

# Overweight and obesity rates across Australia, 2011–12

Published October 2013

This report for the first time presents overweight and obesity rates at the local level across Australia.

In 2011–12, 10.8 million adults were either overweight or obese, and of these 4.7 million were obese.\*

This report shows that the percentage of adults who were obese varied three-fold across local areas, from 14% in Sydney North Shore and Beaches to 41% in Loddon-Mallee-Murray. In three-quarters or more of communities for which we have comparable data, one in four adults were obese in 2011–12.

The percentage of adults who were overweight or obese increased with geographic remoteness and lower socioeconomic status. Yet still half of adults (54%) in the wealthiest urban areas were overweight or obese, and two in 10 (19%) were obese.

Overweight and obesity rates are increasing rapidly across Australia. In 1989, 44% of adults were overweight or obese, rising to 63% in 2011–12.<sup>1,2</sup> Health problems related to excess body weight impact the health care system, as well as individuals, families and the community.

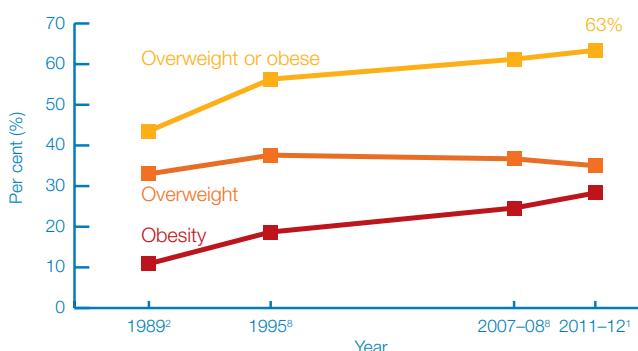
Obesity imposed an estimated \$2 billion in direct costs on Australia's health system in 2008.<sup>3</sup> People who are obese face health care costs that are 30% higher than those with more healthy body weights.<sup>4</sup> Australia has guidelines to assist health professionals in helping people who are overweight or obese.<sup>5</sup>



Overweight and obesity: range across local areas



## National overweight and obesity trends



## Local areas with highest obesity rates

Medicare Local name	Obesity rate (%)
Loddon-Mallee-Murray	41%
Country South SA	40%
Central Qld	39%
Townsville-Mackay	38%
West Moreton-Oxley	38%
Perth South Coastal	38%

Sources and references can be found in the Technical Note at [www.myhealthycommunities.gov.au/publications](http://www.myhealthycommunities.gov.au/publications)

Visit [www.myhealthycommunities.gov.au](http://www.myhealthycommunities.gov.au) for more detailed results

# Key findings

## Variation across Australia

In 2011–12, almost three in 10 adults (28%) were obese compared to one in 10 (11%) in 1989.<sup>1,2</sup> With more than one in four adults now obese, Australia ranks seventh among developed countries for rates of obesity for people aged 15 years and over.<sup>6</sup>

High rates of overweight and obesity occur in all local areas including wealthy inner-city suburbs and rural and disadvantaged communities.

Across all local areas, Western NSW had the highest rate, with almost eight in 10 adults being overweight or obese (79%) compared to five in 10 adults (49%) in Eastern Sydney.

To allow fairer comparisons to be made between the Medicare Local areas for which there were data, Medicare Local catchments have been grouped into seven peer groups based on similar geographic remoteness and socioeconomic status.

Across metropolitan areas, five in 10 adults were overweight or obese in the wealthiest inner-city suburbs (Metro 1 peer group) compared to six in 10 in lower-income communities (Metro 2 and 3). In regional or rural local areas, between six and seven in 10 adults were overweight or obese.

Obesity by itself followed a similar pattern. Across metropolitan areas, two in 10 adults were obese in the wealthiest inner city suburbs (Metro 1) compared to three in 10 in lower-income urban communities (Metro 2 and 3). In regional or rural local areas, anywhere from two to four in 10 adults were obese.

