ACARA code: ACHGK080

Differences in wellbeing across Australia for Indigenous populations

Australian Curriculum Content Descriptor

Humanities and Social Sciences/Year 10/Geography/Geographical Knowledge and Understanding/Geographies of human wellbeing/ACHGK080

Australian Curriculum Content Description

Reasons for, and consequences of, spatial variations in human wellbeing in Australia at the local scale.

Australian Curriculum Elaboration

Researching spatial differences in the wellbeing of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations across Australia, and the extent to which these differences depend on how wellbeing is measured.

Australians Together Learning Framework

The Wound	Our History	Why Me?	Our Cultures	My Response

Essential question

How's your location likely to affect your wellbeing?

Introduction

In this resource, students are led on a thorough examination of the concept of wellbeing as a way of measuring the state of a community. They understand how factors influencing wellbeing may differ between individuals and communities. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' concepts of wellbeing are explained, and activities for mapwork to analyse spatial variations and associations relating to the topic are provided.

This unit is related to the Australians Together resource on 'initiatives' to improve the wellbeing of Indigenous communities (ACHGK081), which would ideally be done after this unit.

	Teacher guidance	Ideas for student activities
The Wound Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives on the issue	*It's a good idea to introduce students to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives at the beginning of a study so their views don't become peripheral to the topic.* The 2016 Australian Census showed there were 798,400 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, comprising 3.3 per cent of the total Australian population. For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, health and wellbeing are linked to the wider health and wellbeing of community and Country. However, health and welfare services have ignored this central, fundamental aspect of Indigenous culture. In the past, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have experienced additional suffering when subjected to colonial health and welfare policies. For example, governments have justified the Stolen Generation as aiming to improve individual children's access to the English language, education and employment. However, the effect on survivors' wellbeing has been profoundly negative, contributing to intergenerational trauma and resulting in worse outcomes for health and welfare indicators today. Consequently, history shows when decisions are made for Indigenous communities by non-Indigenous 'experts', wellbeing can worsen. Western ideas around health and wellbeing tend to focus on 'absence of illness'. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, the definition of health is far more holistic; it includes community and Country as well as positive wellbeing in individuals. It's social, emotional and cultural wellbeing as well as the 'health' of the land itself. As a result of this difference, it's very important that Indigenous communities are in control of the way that health and welfare services are delivered. **Self-determination** and **sovereignty** are key to improving health outcomes in Indigenous communities. In a 2007 speech on the topic, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Tom Calma, stated that "recognising Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination supports communities to regain control of their lives, including through the maintenance of traditional cultures, [and] it can be understood as having positive health impacts".	**Introductory discussion** What is wellbeing? Why does wellbeing mean different things to different people? **Reflection task** Write a list of things important to the wellbeing of students in your school, then consider what students attending school in another country might choose as important factors for their wellbeing. Share your thoughts as a class. **Discussion task** In what ways might wellbeing concerns be different between remote, regional and urban populations? **Short research task** Find articles online by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people about health and wellbeing in urban, regional or remote Indigenous communities. Find a short, succinct quote that summarises their opinion. Combine it with other quotes from other members of your class and write an analysis of the range of views and the areas of cross over and contrast.

