

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people

Key findings 2024–25

Eighty-eight Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–17 years died in Queensland in 2024–25. This represents 20% of all 427 child deaths in Queensland for the review period.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are over-represented in child deaths.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mortality rate was 74.5 deaths per 100,000, which was 2.4 times the non-Indigenous rate of 31.0 deaths per 100,000.

The infant mortality rate was 7.5 per 1,000 births, which was 1.9 times the non-Indigenous mortality rate of 4.0 per 1,000 births.

Of the 88 deaths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, 66 died from natural causes (diseases and morbid conditions), 12 from external causes, 5 were from unexplained causes and 5 were pending a cause at the time of reporting (Table 1).

The level of over-representation was higher for certain causes of death. Mortality rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were four (or more) times higher than the non-Indigenous child mortality rates for:

- other non-intentional injury
- unexplained causes.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infants were also over-represented in sudden unexpected death in infancy with a mortality rate 4 times that for non-Indigenous infants.

The structural inequalities experienced by First Nations families contribute to higher rates of social risk factors for current generations including unemployment, poverty, substance misuse, family violence, residential instability and ill health. Together, these factors can increase the risk of childhood injury and death.

Twenty-two children were known to the child protection system (had some form of contact with the Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety within the 12 months prior to death). A rate of 90.9 deaths per 100,000 across a 5-year average.

Table 1: Child deaths in Queensland by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, 2024–25^a

| | First Nations | Non-Indigenous |
|---|---------------|----------------|
| All deaths | | |
| Children aged 0–17 | 88 | 339 |
| <i>Rate per 100,000^b</i> | 74.5 | 31.0 |
| Cause of death | | |
| Natural causes | 66 | 255 |
| External causes | 12 | 56 |
| Transport | 3 | 20 |
| Drowning | 2 | 8 |
| Other non-intentional injury | 1 | 6 |
| Suicide | 6 | 18 |
| Fatal assault and neglect | 0 | 4 |
| Unexplained causes | 5 | 8 |
| SIDS and undetermined causes | 5 | 8 |
| Cause of death pending | 5 | 20 |
| Sudden unexpected deaths in infancy (SUDI) | | |
| SUDI | 12 | 17 |

a By date of death registration.

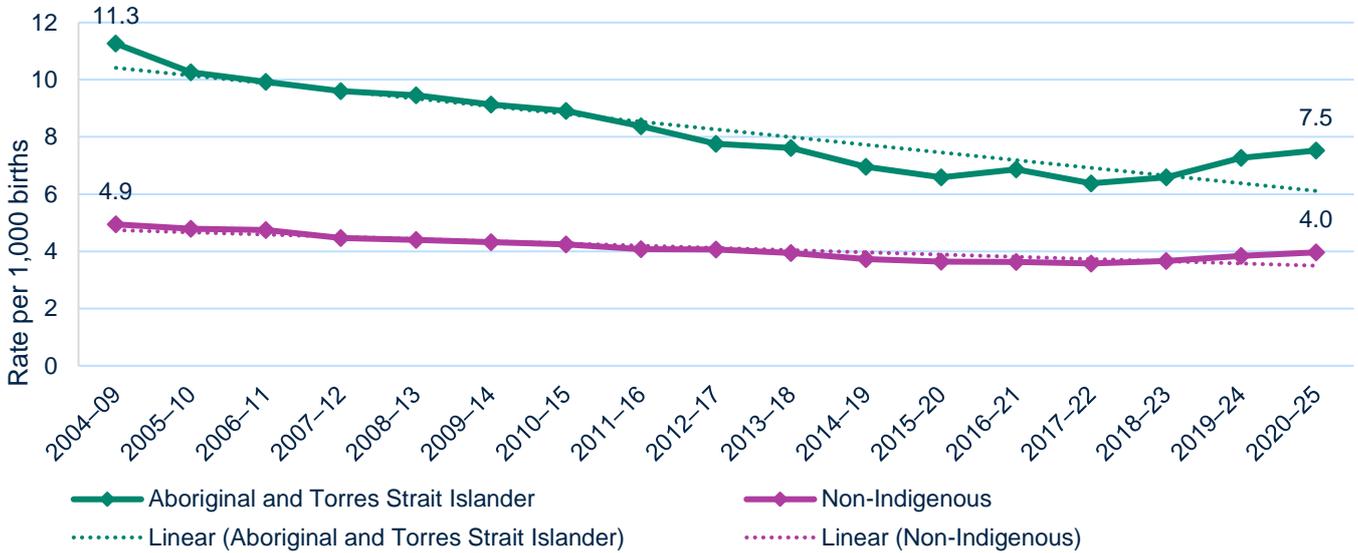
b Rate averaged over 5 years.

