

SHIFTING RESEARCH PARADIGMS THROUGH ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER LEADERSHIP

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“We stand on the cusp of bringing these three parts of our national story together: our ancient Indigenous heritage, our British inheritance, and our multicultural triumph”

- Noel Pearson

Distinct strengths and research challenges

Distinct characteristics

Resilience and strength

Extraordinary strength and resilience in maintaining cultures, languages, and traditions despite impacts of colonisation

Incredible diversity

Hundreds of distinct nations, language groups, and cultural traditions. Diverse forms of art, music, dance, storytelling

Deep connection to Country across continent and islands

Deep relationships with land, waters, and environment across an entire continent, surrounding waters and islands

Strong community networks

Interconnected family, kinship and community relationships provide support, shared responsibility, and cultural continuity

Research challenges

Trust and engagement

A healthy and well-earned skepticism toward institutions, shaped by historical and recent experience

Generalisability

Findings from one community cannot reliably be generalised across the entire Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander population

Logistics

A combination of low population incidence and wide geographic distribution create distinct logistical challenges for some modes

Need for genuine community engagement

Access often depends on establishing trusted relationships with local organisations and gatekeepers

Design principles and features of iMOB

AIATSIS* Ethical Principles

Indigenous self-determination

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the right to make decisions about research that affects them. Communities should be involved in setting research priorities, designing projects, and determining how information is collected, used, stored, and shared.

Indigenous leadership

Research should be led by, or conducted in genuine partnership with, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations. Researchers should recognise and respect Indigenous knowledge systems, cultural authority, and community expertise.

Impact and value

Research should produce tangible benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, not just for researchers or institutions. The outcomes should be relevant, useful, and responsive to community needs and aspirations.

Sustainability and accountability

Researchers must build long-term, respectful relationships and be accountable to the communities involved. Research should support enduring positive outcomes, capacity building, and reporting back to communities.

Design features

Each study supported by a dedicated Indigenous team

ATSIRU team members work with researchers for cultural lensing and preparation of, or review of, ethics applications (AIATSIS preferred). Panel members receive detailed information about studies to enable informed decision-making before taking part in research.

Indigenous-led

Sharon Barnes heads the Ipsos ATSIRU. Sharon is a Ngunnawal woman living on Birpai country in NSW. Sharon specialises in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities. The iMOB panel was conceived and designed by Ngunnawal man, Michael Barnes.

Critical review of opportunities

Not all projects proposed are accepted. The ATSIRU team review potential projects. Projects that are not relevant or useful to the communities being consulted may be refused or revisions requested.

Genuine engagement with communities and delivery of benefits

ATSIRU team members recruit all panel members, ensuring culturally appropriate engagement from the beginning. Research participants are paid generously by electronic fund transfer[^]. All profits are donated to causes supporting Indigenous wellbeing. Researchers are encouraged to provide reporting for participating communities.

* Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)

[^] Compared with alternatives like gift cards, this is more flexible, immediately useful, and ensures all incentive value is paid to participants.

