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# The identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in official statistics: critical issues of international significance



Photo of Kakadu National Park, Northern Territory by Cornel Ozies

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# The identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in official statistics and other data: Critical issues of international significance

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<https://content.iospress.com/articles/statistical-journal-of-the-iaos/sji180491>

# Critical issues

## Australia's colonial context

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – identity

## Definitions and operationalisation of Indigeneity

- Prior to the 1967 referendum
- After the 1967 referendum

## Contemporary issues with the identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

- Human Rights
- Theorising recognition

## Reporting on the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

- Data collections
- Data issues
- Measurement approaches

Who is counted?

How many people are counted?

What is measured?



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Article 33 of the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous people states:

*‘Indigenous peoples have the right to determine their own identity or membership in accordance with their customs and traditions.’*

Further, Article 15 states:

*‘Indigenous peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and **public information**’*



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# The context of Indigenous data

- Data occurs in the context of colonisation and racialised settings
  - Coloniser-sanctioned forms of recognition
- Recognition of identity is achieved by Indigenous peoples for Indigenous peoples
- Recognition of Indigeneity within data is granted by nations



# Why should we be interested in data?

- Data is used to describe and monitor the social, economic, health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
  - International
  - National
  - State/Territory
  - Community
- Enumeration is used to allocate population funding and services

Percentages of undercounts and intercensal population changes in the estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in from 1996 to 2016

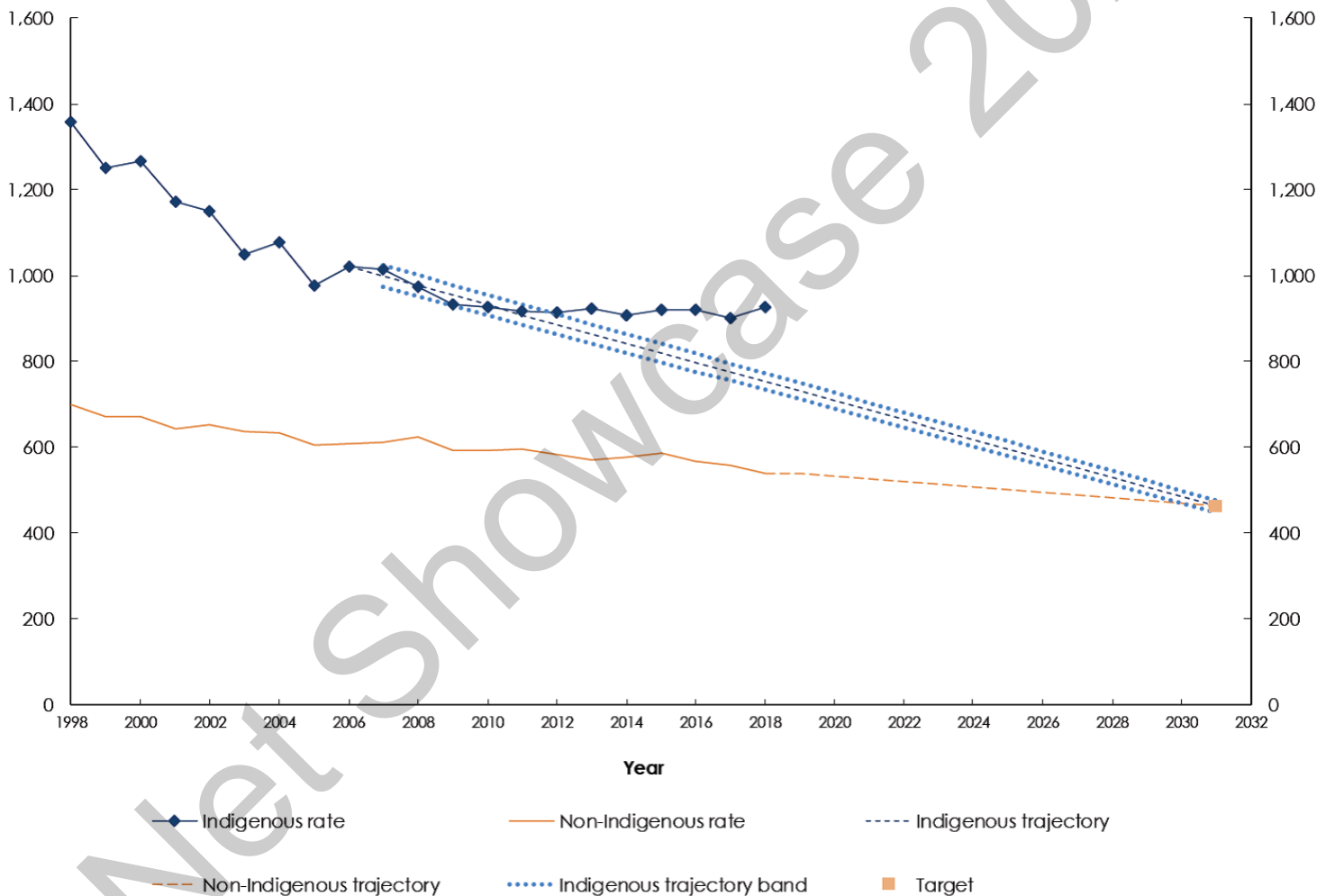
SOURCE: ABS 1997, 2002, 2006, 2012, 2018

