

COVID-19 third leading cause of death in 2022: Actuaries Institute

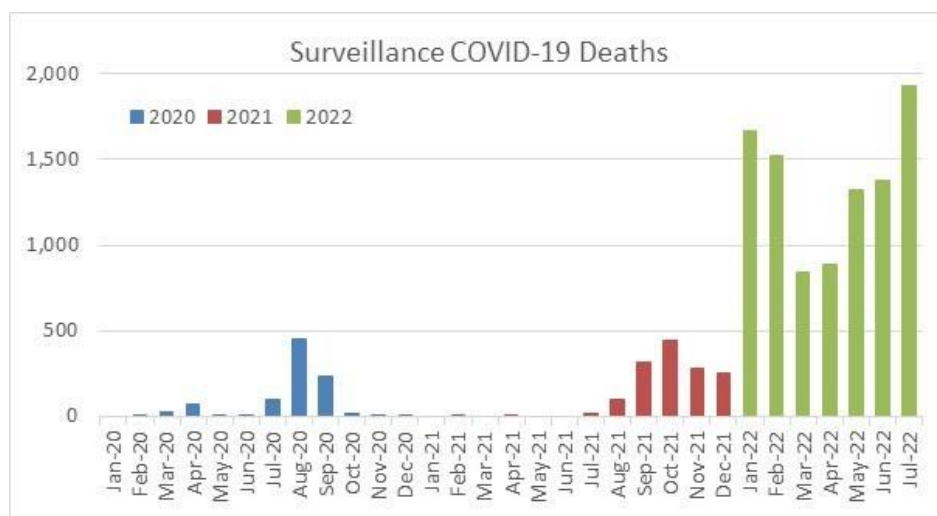
8 August 2022

- **COVID-19 likely to be third leading cause of death in Australia in 2022 after heart disease and dementia (to end July).**
- **Excess mortality for the first four months of 2022 was 13% (+6,800 deaths); more than half due to COVID-19.**

Deaths from COVID-19 are expected to reach 7,100 for the first seven months of 2022, according to the latest Actuaries Institute research, with COVID-19 expected to be the third leading cause of death so far this year.

Deaths from COVID-19 will be higher than deaths from cardiovascular disease (largely stroke, around 5,500) and cancers of the lungs (5,400), but lower than ischaemic heart diseases and dementia with around 10,000 deaths each.

Daily surveillance reports from State and Territory health departments recorded 9,550 COVID-19 deaths in the first seven months of 2022. They included 1,934 deaths in July, the highest yet recorded.



Adjusting the surveillance deaths to remove deaths 'with' COVID, the Actuaries Institute estimates that around 7,100 of these deaths were 'from' COVID-19.

The Institute's COVID-19 Mortality Working Group monitors health department daily surveillance reports, adjusting them in line with their model. They also release detailed modelling for 'excess deaths' from all causes, each time new mortality data is released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). Excess deaths are the deaths above what would have been expected without the pandemic. The ABS released the detailed mortality data up to April this year on 29 July.

Applying their model to the latest ABS data for the first four months of 2022, in addition to 3,600 COVID-19 deaths, they found 3,200 excess deaths from causes other than COVID-19 in the first four months of 2022 (total of 6,800 excess deaths). The non-COVID-19 excess deaths include:

- ischaemic heart disease (470 more deaths than expected);
- cerebrovascular disease (140 more);
- diabetes (170 more);
- dementia (420 more); and
- coroner-referred deaths, which include some COVID-19 deaths (680 more).



There were also 1,400 excess deaths due to causes not specified by the ABS.

COVID-19 deaths alone in May-July 2022 were estimated at +3,500, and excess mortality is expected to be higher once ABS data is available.

Over the course of the pandemic, excess deaths from all causes have been 2% higher than expected according to the Institute model – the figure reflecting the lower deaths from respiratory disease during the first two years.

Actuaries Institute Chief Executive Elayne Grace said the Institute's independent modelling over the course of the pandemic has provided valuable insights.

"This is valuable data for our public health policy-makers and should be informing our flexible, safe and pragmatic public health response," Ms Grace said.

The latest Actuaries Digital article on COVID-19 mortality can be found [here](#).

Karen Cutter, spokesperson for the COVID-19 Mortality Working Group, is available for interview.

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Actuaries use data for good by harnessing the evidence to navigate into the future and make a positive impact. They think deeply about the issue at hand, whether it's advising on commercial strategy, influencing policy, or designing new products. Actuaries are adept at balancing interests of stakeholders, clients, and communities. They're called upon to give insight on complex problems, they'll look at the full picture. Actuaries analyse the data and model scenarios to form robust and outcome-centred advice.

