

National Perinatal Data Collection, 2021: Quality Statement

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Identifying and definitional attributes

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Data quality

Data quality statement summary:

Description

The National Perinatal Data Collection (NPDC) is a national population-based cross-sectional collection of data on pregnancy and childbirth. The data are based on births reported to the perinatal data collection in each state and territory in Australia. Midwives and other birth attendants, using information obtained from mothers and from hospital or other records, complete notification forms for each birth. A standard de-identified extract is provided to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) on an annual basis to form the NPDC.

Summary of Key Issues

Information is included in the NPDC for both live births and stillbirths, where gestational age is at least 20 weeks or birthweight is at least 400 grams, except in Victoria and Western Australia, where births are included if gestational age is at least 20 weeks or, if gestation is unknown, birthweight is at least 400 grams.

Institutional environment: The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) is an independent corporate Commonwealth entity under the [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987](#) (AIHW Act), governed by a [management Board](#) and accountable to the Australian Parliament through the Health portfolio.

The AIHW is a nationally recognised information management agency. Its purpose is to create authoritative and accessible information and statistics that inform decisions and improve the health and welfare of all Australians.

Compliance with the confidentiality requirements in the AIHW Act, the Privacy Principles in the [Privacy Act 1988](#) (Cth) and AIHW's data governance arrangements ensures that the AIHW is well positioned to release information for public benefit while protecting the identity of individuals and organisations.

For further information see the AIHW website www.aihw.gov.au/about-us, which includes details about the AIHW's governance (www.aihw.gov.au/about-us/our-governance) and our role and strategic goals (www.aihw.gov.au/about-us/our-vision-and-strategic-goals).

Data for the NPDC were supplied to the AIHW by state and territory health authorities under the terms of the [National Health Information Agreement](#).

The state and territory health authorities receive these data from patient administrative and clinical records, with the information usually collected by midwives or other birth attendants. States and territories use these data for service planning, monitoring and internal and public reporting.

Data specifications for the NPDC are documented in the AIHW's online metadata registry, [METEOR](#), and the [Maternity Information Matrix](#). METEOR has the following Perinatal NMDSs available:

- [Perinatal NMDS 2014-18](#)
- [Perinatal NMDS 2018-19](#)
- [Perinatal NMDS 2019–20](#)
- [Perinatal NMDS 2020–21](#)
- [Perinatal NMDS 2021–22](#)

Timeliness: NPDC data are collated annually for calendar years. Some states and territories need 12 months or more to undertake data entry, validation and linking with hospitals data as required after the end of the data collection period. Data for 2021 were requested to be submitted to the AIHW in a staggered approach between 15 August 2022 and 15 November 2022. Five of 8 states and territories provided at least one data submission within this timeframe. Final and useable data were received from all states and territories by 17 April 2023. Data are published annually in [Australia's mothers and babies](#), with 2021 data published on 29 June 2023, 18 months after the end of the data collection period.

Accessibility:

A variety of products draw upon the NPDC. Products published by the AIHW that are based primarily on data from the NPDC include:

- [Australia's mothers and babies](#)
- [National Core Maternity Indicators reports and data visualisations](#).

[Australia's mothers and babies](#) is the thirty-first annual report on pregnancy and childbirth in Australia, providing national information on women who gave birth in 2021 and the characteristics and outcomes of their babies.

Users can request data not available online or in reports via the [AIHW data request system](#) (noting the release of data are subject to restrictions and requests that take longer than half an hour to compile are charged for on a cost-recovery basis).

Data for selected indicators are also included in AIHW and other products such as:

AIHW products

- [Australia's health 2022](#)
- [Australia's health performance framework](#)
- [Children's Headline Indicator as reported in Australia's Children](#)
- [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health performance framework](#)
- [National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children](#).

Other products

- Closing the Gap Information Repository
- Report on Government Services
- Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage.

Interpretability:

Supporting information on the quality and use of the NPDC is published annually in [Australia's mothers and babies](#) (see the technical notes section); and the [NPDC data availability resource](#), which is an interactive information resource detailing data availability for NPDC data elements.

Metadata information for the NPDC are published in the National Health Data Dictionary (NHDD) on METEOR and in the Maternity Information Matrix.

Readers are advised to read caveat information to ensure appropriate interpretation of data.

