



Gender & Disaster Australia

Alice Springs

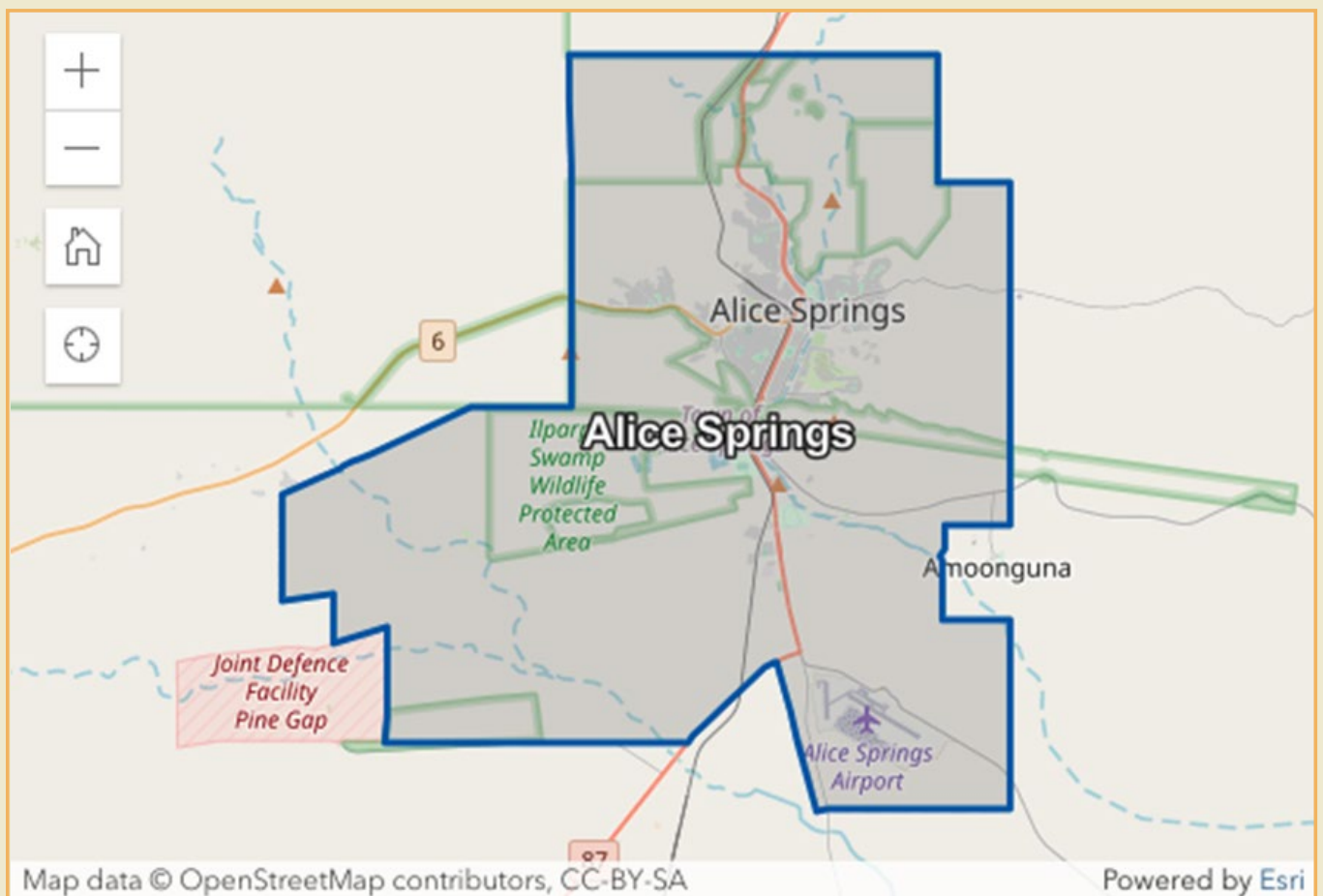
DISASTER CONTEXT

Socio-demographics from
a gendered perspective





Alice Springs



Map of the Alice Springs Local Government Area (LGA).

