


About NOO

The National Obesity Observatory provides a single point of contact for wide-ranging authoritative information on data and evidence related to obesity, overweight, underweight and their determinants. The observatory works with a range of organisations to support policy makers and practitioners involved in obesity and related issues. NOO is a member of the Association of Public Health Observatories. It is based in Oxford where it sits alongside the South East Public Health Observatory.

new from noo: Obesity Surveillance: what is measured and where are the gaps?



NOO has recently published


a briefing paper that identifies and describes the main publicly available sources of national level surveillance data for adults and children in England.

The paper highlights various measurement methods, indicates their relative accuracy and applicability to large-scale data

collection, and identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the data sets in terms of sampling and the detail and reliability of the data collected. The paper makes recommendations for the national surveillance of obesity in the future, which would improve our understanding at population level.

NOO news

the Newsletter from the
National Obesity Observatory

Welcome to the third issue of
**NOO News – the newsletter
from the National Obesity
Observatory (NOO).**

This newsletter is produced twice a year for practitioners and other professionals working in obesity and related fields. NOO News provides updates on NOO projects, publications and data analyses; reports and statistics from other organisations; wider news; and forthcoming events.

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new from noo: Central adiposity

NOO has produced ▶ **a briefing paper – Measures of central adiposity as an indicator of obesity.**

The paper describes the pros and cons of measuring central adiposity (body fat around the waist), especially within ethnic minority populations. It reviews approaches to measuring central adiposity and how such measures should be interpreted in terms of health risk. The paper also summarises and compares the evidence for recent trends in waist circumference and BMI.



new from noo: Maternal obesity

In October NOO published information **about maternal obesity (obesity during pregnancy) on our website.**

▶ **These web pages** draw together the most recent data from several sources to provide an overview of maternal obesity, including epidemiology, maternal health, child health and guidance on the management of maternal obesity.

Women who are obese are likely to be older in pregnancy, to have a higher parity, and to live in areas of deprivation. Maternal obesity increases the risks to health for the mother and child both during and after pregnancy.

The resource also includes information about forthcoming publications on maternal obesity.

FROM THE PAGES

EPIDEMIOLOGY: International studies show a prevalence of maternal obesity ranging from 1.8% to 25.3% across countries (using the WHO definition of obesity of BMI of at least 30kg/m²)

MATERNAL HEALTH: the CEMACH Maternal Death Enquiry for the period 2000–02 found that 78 (30%) of the 261 maternal deaths in the UK were in obese women (BMI of at least 30kg/m²)

CHILD HEALTH: In 2005, 22.9% of mothers who had late foetal loss were obese, as were 30.4% of the women who experienced stillbirths, and 30.6% of those who experienced neonatal deaths



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new from noo:

The National Obesity Observatory e-atlases

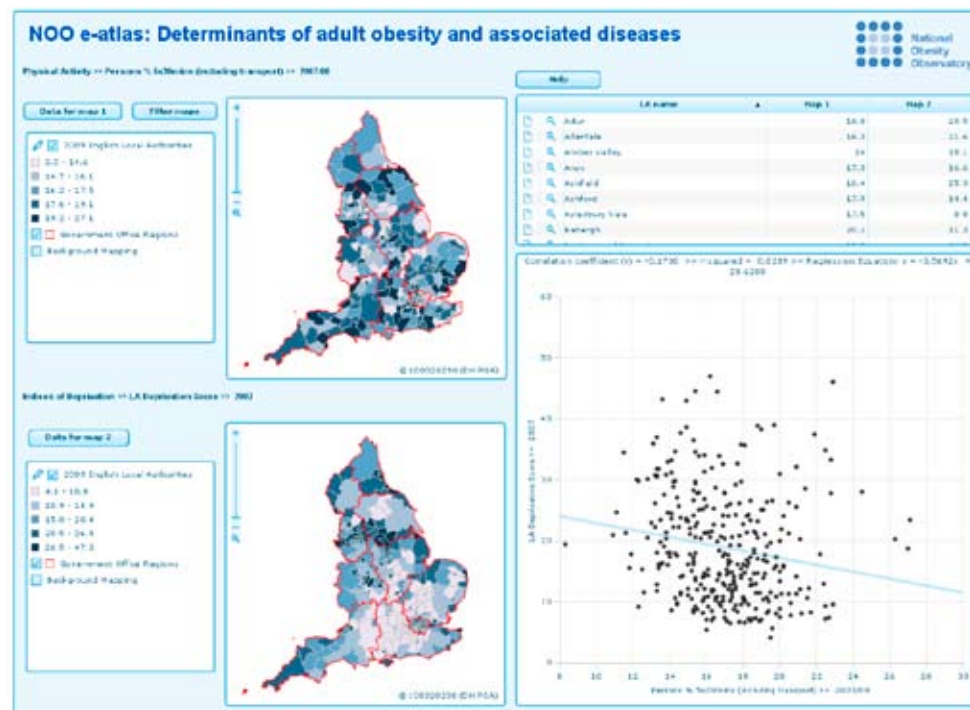
The NOO e-atlases are interactive mapping tools for the analysis of data on the prevalence of obesity and its determinants for local authorities in England. The NOO website has recently been updated with new dual-map and single-map e-atlas templates – see

