



**To: Minister Hunt**  
**cc: Minister McKenzie**  
**Minister Wyatt**

**Publication Title: AIHW report – Data sources for monitoring overweight and obesity in Australia**

<b>Minister</b> .....		<b>Date:</b> /    /	
<b>Comments:</b>			
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<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/behaviours-risk-factors/overweight-obesity/reports>

This embargoed publication (**Attachment A**) is expected to be publicly released on 19 February 2019. The AIHW is not issuing a media release. The report was funded from AIHW’s own appropriation; it was not commissioned by the Department.

**Key Issue/s:**

1. This embargoed AIHW report is a technical report about the range of data sources that could be drawn upon to enhance future reporting on overweight and obesity in Australia. The report does not contain new statistics or findings about overweight and obesity.

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2. The main audiences for this report are AIHW project staff, the Department of Health and researchers. This report is unlikely to attract media interest. AIHW's media team can be contacted via [media@aihw.gov.au](mailto:media@aihw.gov.au) or 02 6249 5048 during business hours.
3. In order to support public health interventions and policy such as the National Obesity Strategy being developed under the auspices of the Council of Australian Governments Health Council, it is important to assess the quality of the data available to monitor overweight and obesity.

### **Summary and analysis of key findings**

This report assesses the potential for existing data sources to improve our understanding of overweight and obesity. Although many of the data sources identified were not designed primarily for monitoring overweight and obesity, they do contain relevant data.

Overall, a majority of the data sources listed in this report collect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status and about half collect a measure of remoteness, where far fewer collect specific measures of socioeconomic position. Almost all sources collect some information that can be used for local area analysis, although the format varies which may limit comparisons between data sources.

Data sources for monitoring overweight and obesity in Australia are well developed for behavioural risk factors (e.g. nutrition, physical activity and alcohol intake) and the prevalence of overweight and obesity. This is due to the comprehensive information available from large, nationally representative surveys such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics *National Health Survey* and the *Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health* funded by the Department of Health. It is important that these data continue to be regularly collected in a comparable way to assess change over time. Additionally, the *Ten to Men Australian Longitudinal Study on Male Health* (also funded by the Department of Health) is potentially another substantial ongoing resource for the monitoring of overweight and obesity.

Data are available but require further development for:

- prevention, treatment and management activities for overweight and obesity, particularly in relation to early intervention and prevention activity and care provided in primary health-care settings;
- death and disability associated with overweight and obesity, noting additional information is expected in 2019 from new Australian estimates of burden of disease;
- quality of life associated with overweight and obesity; and
- health expenditure associated with overweight and obesity.

Future opportunities for improving data include:

- data linkage to enhance the information that can be gained using existing data,
- enhancing primary health-care data,
- access to emerging and novel data sources, and
- surveys specific to people who are overweight or obese and/or specific questions on overweight and obesity in existing surveys.

### **Background**

Overweight and obesity are major public health issues in Australia, associated with significant risk for chronic disease, and large costs for the health system. Monitoring overweight and obesity can include describing existing health patterns, populations at risk, current health service use and future demands on the health and welfare system.

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**Attachment:**

- A. Full report - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2019. *Data sources for monitoring overweight and obesity in Australia*. Cat. no. PHE 244. Canberra: AIHW.

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