Source: <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA70200>





INTRODUCTION

The Local Government Area (LGA) of Alice Springs is the third-largest town in the Northern Territory and the only one that sits in the Central Australian desert. The town sits across the Todd River and is flanked by the MacDonnell Ranges on one side. Alice Springs has an arid desert climate with temperatures fluctuating from above 40 degrees in the summer and below 0 degrees in the winter.¹ Its desert location makes Alice Springs vulnerable to heatwaves and historically it has endured periods of drought. In recent years, Alice Springs has been more likely to experience flooding, as the “usually dry” Todd River has been flowing more strongly following rain from former tropical cyclones over the Northern Territory.² Flood is the only hazard that now has a High Risk Rating in the Alice Springs Emergency Plan and is of particular concern because of the risk of community isolation that can accompany a flood event in remote areas.³

Alice Springs, like the rest of the Northern Territory, has a high percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents. 1 in 5 people living in Alice Springs are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, compared to just 3.2% of people Australia-wide.⁴ Evidence indicates that reclaiming and reviving Indigenous knowledges may reduce disaster risk in the Northern Territory.⁵ Despite this, except a claim in a 2016 report from the Alice Springs Flood Mitigation Advisory Committee that its membership includes representation from Lhere Artepe, the recognised holder of Native Title over Alice Springs, there is very little indication that the state or any local government is working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on disaster mitigation in any formal way.

- 1 Alice Springs Local Emergency Plan, available at: https://pfes.nt.gov.au/sites/default/files/uploads/files/2023/Alice%20Springs%20Local%20Emergency%20Plan_0.pdf
- 2 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-01-11/nt-alice-springs-rainfall-todd-river-flowing/101841178>
- 3 Alice Springs Local Emergency Plan, available at: https://pfes.nt.gov.au/sites/default/files/uploads/files/2023/Alice%20Springs%20Local%20Emergency%20Plan_0.pdf
- 4 <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA70200>
- 5 See, for example, a study summary here: <https://www.preventionweb.net/news/reclaiming-and-reviving-indigenous-knowledges-reduce-disaster-risk>



DISASTER BACKGROUND

Kind of disasters affecting this region: Drought, earthquake, flooding, heatwave, thunderstorm

EVENT NAME	HAZARD TYPE(S)
Alice Springs thunderstorm, 2022 ⁶	Thunderstorm
Todd River flood, 2021 ⁷	Flood
Alice Springs flood, 2015 ⁸	Flood
National heatwave, 2012 ⁹	Heatwave

Recent major disaster: Alice Springs thunderstorm, 2022

- Fatalities: 0
- People displaced: 0
- Properties and infrastructure affected:
 - o Yipirinya School in Araluen had large sections of roof pulled off two of its buildings¹⁰
 - o Several trees of cultural significance at the school were felled¹¹
 - o Multiple trees and power lines were brought down on private premises and public roads;¹² police received 132 reports¹³
 - o 1,300 homes were without power at 11am the day following the storm¹⁴
- Other notable facts:
 - o The storm was a 'microburst' and lasted only two to three minutes. Bureau of Meteorology meteorologist Billy Lynch described microbursts as "quite localised, but [can produce] violent bursts of wind", and said they were common in Central Australia at certain times of year because the humidity brought down from the tropics combines with the dry air of the desert.¹⁵

⁶ <https://www.disasterassist.gov.au/Pages/disasters/current-disasters/Northern-Territory/alice-springs-thunderstorm-november-2022.aspx>

⁷ <https://www.9news.com.au/national/weather-forecast-northern-territory-alice-springs-darwin-updates-rain-floods-storms-november-10/cbfe884d-b55e-43ae-99f4-dbd4bdc846c8>

⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/jan/10/alice-springs-and-bendigo-flood-as-south-australia-braces-for-heavy-rain>

⁹ <https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/health-national-heatwave-2012/>

¹⁰ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-11-13/nt-alice-springs-storm/101647898>

¹¹ <https://www.nationaltribune.com.au/ensuring-strong-response-to-alice-springs-storm/>

¹² <https://pfes.nt.gov.au/newsroom/2022/severe-thunderstormspower-lines-down-alice-springs>

¹³ <https://www.ntnews.com.au/news/cycloneready-in-the-middle-of-the-territory-major-storm-wreaks-havoc-in-alice-springs/news-story/256fae85e9a7e964d70a1c3994d70553>

¹⁴ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-11-13/nt-alice-springs-storm/101647898>

¹⁵ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-11-13/nt-alice-springs-storm/101647898>



ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE

- Alice Springs LGA is ranked:¹⁶
 - o 396 out of 544 LGAs in Australia (where 544 is most advantaged)
 - o in the 8th decile (out of 10, where 10 is most advantaged)
 - o in the 73rd percentile (out of 100, where 100 is most advantaged)



HOUSING AFFORDABILITY AND HOMELESSNESS

- Housing affordability in Alice Springs:
 - o Median rent: \$375/week (NT: \$325/week | Aus: \$375)¹⁷
 - o Renter households where rent payments are greater than 30% of household income: 18.3% (NT: 16.3% | Aus: 32.3%)¹⁸
- Homelessness¹⁹
 - o In 2021-22, 2,358 people accessed Specialist Homelessness Services in the LGA of Alice Springs, equating to 9.1% of the population, or 910 per 10,000
 - o 905 of these were men (718 per 10,000) and 1,453 were women (1,092 per 10,000)
 - o In January 2020, the homelessness rate in Alice Springs was reported to sit at 17 times the national average.²⁰
 - o In 2020, the Northern Territory (NT) government submitted to the Inquiry into Homelessness in Australia that overcrowding accounts for more than 80% of homelessness in the NT.²¹

