

New report sheds light on disadvantage for the Stolen Generations and their descendants

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations and descendants
Numbers, demographic characteristics and selected outcomes

What the report is about

This new report, collated by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), has uncovered chronic health issues, disability and alarming levels of economic and social disadvantage for the Stolen Generations and their descendants.

As the first demographic study of its kind, it also provides comprehensive data to illustrate the direct link between the forced removal of tens of thousands of children from their families and the real-life symptoms of Intergenerational Trauma within today's families and communities.

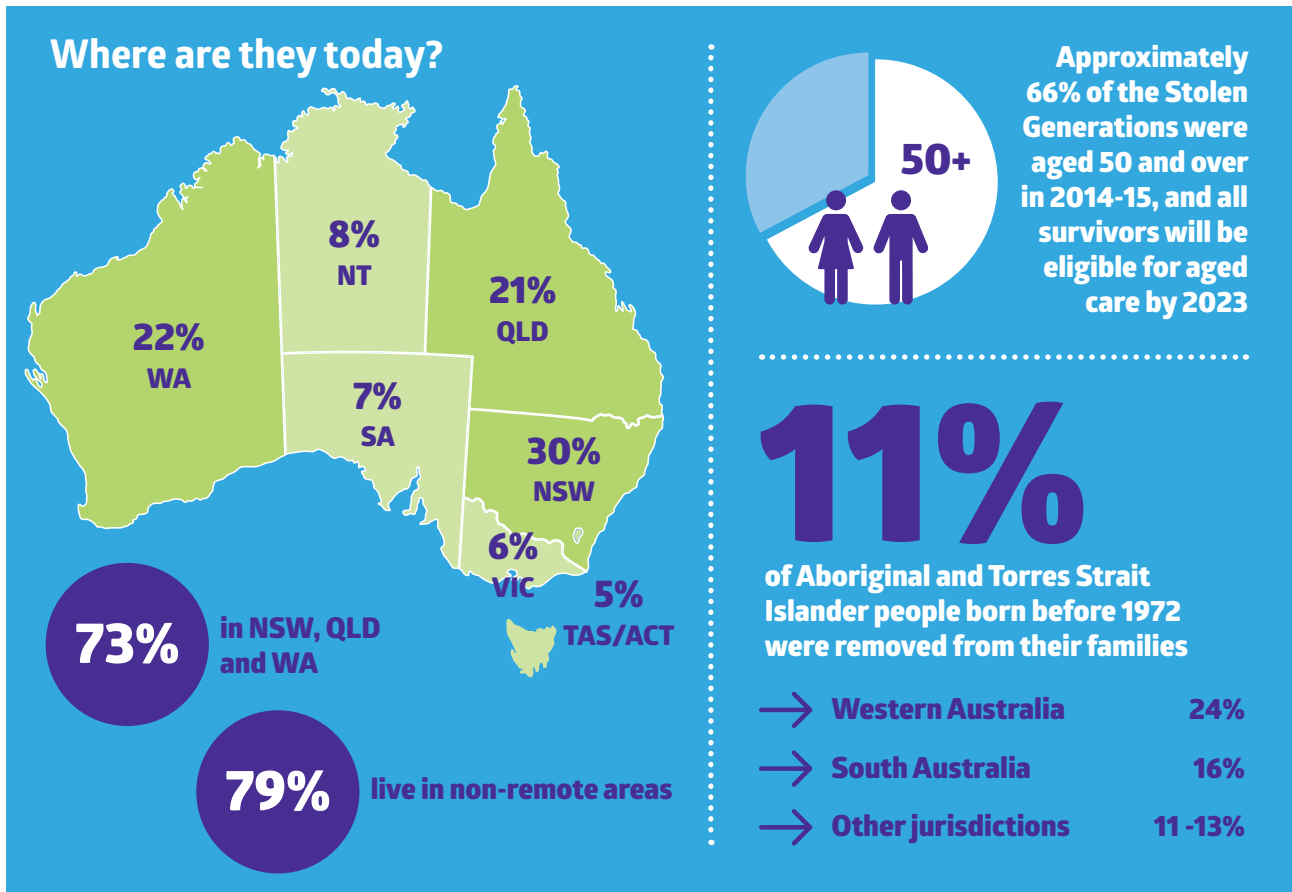
The report is part of an ongoing needs analysis being led by The Healing Foundation, with funding from the Federal Government. It will be used to determine priorities for future strategies and services.

