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Health Status of Metropolitan and Rural Australians

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Abstract

Health status as expressed by mortality and hospital admissions have been widely described for rural Australia, indicating that health becomes worse as remoteness increases. Analysis of the data by Indigenous status shows another pattern. This paper describes the death rate by RRMA category 'all cause' mortality and for specific causes of death, for non-Indigenous and where the quality of data allows, for Indigenous people. An assessment of hospital admissions as a marker for morbidity has also been made. Trends in death rate across time are also described by RRMA category and where possible by Indigenous status.

There is little variation in 'all cause' mortality by RRMA category, either for the Indigenous or the non-Indigenous population. The greater prevalence of Indigenous people in remote areas and their higher death rate tends to inflate the 'all cause' death rate for the entire population in these areas (and hence generates much of the death rate differential between metropolitan and non metropolitan populations). There is significant variation in mortality between RRMA categories for a number of specific causes of death. Mortality has decreased over time in all areas, although the trend is less clear for Indigenous people.