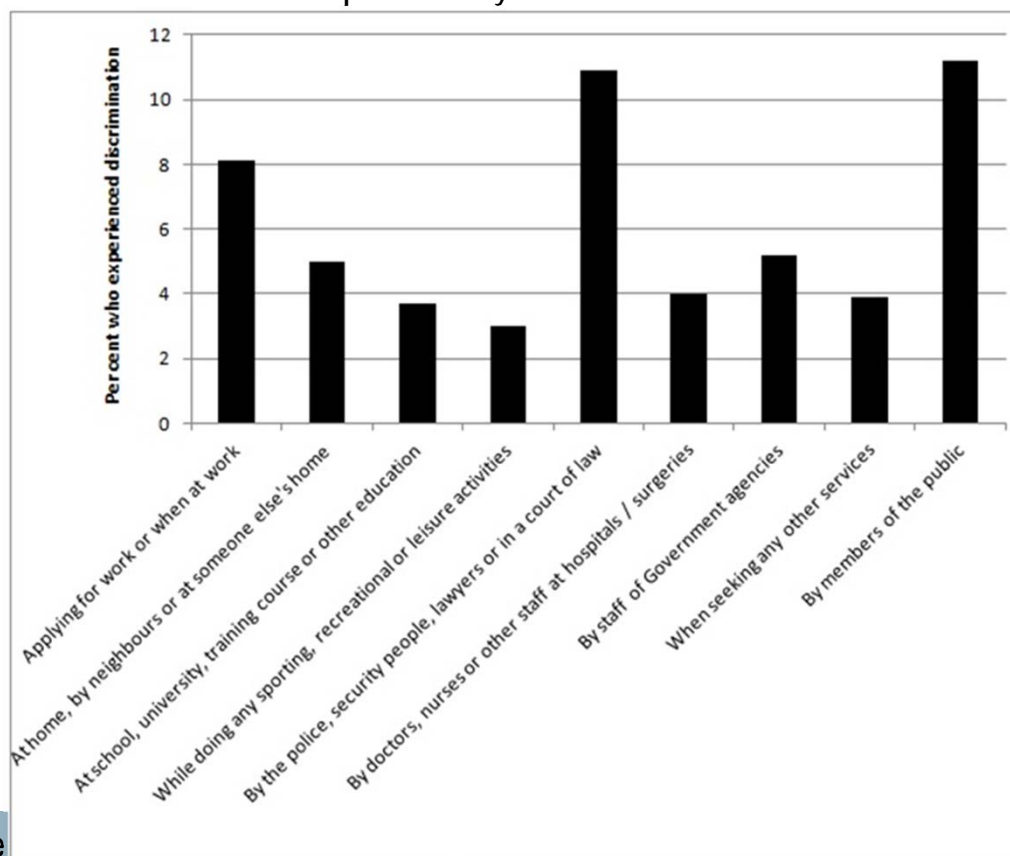
Insights from the behavioural sciences

– Implicit prejudice and discrimination

- Becker (1971: p. 14) defined people as having a ‘taste for discrimination’ if they acted in such a way that they were ‘willing to pay something, either directly or in the form of reduced income, to be associated with some persons instead of others.’
- Altonji and Blank (1999: p 3168) define labour market discrimination as ‘a situation in which persons who provide labor market services and who are equally productive in a physical or material sense are treated unequally in a way that is related to an observable characteristic such as race, ethnicity or gender.’
- Such definitions work well for aspects of discrimination which are conscious and results from personal animosity or hostility towards another group. However, most prejudice is implicit
 - That can have a more damaging effect on those who experience it.
- Specifically, Hardin and Banaji (2013: 13-14) defines implicit prejudice as that which is ‘unwitting, unintentional and uncontrollable.’
 - For example, professional police officers were more likely to shoot (simulated) black individuals holding firearms than white individuals and more likely to avoid shooting whites carrying tools (made to look like firearms) than blacks.
- Importantly, Hardin and Banaji (2013: 18) also make it clear that ‘Implicit prejudice is not limited to judgement of others, however, but also affects self-judgement and behavior, especially with regard to intellectual performance.’

Indigenous experiences of discrimination

- 2008 (NATSISS) – ‘In the last year, have you felt that you have been treated unfairly ... because you are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?’
- Around 28% of Indigenous Australians aged 15 years and over reported that they experienced some form of discrimination in the previous year.