▶ www.noo.org.uk/maps/eatlas.

The dual map e-atlases enable users to compare a range of indicators including

prevalence of childhood obesity using data from the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) with, for example, local area deprivation scores and levels of physical activity. The adult atlases include indicators on physical activity, prevalence of type 2 diabetes and incidence of colorectal cancer. The degree of correlation between selected variables is presented both numerically and graphically.

All the indicators included in the dual map e-atlas are also included in the single map e-atlas where users can relate local authority figures to regional and national comparators. A metadata and guidance document is available for each indicator providing information on the data sources and an explanation of any limitations that should be considered when undertaking analysis.



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Seasonality and obesity prevalence in NCMP 2007/08

In 2007/08 the month of measurement of individual children was collected centrally for the first time within the NCMP database. Analysis of this variable should improve our understanding of the determinants of obesity and initial findings suggest obesity prevalence amongst children in England may display some seasonal variation.

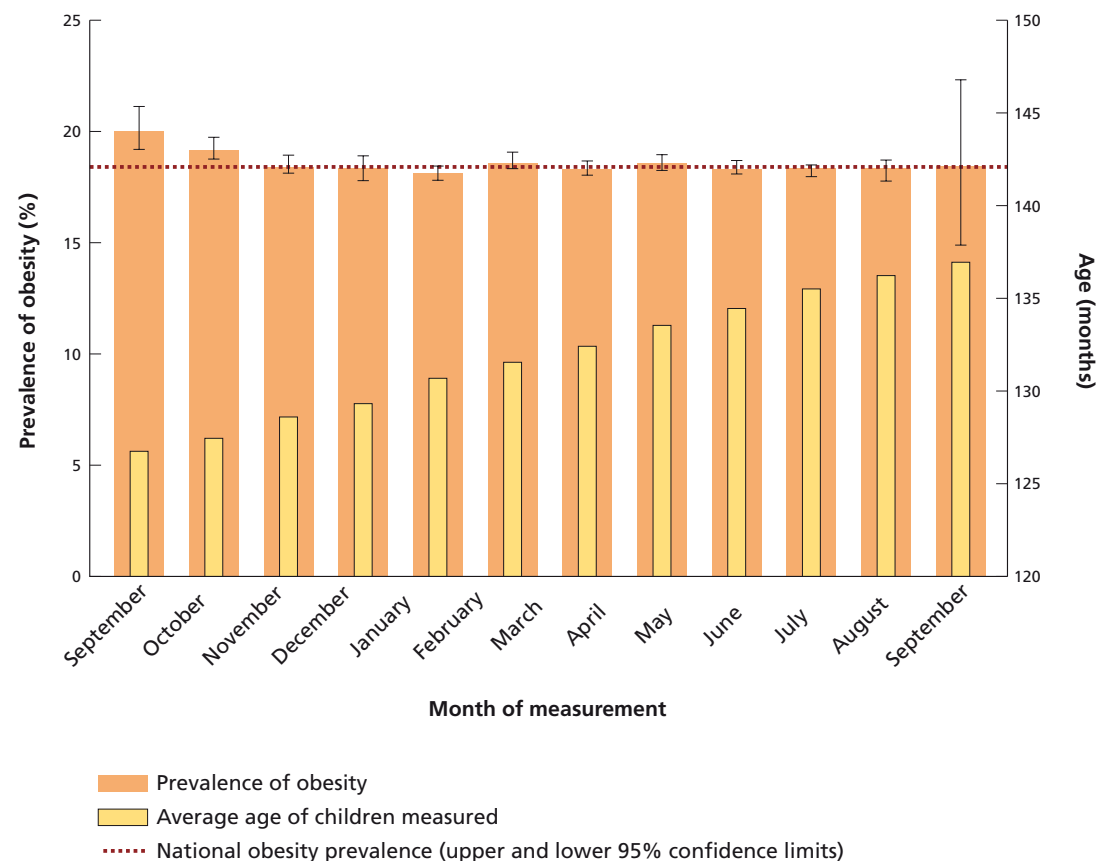
A number of papers have been published which show seasonal variation in the prevalence of childhood obesity. Most commonly the body mass index (BMI) of children has been observed to be highest during the winter months, with such patterns reported in the US¹, Japan² and Chile³ amongst others. More recently however other studies have suggested that children's BMI may increase during the summer holidays, but decrease during the school term.^{4,5}