iMOB

THE PANEL TODAY



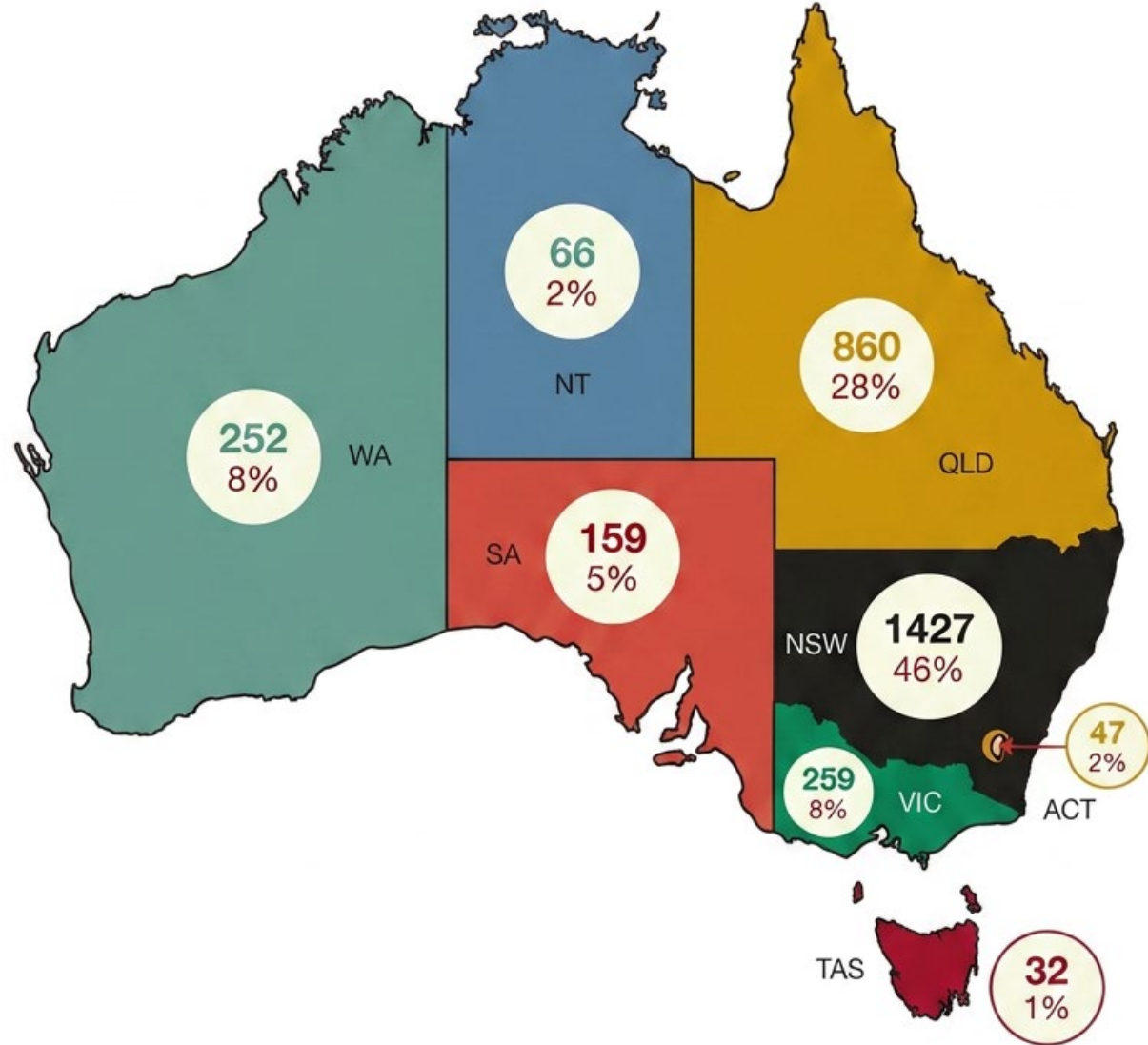
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Geographic distribution

Over 3,000 panel members and growing!



[^]Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 Census, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait



Geographic distribution



Geographic Distribution				
State	iMOB		18+ ATSI Population^	
New South Wales	1,427	46%	168,294	34%
Victoria	259	8%	40,942	8%
Queensland	860	28%	142,234	29%
South Australia	159	5%	26,064	5%
Western Australia	252	8%	54,890	11%
Tasmania	32	1%	18,821	4%
Northern Territory	66	2%	40,457	8%
Australian Capital Territory	47	2%	5,720	1%
Other Territories	-	0%	128	0%
Total	3,102	100%	497,708	100%

[^]Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 Census, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander population aged 18 years or more



Basic demographic profile



Basic Demographic Profile				
Gender	iMOB		18+ ATSI Population^	
Male	912	29%	241,887	49%
Female	2,190	71%	255,844	51%
Total	3,102	100%	497,708	100%
Age	iMOB		18+ ATSI Population^	
18-29 years	687	22%	164,058	33%
30-39 years	679	22%	101,459	20%
40-49 years	662	21%	82,564	17%
50-59 years	587	19%	73,964	15%
60-69 years	362	12%	48,271	10%
70+ years	126	4%	27,392	6%
Total	3,102	100%	497,708	100%

[^]Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 Census, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander population aged 18 years or more



Education Attainment



Education Attainment				
Education	iMOB [*]		18+ ATSI Population [^]	
Bachelor or Higher	793	26%	40,476	8%
TAFE or Technical	901	29%	141,822	29%
No tertiary qualification	1408	45%	315,293	63%
Total	3,102	100%	497,708	100%

**Based on a survey estimate of ~1,000 panel members*

[^]Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 Census, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander population aged 18 years or more

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iMOB

2025 IN NUMBERS



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Key numbers from 2025



1,025 new members added
(84% growth in panel size)



20+ unique research projects,
5,000+ survey responses



\$200k+ in participant payments
(not including F2F)



All profits for the year were
donated to **13YARN**

Thank you!

