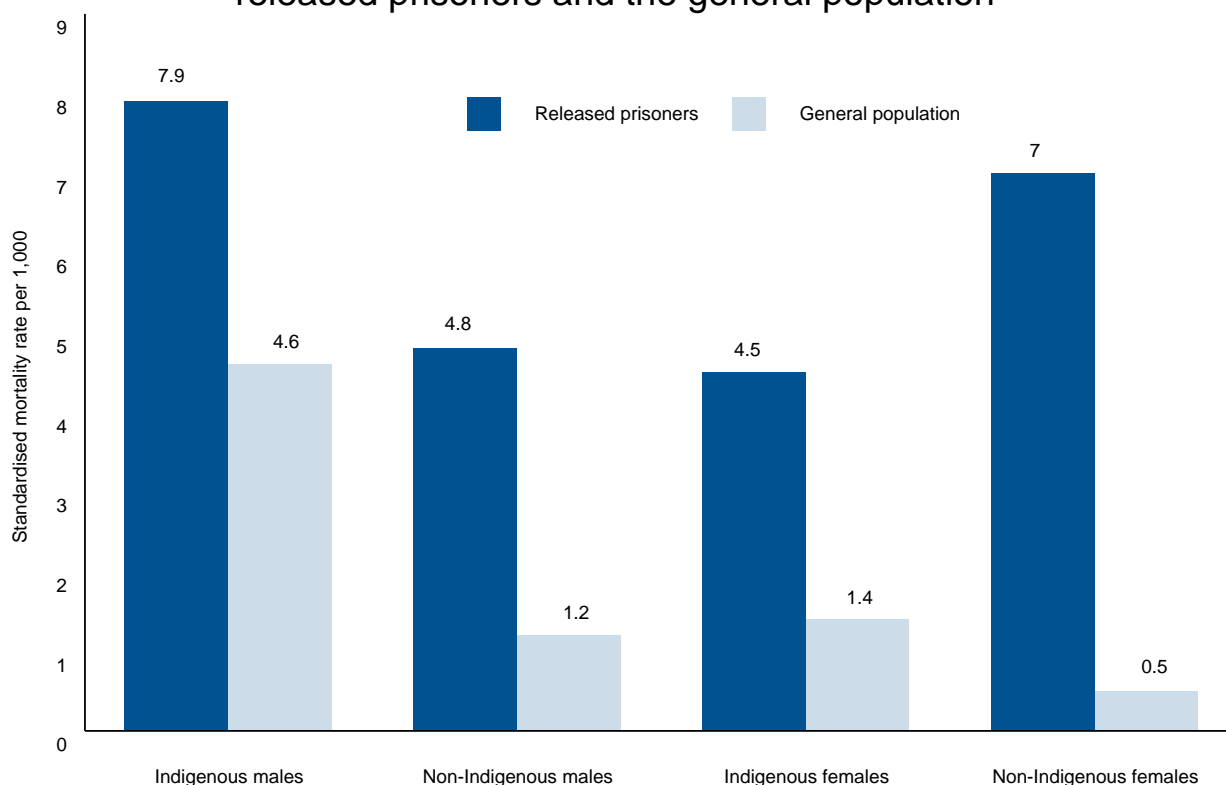


## Mortality after release from prison

Released prisoners are generally assumed to have poorer health and a higher mortality rate than members of the general population. A recent Criminology Research Council report *Mortality and morbidity in prisoners after release from prison in Western Australia 1995–2003* is the first comprehensive study to empirically demonstrate the extent to which this holds true for the whole population. The study tracked 13,667 persons released from prisons in the six years 1995–2001 inclusive, for a minimum of two years. After adjustments for age, ex-prisoners had substantially higher risks of death than the general population. When Indigenous and non-Indigenous ex-prisoners are compared, male Indigenous ex-prisoners have a higher mortality rate than non-Indigenous ex-prisoners; the opposite is the case for female ex-prisoners although the numbers involved are considerably smaller. The figure below shows that for the birth cohort aged 20–39 years in 1999, mortality rates per 1,000 person-years were 7.9 for Indigenous male prisoners, 4.8 for non-Indigenous male prisoners, 4.5 for Indigenous female prisoners and 7.0 for non-Indigenous female prisoners. The report also found that released prisoners have higher rates of morbidity prior to imprisonment suggesting long-standing health problems.

Age standardised mortality rates for released prisoners and the general population



Source: Hobbs M et al. *Mortality and morbidity in prisoners after release from prison in Western Australia 1995–2003*. Research and public policy series no. 71. <http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/rpp/71/>