	Teacher guidance	Ideas for student activities
	The video in this source would be a good way to introduce students to the importance of land health to the health of communities and individuals: https://australianstogether.org.au/discover/indigenous-culture/the-importance-of-land/	**Synthesis task** Read through examples found in the Australian Human Rights Commission's *Social determinants and the health of Indigenous peoples in Australia – a human rights based approach*, https://www.humanrights.gov.au/about/news/speeches/social-determinants-and-health-indigenous-peoples-australia-human-rights-based. Such as: • 3(c) Evidence of the health impact of Indigenous community control of health services • 3(d) Traditional ownership of land and health status • the case study on the Kuka Kanyini project, in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands from Calma's speech. Use information and quotes from the speech to explain the importance of self-determination to Indigenous communities' wellbeing.
Our History A background to the issue	*Below is a summary of the information on the student handout.* • Wellbeing was defined by the **Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)** in 2001 as "a state of health or sufficiency in all aspects of life". • Wellbeing is a useful measurement because it is 'holistic'. • Measurements of wellbeing are highly subjective (subject to the individual), making it difficult to create data for comparison. • Governments can create policies that aim to increase wellbeing. Sometimes, these policies can have side effects or negative consequences on wellbeing. • Indigenous communities may have different standards of wellbeing. In response, governments have developed different ways of measuring wellbeing. • There are several ways that Indigenous wellbeing has been tracked and measured. The ABS and the **Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW)** have produced important reports. The Commonwealth Government releases an occasional report on Indigenous inequality, which measures and lists policy initiatives that influence wellbeing. For example, the Closing the Gap* policy priority attempts to address and improve wellbeing factors but it's been criticised for focusing on the government's needs, rather than what Indigenous people might aspire to, and makes little use of community input. *Not to be confused with Oxfam's Close the Gap campaign.	**Short research task** Go to the ABS website (https://www.abs.gov.au/), click on 'Statistics', and find 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander', under the 'People' heading. A list of recently analysed statistics will appear. Clicking on 'More releases' will give additional topics. What topics have recently been released, and what does this tell us about areas of focus for Indigenous wellbeing? Summarise your thoughts in a paragraph. **Application and discussion task** Look at the current government's Closing the Gap targets, and the list of Indigenous wellbeing **determinants**. Write your own additional targets that specifically relate to the latter. Share and discuss possible new targets as a class.

	Teacher guidance	Ideas for student activities
	To engage more with Indigenous resources that discuss Indigenous wellbeing, consider these resources: https://healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/learn/health-topics/social-and-emotional-wellbeing/ https://aiatsis.gov.au/research/research-themes/health (note: this website has some interesting links to papers on Urban Indigenous health) Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001, 4160.0 - *Measuring wellbeing: frameworks for Australian social statistics*, https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/ABS@.NSF/0/B176042438EE2331CA2571B7000A43A7?opendocument. © Commonwealth of Australia 2017. CC-BY-4.0 licence.	**Statistical analysis task** In pairs, access the ABS website: https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3238.0.55.001. Create a series of charts or graphs that show the proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People compared to non-Indigenous Australians in each state. Underneath, analyse the graphs, explaining historical or other reasons for patterns.
? **Why Me?** Why am I learning this? What do I need to know to understand the issues?	*After reading the information in the student handout, teachers can guide students on an exploration of statistics that demonstrate spatial differences in wellbeing.* Firstly, teachers may want to help students build a picture of the spatial distribution of Indigenous communities by an examination of data using maps. This map from the Australian Institute of Family Studies shows the degrees of remoteness in Australia, known as the Accessibility and Remoteness Index (ARIA): https://aifs.gov.au/publications/families-regional-rural-and-remote-australia/figure1. Compare the ARIA map with maps showing the distribution of the Indigenous population in Australia are useful for this topic. This article includes two maps showing Census 2016 data: https://theconversation.com/census-2016-whats-changed-for-indigenous-australians-79836. Identifying spatial associations and spatial differences with a map showing total population densities across Australia should be of interest to the student. To continue using maps to explore data on spatial differences in wellbeing, the most ideal site that's currently available is the Heart Foundation's interactive map, which allows examination of the incidence of heart disease at regional, state and national levels, and shows specific data for Indigenous populations: https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/for-professionals/heart-maps/australian-heart-maps. Another resource that may be of use is the AIHW's examination of the spatial variation in women's' access to maternal services: https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/09ca380e-a5f1-4eb1-bb9a-b1ecb735e090/aihw-ihw-187-spatial.pdf.aspx?inline=true. This report outlines access to healthcare: https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/indigenous-australians/spatial-variation-to-access-primary-health-care/contents/table-of-contents. Alternatively, teachers may want to survey for themselves the list of extensive research reports on the AIHW website to identify documents or extracts that are appropriate to the level of their classroom. This is a good, simple example: https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/health-welfare-overview/indigenous-health-welfare/overview.	**Research interpretation task** Chapter 5 of the Australian Government's report on *Australia's health 2016* covers numerous statistics relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples versus non-Indigenous Australians and their health https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/australias-health-2016/contents/chapter-5-health-of-population-groups. Conduct a word search on the webpage of 'Aboriginal' to locate relevant mentions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Write down 10 points of significant differences or health gaps between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians. Write a short paragraph to interpret your findings. **Map analysis presentation** In pairs, choose four different sets of data represented on maps of Australia that relate to Indigenous wellbeing. Collate them either using software, animations or a paper overlay system. Conduct a detailed analysis of spatial associations or variations. Justify your choice of these data sets to create an accurate idea of wellbeing. Summarise your findings and present to the class.