Explicit discrimination from the Reconciliation Barometer

- The Reconciliation Barometer showed a high degree of acceptance amongst the broader Australian population for the notion that Indigenous Australians experience prejudice.
 - 23 per cent report that the level of prejudice Australians hold towards Indigenous people is very high, with a further 53 per cent reporting that prejudice is fairly high.
 - 82 per cent of respondents felt that discrimination was either a very important or fairly important factor in 'creating disadvantage amongst some Indigenous people.'
- Only a small minority of the general population reported that they themselves had negative attitudes towards the Indigenous population:
 - Around 14 per cent of the general community either disagreed or strongly disagreed that 'I would feel fine if I had a child who decided to marry an Indigenous person.'
 - Only 10 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that non-Indigenous Australians are superior to Indigenous Australians.
 - And 9 per cent of respondents reported that they wanted to have no contact with Indigenous people.



Implicit and statistical discrimination

- Much of the discrimination appears to be implicit, unintentional or ‘statistical’.
 - Only 20 per cent of the general community thought that Indigenous Australians were hard working compared to 71 per cent of who thought Australians in general are.
 - Only 15 per cent thought Indigenous Australians were disciplined compared to 41 per cent for Australians in general.
- Diversity training does not always work for reducing implicit prejudice and can sometimes make it worse. Effective programs induce intergroup relationships
 - 16 per cent of general community wanted frequent contact with Indigenous population and 49 per cent *wanted* occasional contact.
 - Only 10 per cent and 31 per cent of the community reported frequent and occasional contact respectively *at the moment*



Concluding comments and ongoing research

- Demography, geography and socioeconomic status shape the potential workforce and those who use local government services
- Disengagement from school and professional occupations start early.
 - Local government has a role in showing Indigenous youth that there are realistic careers for them
- Indigenous Australians have an ongoing and diverse experience with disability, but those who provide care are a potential experienced workforce
- Discrimination an ongoing experience for Indigenous workers, with much of this discrimination likely to be 'implicit' or 'statistical'
- Compared to other sectors, Indigenous workers are disproportionately found in Local Government
 - ...and those in Local Government sector are more likely to be female, about average age, more likely to be labourers and have relatively low levels of education



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A comparison across sectors

Indigenous Australians in Local Government – Census counts

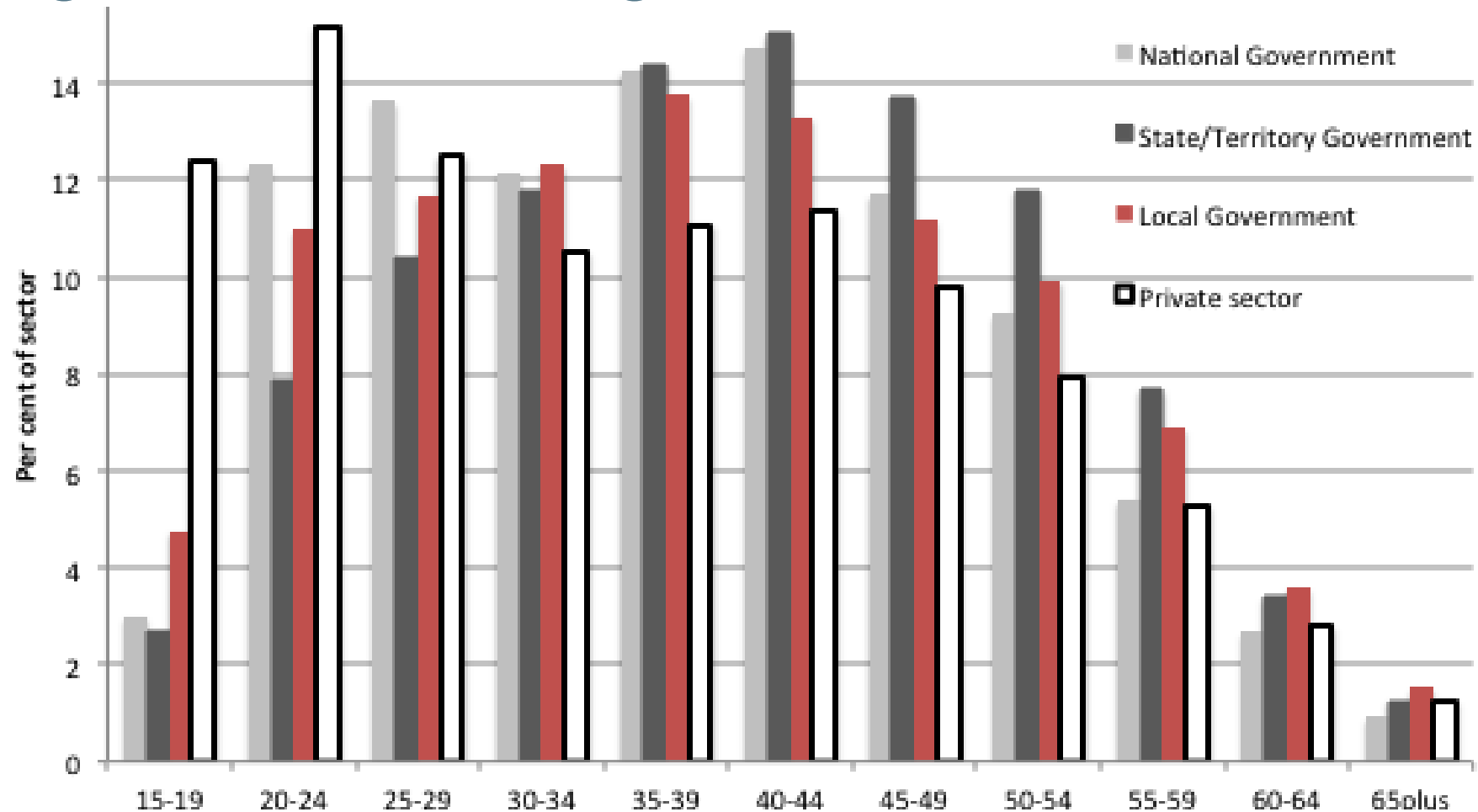
Sector	Number in the sector	Per cent of Indigenous workforce	Per cent of sector Indigenous	Per cent of Indigenous workers female
Local government	7,321	5.1	5.0	36.4
State/Territory government	19,554	13.6	1.9	64.5
National government	6,440	4.5	1.6	59.6
Private sector	110,505	76.8	1.3	45.1
Australian total	143,820	100.0	1.5	48.0