¹⁶ This ranking comes from the ABS Local Government Area Indexes, available here: <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/2033.0.55.0012016?OpenDocument>

¹⁷ <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA70200>

¹⁸ <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA70200>

¹⁹ Data cube: SHSC geographical location of client—LGA. Available here: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/shsc-data-cubes/contents/specialist-homelessness-services-collection-shsc-data-cubes>

²⁰ <https://www.ntnews.com.au/news/centralian-advocate/alice-homelessness-rate-17-times-the-national-average/news-story/22aa954700e8c0fd38f4396ef5896033>

²¹ Submission 62, available at: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Social_Policy_and_Legal_Affairs/HomelessnessinAustralia/Submissions



MENTAL HEALTH

- Mental health conditions (any): Alice Springs LGA: 6% | NT: 5.1% | Aus: 8.8%²²
- Suicide rates in Statistical Area 4 (SA4) Northern Territory - Outback, in which the Alice Springs LGA sits (2017-2021):²³

Area	SA4 Northern Territory - Outback	NT	Australia
Age-standardised suicide rate per 100,000 population	24.9	19.7	12.6
Rate for males	34.3	26.9	19.2
Rate for females	15.8	7.2	6.1



GENDER EQUALITY

- Lone parent status
 - 18.6% one-parent families (NT: 18.5%), of which 80.9% are female-led (NT: 79%)²⁴
- Mothers' Index²⁵
 - Alice Springs LGA ranked 4 out of 14 LGAs, where 1 is the best place in the Northern Territory for a mother to live
- Unpaid work²⁶
 - Unpaid domestic work: 5,405 women did more than 5 hours of unpaid domestic work per week, compared to 3,517 men
 - Unpaid care: 1,118 women provided unpaid assistance to a person with a disability, health condition, or due to old age, compared to 663 men
 - Unpaid childcare: 3,265 women provided unpaid childcare, compared to 2,318 men

²² <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA70200>

²³ All suicide rate stats come from Data table: 2021 National Mortality Database - Suicide, Table NMD S10, available at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring/data/data-downloads>

²⁴ <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA70200>

²⁵ The Mothers' Index consists of composite scores from five different indicators relating to maternal wellbeing (maternal health, children's wellbeing, educational status, economic status and socio-economic disadvantage), with each indicator given equal weighting. Scores were sorted from low to high and ranked from 1 to 14 (1 being the best place for a mother to live) to give the overall Mothers Index rank for each LGA in the Northern Territory. Full table available at <https://apo.org.au/node/63692>, p. 33.

²⁶ ABS General Community Profile for LGA Alice Springs, Tables G24-G26, available here: <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/community-profiles/2021/LGA70200>



- Violence against women²⁷
 - o There were 1895 domestic violence related assaults recorded in Alice Springs in the year to 31/3/2023, an increase of 47.7% from the previous year. The domestic violence related assault rate per 100,000 population is 6588.6.
 - o There were 89 sexual assaults recorded in Alice Springs in the year to 31/3/2023, an increase of 12.66% from the previous year. The sexual assault rate per 100,000 population is 309.4 (the national rate of 121 per 100,000 in 2021 is indicative only as it is drawn from different data)²⁸



DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

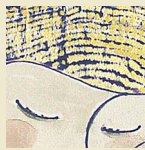
	Alice Springs ²⁹	NT	Australia
Median age	34	33	38
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	20.6%	26.3%	3.2%
Both parents born in Australia	51%	53.9%	45.9%
Non-English language used in household	27.8%	32.7%	24.8%
With university education	27.2%	21.5%	26.3%
Year 10 as highest qualification	8.5%	10.5%	10.0%
Labour force participation	69.3%	61.7%	61.1%
Working part-time	21.4%	22.8%	31.2%
Unemployment	3.5%	5.6%	5.1%
Median weekly personal income	\$1131	\$936	\$805
Median weekly household income	\$2142	\$2061	\$1746
Rate of people on Disability Support Pension per 10,000 population ³⁰	496	349	296

²⁷ <https://pfes.nt.gov.au/police/community-safety/nt-crime-statistics/alice-springs>

²⁸ <https://www.abs.gov.au/media-centre/media-releases/sexual-assaults-increase-tenth-year-row>

²⁹ <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA61510>

³⁰ <https://data.gov.au/data/dataset/dss-payment-demographic-data>



Gender & Disaster Australia

© GADAus, 2023, Prepared by Catherine Orian Weiss