

# Overweight and obesity more common among some groups of Australian children and adolescents

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Credit: UConn Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity

Some groups of Australian children and adolescents are more likely to be overweight or obese, according to a new report released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

The report, "Overweight and [obesity](#) among Australian children and adolescents," brings together the latest national data to provide insights into patterns of overweight and obesity across children and adolescents over time.

"Certain population groups of children and adolescents are more likely to be overweight or obese: those who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, those who have a disability, those who live in Inner regional areas, and those who live in the lowest socioeconomic areas," said AIHW spokesperson Ms. Claire Sparke.

"The report found that in 2017–18, two- to 17-year-olds living in the lowest socioeconomic areas were more than twice as likely to be obese as those

living in the highest socioeconomic areas (11% compared with 4.4%)", Ms. Sparke said.

The report shows the proportion of Australian children and adolescents who are overweight or obese stabilised between 2007–08 and 2017–18, however this wasn't true for certain population groups.

In 2017–18, one in four (25%) Australian children and adolescents aged 2–17 were overweight or obese, with one in 12 (8.2%) being obese.

"While the prevalence of overweight and obesity increased for 5–17 year olds between 1995 (20%) and 2007–08 (25%), it has been relatively stable (but high) since," Ms. Sparke said.

"However rates have increased for Indigenous children and adolescents from about three in 10 (31%) in 2012–13 to almost four in 10 (38%) in 2018–19," Ms. Sparke said.

New analysis from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children shows that overweight and obesity generally increased with age (from 21% at age 4–5 to 31% at age 16–17 in the older cohort), while children of younger ages (between 2–3 and 4–5) were most likely to fluctuate between weight categories of overweight/obese and normal/underweight.

From age 8–9 onwards, [children](#) and adolescents were generally more likely to become overweight/obese than change to normal/underweight.

A second report, also released today, uses [historical data](#) to determine a person's likelihood of being overweight or obese based on their year of birth.

Overweight and obesity in Australia: an updated birth cohort analysis enables us to better understand whether the generation a person is born into may put them at greater risk of overweight or obesity.

"For most age groups, those born most recently were more likely to be overweight or obese, and to have a higher median body mass index, than those born 10 years earlier," Ms. Sparke said.

"For example, an additional seven in every 100 adults were severely obese at age 65–74 in 2017–18 (15.4%) compared with 2007–08 (8.5%)."

Overweight and obesity also generally increased within most birth cohorts as they aged.

"For those born in 1973–1982, overweight and obesity more than doubled from 24% at age 13–22 to 54% at age 25–34, then increased to 69% at age 35–44," Ms. Sparke said.

**More information:** Overweight and obesity among Australian children and adolescents.  
[www.aihw.gov.au/reports/overweight-and-obesity/summary](https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/overweight-and-obesity/summary)

Provided by Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

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