

# Australians are living longer due to lockdowns

January 17 2022

---



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

Pandemic restrictions have led to longer life expectancy for Australians, a new study from The Australian National University (ANU) has found.

A silver lining to seemingly endless days in lockdown is that Australians' life expectancy jumped in 2020. Instead of the expected average annual increase in longevity of 0.09–0.14 years seen from 2015 to 2019,

researchers found an increase of 0.7 years from 2019 to 2020 for both females and males. This was the greatest increase of all the countries looked at in the study, published in the *International Journal of Epidemiology*.

The countries with the next highest increases were Denmark and Norway, both with 0.1 and 0.2 years for females and males respectively.

In contrast, the United States has seen a decrease in life expectancy, with losses of -1.7 and -2.2 years for females and males respectively.

The researchers say Australia's quick response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including closing borders and implementing lockdowns, was what differentiated Australia's longevity outcome from the United States.

"Australia was in a unique position to be able to close borders to the rest of the world. Now with the strong compliance on vaccinations, we are likely to be one of the safest places in the world," study co-author Professor Vladimir Canudas-Romo said.

"During the 1918 Spanish flu, attempts were made to close borders. Yet, once ports opened, the lack of a vaccination meant the virus spread with fatal effects. With modern-day vaccines, Australia has been able to escape this deadly fate."

The researchers say lockdowns led to longer lives because of a "sharp decline in the spread of other infectious diseases due to COVID-19 containment measures."

For example, there was a 20 percent fall in deaths caused by pneumonia or influenza during Australia's lockdowns.

There was also an effect on non-infectious diseases, Professor Canudas-Romo said.

"This includes a reduction in deaths due to cancer and cardiovascular diseases, such as heart attacks and strokes, which accounted for a great share of the mortality reductions," he said.

Another key finding in the study was that a decline in [social mobility](#) triggered a large reduction in the number of road traffic accidents.

According to study co-author Associate Professor Brian Houle the question remains whether this increased [life expectancy](#) will continue in a post-pandemic Australia.

"It's hard to make a long-term assessment for this unusual increase," he said.

"If working from home remains popular, with fewer people on the road commuting at peak times, that might result in reduced road accidents compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic."

**More information:** Vladimir Canudas-Romo et al, Quantifying impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Australian life expectancy, *International Journal of Epidemiology* (2021). [DOI: 10.1093/ije/dyab273](https://doi.org/10.1093/ije/dyab273)

Provided by Australian National University

Citation: Australians are living longer due to lockdowns (2022, January 17) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-01-australians-longer-due-lockdowns.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private

study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.