Year	Percent (%) undercount	Percent (%) change since last census
1996	7	33
2001	6.1	16
2006	11.5	13
2011	17.2	21
2016	17.5	14

# Age-standardised mortality rates, trajectory to 2031 target<sup>a,b</sup>

Deaths per 100,000

Deaths per 100,000



SOURCE: Closing the Gap Report 2020



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# Remoteness and the under-registration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander births

There is an estimated 5% under-registration of births in Australia when compared to the perinatal database

	Whole of state	Remote and very remote
Queensland	17%	23.4%
Western Australia	18%	27.1%

25.5% of under-registration of births in remote and very remote Queensland

1. Endo, T., van Schalkwijk, J., & Wills, R. (2014). *An estimate of the extent of under-registration of births in Queensland*. Queensland Health.

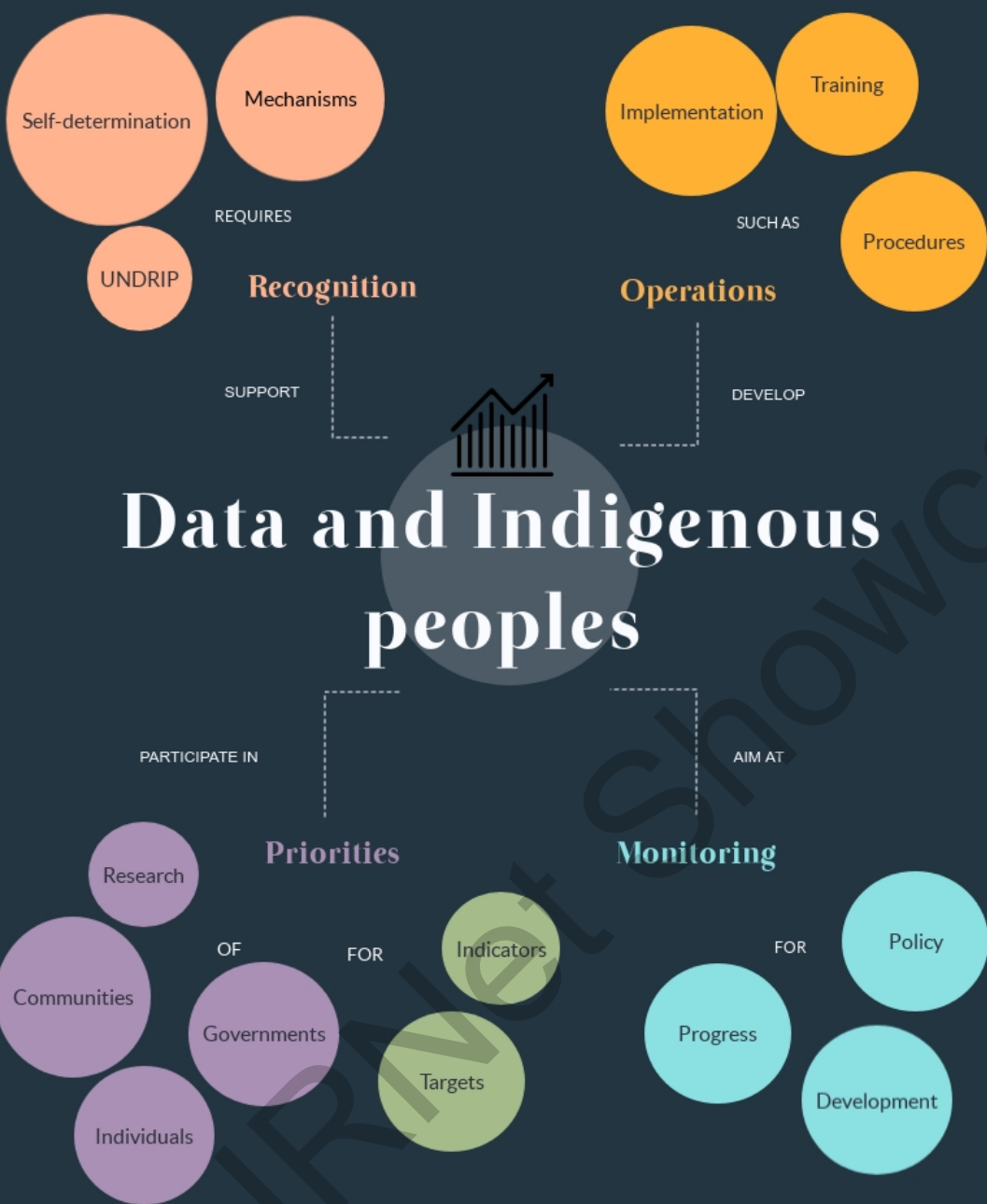
2. Gibberd, A. J., Simpson, J. M., & Eades, S. J. (2016). No official identity: a data linkage study of birth registration of Aboriginal children in Western Australia. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*



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# Data and Indigenous peoples



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