## Variation across states and territories

The five local areas with the highest percentages of overweight or obese adults were regional and rural catchments in five states:

New South Wales	Western NSW	79%
Queensland	Townsville-Mackay	75%
South Australia	Country South SA	75%
Victoria	Gippsland	75%
Western Australia	Goldfields-Midwest	74%

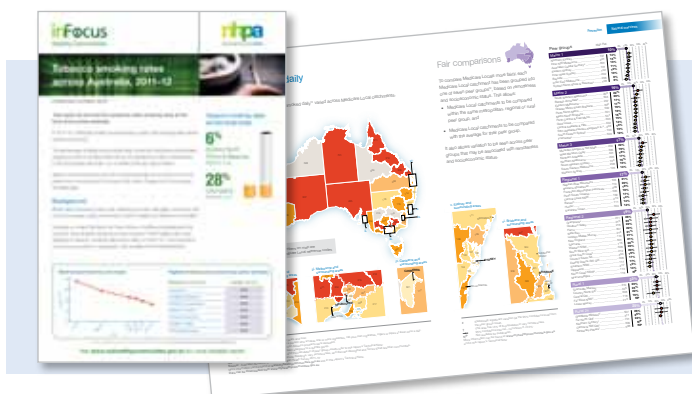
When only obese adults were considered, half of the six local areas with the highest percentages were in Queensland.

The five local areas with the lowest percentages of overweight and obese adults were all in the Metro 1 peer group and in New South Wales or Victoria. The same five local areas also had the lowest percentages of obese adults.

### Where to from here?

The Council of Australian Governments has set a target by 2018 to increase the proportion of the population in the healthy weight range by 5 percentage points over the 2009 baseline, from 37% to 42%.<sup>7</sup>

In 2011–12, 36% of adults nationally were found to be in the healthy weight range.<sup>1</sup>



Also now available:

### **In Focus: Tobacco smoking rates across Australia, 2011–12**

For more information, go to

[www.myhealthycommunities.gov.au](http://www.myhealthycommunities.gov.au)

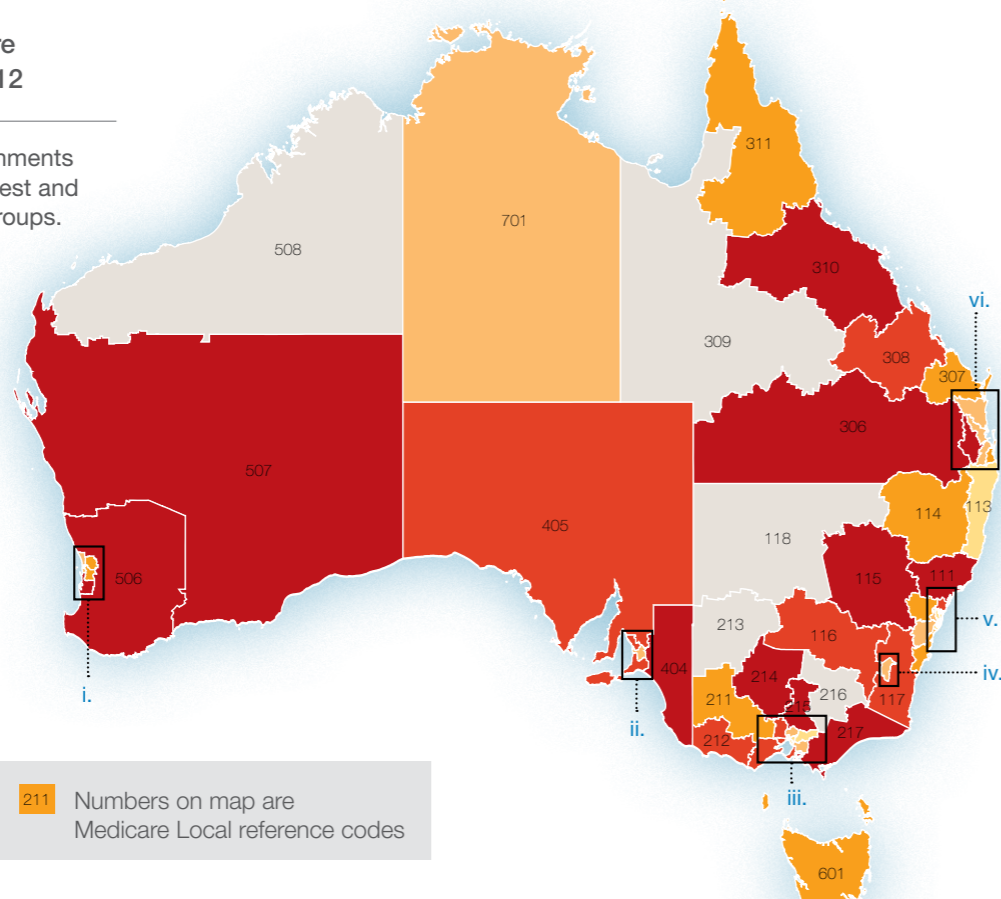
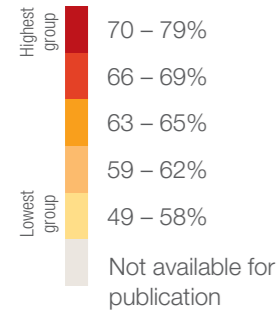
# Adults who are overweight or obese

