

High excess deaths continue into June 2022: Actuaries Institute

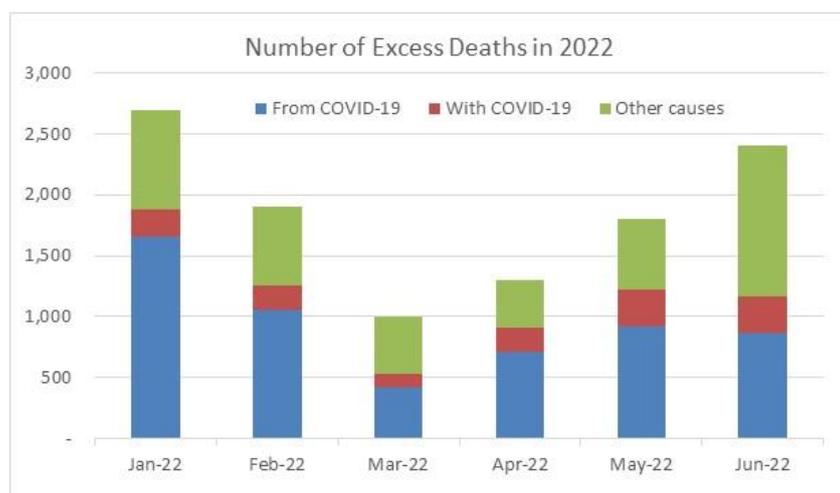
6 October 2022

- **Excess mortality for the first six months of 2022 was 13% (+11,200 deaths).**
- **COVID-19 accounted for half of all excess deaths (+5,600).**
- **Deaths from influenza in June 2022 were higher than predicted, likely due to the early flu season.**
- **COVID-19 surveillance deaths in September 2022 were considerably lower than for July and August 2022.**
- **COVID-19 expected to be the third leading cause of death in 2022 after dementia and ischaemic heart disease and ahead of cerebrovascular disease and lung cancer.**

Excess deaths for the first six months of 2022 were +11,200, or 13% more than predicted, according to the Actuaries Institute.

Applying their model to data released last Friday (30 September), the Institute's COVID-19 Mortality Working Group estimates that half of the 'excess deaths' were due to COVID-19. A further 1,300 deaths were in people who died with COVID-19.

The graph below shows the breakdown of excess deaths in the first six months of 2022 into those due to COVID-19, those from COVID-19, and those where COVID-19 does not appear on the death certificate.



'Non-COVID-19' excess deaths are occurring around the world, with experts suggesting reasons including post-COVID-19 sequelae (conditions arising from COVID) or interactions with other causes of death; delayed deaths from other causes; delays in emergency care; delays in routine care; and increased use of drugs and alcohol.

"Multiple factors are likely to be in play, and different factors may be more or less pronounced at various times," said Karen Cutter, spokesperson for the Actuaries Institute's Working Group. "It isn't possible to identify from the data whether any or all of these issues are causing the non-COVID-19 excess deaths. We would like to see further investigation into the possible causes to try to answer this question."

The 'excess deaths' due to causes other than COVID-19 for the first six months of 2022 include:

- ischaemic heart disease (900 more deaths than expected);
- cerebrovascular disease (320 more);
- diabetes (300 more);
- dementia (760 more);
- doctor-certified deaths due to causes not specified by the ABS (2,430 more); and
- coroner-referred deaths (610 more).



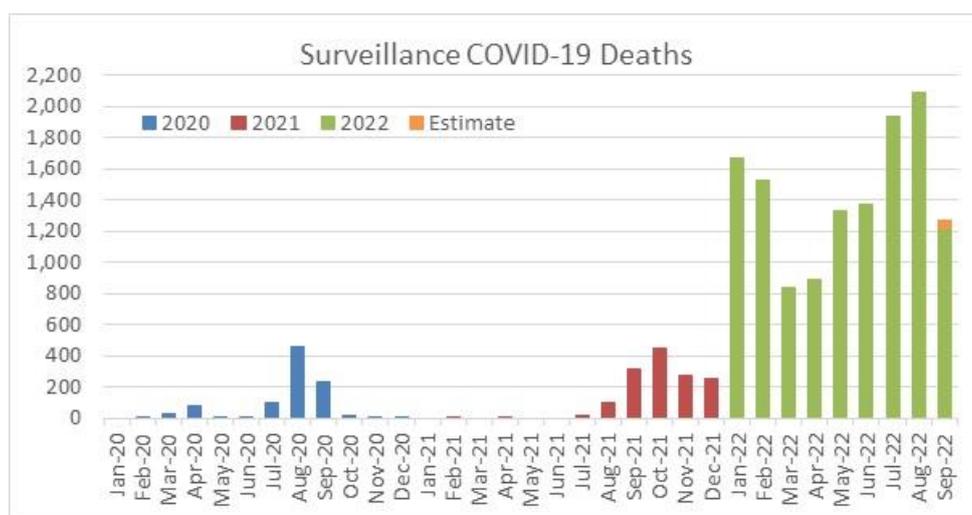
After removing all deaths with COVID-19 from the above excess death estimates, the modelling found that significant numbers of excess deaths remain for ischaemic heart disease, dementia and other diseases. However, excess mortality for diabetes was reduced to very low levels.

The COVID-19 Mortality Working Group releases detailed modelling each month, covering:

1. 'Excess deaths' from all causes, based on the latest release of comprehensive mortality data from Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The latest release, on 30 September, covered the period to June 2022. Excess deaths are the deaths above what would have been expected without the pandemic; and
2. The most up-to-date figures from State and Territory health department daily surveillance reports.

According to daily surveillance reports from State and Territory health departments, there were around 12,900 COVID-19 deaths in the first nine months of 2022. The number of deaths in the month of September 2022 was considerably lower than for July and August.

Adjusting the surveillance deaths to remove deaths 'with' COVID, the Actuaries Institute estimates that around 9,500 of these deaths were 'from' COVID-19.



The Working Group has estimated the leading causes of death in Australia for the first nine months of 2022, and for 2022 as a whole (noting no estimate of COVID-19 deaths has been formed for the last three months of 2022).

Leading cause	Estimated deaths Jan-Sep 2022	Estimated deaths Oct-Dec 2022	Estimated deaths 2022
1 Dementia, including Alzheimer's disease	13,500	4,100	17,600
2 Ischaemic heart diseases	13,300	3,800	17,100
3 COVID-19 deaths	9,500	???	???
4 Cerebrovascular diseases	7,200	2,100	9,300
5 Malignant neoplasm of lung, etc	6,900	2,300	9,200
6 Chronic lower respiratory diseases	6,500	2,000	8,500
7 Malignant neoplasm of colon, etc	4,600	1,400	6,000
8 Diabetes	4,400	1,300	5,700



Ischaemic heart disease has been the leading cause of death in Australia for many years. However, the mortality rate for this cause has been declining. At the same time, the population has been aging, resulting in an increasing number of dementia deaths. The working Group estimates that dementia will overtake ischaemic heart disease to be the leading cause of death in 2022 by a small margin (17,600 versus 17,100).

At 9,500 deaths, COVID-19 is estimated to be the third leading cause of death for the first nine months of 2022. It is expected that COVID-19 will also be the third leading cause of death over the whole of 2022.

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

Karen Cutter is available for interview.

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