Key findings

Before this report, we didn't know how many Stolen Generations members were still alive, let alone where and how they live, which made it difficult to determine their needs and plan services to address them. This report provides vital answers about the Stolen Generations and their families.

Who are the Stolen Generations?





The tragic impact of past policies

The report paints a disturbing picture of health issues, disability and poor economic security factors for the Stolen Generations. As they rapidly approach their elderly years, their aged care needs will be far more complex than the average ageing Australian.

For example:

67% live with a disability or restrictive long-term condition

70% rely on government payments as their main source of income

66% of Stolen Generations live in households within the three lowest income percentages

40% have experienced homelessness in the past 10 years

91% never completed Year 12

62% (of working age) are not employed

39% (over the age of 50) report poor mental health.

Disproportionate disadvantage

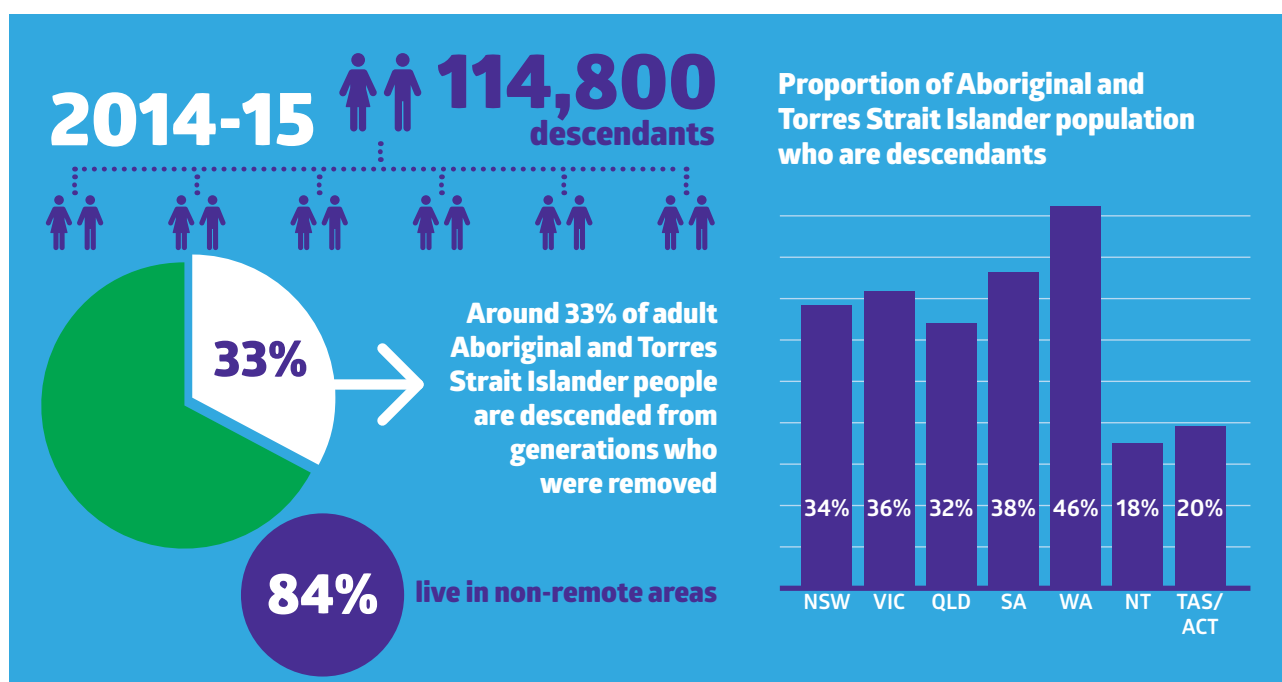
Even compared to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the same age group, who are already at a disadvantage in Australia, Stolen Generations members are suffering more. The AIHW report shows that the Stolen Generations experience higher levels of adversity in relation to most of the 38 key health and welfare outcomes analysed in the report. This disproportionate level of disadvantage demonstrates the negative impact of past actions to forcibly remove children from their families.

