

National Maternal Mortality Data Collection, 2019; Quality Statement

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Identifying and definitional attributes

Metadata item type:	Data Quality Statement
Synonymous names:	Maternal deaths
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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 2006–2019.
- Data sources, supply and quality varied considerably by state and territory.
- Due to their health and privacy legislation, only limited summary data on maternal deaths were supplied by Western Australia for 2006–2018 and data for 2019 is not yet available.
- 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 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 vision and strategic goals (www.aihw.gov.au/about-us/our-vision-and-strategic-goals).

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 12–18 months lead time to undertake post-mortem investigations, data entry and validation as required after the end of the data collection period. Deaths subject to coronial inquiry may take longer to finalise. Maternal deaths data for 2019 were requested on 3 June 2021 for submission to the AIHW by 23 July 2021. Four jurisdictions supplied completed data by this date. Final and useable 2019 data were received from seven jurisdictions by 1 September 2021. Data for one jurisdiction is not yet available.

Accessibility: Maternal deaths data is published annually in the web-based [Australia's mothers and babies](#) report available on the AIHW website.

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 on request](#) service.

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: For maternal deaths reporting, all statistical methods and concepts applied to NMMDC can be found online at [Australia's mothers and babies, Data sources - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare \(aihw.gov.au\)](#)

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 2006–2019. 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. Following a restructure in July 2019, the National Maternal and Perinatal Mortality Advisory Group was re-named the National Maternal and Perinatal Mortality Clinical Expert Group.

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.

Due to their health and privacy legislation, only limited summary data on maternal deaths were supplied by Western Australia for 2006–2018 and data for 2019 is not yet available.

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.

Source and reference attributes

Submitting organisation: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Relational attributes

Related metadata references: Supersedes [National Maternal Mortality Data Collection, 2018; Quality Statement AIHW Data Quality Statements](#), Superseded 18/11/2021