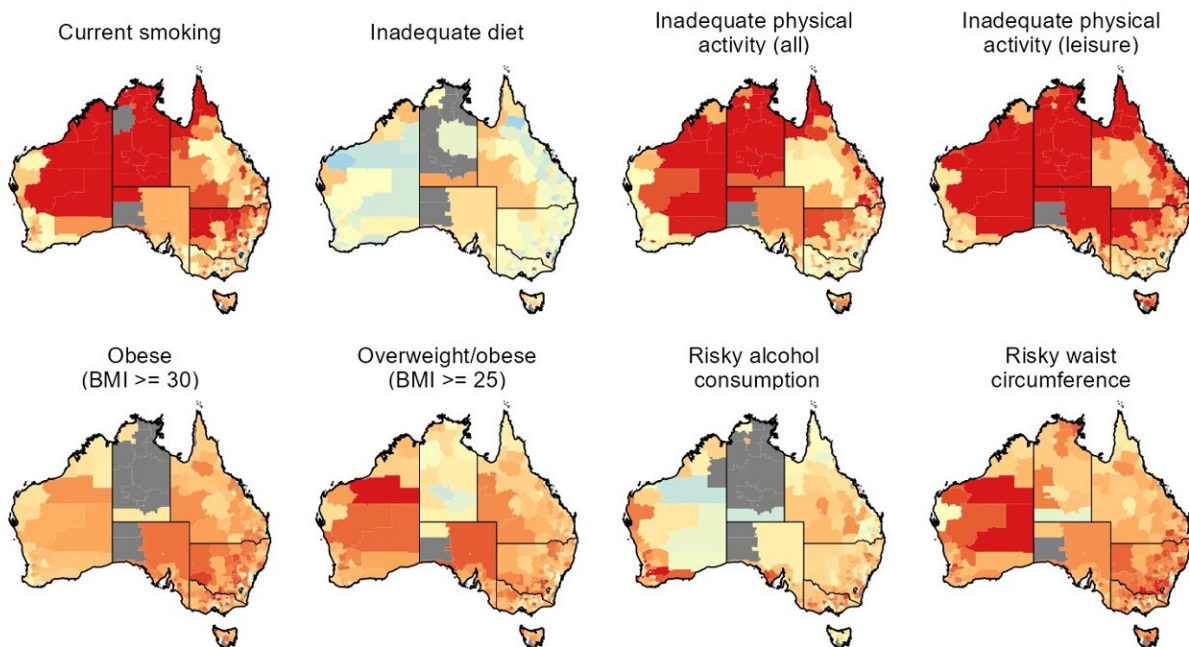


New health mapping study pinpoints cancer risk factors at local level

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The maps show areas where unhealthy behaviors are more (marked in red) or less (in blue) common than the national average. The deeper the shade, the greater the deviation from the average. Credit: Queensland University of Technology

A new QUT-led study that maps health statistics in Australia highlights

the disparities in small area-level data and identifies communities where people may have unhealthy behaviors that could lead to cancer.

The research, [published](#) in *International Journal of Health Geographics*, aimed to map the prevalence of eight risk factors for cancer across 2,221 small areas in Australia.

Investigators from the QUT Center for Data Science, led by Ph.D. researcher James Hogg, along with Associate Professor Susanna Cramb, Distinguished Professor Kerrie Mengersen, and Cancer Council Queensland's Dr. Jessica Cameron and Professor Peter Baade, provided better information about cancer risk factors for small areas.

By analyzing cancer [risk factors](#) such as smoking, [alcohol consumption](#), [physical activity](#), diet, and weight, based on survey data provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, patterns showed a higher prevalence of unhealthy behaviors in more remote and socio economically disadvantaged areas.

Although the study shows disparities in these behaviors across the country, the greatest disparities tend to be located within urban centers.

Hogg said the work improved upon previous estimates by allowing a more "granular exploration of spatial disparities."

"Our improved methods now let us look closely at these behaviors in almost twice as many areas as before," he said.

"Also, since these behaviors often lead to other [health problems](#), our findings could help research on diseases like heart disease."

He said this work could help health policy makers to quickly identify the areas and groups of areas where preventative strategies for cancer may

be most fruitful.

More information: James Hogg et al, Mapping the prevalence of cancer risk factors at the small area level in Australia, *International Journal of Health Geographics* (2023). [DOI: 10.1186/s12942-023-00352-5](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12942-023-00352-5)

Provided by Queensland University of Technology

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