# PRIORITY POPULATIONS IN AN INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIAN SEXUAL HEALTH CONTEXT

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## BACKGROUND

Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities continue to experience shortages in quality, accessibility, and practices around sexually transmitted infection (STI) and blood-borne virus (BBV) testing and treatment. Within these communities, certain populations require specialised approaches to care.

## METHODS

A review of evidence from Australia, Aotearoa/New Zealand and Canada was initiated as part of the WA Department of Health's *Aboriginal Sexual Health and Blood-borne Viruses Strategy 2019-2023*. This was conducted using PubMED, Scopus and ProQuest for peer-reviewed literature, alongside Google and Google Scholar for grey literature, which yielded 600 relevant sources and identified several priority populations. This review was significantly aided by an advisory group consisting of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal service providers and stakeholders.

## RESULTS

The priority populations identified include:

- Gender and sexually diverse people
- Men
- People experiencing houselessness
- People experiencing incarceration
- People living in rural/remote communities
- People living with blood-borne viruses
- People who use/inject drugs
- Sex workers
- Women and girls
- Young people

While many approaches used with broader Indigenous populations are appropriate for these communities, people who belong to one or more priority populations benefit from frameworks which orient services towards more comprehensive care. Implementing specialised strategies and actions can have a positive impact on the health of these often marginalised, groups.

These frameworks have an emphasis on gender-specialised services (Men's and Women's Business), and approaches which focus on de-stigmatisation and supporting priority populations to overcome barriers to better sexual health (e.g. service affordability, access, language barrier, discrimination).

## SO WHAT?

Consideration should be given to priority populations within the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities when designing and delivering sexual health programs and interventions.

The sexual health needs of some priority population groups are significantly under-researched and under-evaluated. Further research is needed to better understand priority populations in order to improve policies, service delivery models, and overall sexual health.

## MORE INFO

Supporting documentation for the evidence review includes a series of checklists for clinicians, public health practitioners and researchers, and summaries of insights on working with select priority populations.

Contact the SiREN team for more information: siren@curtin.edu.au

The full report can be found on the SiREN website: https://siren.org.au/evidence-review-for-the-wa-aboriginal-shbbv-strategy/

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