

COVID-19 DEATHS FIVE TIMES HIGHER THAN FOR FLU IN 2024

20 March 2025

Five times as many Australians are dying from COVID-19 than influenza five years after the outbreak of the global pandemic, research published by the Actuaries Institute shows.

New analysis by the Institute's Mortality Working Group of mortality between January and November 2024 found 3,676 people died from COVID-19 – 69% more than predicted.

Another 14,780 people died from non-COVID-19 respiratory conditions including influenza and pneumonia – nearly 1,000 or 7% more than predicted, following analysis of the latest Provisional Mortality Statistics released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

COVID-19 deaths at 3,676 were five times more than the 728 recorded for influenza, which were 69 per cent higher than predicted. Another 2,460 people died from pneumonia, 10 per cent higher than expected.

Chair of the Institute's Mortality Working Group, actuary Jennifer Lang, said while there have been slightly fewer deaths from COVID-19 in 2024 than in 2023, the reduction has not been as great as expected. Deaths from COVID-19 fully explain the overall excess mortality we have seen.

"COVID-19 was a much more significant cause of death than the flu in 2024, with pneumonia and other lower respiratory disease also markedly higher than predicted," she said.

"The first 11 months of 2024 were materially worse than we anticipated for COVID-19, in terms of both the peak mortality wave and the underlying mortality between waves. While at the beginning of 2024, deaths from COVID-19 were not as high as in the equivalent wave in 2023, since then the mortality from COVID-19 waves and in between waves has been very similar to 2023, rather than reducing as we anticipated.

"Those waves appear to have kept deaths from COVID-19 stubbornly high, which contrasts with the drop we saw from 2022 to 2023 when the number of deaths from COVID-19 more than halved from 10,300 to 4,600."

The Mortality Working Group also found there were 1,400 more deaths in the first 11 months of 2024 than had been predicted.

As a result, Australia's excess mortality rate – or the number of actual deaths compared to our predictions – was 1%, which can be fully explained by excess COVID-19 deaths. Respiratory conditions caused 10.8% of all deaths in 2024, with COVID-19 accounting for 2.1% of total mortality.

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Note that we measure excess deaths by comparing actual deaths each week to a baseline. For 2024, this baseline is our predicted values, based on 2023 mortality and expected improvement rates, and including COVID-19.

View the full article [here](#).

[Jennifer Lang is available for interview.](#)

For media inquiries, please contact:

Helen McCombie, Sodali & Co

M +61(0) 411 756 248 **E** helen.mccombie@sodali.com

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As the peak professional body in Australia, the Actuaries Institute represents the profession to Government, business and the community, and holds the 'public interest' and 'common good' as key principles in developing policy.

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

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Supporting data

**Table 1 – Excess deaths in Australia (vs. 2023-based expectation)
– by cause of death for January–November 2024**

	2024 Year to Date			
	Actual	Predicted	Excess	% Excess
From COVID-19				
Doctor-certified	3,511			
Coroner-referred	165			
All From COVID-19	3,676	2,177	1,499	69%
Doctor-certified other respiratory disease				
Influenza	728	431	297	69%
Pneumonia	2,460	2,230	230	10%
Lower respiratory	7,860	7,460	400	5%
Other respiratory	3,720	3,680	40	1%
All doctor-certified respiratory	14,780	13,810	970	7%
Doctor-certified other diseases				
Cancer	47,030	47,960	(930)	-2%
Ischaemic heart disease	11,470	11,880	(400)	-3%
Other cardiac conditions	9,540	9,610	(70)	-1%
Cerebrovascular disease	7,920	8,000	(80)	-1%
Diabetes	4,920	5,110	(180)	-4%
Dementia	16,570	16,660	(80)	-1%
Other unspecified diseases	34,100	33,890	220	1%
All other doctor-certified disease	131,560	133,090	(1,530)	-1%
Coroner-referred excl. From COVID-19	21,570	21,100	470	2%
Total	171,600	170,200	1,400	1%

* Figures shaded green indicate that the observed values are below the 95% prediction interval while figures shaded red are above the 95% prediction interval. COVID-19 data from ABS customised report 2024 and analysis