Analysis of 2007/08 NCMP data shows the reported prevalence of obesity for children in Year 6 (aged 10–11 years), defined as having a BMI above the 95th centile of the UK90 distribution, is significantly higher in September and October than it is for the year as a whole. No other months show

any significant difference from the average prevalence across the year. 20.1% of Year 6 children measured in September had a BMI

for age above the 95th centile, compared to 18.4% of all Year 6 children.

Reported prevalence of obesity and month of measurement: all Year 6 children in the NCMP 2007/08 dataset



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Seasonality and obesity prevalence in NCMP 2007/08 (cont.)

→ By contrast the average age of children measured displays the expected pattern – increasing by month of measurement. The observed rise in obesity prevalence in September is therefore unlikely to be due to factors such as irregular patterns in the age of children being measured.

This finding is based on preliminary analysis of the 2007/08 NCMP data. NOO is currently conducting a more in-depth investigation, using data from more than one year of NCMP and employing multi-level modelling techniques. This analysis will better determine the factors that influence reported child obesity prevalence through the NCMP, including the month of measurement.

This apparent seasonal effect on child weight status could be caused by a number of factors. It is possible that diet or levels of physical activity vary during the year, or seasonal variation could be driven by biological mechanisms which determine the amount of fat deposited

throughout the year. Further research would be required to determine the cause of this variation. However, similar patterns in the US have been interpreted as evidence that the school environment

may be less obesogenic than the non-school environment⁵. If this is also found to be the case in England, this could provide useful information for the targeting of interventions to tackle obesity.



References:

1 Diets WH, Gortmaker SL. Factors within the physical environment associated with childhood obesity. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. 1984; 39:619-624

2 Tobe H, Arai K, Togo M. Seasonal variation of growth in body weight of Japanese children and its relationship

to physique. *American Journal of Human Biology*. 1994; 6(2):227-235

3 Stanojevic S, Kain J, Uauy R. Secular and seasonal trends in obesity in Chilean preschool children, 1996–2004. *Journal of Pediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition*. 2008; 47:339–343

4 Kobayashi M, Kobayashi M. The relationship between

obesity and seasonal variation in body weight among elementary school children in Tokyo. *Economics & Human Biology*. 2006; 4(2):253-261

5 von Hippel PT, Powell B, Downey DB, Rowland NJ. The effect of school on overweight in childhood: gain in body mass index during the school year and during summer vacation. *American Journal of Public Health*. 2007; 97(4):696-702

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Physical activity policy developments

Following the launch of the national physical activity plan 'Be Active, Be Healthy' earlier this year, there are a number of important developments around physical activity policy.

Physical activity guidelines

The Department of Health has announced a review of the current physical activity guidelines in the UK in collaboration with home country governments in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The review will focus on the health benefits of physical activity for three population groups: children and young people, adults and older adults.

This work will build on the evidence review conducted in the US for the ▶ **'2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans.'** These guidelines shifted the focus from a daily to a weekly physical activity recommendation, and included a greater emphasis on vigorous exercise. A recent expert consensus event (convened by the British Heart Foundation National Centre for Physical Activity and Health at Loughborough University) with national and international experts, reviewed the latest scientific evidence and considered modifications and possible updating of the current UK Guidelines. For more details see ▶ www.bhfactive.org.uk

Alongside this, the Department of Health is also leading reviews of physical activity guidance for children under five years, and potential public health recommendations to limit sedentary behaviour for adults and children.

Physical activity care pathway

The Department of Health has also recently published its physical activity care pathway, ▶ **'Let's Get Moving'**.