Year of data: 2011–12

In 2011–12, the percentage of adults classified as overweight or obese varied across Medicare Local catchments, ranging from 49% to 79%.

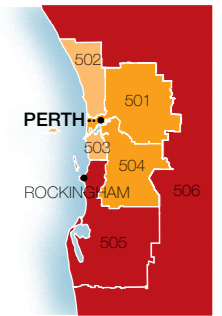
## Percentage of adults who are overweight or obese, 2011–12

Results for Medicare Local catchments were ranked from highest to lowest and then split into five equal-sized groups. The range within each of the five groups was as follows:

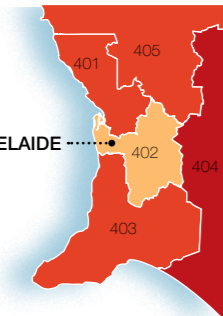


□ Medicare Local catchment boundary  
 211 Numbers on map are Medicare Local reference codes

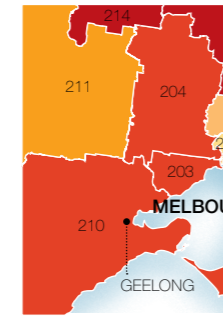
i. Perth and surrounding areas



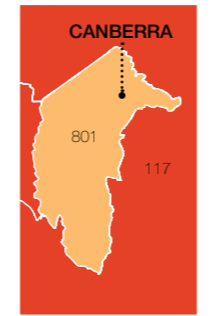
ii. Adelaide and surrounding areas



iii. Melbourne and surrounding areas

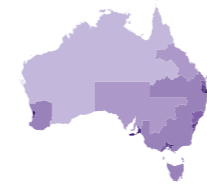


iv. Canberra and surrounding areas



**Note:** Survey excludes adults living in non-private dwellings, very remote areas, and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.  
**Source:** Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Health Survey 2011–13.  
 Data can be downloaded from [www.myhealthycommunities.gov.au](http://www.myhealthycommunities.gov.au)

