

# Truckies more obese than most: Study

August 22 2019

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A QUT study aims to improve the physical health and well being of truck drivers. Credit: QUT Marketing & Communication

More than 200,000 people are employed as truck drivers in Australia and while their role in transporting goods across our wide brown land is critical, they are among the nation's most unhealthy.

Dr. Marguerite Sendall from QUT's School of Public Health and Social Work at the Institute of Health and Biomedical Innovation, led a survey of 231 truck drivers aged between 20 and 71 and discovered around two thirds of them are classified as obese, compared to one third of the Australian population.

On a more positive note though, the majority recognised the importance

of improving their health, are motivated to do so and believe workplace health promotion is the most effective tool for that.

"Truck drivers' work environments generally consist of long sedentary hours, erratic schedules and tight deadlines," Dr. Sendall said.

"They have limited access to healthy food options or [physical activity](#) and are therefore considered to be at a far greater risk of life-threatening conditions like cardio-vascular disease, diabetes and some cancers."

Dr. Sendall and colleagues Laura McCosker, Rahma Ahmed and Associate Professor Phil Crane, gave a multiple choice, short response survey to drivers at an Australian truck show in Brisbane. They asked them about self-reported health, their sources for [health information](#), how much fruit and vegetables they ate, how much unhealthy food and how much moderate intensity physical exercise they did each week.

Their paper on the findings—Truckies' Nutrition and Physical Activity: A Cross-sectional Survey in Queensland, Australia, has just been published in the *International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*.

"Our previous research has suggested the use of social media and digital technologies as a health promotion intervention for truck drivers has potential," said Dr. Sendall.

"Truck drivers work [long hours](#), are a highly mobile, pressured and hard-to-reach group so traditional health promotion strategies, such as television campaigns, can easily be missed. However, transport industry workplaces, including truck cabs, depots and truck stops, are seen as settings where health messages can be promoted effectively.

"It has been shown that workplace health promotion can generate

improvements in drivers' health knowledge, behaviours and self-reported health outcomes, as well as ease the burden on our [public health](#) system. Our research demonstrates a need for industry-wide adoption of this approach, along with some government incentives to encourage that Australia-wide."

Dr. Sendall said she was collaborating with Brisbane-based Team Transport and Logistics to continue her push to help [drivers](#) make better choices about their health behaviour.

The research backs up a 12-year Monash University-led Driving Health Study published in 2018 which revealed [truck drivers](#) had a 13 fold higher risk of dying at work than other Australian workers, making it among the most dangerous occupations in the country.

It found truck driving was a job with many [health](#) risks—long working hours, lots of sitting, poor nutrition, social isolation, shift work, time pressure, elevated risk of chronic disease and musculoskeletal conditions, low levels of job control, and a high risk of road crashes.

**More information:** Marguerite C. Sendall et al, Truckies' Nutrition and Physical Activity: A Cross-sectional Survey in Queensland, Australia, *The International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* (2019). [DOI: 10.15171/ijoem.2019.1533](https://doi.org/10.15171/ijoem.2019.1533)

Provided by Queensland University of Technology

Citation: Truckies more obese than most: Study (2019, August 22) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-08-truckies-obese.html>

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