

COVID-19 first infectious disease in top five causes of death since 1970

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Credit: Martin Sanchez on Unsplash

COVID-19 was the third leading cause of death in 2022, accounting for more than 1 in 20 deaths (9,859 of 190,939 deaths), according to figures released today (Sept. 27) by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

Lauren Moran, ABS head of mortality statistics, said, "This marks the first time an infectious disease has appeared in the top five leading causes since 1970, when influenza and pneumonia was ranked fifth.

"COVID-19 was among the top 10 leading causes of death in all states and territories in 2022, ranging from the third leading cause in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory to ninth in the Northern Territory. The virus was the sixth leading cause in Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania.

"Broken down by sex, we saw that COVID-19 was the third ranked cause of death for males (5,484) and the fourth ranked cause of death for females (4,375). Those who died from COVID-19 had a high median age at death of 85.8 years."

Overall, there were almost 20,000 more deaths recorded in 2022 than in 2021. Ischemic heart disease remained the leading cause of death, accounting for more than 18,500 (1 in 10) deaths, with more than 60% of these being males.

Dementia (including Alzheimer's disease) was the leading cause of death for females and the second leading cause for males. Females constituted almost two-thirds of [dementia](#) deaths.

"The top five causes of death in 2022 were ischemic heart disease, dementia (including Alzheimer's disease), COVID-19, cerebrovascular diseases (strokes) and [lung cancer](#), which when combined, accounted for more than a third of all deaths," Moran said.

Ischemic heart disease, followed by diabetes, chronic lung diseases, lung cancer and suicide remained the top five leading causes of death for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in 2022. COVID-19 was the ninth leading cause of death.

There were 3,249 people who died by suicide in 2022 (rate of 12.5 per 100,000 people), with males accounting for around three quarters of those deaths. The median age at death for people who died by suicide was 45.6. This compares to a median age at death of 82.2 years for the [total population](#). Suicide was the leading cause of premature death in 2022.

Provided by Australian Bureau of Statistics

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