

National Maternal Mortality Data Collection, 2015–2016; Quality Statement

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Identifying and definitional attributes

Metadata item type:	Data Quality Statement
Synonymous names:	Maternal deaths
METEOR identifier:	708446
Registration status:	AIHW Data Quality Statements , Superseded 26/11/2019

Data quality

Data quality statement summary:

Description

The National Maternal Mortality Data Collection (NMMDC) has been established within the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) and collates data from state and territory sources to be used in the preparation of national maternal death reports. The AIHW only receives such jurisdictional data and does not source, compile, validate or review data regarding maternal deaths independently.

The NMMDC contains information on the deaths of women reported to have died while pregnant or within 42 days of the end of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration or outcome of the pregnancy. The state and territory health authorities and other jurisdictional bodies responsible for primary data collection and review regarding maternal deaths receive clinical data on the women who died from patient administrative and clinical records, as well as from the State and Territory Maternal Mortality Committees where death reviews are undertaken. This information is usually collected through a variety of sources, including notifications from health professionals, coronial reports and notifications from related data collections, including the jurisdictional register of births, deaths and marriages. Data are entered into the NMMDC via an electronic data collection system (electronic National Maternal Death Reporting tool or e-NMDR). Data in the NMMDC includes data collected retrospectively and specifically by some states and territories.

Summary of key data quality issues

- The NMMDC provides national information for use in preparing a national report on women who died while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration or outcome of the pregnancy, from 2006–2016.
- Data has not been received from Western Australia for 2016; or from the Northern Territory for 2015–2016.
- Data sources, supply and quality varied considerably by state and territory.
- Legislative privacy restrictions and data approval processes differed by state and territory, and in some jurisdictions precluded full supply of maternal death data. Due to their health and privacy legislation, only limited summary data on maternal deaths are supplied by Western Australia.
- Not all states and territories had active maternal mortality committees or subcommittees for the period of deaths. This has limited the quality and completeness of data supplied.
- Data collection for some jurisdictions is retrospective and not from existing collections. Retrospective data collection limits the quality and completeness of data supplied.
- Methodology, definitions, classifications and reference periods for maternal death data collections differ significantly across states and territories, and comparisons between collections should be made with caution.

Institutional environment: The AIHW is a major national agency set up by the Australian Government under the *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987 (Cwlth)* to provide reliable, regular and relevant information and statistics on Australia's health and welfare. It is an independent corporate Commonwealth entity established in 1987, governed by a management board, and accountable to the Australian Parliament through the Health portfolio.

The AIHW aims to improve the health and wellbeing of Australians through better health and welfare information and statistics. It collects and reports information on a wide range of topics and issues, from health and welfare expenditure, hospitals, disease and injury, and mental health, to ageing, homelessness, disability and child protection.

The AIHW also plays a role in developing and maintaining national metadata standards. This work contributes to improving the quality and consistency of national health and welfare statistics. The AIHW works closely with governments and non-government organisations to achieve greater adherence to these standards in administrative data collections to promote national consistency and comparability of data and reporting.

One of the main functions of the AIHW is to work with the states and territories to improve the quality of administrative data and, where possible, to compile national data sets based on data from each jurisdiction, to analyse these data sets and disseminate information and statistics.

The *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987*, in conjunction with compliance to the *Privacy Act 1988 (Cwlth)*, ensures that the data collections managed by the AIHW are kept securely and under the strictest conditions with respect to privacy and confidentiality.

For further information see the AIHW website <www.aihw.gov.au>.

Under a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Health, the AIHW is responsible for the management of the NMMDC. The AIHW maintains a coordinating role in the collection, including providing secretariat duties to the National Maternal and Perinatal Mortality Advisory Group, undertaking data development and highlighting implementation and collection issues.

Australian state and territory health authorities supply data to the AIHW under individual data agreements between AIHW and each state and territory. The AIHW is the data custodian of the NMMDC and receives, compiles, edits and verifies the NMMDC data in collaboration with the state or territory health authority that supplied the data. State and territory health authorities retain ownership of the jurisdictional level data and must approve any jurisdictional level output before it is released.

Timeliness: NMMDC data are collected annually. Most jurisdictions need at least 12 months lead time to undertake post-mortem investigations, data entry and validation as required after the end of the data collection period. Maternal deaths data for 2015–2016 were requested for submission to the AIHW by 31 May 2018. Two jurisdictions supplied completed data by this date. Final and useable 2015–2016 data were received from all jurisdictions by 5 November 2018, except from Western Australia and the Northern Territory who have not supplied data for 2016 and 2015–2016 respectively. The AIHW is working with states and territories to improve the timeliness of these data.

Accessibility: *Maternal deaths in Australia 2016* is a web based report published available on the AIHW website < <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/mothers-babies/maternal-deaths-in-australia-2016/contents/report>>.

Requests for unpublished data can be made by contacting the AIHW on (02) 6244 1000, by email to info@aihw.gov.au or through the AIHW's custom data request service at <https://www.aihw.gov.au/our-services/data-on-request>.

A cost-recovery charge may apply to requests that require substantial resources. Depending on the nature of the request, requests for access to unpublished data may require additional approval from jurisdictional data custodians or the AIHW Ethics Committee.

Interpretability:

The organisational structure, including relevant legislation, policy and process for maternal death data collection, varies by state and territory. The NMMDC reflects these variations. In all cases, the best available information has been used to form the NMMDC.

