

Sports injury hospitalizations in Australia return to pre-COVID trends

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In 2020–21, 66,500 Australians were admitted to hospital for injuries sustained while playing sport—an increase of 14,200 compared with the previous year, with the total number of injury hospitalizations largely in

line with pre-COVID trends—according to a new report from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

"In response to COVID-19 lockdowns and the cancelation of many sporting activities, there was a decline in the number of sports injury hospitalizations in 2019–20, but in 2020–21, the numbers rebounded to pre-pandemic trends, increasing by 27%," said AIHW spokesperson Dr. Heather Swanston.

The report, [Sports injuries in Australia](#), shows that cycling accounted for the highest number of sports injury hospitalizations in 2020–21, with 9,800 injury hospitalizations—up from 8,000 in 2019–20—an increase of 35 injury hospitalizations per week.

"Unlike many other sports, there was a rise in the number of cycling injuries in 2019–20 and 2020–21, which may reflect increased participation rates in solo sports with the onset of COVID-19 that has continued with the lifting of restrictions," said Dr. Swanston.

When participation rates are taken into account, rugby codes and wheeled motor sports (for example, motor bike racing, car racing) had the highest rates of injuries requiring hospitalization, each with 1,200 injury hospitalizations per 100,000 participants aged 15 and over.

Over half of all hospitalizations for sporting injuries in 2020–21 were for fractures—most commonly a fractured arm or shoulder. Less than 5% of all injuries resulted in concussion.

According to an AusPlay survey administered by the Australian Sports Commission, 18.3 million Australians aged 18 and over (about nine in 10 respondents) played sport or took part in [physical activity](#) at least once during 2022.

It should be noted that the report does not include information on people who sought treatment at hospital emergency departments, general practitioner clinics, sports medicine centers, or from other practitioners such as physiotherapists.

The Australian Sports Commission is working with the AIHW to implement a National Sports Injury Data Strategy, including a framework to support sports injury data collection. This will provide important data to help identify sports injury trends, and identify prevention priorities and opportunities.

Provided by Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW)

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