

# INSIGHTS INTO THE BURDEN OF ILLNESS IN INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS 2019

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## INTRODUCTION

Indigenous Australians have an increased risk of adverse outcomes due to influenza, however national influenza surveillance does not comprehensively monitor influenza activity and severity by Indigenous status. Flutracking, an Australian and New Zealand community level online influenza-like illness (ILI) surveillance system, has collected Indigenous status data since 2012.

## AIM

We provide insights into the community burden of influenza in Indigenous Australians, using Flutracking ILI data.

## METHOD

We report on 2019 cumulative ILI results, health seeking behaviour, and vaccination coverage, stratified by Indigenous status, and compared to prior years. All analyses were age-standardised to the relevant Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia populations. Data from April to October for each year were included.

## RESULTS

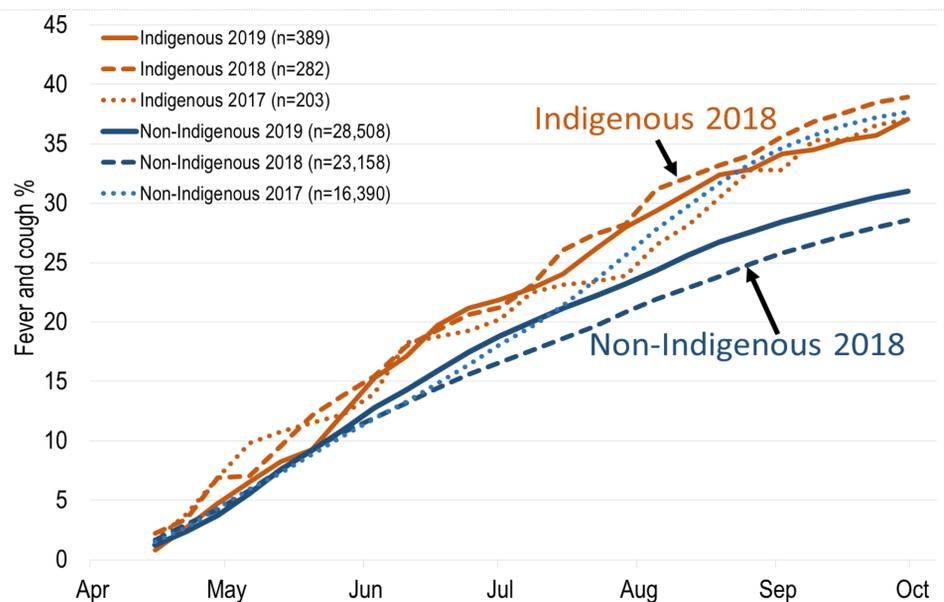


Figure 1. Cumulative incidence of ILI by Indigenous Status, Australia, April to October, 2017 - 2019, by week (age-standardised)

While, in the general population, 2017 was considered a relatively severe influenza season, followed by a milder year in 2018, this was not the experience of Indigenous participants who experienced high ILI rates both years. ILI rates were highest in 2018 for Indigenous participants and lowest in 2018 for non-Indigenous participants (Figure 1).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our loyal Flutrackers!!!  
The Australian Government  
Department of Health  
The University of Newcastle  
Hunter Medical Research Institute  
Stephen Clarke  
The Flutracking team