## Fair comparisons

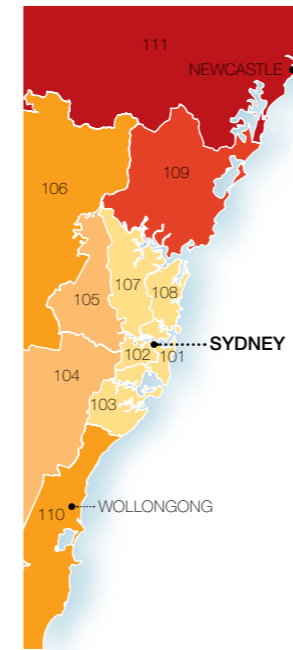


To compare Medicare Locals more fairly, each Medicare Local catchment has been grouped into one of seven peer groups, based on remoteness and socioeconomic status. This allows:

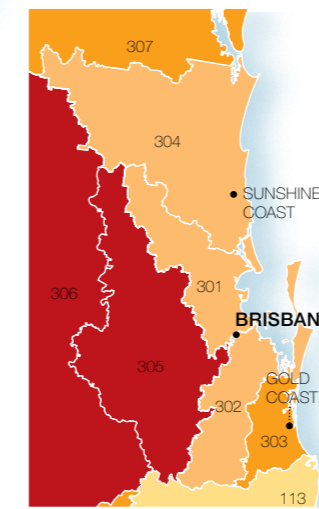
- Medicare Local catchments to be compared within the same metropolitan, regional or rural peer group, and
- Medicare Local catchments to be compared with the average for their peer group.

It also allows variation to be seen across peer groups that may be associated with remoteness and socioeconomic status.

