

COVID-19 deaths may reach 5,800 by end June: Actuaries Institute

30 June 2022

- COVID-19 deaths likely to reach 5,800 for first six months of 2022, compared to approximately 2,100 deaths over first two years of pandemic; this is 11 times the rate of 2020 and 2021.
- Q1 total excess mortality at 13% (+5,100 deaths) with 7% (3,000) due to COVID-19.
- Q2 COVID-19 deaths predicted at 2,800.

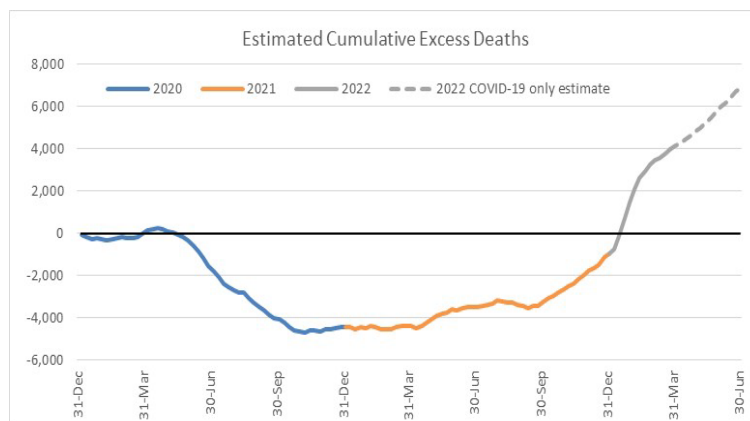
Deaths from COVID-19 are expected to reach 5,800 for the first six months of 2022, according to the latest Actuaries Institute research. This is significantly higher than the 2,100 deaths recorded in the first two years of the pandemic and represents 11 times the average rate of 2020 and 2021.

The number of deaths excludes 'deaths *with* COVID', where the main causes of death have been cancer, dementia, ischaemic heart disease and other circulatory system diseases.

Around 3,600 COVID-19 deaths were noted in daily surveillance reports from state/territory health departments during April to June. Adjusting these to remove deaths 'with' COVID, the Actuaries Institute estimates that around 2,800 of these deaths were due to COVID-19 alone.

Adding this to the estimate of deaths from COVID-19 in January to March (3,000) puts the total number of deaths due to COVID-19 in the first six months of 2022 at 5,800.

Australia's total excess deaths from all causes during the pandemic is 6,800 – an excess mortality rate of about 1.5%. This figure accounts for the significant drop in deaths from respiratory diseases in 2020 and 2021.



"We are now seeing a consistently high pattern of COVID-19 deaths," said Jennifer Lang, spokesperson for the Australian Actuaries Institute's COVID-19 Mortality Working Group.

"This is undoubtedly a reflection of the prevalence of COVID-19 in the community – a result of the relaxation of public health measures coupled with the much more transmissible Omicron strain," Ms Lang said.

The Institute's COVID-19 Mortality Working Group has also released detailed modelling for excess deaths from all causes for the first quarter of 2022, following the release of updated Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data.



Cause of Death	Jan to Mar 2022				2021 (52 weeks)		2020 (53 weeks)	
	Actual	Predicted	Excess	% Excess	Excess	% Excess	Excess	% Excess
Doctor-certified deaths								
COVID-19	2,954	-	2,954	100%	1,242	100%	855	100%
All Respiratory Disease	2,940	3,140	(210)	-7%	(2,690)	-17%	(3,360)	-21%
Cancer	12,400	12,300	100	1%	190	0%	(680)	-1%
Ischaemic heart disease	3,390	3,080	310	10%	840	6%	(90)	-1%
Cerebrovascular disease	2,170	2,070	100	5%	330	4%	(70)	-1%
Diabetes	1,280	1,130	140	13%	380	8%	390	8%
Dementia	3,910	3,650	260	7%	(530)	-3%	(820)	-5%
Other unspecified diseases	10,600	9,610	990	10%	2,470	6%	(610)	-2%
All Other Disease	33,740	31,840	1,900	6%	3,680	3%	(1,890)	-1%
Coroner-referred deaths								
	5,580	5,130	450	9%	1,240	6%	(50)	0%
Total	45,200	40,100	5,100	13%	3,400	2%	(4,500)	-3%

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

There were 2,100 excess deaths from causes other than COVID-19 in Q1 2022, including:

- ischaemic heart disease (310 more deaths than expected);
- diabetes (140 more); and
- dementia (260 more).

There were 1,000 excess deaths due to causes not specified by the ABS.

Institute modelling measures actual deaths against predicted deaths, adjusted as the population ages and grows, and allowing for trends in mortality improvement. Adjusting for population changes, rather than historical averages, is a more accurate way of measuring excess deaths.

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

"We have almost six months of data since the majority of public health restrictions were relaxed," Ms Grace said. "It may be time to reflect on whether we have adequate public health and public policy measures in place, to offer better protection to the more vulnerable people in our communities."

Jennifer Lang is available for interview. An [Actuaries Digital](#) article detailing the findings is [here](#).

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