

Fewer Aussies used hospitals during the early months of pandemic

June 3 2021



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Years of strong growth in hospital admissions stalled when COVID-19 emerged in Australia, according to a new release from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

The [latest MyHospitals update](#) shows there were 11.1 million hospitalisations in Australia in 2019–20, down from 11.5 million in

2018–19. The release includes information for local hospitals and Local Hospital Networks (LHN).

Hospitalisations increased by an average 3.3% each year between 2014–15 and 2018–19 before falling by 2.8% between 2018–19 and 2019–20.

"The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on activity in Australian hospitals. Restrictions on some [hospital](#) services, associated measures in other health care settings to support social distancing, alongside changes in community behaviors resulted in an overall decrease in hospital activity," said AIHW spokesperson Dr. Adrian Webster.

There were 6.9 million same-day hospitalisations and 4.3 million overnight hospitalisations in 2019–20. This represents a 2.1% and a 4.0% decrease, respectively since 2018–19.

"This decrease is in contrast to the previous 5-year period, where same-day hospitalisations increased by 4.0% each year, and overnight hospitalisations increased by 2.1% on average each year."

The decrease in hospitalisations was greater in private hospitals (which saw a 4.5% decrease from 2018–19) compared with [public hospitals](#) (which decreased by 1.7%).

"The larger decrease in [private hospitals](#) was heavily influenced by the restrictions placed on certain categories of elective surgeries from March 2020," Dr. Webster said.

Today's release also includes information on hospitalisations with a COVID-19 diagnosis. From January to June 2020, there were over 2,600 hospitalisations involving a COVID-19 diagnosis.

Of those hospitalisations for people with a COVID-19 diagnosis, 1 in 4 (26%) had one or more comorbid chronic conditions (such as cardiovascular disease or type 2 diabetes).

"Of the 2,600 hospitalisations for people with COVID-19, 225 (8.6%) required a stay in an Intensive care unit (ICU), and 105 (4.0%) died in hospital," said Dr. Webster.

People aged 65 and over accounted for one third of the hospitalisations and 90% of deaths in hospital for patients with a [diagnosis](#) of COVID-19.

The AIHW is continuing to facilitate data sharing between the states and territories and Commonwealth to support the COVID-19 response, including daily monitoring of hospital capacity and activity.

More information: [MyHospitals](#) will be updated later in 2021 with information on emergency department care and elective surgery waiting times covering 2020–21.

Provided by Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW)

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