Relevance:

The NPDC comprises data items as specified in the [Perinatal National Minimum Data Set \(NMDS\)](#), plus additional items collected by the states and territories. The purpose of the NPDC is to collect information about births for monitoring pregnancy, childbirth and the neonatal period for both the mother and baby.

The NPDC is a specification for data collected on all births in Australia in hospitals, birth centres and the community. It includes information for both live births and stillbirths, where gestational age is at least 20 weeks or birthweight is at least 400 grams. Live births and stillbirths may include termination of pregnancy after 20 weeks. Stillbirths can include fetus papyraceous and fetus compressus. In Victoria and Western Australia, data were included for both live births and stillbirths of at least 20 weeks' gestation or, if gestation was unknown, the birthweight was at least 400 grams. In South Australia, data may not include all terminations of pregnancy for psychosocial reasons after 20 weeks gestation where birthweight was not recorded.

The NPDC includes data items relating to the mother—including demographic characteristics and factors relating to the pregnancy, labour and birth—and data items relating to the baby—including birth status (live birth or stillbirth), sex, gestational age at birth, birthweight and neonatal morbidity and deaths.

A program of national perinatal data development has led to improvements in data provision and reporting. The program involves revision of existing Perinatal NMDS and National Best Endeavours Data Set (NBEDS) data elements, data development work on existing perinatal METEOR data elements and the development of new perinatal data elements. In recent years additional data elements have been developed relating to alcohol consumption, mental health screening and family violence screening. Due to the time lag between development, implementation and collection of data by the state and territory perinatal data collections and their inclusion in the NPDC, some of these items will not appear in published data until after 2023, subject to quality assessment. New data elements introduced into the NPDC in the reference period may not be available for the entire period.

Accuracy:

The AIHW undertakes validation on all data provided by the states and territories. Data received from the states and territories are checked for completeness, validity and logic errors. Potential errors are queried with states and territories, and corrections and resubmissions are made in response to these edit queries.

The AIHW does not adjust data to account for possible data errors or to correct for missing data.

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

According to the National Health Data Dictionary (NHDD), Indigenous status is a measure of whether a person identifies as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. All states and territories have a data item to record Indigenous status of the mother and Indigenous status of the baby on their perinatal form, although there are some differences among the states and territories.

Neonatal deaths collected as part of the NPDC may be incomplete. In some states and territories, neonatal deaths for babies transferred to another hospital or readmitted to hospital, and those dying at home, may not be included. Neonatal deaths for the Northern Territory are considered to be incomplete for 2021 as data do not include deaths occurring outside the Northern Territory. Differences in mortality rates may be due to the small number of deaths, which result in statistical fluctuations, under-ascertainment, or actual differences in mortality experience.

Freebirths (births that are planned to occur without a midwife or other medical professional in attendance and at home) may be included in the NPDC if:

- they are in scope of the data collection, and the mother or baby present to hospital following birth, or
- the birth is registered with the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

However, this differs by state and territory.

Coherence: NPDC data are reported and published annually by the AIHW. While definitions and data domains of some data elements have changed over time as a result of data development, in most cases it is possible to map these changes and make consistent comparisons over time.

The other national data sources on perinatal data are the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the AIHW's National Hospital Morbidity Database (NHMD). The ABS compiles statistics and publishes reports on registrations of live births and perinatal deaths from data made available by the Registrars of Births, Deaths and Marriages in each state and territory. The ABS collection includes all live births that were not previously registered and stillbirths of at least 400 grams, or of at least 20 weeks gestation where birthweight is unknown. The AIHW NHMD is compiled from data supplied by the state and territory health authorities. It is a collection of electronic confidentialised summary records for separations (that is, episodes of admitted patient care) in public and private hospitals in Australia, and includes information on all births in hospital, and some that occur while the mother is on the way to a hospital.

As these collections differ from the NPDC in scope, collection methodology, definitions and reference periods, comparisons between collections should be made with caution.

Data products

Implementation start date: 01/01/2021

Source and reference attributes

Submitting organisation: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Relational attributes

Related metadata references: Supersedes [National Perinatal Data Collection, 2020: Quality Statement](#)
[AIHW Data Quality Statements](#), Superseded 29/06/2023