Indigenous Australians in local government – By remoteness

Remoteness area	Number in the sector	Per cent of total Australian Indigenous local government	Per cent of Indigenous workforce	Per cent of Indigenous sector	Per cent of Indigenous workers female
Major cities	1,039	14.2	1.8	1.3	43.3
Inner regional	800	10.9	2.6	2.2	34.0
Outer regional	1,113	15.2	4.0	5.5	35.0
Remote	871	11.9	9.1	20.5	34.4
Very remote	3,492	47.7	20.4	57.9	35.7
Australian total	7,315	100.0	5.1	5.0	36.3



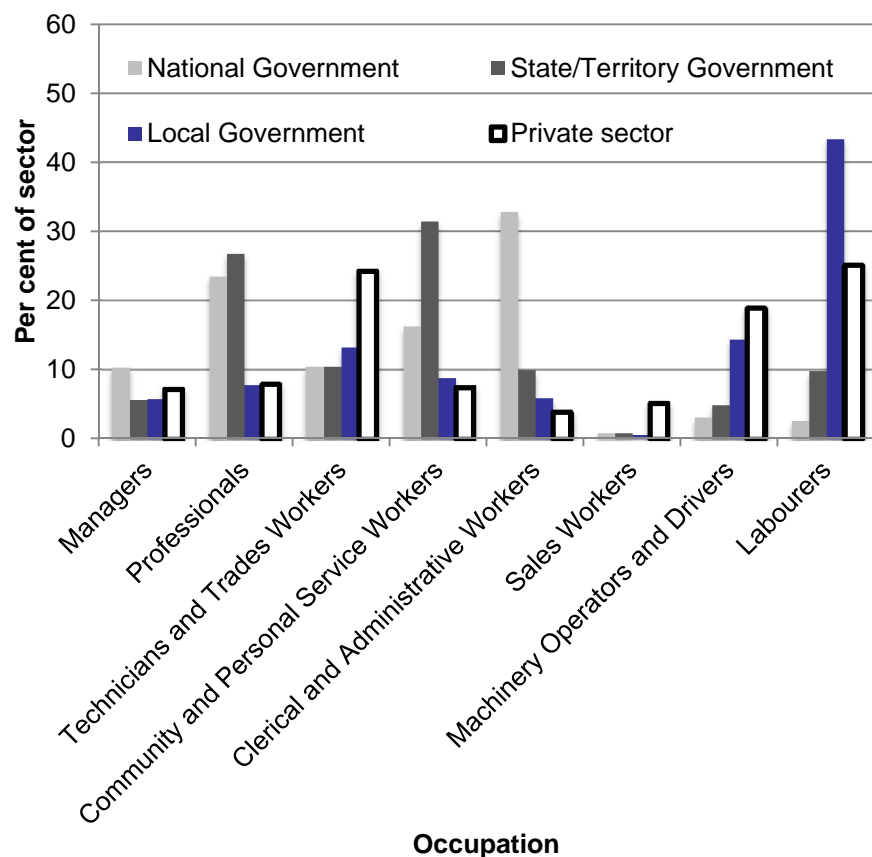
Indigenous Australians in local government – Age distribution