The care pathway is based on the NICE public health guidance, which found brief interventions for physical activity in primary care to be both clinically effective and cost-effective in the long term. 'Let's Get Moving' provides a very strong foundation for the integration of physical activity promotion into NHS services and will be a very important resource for anyone working in primary care.

Let's Get Moving incorporates a comprehensive package of tools to support the NHS to implement the programme locally including:

- a diagram of the full physical activity care pathway
- commissioning guidance for PCTs and practice-based commissioners
- training package for service providers
- the 'Let's Get Moving' patient pack and national activity search tool available on NHS choices
- tools for PCTs/primary care including presentations, information leaflets for partners and service providers, patient 'read codes' (for entering into the GP practice computer systems) and tools to help use the GP physical activity questionnaire (GPPAQ).

All information and resources are available in ▶ **'Let's Get Moving'**. →

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Physical activity alliance

The 'Be Active, Be Healthy' physical activity strategy also announced the development of the new 'Physical Activity Alliance'.

The Alliance, which is an organisation of leading physical activity bodies, recently undertook a consultation to explore the possibility of creating a single voice for advocacy on physical activity.

A full report, and details of how to join the alliance, can be found at

▶ www.activityalliance.org.



Walking: the HEAT is on

In 2008, the World Health Organisation regional office for Europe released the **▶ Health Economic Assessment Tool (HEAT) for cycling**.

This tool offers transport planners a new method to quantify the health benefits of schemes to promote cycling. Before this, the health benefits of cycling were not taken fully into account, making it difficult for cycling initiatives to demonstrate their cost-effectiveness. The HEAT for cycling (developed by a team including members of NOO) has been incorporated into official

▶ Department for Transport guidance, and was a finalist in the recent **▶ Chief Medical Officer's public health awards**.

The approach is now being adapted to produce a HEAT for walking. This will enable transport planners to quantify the economic value of health impacts in their assessments of schemes aimed at promoting walking. For more information contact **▶ info@noo.org.uk**.

Walking and cycling in the Active People Survey

NOO has recently undertaken secondary analysis of Sport England's Active People Survey to explore whether it is possible to produce an indicator that includes active travel.

The main purpose of the Active People Survey (APS) is to measure progress towards National Indicator 8: *the percentage of the adult population (age 16 years and over) in a local area who participate in sport and active recreation, at moderate intensity, for at least 30 minutes on at least 12 days out of the last 4 weeks*.

The data published by Sport England include a composite indicator of physical activity that includes participation in walking and cycling, but only if done for the purposes of sport and recreation. For obesity prevention the purpose of the walk or bike ride is largely irrelevant, so NOO has re-analysed the data to include data on walking and cycling for all purposes – including active travel. These data are available on the **▶ NOO e-atlas**.

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NCMP: coming soon ...

2008/09 was the fourth year of routine collection of child measurement data in England. In December, the NHS Information Centre for Health and Social Care (NHS IC) will publish their report on the 2008/09 National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP). At the same time the cleaned data will be released by the NHS IC to Public Health Observatories (PHOs) for local analysis and distribution to Primary Care Trusts (PCTs).

NOO has been commissioned to include additional NCMP data in our e-atlas. This online data interrogation tool will allow users to examine the 2008/09 NCMP data at local authority and PCT level. Users will also be able to view data from previous years of the NCMP and other relevant sources, such as mode of travel to school and Indices of Deprivation. The tool will be available on the NOO website in December 2009, and will replace the current mapping tool from the NHS IC.

An updated NCMP School Feedback Tool will be distributed to PHOs in early 2010. This tool will enable PCTs to provide feedback to head teachers on the results of the 2008/09 NCMP for their school, and is in line with the Department of Health guidance on how data should be shared with schools. NOO will produce a detailed analytical report on the 2008/09 NCMP data in spring 2009.

▶ [NOO NCMP web pages.](#)

Evaluation

In April 2009 NOO developed a Standard Evaluation Framework (SEF) to support high quality, consistent evaluation of public health interventions to manage or prevent overweight and obesity. The SEF has been well received amongst stakeholders and is being used to evaluate an increasing number of local programmes.

Broadening the SEF

Currently the SEF is most applicable for small scale interventions in which data are collected from individuals and measures focus on individual and/or group outcomes. Preliminary work is underway to explore the potential to broaden the SEF for use with population-level interventions with an impact on obesity.

