

Aussie heart disease deaths have dropped in the last 40 years

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A new report from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) shows that 1.2 million Australian adults had one or more conditions related to heart, stroke or vascular disease in 2017–18. Modifiable risk factors such as smoking, insufficient physical activity and uncontrolled high blood pressure are putting millions more at risk.

Today's release coincides with World Heart Day, which has the theme to "Use Heart to Connect." This year's theme seeks to improve equity, prevention, and support within the community.

The report, Heart, [stroke](#) and vascular [disease](#)—Australian facts, covers a range of sub types of heart, stroke and vascular disease, including how they impact different populations—for example, by socioeconomic group, remoteness areas and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

There were 58,700 acute coronary events (including heart attack and unstable angina) and 38,600 stroke events among people aged 25 and over in 2018—this equates to around 161 and 100 events every day, respectively.

Between 1980 and 2019, the number of [cardiovascular disease](#) deaths declined by 22%, from 55,800 to 42,300.

While still accounting for 25% of deaths in Australia, the age-standardized [death rates](#) have declined by three-quarters over the last 40 years —falling from 700 to 150 per 100,000 for males, and 452 to 107 per 100,000 for females.

Over the same period of time, the number of stroke deaths has declined by 30% from 12,100 to 8,400.

"These declines in deaths have been driven by a number of factors,

including reductions in certain risk factors, clinical research, improvements in detection and secondary prevention, and advances in treatment, care, and management," said AIHW spokesperson Richard Jukes.

"However, the broader impact of heart, stroke and vascular disease to individuals and the health system is substantial and is expected to increase in the future as the population ages."

The report also shows that certain groups in the Australian population are more impacted by cardiovascular disease. People living in the lowest socioeconomic areas had cardiovascular death rates 1.5 times as high as people living the highest socioeconomic areas (age-standardized rates of 158 and 106 per 100,000 population).

Today's release also includes analysis of selected cardiovascular risk factors—[poor diet](#), insufficient physical activity, smoking, alcohol consumption, overweight (including obesity), uncontrolled high blood pressure, abnormal blood lipids, and self-reported diabetes.

The report brings together data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' National Health Surveys held between 2014–15 and 2017–18. This found that 1 in 3 adults (31%) had 2 of these risk factors in combination, while 57% had 3 or more risk factors, including 3.6% who had 5 or 6 risk factors. Males (62%) were more likely than females (50%) to have 3 or more risk factors in combination.

"Risk factors are behaviors or characteristics that increase the likelihood of developing a particular disease, the more [risk factors](#) a person has, the higher the risk of developing cardiovascular disease, including coronary heart disease, stroke or angina," said Mr Jukes. "This presents an increased risk of poorer health outcomes, reduced life expectancy and [death](#)."

"Despite the risks facing adults, substantial progress has been made in improving the cardiovascular health of Australians through prevention and treatment," said Mr Jukes.

There were 327,000 emergency department presentations with cardiovascular disease in 2019–20. The majority (43%) were triaged as 'emergency' and required care within 10 minutes.

Over 107 million prescriptions were supplied through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) for cardiovascular medicines, representing one-third (35%) of all medications prescribed in Australia in 2019–20.

Today's report expands on analysis from the Australian Burden of Disease Study 2018 which shows that coronary [heart](#) disease continues to be the leading cause of disease burden in Australia.

More information: Heart, stroke and vascular disease—Australian facts (AIHW). www.aihw.gov.au/reports/heart-...facts/contents/about

Provided by Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW)

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