	Teacher guidance	Ideas for student activities
Our Cultures Are there any ways that more knowledge of Indigenous cultures can help broaden our understanding of this topic?	*Teachers can spend some time exploring in more depth the Indigenous concept of individual wellbeing being linked to, and dependent upon, the whole community's wellbeing.* Indigenous societies prior to colonisation were structured in a way that every member of the community was valued and had a role in supporting the community and caring for Country; managing the land and its resources. Country is the responsibility of all members of the cultural group. This is significantly different to many other cultures around the world where the leaders or rulers do not engage in any physical labour and instead hire or oblige others to perform labour for them. Contrast, for example, the social structure of an Aboriginal community with the triangular medieval hierarchy; with powerful lords at the top and powerless serfs or peasants at the bottom. Some interpretations of traditional Indigenous communities might place children at the top, or at the most central and important place in the hierarchy of people. Children have the greatest needs; to be monitored and cared for, taught, and included in activities so to ensure the knowledge of the community.	**Reflection task** Traditional Indigenous societies do not have a servant class of people. What do you think the benefits of a non-class-based society would be, and why? How might it be better for the overall health and social wellbeing of the community? **Group reflection task** Who would you regard as the most important group in Australian society? In groups, draw and label a diagram that represents your opinions on how Australian society is structured.
My Response How does this lesson help us do our part to work towards justice and reconciliation?	*This Key Idea concludes the unit and asks students to consider how they would reframe the situation in Australia to bring about justice and equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. There are many ways to respond, including:* • **Thinking** about what might negatively impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' wellbeing in your school and local community. Are there ways that you can address this, such as setting up a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) committee? • Reading and keeping up-to-date with issues of concern and importance in the Indigenous community, by reading Indigenous controlled media. • **Supporting** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by writing to government representatives when you have a strong opinion about a matter relating to wellbeing policy.	**Research report/Ted Talk task** How might self-determination offer better outcomes in health and wellbeing for Indigenous communities? Define your understanding of the term and the self-determination movement within Australia, then explain the actual or potential impacts on specific areas of wellbeing, including health. Present your findings as a written report or recorded Ted Talk-style presentation. Consider the ways in which information could be presented visually, using mapping for example. **Research and reflection task** Research articles that discuss the involvement of non-Indigenous Australians in matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Write down ways that non-Indigenous Australians can show respect for the right of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to self-determination. Create an infographic to present your findings.

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		Research and reflection task Hypothesise about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' health and wellbeing over time. You may represent your ideas on a timeline. What would have been the general state of community wellbeing prior to colonisation, after, and at different times of the last 100 years? Give reasons to support your ideas and be sure to recognise the factors that have contributed to wellbeing over time, for example, the impacts of transgenerational trauma and how this relates to health outcomes.
Other resources	Teachers may want to use this highly relevant lecture transcript from the Australian National University for background reading to consolidate their understanding of the topic: https://caepr.cass.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/docs/2019/5/Lecture01Paper.pdf.	