v. Sydney and surrounding areas



vi. Brisbane and surrounding areas

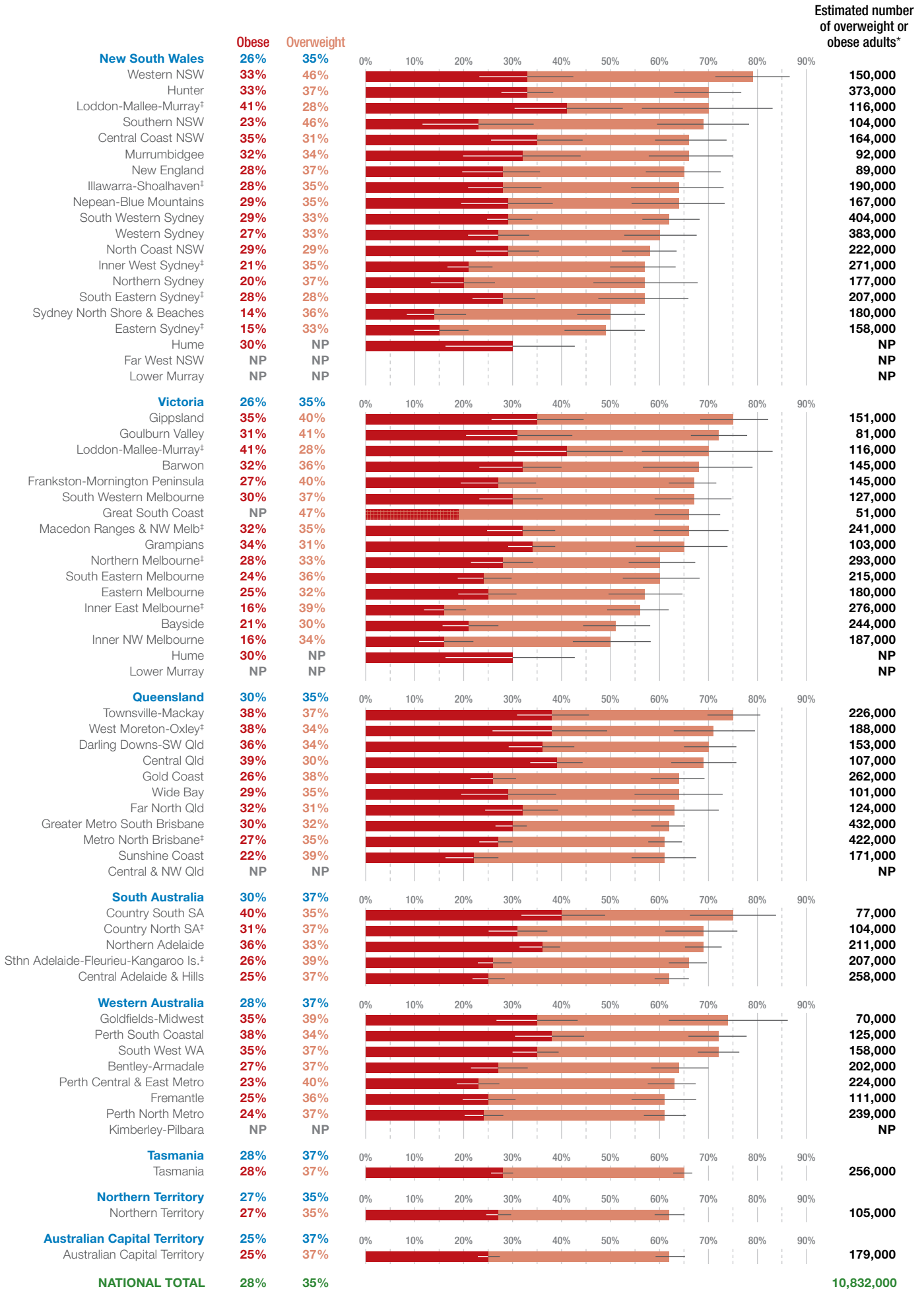


# Statistically significant variation (at the 95% confidence level) from the peer group result.  
 † This area has >5% of its population in very remote areas.  
 —●— 95% confidence interval – not shown if <5%.  
 NP Not available for publication.  
 More information can be found at [www.myhealthycommunities.gov.au](http://www.myhealthycommunities.gov.au) and in this report's Technical Note.

### Peer groups

Peer groups	Map ref.	Obese rate	Combined overweight or obese rate
<b>Metro 1</b>		<b>19%</b>	<b>54%</b>
Australian Capital Territory.....	801	25%	62%#
Northern Sydney.....	107	20%	57%
Inner West Sydney.....	102	21%	57%
Inner East Melbourne.....	206	16%	56%
Bayside.....	202	21%	51%
Inner NW Melbourne.....	201	16%	50%
Sydney North Shore & Beaches.....	108	14%	50%
Eastern Sydney.....	101	15%	49%
<b>Metro 2</b>		<b>27%</b>	<b>62%</b>
South Western Melbourne.....	203	30%	67%
Sthn Adelaide-Flourieu-Kangaroo Is.....	403	26%	66%#
Bentley-Armadale.....	504	27%	64%
Gold Coast.....	303	26%	64%
Central Adelaide & Hills.....	402	25%	62%
Perth Central & East Metro.....	501	23%	63%
Greater Metro South Brisbane.....	302	30%	62%
Metro North Brisbane.....	301	27%	61%
Perth North Metro.....	502	24%	61%
Fremantle.....	503	25%	61%
Eastern Melbourne.....	207	25%	57%
South Eastern Sydney.....	103	28%	57%
<b>Metro 3</b>		<b>30%</b>	<b>63%</b>
West Moreton-Oxley.....	305	38%	71%
Northern Adelaide.....	401	36%	69%#
Macedon Ranges & NW Melb.....	204	32%	66%
South Western Sydney.....	104	29%	62%
Northern Melbourne.....	205	28%	60%
South Eastern Melbourne.....	208	24%	60%
Western Sydney.....	105	27%	60%
<b>Regional 1</b>		<b>31%</b>	<b>67%</b>
Perth South Coastal.....	505	38%	72%
Hunter.....	111	33%	70%
Barwon.....	210	32%	68%
Frankston-Mornington Peninsula.....	209	27%	67%
Central Coast NSW.....	109	35%	66%
Nepean-Blue Mountains.....	106	29%	64%
Illawarra-Shoalhaven.....	110	28%	64%
Sunshine Coast.....	304	22%	61%
<b>Regional 2</b>		<b>31%</b>	<b>68%</b>
Western NSW.....	115	33%	79%#
Gippsland.....	217	35%	75%#
Country South SA.....	404	40%	75%
Goulburn Valley.....	215	31%	72%
South West WA.....	506	35%	72%#
Darling Downs-SW Qld.....	306	36%	70%
Loddon-Mallee-Murray.....	214	41%	70%
Southern NSW.....	117	23%	69%
Murrumbidgee.....	116	32%	66%
Great South Coast.....	212	NP	66%
New England.....	114	28%	65%
Tasmania.....	601	28%	65%#
Grampians.....	211	34%	65%
Wide Bay.....	307	29%	64%
North Coast NSW.....	113	29%	58%#
Hume.....	216	30%	NP
<b>Rural 1</b>		<b>36%</b>	<b>72%</b>
Townsville-Mackay.....	310	38%	75%
Central Qld.....	308	39%	69%
Country North SA†.....	405	31%	69%
Far West NSW†.....	118	NP	NP
Lower Murray.....	213	NP	NP
<b>Rural 2†</b>		<b>31%</b>	<b>65%</b>
Goldfields-Midwest†.....	507	35%	74%
Far North Qld†.....	311	32%	63%
Northern Territory†.....	701	27%	62%
Central & NW Qld†.....	309	NP	NP
Kimberley-Pilbara†.....	508	NP	NP

