



The Changing Size and Shape of Australian Women.

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Abstract

This study investigates body size and shape of present-day Australian women. The need for such investigations results from the fact that secular trends in body size and shape change these characteristics every few decades. As body size and shape change, there is a need to update metric data used for clothing design. Morphometric photographs and measurements of 38 anthropometric characteristics were taken of 163 women aged from 18 to 82 years coming from various socio-economic circumstances. Their average body height and weight matched Australian Bureau of Statistics data for South Australian women. The anthropometric characteristics were selected for their usefulness in the clothing industry. In comparison with earlier studies of adult Australian women, especially the one conducted in 1926-28 by Berlei, the participants of the present study were only slightly taller (about 11 mm), but much heavier (about 6 kg); this produced an average Body Mass Index of 24.7. Participants also differed from British and American women. These findings indicate a need for an anthropometric survey of Australian women to provide current data for industrial purposes. As a pilot study to this end averages and standard deviations of all 36 anthropometric dimensions and weight were tabulated. Furthermore, based on standard morphometric photographs of anterior, posterior and the lateral aspect of standing women, five body types were identified. They resemble the letters of the alphabet I, A, H, X and XH. For each figure type basic anthropometric dimensions were tabulated. This study can be considered a pilot study for a larger, fully representative anthropometric survey but its results already show an occurrence of a significant trend towards overweight.

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