Quick reference core criteria

The SEF contains a list of core evaluation criteria, which has now been produced as a quick reference table available in print and online. For print copies please email: ▶ sef@noo.org.uk, stating the quantity needed. The electronic version is available at:

▶ www.noo.org.uk/sef.

Call for case studies

As part of our ongoing evaluation of the SEF, we are keen to hear about the experiences of people who have used it. We would also like to include on our website examples of local weight management interventions which have been or are being evaluated using the SEF. The case studies should include brief details of the intervention, experiences of using the SEF and contact details of the person leading the evaluation. If you are happy to share this information please email ▶ sef@noo.org.uk

The details of one case study – ▶ [the Stockport Altogether Active Programme](#) – are on our website.

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Childhood obesity: trends and predictions



This ▶ **new report from the National Heart Forum compares previous forecasts of obesity prevalence in children based on data from 1993 to 2004 to new updated forecasts based on data up to 2007.**

The report uses micro simulation modeling techniques, similar to those used in the Foresight report, and concludes that future trends in healthy weight are more favourable than previously predicted – although prevalence of excess weight is still unacceptably high. The report discusses possible reasons for these findings and emphasises that the results should be treated with caution. The continued collection and analysis of child measurement data from the NCMP will enable further work to analyse these predicted trends.

The Obesity Learning Centre

The National Heart Forum (NHF) is developing a web-based ▶ **Obesity Learning Centre (OLC) to support the delivery chain to tackle obesity.**

The OLC is a one-stop-shop website to help local areas develop their obesity objectives. This is part of the Cross-Government Obesity Unit's 'Obesity Improvement Programme' designed to provide information, training, guidance and tools.

The portal will provide current news on obesity, eLearning modules, forums offering support for regional and national discussion, up-to-date information and useful tools on obesity. The site also hosts an obesity eLibrary, which allows the user to search and retrieve existing resources. The OLC will work with existing organisations and information providers to support professionals in the delivery of services.

The OLC will be launched shortly. Users can now register with the ▶ **OLC website**. For more information please contact Helena Korjonen, NHF Assistant Director Information Services at ▶ **olc@obesitylearningcentre-nhf.org.uk**.



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Bariatric surgery



The Health Technology Assessment (HTA) programme based at the University of Southampton has recently published **▶ a report on the clinical effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of bariatric surgery for obesity.**

The report is a systematic review of studies comparing the outcomes of bariatric surgical procedures and non-surgical interventions in terms of weight loss and quality of life measures.

In early 2010 NOO will publish a paper on morbid obesity which will include data on bariatric surgery.

US local government actions to prevent childhood obesity



A **▶ new report** from the Institute of Medicine (IOM) in the US, recommends strategies for local governments to consider to promote healthy behaviors among young people and children.

The report presents healthy eating and physical activity strategies, each broken down into steps to facilitate their implementation.

Big Food Debate II 20th October 2009

The second national Big Food Debate was held in Liverpool on 20th October. Novel approaches to improving diet were discussed in the context of issues such as global food sustainability and climate change.

An industry panel including representatives from the Food and Drink Federation and Asda provided an opportunity for lively debate about the roles and responsibilities of supermarkets within the food chain. Other topics raised during the day included mandatory food labelling for caterers and restaurants, the distribution and use of palm oil, the elimination of trans fats. The list of speakers and slides from the presentations made at the event are available on the

▶ [Heart of Mersey website.](#)

Focusing on obesity through a health equity lens

This report highlights innovative approaches and promising practices by health promotion bodies in Europe to counteract obesity and improve health equity.

In July EuroHealthNet produced a new report on obesity: **▶ [Focusing on obesity through a health equity lens.](#)** The document describes over 70 projects running in 20 different European countries that aim to prevent obesity among disadvantaged communities. It also gives an overview of implemented policies and strategies in Europe that are relevant to the prevention of obesity among different socio-economic classes.



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Events and conferences

▶ [Transforming Obesity Strategy](#)

Health Service Journal

20th January 2010

American Square Conference Centre,
London

▶ [Tackling Obesity 2010](#)

Govnet

23rd March 2010

QEII Conference Centre, London

▶ [18th Annual Public Health Forum: Confronting the Public Health Crisis](#)

uktha

24–25th March 2010

Bournemouth International Centre



Inclusion of these events does not imply endorsement by NOO

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National Obesity Observatory

4150 Chancellor Court, Oxford Business Park South, Oxford OX4 2GX

▶ info@noo.org.uk

▶ www.noo.org.uk

Telephone: 01865 334900