SIDS Sudden infant death syndrome

Trends

The infant mortality rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders decreased since 2004 at a faster rate compared to the non-Indigenous rate, as shown in Figure 1. Between 2004–09 and 2020–25 the Indigenous infant mortality rate decreased 2.5% per year on average while the non-Indigenous rate decreased 1.6% per year (as indicated in the trend lines). Increased rates are apparent in both categories in the last 3 periods.

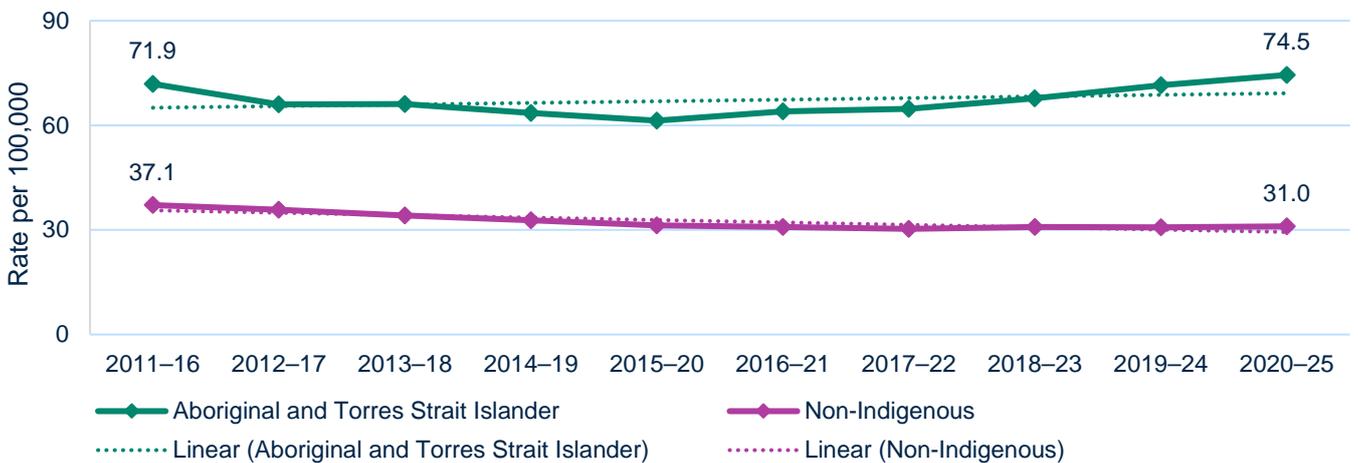
Figure 1: Infant deaths by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status (5-year rolling rate), 2004–09 to 2020–25



Notes: Rates calculated per 1,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous live births, averaged over 5 years.

The trends in the child mortality rate (0–17 years) by Indigenous status between 2011–16 to 2020–25 are illustrated in Figure 2. No notable changes in mortality rates were apparent in either of the categories, with the slight increasing trend in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rate and the slight decreasing trend in the non-Indigenous rate not representative of changes which were statistically significant.

Figure 2: Child deaths (0–17 years) by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status (5-year rolling rate), 2011–16 to 2020–25



Notes: Rates calculated per 100,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous children aged 0–17 years, averaged over 5 years.

More information

This fact sheet provides summary information from the Queensland Family and Child Commission's *Annual Report: Deaths of children and young people Queensland 2024–25*, available at www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/sector/child-death/child-death-reports-and-data

Data for prevention activities

The Queensland Family and Child Commission (the Commission) works with researchers and government agencies to raise community awareness and develop prevention programs and policies by identifying risk factors, trends and emerging safety hazards.

The Commission can provide detailed Queensland child death data to researchers and organisations at no cost.

Email: child_death_prevention@qfcc.qld.gov.au

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The Queensland Family and Child Commission (the Commission) acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians across the lands, seas and skies where we walk, live and work.

We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as two unique peoples, with their own rich and distinct cultures, strengths and knowledge. We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures across Queensland and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.