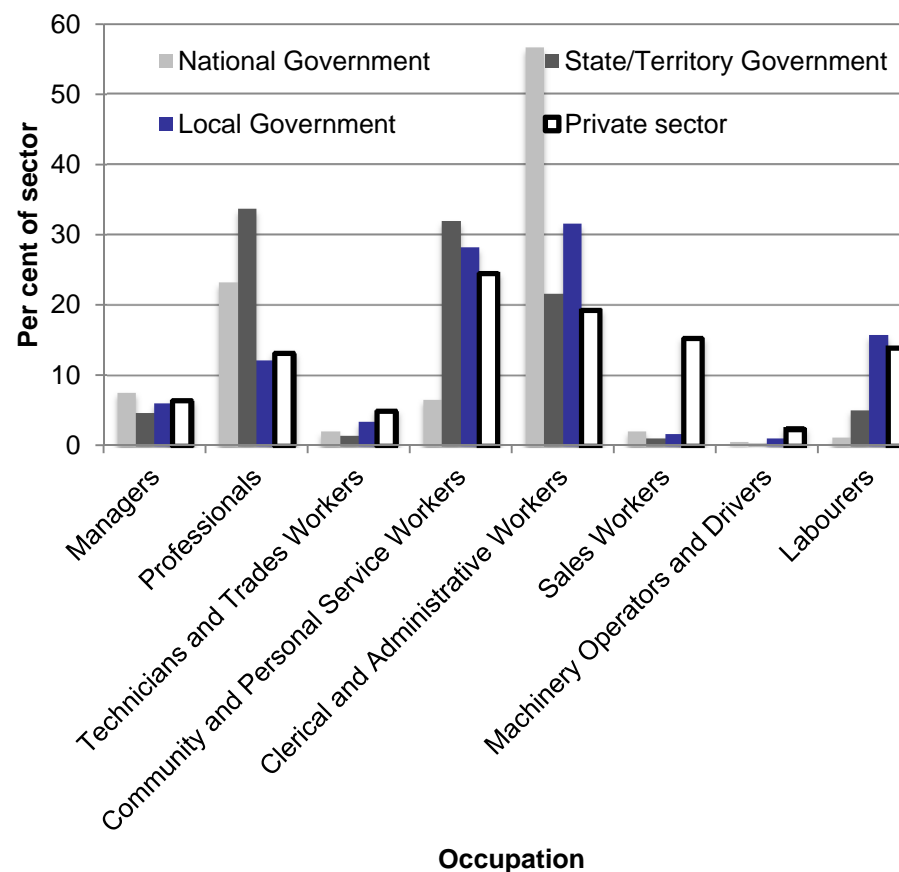


Indigenous Australians in local government – Occupation

Males



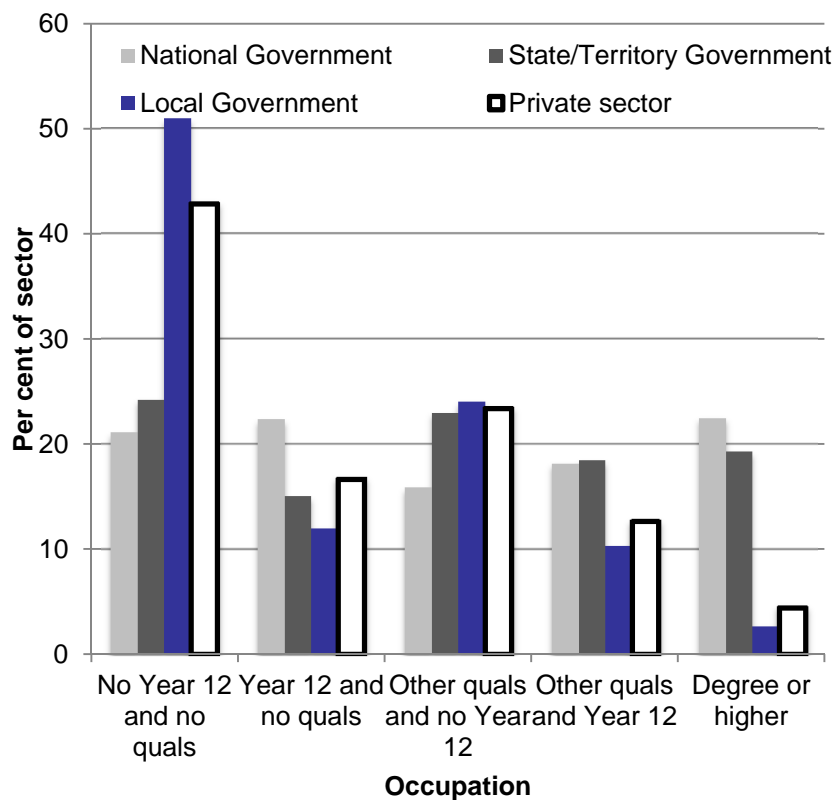
Females





Indigenous Australians in local government – Education

Males



Females