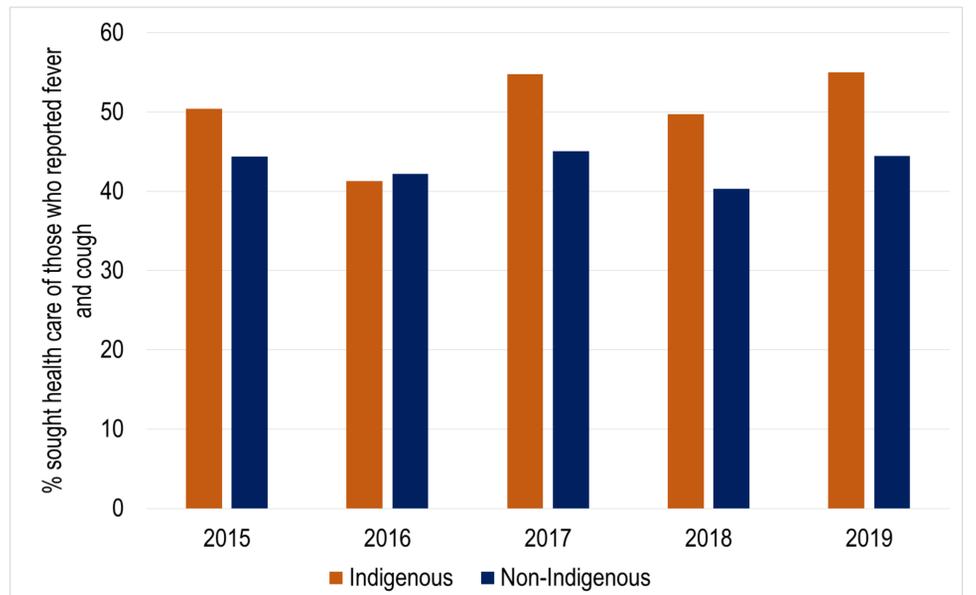


Figure 2. Percentage of participants who sought health care, by Indigenous Status, Australia, 2015-2019 (age-standardised)

The percentage of Indigenous participants seeking health advice for influenza was higher than non-Indigenous participants most years from 2015 to 2019, with approximately half of Indigenous participants with ILI seeking health advice (Figure 2).

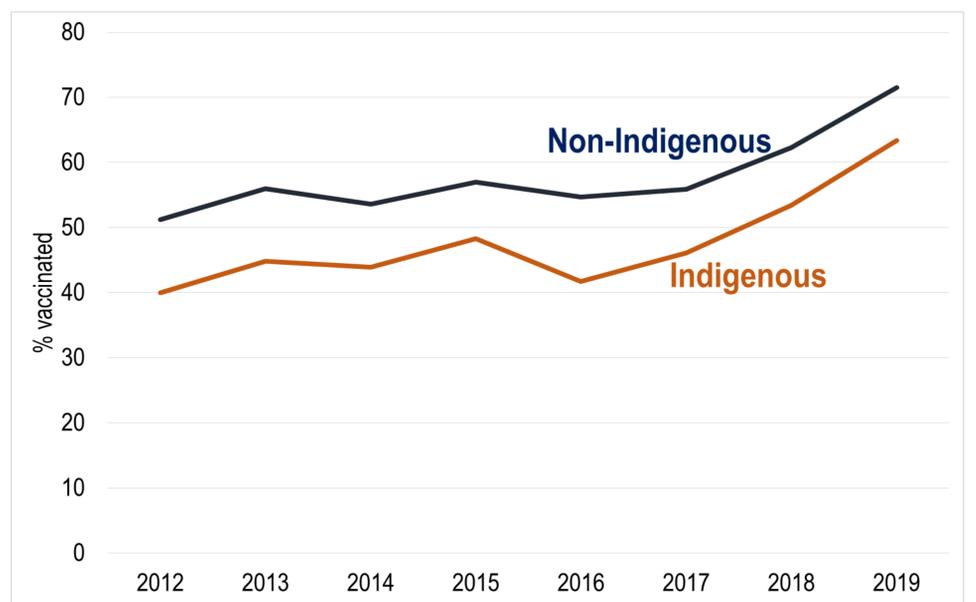


Figure 3. Percentage of participants vaccinated for influenza, by Indigenous Status, Australia, 2012-2019 (age-standardised)

The percentage of Indigenous Flutracking participants reporting being vaccinated against influenza increased each year from 2016 onwards, and was consistently lower than non-Indigenous participants every year from 2012 to 2019 (Figure 3).

## CONCLUSION

A severe influenza season for Indigenous participants may be masked by a relatively mild influenza season in the broader population. This raises the importance of monitoring and reporting of influenza surveillance by Indigenous status.



FluTracking



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