

Paper delivered at the 10th Biennial Conference of the
Australian Population Association
POPULATION AND GLOBALISATION:
AUSTRALIA IN THE 21ST CENTURY
Melbourne 28th November to 1st December 2000
Melbourne Australia

The health of Australians: An overview

Kuldeep Bhatia

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Abstract

Australians enjoy good health by international comparisons- second only to Japan in terms of healthy life expectancy. Along other dimensions, such as oral health care, general fitness including ability to perform care activities, nutritional levels and mental health, they rate highly. Underlying trends, both long and short term, reveal continuing improvements in their health overall. And this is achieved with relatively modest costs in terms of provision of health care and services.

This bright picture of health however hides certain significant differentials, some of which may be described as health inequalities. Large gaps in health outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians constitute one such example. Differences in access to health services between metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas is another. Some of the healthy life expectancy is a result of 'healthy migrant effect'; this may conceal relatively poor health outcomes in other sections of the population.

This presentation will be in the form of a report card on the health of Australians at the turn of the 21st century. It will not only cover health outcomes but also provide information on factors contributing to these outcomes including the provision of services. Excerpting information from a range of data sources, the presentation will aim to provide a brief overview of the health of Australians.