**Table 1: Estimated overweight and obese rates across Medicare Locals, 2011–12, grouped by state and territory**



## Interpret with caution. — 95% confidence interval.  
 \* Estimates were obtained by multiplying the estimated resident adult population by the estimated overweight and obese percentage, and rounding to the nearest 1000.  
 ‡ Due to separate rounding of data values, the total of obese and overweight does not match the published total.  
 Source: Estimated Resident Population 30 June 2011 and Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Health Survey 2011–13.

## MyHealthyCommunities



Visit [www.myhealthycommunities.gov.au](http://www.myhealthycommunities.gov.au) to see how your local area is performing. This interactive website lets you see the results for over 40 health measures including:

- Childhood immunisation rates
- Waiting times for GPs
- After-hours GP attendances.

Compare your local area with other similar areas across Australia – or see how Medicare Locals in diverse parts of the country are performing when it comes to delivering community health services. This powerful website not only enables the public to make informed decisions, it empowers clinicians and service providers to drive improvements in health.

### What is a Medicare Local?

Medicare Locals plan, fund and deliver health services to meet the needs of communities across Australia. They help to ensure patients can access the co-ordinated care they need, particularly when a variety of health workers are involved in providing treatments.

For more information, go to [www.medicarelocals.gov.au](http://www.medicarelocals.gov.au)

## About the data

The data were sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics Australian Health Survey 2011–13. Consenting participants were measured using digital weighing scales to measure weight and a stadiometer to measure height. Body Mass Index (BMI) scores were calculated as weight (kg) divided by height squared (m)<sup>2</sup>. Participants with a BMI greater than or equal to 25 and less than 30 were classified as overweight. Those with a BMI greater than or equal to 30 were classified as obese. For more information refer to the Technical Note at [www.myhealthycommunities.gov.au/publications](http://www.myhealthycommunities.gov.au/publications)

## What is the National Health Performance Authority?

We are an independent government agency that provides information on health care organisations at a local level across Australia. We produce regular reports and publish data online at [www.myhealthycommunities.gov.au](http://www.myhealthycommunities.gov.au) and [www.myhospitals.gov.au](http://www.myhospitals.gov.au)

The Performance Authority's activities are guided by a document called the *Performance and Accountability Framework* agreed by the Council of Australian Governments. The framework contains 48 indicators that form the basis for the Performance Authority's reports.

For more information, go to [www.nhpa.gov.au](http://www.nhpa.gov.au)



National Health Performance Authority

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Please note that there is the potential for minor revisions of this document.