An overview of each state's maternal death data collection process is outlined below:

- The New South Wales Ministry of Health is notified of maternal deaths through a variety of organisations and methods, including hospitals, the Department of Forensic Medicine at Glebe, Ministry of Health systematic searches of New South Wales population health data sets (for example Admitted Patient Data Collection and the New South Wales Perinatal Data Collection) and through the National Coronial Information System. The number of maternal deaths for each year is assessed against Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) mortality data, where available (deaths with an International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, 10th edition (ICD-10) cause of death code commencing with an 'O') to maximise ascertainment.
- In Victoria, maternal deaths are identified through direct notification by health services, Victorian Perinatal Data Collection Unit (birth forms), the Coroner's Office, the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages and through media reports. Under the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008, the Consultative Council on Obstetric and Paediatric Mortality and Morbidity (CCOPMM) is responsible for receiving and reporting information regarding maternal deaths, including late maternal deaths; the cases are classified and reviewed by the maternal mortality sub-committee of CCOPMM. In 2010, automatic electronic notification through coronial e-Medical Deposition Form was introduced, and that form includes a tick box 'was the patient pregnant in the last 12 months'.
- Queensland Health conducts dedicated searches of hospital administrative data sets intended for the sole purpose of identifying maternal deaths. In 2012, the Minister of Health approved changes to the Public Health Act 2005 to mandate reporting of maternal deaths to the Department (working with the Queensland Maternal and Perinatal Quality Council).
- South Australia Health has no formal process of maternal death notification. The Maternal Mortality Committee accesses multiple notifications, including review of media articles, word of mouth, clinicians, pathologists and sentinel event reporting from hospitals. Although there is a tick box on death certificates to indicate if a woman has been pregnant in the last 3 months, this has never been a source of notification to the Maternal Mortality Committee of a maternal death. Hospital separation discharge codes are also reviewed as a quality check to identify maternal deaths. However, to date, this process has never informed the Maternal Mortality Committee of a maternal death the committee was not already aware of. Similarly, sentinel event reporting has not identified a new maternal death to this committee.
- The Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services is notified of maternal deaths through the following sources: health statistics, the Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages and local clinicians who are members of the Tasmanian Council of Obstetric and Paediatric Mortality and Morbidity (state-wide) and local hospital morbidity and mortality committees.
- In Western Australia the Maternal Mortality Committee appoints an investigator when it is notified of such a death. After the committee considers the report of that investigator the committee chair reports to the Executive Director of Public Health on the findings of the committee.
- Review of maternal deaths in the Australian Capital Territory was previously carried out in conjunction with such review in New South Wales. Since 2011 the ACT Maternal and Perinatal Morbidity and Mortality Committee has completed such review independently.
- Northern Territory Department of Health undertook a process of maternal death ascertainment and review specifically to supply data to the NMMDC.

Relevance: The NMMDC data are compiled primarily from state and territory maternal death data collections or, where not available, other state and territory data sources. Data are requested on the death of all women reported to have died while pregnant or within 42 days of the end of pregnancy in Australia from 2006–2016. Specifications for data items in the NMMDC were developed using nationally standardised data as entered into the National health data dictionary. It includes data items relating to the mother, including demographic characteristics and factors relating to the pregnancy, labour and birth; details of death; classification of death and data items relating to the baby, including birth status; and any additional case summaries.

A National Maternal and Perinatal Mortality Advisory Group was convened in 2015 to oversee the process of data collection for the maternal and perinatal death reports and has taken over the responsibilities of the previous National Maternal Mortality Advisory Committee.

Accuracy: Inaccurate responses may occur in all data provided to the AIHW. The AIHW does not have direct access to maternal mortality committee records to determine the accuracy of the data provided. However, the AIHW undertakes validation on receipt of data. Data received from states and territories are checked for completeness, validity and logical errors. Potential errors are queried with jurisdictions, and corrections and resubmissions are made in response to these edit queries. The AIHW does not adjust data to account for possible data errors without the permission of the state or territory that supplied the data.

Errors may occur during the processing of data by the states and territories or at the AIHW. Processing errors prior to data supply may be found through the validation checks applied by the AIHW. The data are corrected when verification of an error is supplied. The AIHW does not adjust the data to correct for missing values.

Prior to publication, state/territory-level data are referred back to jurisdictions for checking and review. Note that because of data editing and subsequent updates of state/territory information, numbers reported may differ from those in reports published by the states and territories.

Due to small numbers contained in the NMMDC, caution should be taken when interpreting these data.

Data on maternal deaths are not available from Western Australia for 2016 or from the Northern Territory for 2015–2016. Due to their health and privacy legislation, only limited summary data on maternal deaths are supplied by Western Australia.

Coherence: The NMMDC is an ongoing data set collected specifically, in the first instance, for use in the *Maternal deaths in Australia* reporting; it is a continuing collection and will be available as it expands for future reports in that series.

State and territory health authorities compile statistics and publish reports on maternal deaths. Methodology, definitions, classifications and reference periods for these collections differ significantly across states and territories, and comparisons between states and territories should be made with caution.

Data products

Implementation start date: 01/01/2015

Source and reference attributes

Submitting organisation: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Relational attributes

Related metadata references: Supersedes [National Maternal Mortality Data Collection, 2012–2014; Quality Statement](#)

[AIHW Data Quality Statements](#), Superseded 17/12/2018

Has been superseded by [National Maternal Mortality Data Collection, 2017; Quality Statement](#)

[AIHW Data Quality Statements](#), Superseded 25/11/2020

