

# Aboriginal and Torres Strait smoking rates in decline

June 24 2020

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Smoking rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have declined by almost 10 percent in the last 15 years, according to a new review by The Australian National University (ANU).

Co-author of the [review](#), ANU Associate Professor Ray Lovett, says the

drop will save tens of thousands of lives. The study has also identified further ways to drive change.

"Up until the late 1960s, Aboriginal peoples were paid in [tobacco](#) and this context helps explain high rates of [tobacco use](#) and the complexity involved in shifting change within that context," Associate Professor Lovett said.

"This research shows reducing tobacco use is achievable with a suite of approaches."

The review includes detailed key actions to further reduce [smoking](#) and its associated harms. This includes programs and policies specifically developed and led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from the national to local level, as well as expanded and long-term funding and rigorous evaluation.

Experts say these should be complemented by national policies affecting Australians more broadly.

"Tobacco is the largest contributor to the burden of disease for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and there is substantial potential for health gains through reducing tobacco use," ANU lead author Ms Emily Colonna said.

"It is a really complex behavior. Smoking is influenced by a range of factors including colonization and its ongoing impacts, stress, racism, and exclusion from economic structures like employment and education. To address tobacco use most effectively, we need to take this context into account."

HealthInfoNet Director Professor Neil Drew, who collaborated on the project, said: "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples experience

discrimination and barriers to both education and employment, at least in part due to colonization and its lasting impacts. This review shows these factors can contribute to smoking, or make it harder to quit."

The review will be published by *The Alcohol and Other Drugs Knowledge Centre* today.

The review is accompanied by a [summary](#), [factsheet](#) and [video](#) of the key findings.

**More information:** The review is accompanied by a [summary](#), [factsheet](#) and [video](#) of the key findings.

Provided by Australian National University

Citation: Aboriginal and Torres Strait smoking rates in decline (2020, June 24) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-06-aboriginal-torres-strait-decline.html>

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