

## Trend of higher than expected deaths due to COVID-19 continues in the lead up to winter: Actuaries Institute

6 April 2022

- Trend of higher than expected mortality rates across the Australian population continues into 2022, driven by COVID-19 deaths.
- 839 COVID-19 deaths in March.
- Overall deaths in 2021 were 2,000 more than expected.
- During 2021, with COVID-19 public health measures, there were only 2 deaths from influenza compared to 840 expected; pneumonia deaths were 31% lower than expected, and across all respiratory diseases deaths were 17% lower than expected.

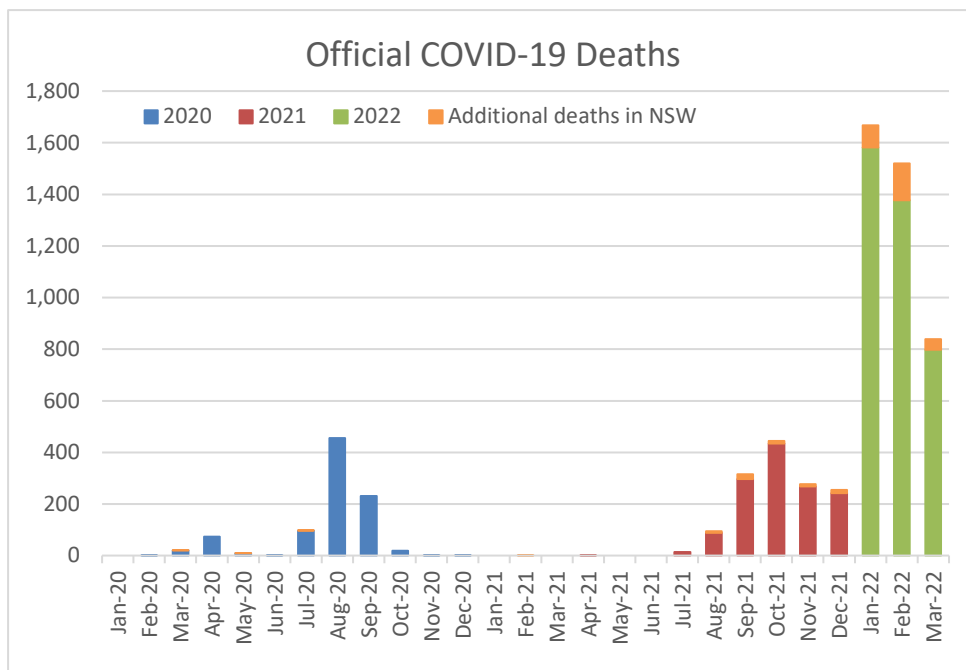
Australia continued to see high numbers of COVID-19 deaths in the first quarter of 2022, following the relaxation of public health measures to combat the pandemic.

Actuaries Institute analysis of daily reported COVID-19 deaths showed a significant drop in the number of COVID-19 deaths in March 2022 compared to January and February, but still higher than any other month during the pandemic.

In the first quarter of 2022, there were 4,027 COVID-19 deaths:

- 1,668 in January.
- 1,520 in February.
- 839 in March.

Adjusting the above figures to take into account ABS data on the proportion of “with” COVID-19 deaths, the Institute estimates 3,500 deaths were due to COVID-19 in the first quarter of 2022. If deaths from other causes are as expected, this will result in nearly 10% more deaths than expected if there was no pandemic.



The Actuaries Institute modelling is based on monthly ABS data for doctor-certified deaths. It excludes about 10% of deaths, which are certified by the coroner.



The model measures actual deaths against predicted deaths, adjusted as the population ages and grows, and allowing for trends in mortality improvement. These adjustments are important because a simple comparison with historical averages can be misleading, said Jennifer Lang, spokesperson for the Australian Actuaries Institute's COVID-19 Mortality Working Group.

Ms Lang said: "In 2020, we had about 5,000 fewer deaths than expected because of defence measures introduced to protect us from COVID-19. These measures did their job, and also eliminated the usual winter surge in respiratory disease."

Overall deaths in 2021 were 2,000 more than expected, with only deaths from respiratory disease, dementia and cancer lower than or close to expected; deaths were higher than expected for all other causes.

"In 2021, deaths from respiratory disease were again low during the winter months as were deaths from dementia. It was good to see fewer people dying from respiratory diseases over the past two years and is likely the result of public health measures instituted during the COVID-19 lockdown," Ms Lang said.

"I hope that people will continue to see the value of public health measures, especially in high-risk settings, as we wait to see what the winter months will bring."

Cause of Death	2021 (52 weeks)			
	Actual	Predicted	Diff.	% Diff
<b>COVID-19</b>	<b>1,217</b>	-	<b>1,217</b>	<b>100%</b>
<i>Respiratory disease</i>				
Influenza	2	840	(840)	<b>-100%</b>
Pneumonia	2,140	3,100	(950)	<b>-31%</b>
Lower respiratory	7,280	8,070	(790)	<b>-10%</b>
Other respiratory	3,770	3,880	(110)	<b>-3%</b>
<b>All Respiratory Disease</b>	<b>13,200</b>	<b>15,900</b>	<b>(2,700)</b>	<b>-17%</b>
Cancer	49,490	49,670	(180)	0%
Heart disease	13,960	13,030	930	<b>7%</b>
Cerebrovascular disease	9,150	8,730	420	<b>5%</b>
Diabetes	4,970	4,640	330	<b>7%</b>
Dementia	15,540	16,030	(490)	<b>-3%</b>
Other unspecified diseases	42,900	40,400	2,500	<b>6%</b>
<b>All Other Disease</b>	<b>136,000</b>	<b>132,500</b>	<b>3,500</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>150,400</b>	<b>148,400</b>	<b>2,000</b>	<b>1%</b>

\* Figures shaded green indicate that the observed values are below the 95% prediction interval while figures shaded red are above the 95% prediction interval

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