

## Excess deaths climb to nearly 20,000 for Australia in 2022

Australia is estimated to have recorded nearly 20,000 more deaths than expected in 2022, largely because of the COVID-19 pandemic, research released by the Actuaries Institute today shows.

An analysis of excess mortality data by the Institute's COVID-19 Mortality Working Group found that total excess mortality – or the increase in the number of deaths compared to expert predictions – was 11 per cent (+17,900 deaths) for January to November 2022.

For the full calendar year, the Working Group estimates there was 12 per cent excess mortality - or nearly 20,000 more deaths than would have been predicted if the pandemic had not happened.

Actuaries Institute Chief Executive, Elayne Grace, said: "These figures are a stark reminder of the tremendous impact COVID-19 has had across Australia. Although people have largely moved on with their lives beyond the lockdowns and border closures, the fact is that COVID-19 remains a key contributor to the majority of excess mortality."

Just over half of the excess deaths (10,300) for 2022 were due to COVID-19, the Working Group's analysis of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' latest provisional mortality data found.

Deaths from COVID-19 peaked in the last week of July, then trended downwards until the end of October before rising throughout November and December.

COVID-19 was also a contributing factor for a further 2,900 deaths. For the remaining 6,600 excess deaths, COVID-19 was not mentioned on the death certificates for those people.

All states and territories, apart from the Northern Territory, had broadly similar levels of excess deaths (ranging from 10-15 per cent) during the year.

While most of the excess deaths were in older age groups (i.e. the over 65s), excess mortality was a significant percentage in all age groups in 2022.

Spokeswoman for the Institute's COVID-19 Mortality Working Group, Karen Cutter, said that to have 12 per cent excess mortality over a 12-month period is exceptional.

"It is not within normal levels of fluctuation in non-pandemic times," she said.

"COVID-19 accounts for about half of this excess, and we are also seeing a significant amount of excess mortality that is not recorded as **due to** COVID-19 on death certificates. While it is likely that COVID-19 was a catalyst for the deaths of those dying **with** COVID-19, there are a large number of excess deaths with no documented COVID-19 involvement.

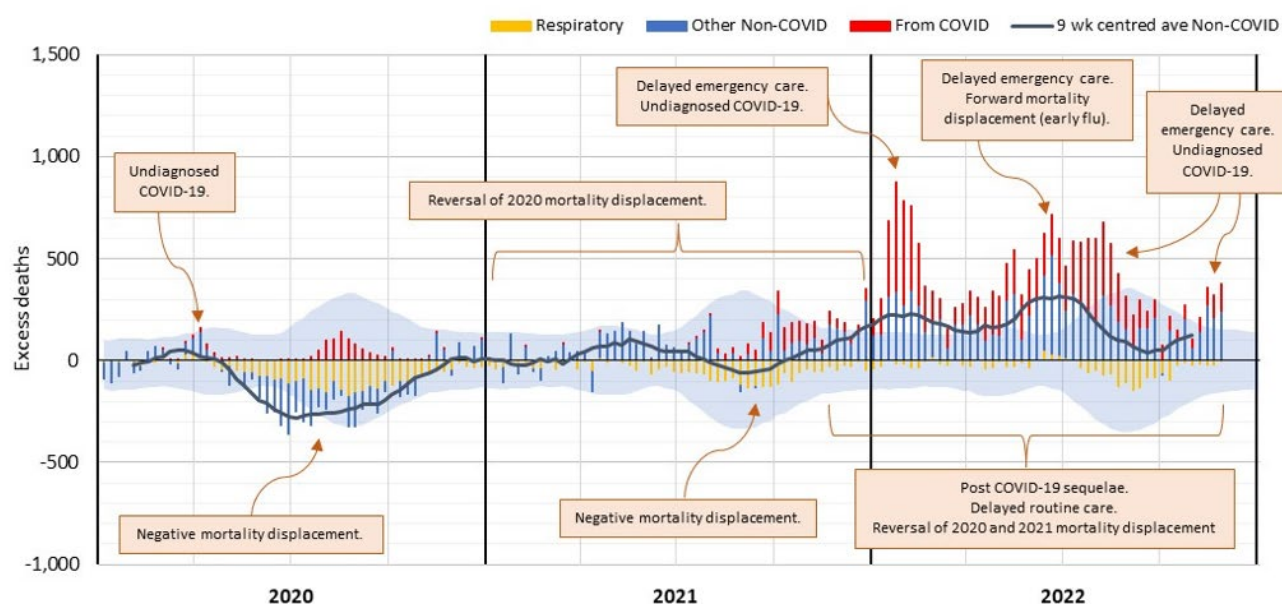
"We do, however, think it is likely that the pandemic played a role in many of these deaths due to three main factors. Firstly, mortality risk is higher subsequent to an acute covid infection, and most Australians have now had COVID-19.

"Secondly, people have not accessed medical care when needed, either through inability (in emergency situations) or through fear/lack of opportunity (thus missing routine care earlier in the pandemic). Lastly, some of these deaths could be undiagnosed COVID-19 deaths."

**Karen Cutter is available for interview.**



### Possible causes of non-COVID-19 excess mortality from time to time during the pandemic



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