Compared to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the same age group, the Stolen Generations are:

- 3.3** times as likely to have been incarcerated in the last five years
- 1.8** times as likely to rely on government payments as their main source of income
- 1.7** times as likely to have experienced violence in the previous 12 months
- 1.7** times as likely to NOT own their home
- 1.6** times as likely not to be employed
- 1.6** times as likely to be in poor health
- 1.6** times as likely to have experienced homelessness in the last 10 years
- 1.5** times as likely to have mental health problems
- 1.5** times as likely to have experienced discrimination in the previous 12 months

The Stolen Generations are also more likely to report chronic health conditions like cancer (9.1% compared to 7.1%), diabetes (37.8% compared to 28.8%) and heart disease (44.2% compared to 36.9%).

The descendants of the Stolen Generations



The intergenerational impact

The story of disadvantage doesn't end with the Stolen Generations. This report also shows that the negative impact of past atrocities is having a flow-on effect to their families.

According to the AIHW report, descendants consistently experience poorer health and social outcomes. For example, compared to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, they are:

2.0 times as likely to have experienced discrimination in the last 12 months

1.9 times as likely to have experienced violence in the last 12 months

1.6 times as likely to be in poor health

1.5 times as likely to have been arrested by police in the last 5 years

1.4 times as likely to have low levels of trust in the general community

1.3 times as likely to report poor mental health, and

1.2 times as likely to have used substances (in the preceding 12 months)

Access to services

The AIHW report, supported by our other research, highlights current failures in delivering effective and accessible solutions. For example, almost one third (32%) of the Stolen Generations report having problems accessing services. The Stolen Generations and their descendants are 1.5 times as likely to report access difficulties than other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

This is largely because of a lack of appropriate healing services across areas where we now know that the Stolen Generations and their families live. Poor accessibility is also linked to issues with trust and a failure to provide services that are trauma-informed and culturally focused.

The underlying causes

While disturbing, the level of disadvantage uncovered by the report should not come as a surprise. As we know from the evidence given to national inquiries and royal commissions into sexual abuse over the past two decades, the Stolen Generations suffered terrible childhood trauma, including institutionalisation, neglect and abuse.

If people don't have an opportunity to heal from trauma, it continues to impact on the way they think and behave, which can lead to a range of negative outcomes including poor health, violence and substance abuse. This in turn leads to a vicious cycle of social and economic disadvantage.

Unknowingly, the trauma is often passed down to the next generation and then the next, which creates a ripple effect within families and communities. This is what we call Intergenerational Trauma. As the descendant population keeps growing, so will experiences with trauma and its many negative outcomes.

In many cases, the Stolen Generations were also denied a proper education or an equal wage when they started to work, which also put them at an economic disadvantage and affected their ongoing employment and wealth status.

Next steps

Based on its comprehensive needs analysis, The Healing Foundation will present an Action Plan for Healing to the Federal Government, outlining the needs of an ageing Stolen Generations population, suffering complex and overlapping health and welfare issues.

The report will set out priorities for tackling their unresolved trauma, as well as the inevitable spread of Intergenerational Trauma to tomorrow's generation if we don't act now to break the cycle. The Federal Government is waiting for this report to determine its next steps.

About the data

The AIHW analysis is based on data from five surveys conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics between 2002 and 2015. This includes the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) of 2002, 2008, and 2014–15 and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS) of 2004–05 and 2012–13. These are large, nationally representative surveys, containing a consistent set of information and detailed data on a wide range of topics, including removal from family.

To provide a more thorough picture, the AIHW report has made comparisons with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the same age cohort, as well as non-Indigenous people. For the purposes of this report, descendants include children, grandchildren, nephews and nieces, depicting the extended family framework in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities.

For more information

Read the full report at <http://healingfoundation.org.au/stolengenerationsreport/> or contact the people involved:

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