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# **The current and future health status of the New South Wales population (Summary Report)**

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NSW Department of Health

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The disease projections used in this document were included to assist in setting future priorities for the whole of the NSW health system. The method chosen for the NSW Health futures planning process provides an overall picture of the future burden of the major causes of disease, as well as the relative burden and trends among the major diseases. In considering and utilising these projections, caution is required; the reader should bear in mind the considerable uncertainty inherent in any projections of disease.

## Executive summary

Overall, the health of the New South Wales population is very good, but certain population groups experience poorer health than others. Life expectancy has increased, with males born in 2002 expected to live 78.1 years and female born in 2002 expected to live to 83.3 years. Between 1968 and 2002, life expectancy at age 65 years increased from 76.8 to 82.8 years for males and from 80.5 to 86.4 years for females. The age-adjusted death rate decreased by almost one-half (49 per cent) over the 30-year period 1972 to 2002.

The most common causes of death in 2002 were: cardiovascular diseases, including coronary heart disease and stroke (40 per cent); cancers (27 per cent); chronic respiratory diseases (7 per cent); nervous system diseases (5 per cent); unintentional injuries and poisoning (4 per cent); and digestive system diseases (3 per cent). Just over 2 million hospitalisations were recorded for 2002–03, representing a 34 per cent increase in the age-adjusted rate of hospitalisation since 1989–90. In 2002–03, the most common causes of hospitalisation were: ‘factors influencing health’ (including symptoms without a specific cause, admissions of newborn infants, and admissions for rehabilitation, nursing home, and respite care), unintentional injuries, digestive system diseases, and conditions relating to pregnancy and childbirth.

A range of health behaviours affect the health of the New South Wales population. In 2004, 22.7 per cent of males and 19.3 per cent of females aged 16 years and over were current smokers, a decline of 9 per cent for males and 6 per cent for females since 1989–90. In 2004, 48.3 per cent of the population aged 16 years and over was classified as overweight or obese. In 2004, just over one-half (52.2 per cent) of residents aged 16 years and over reported adequate levels of physical activity. In the same year, 13.4 per cent of residents aged 16 years and over who consumed alcohol were classified as being at a high risk of harm in the short-term, as a result of their drinking. Between 1993 and 2002, the proportion of secondary school students wearing hats for sun protection declined, as did the proportion wearing maximum protection sunscreen.

The New South Wales population will number approximately 8,012,650 in the year 2026, an increase of 1.4 million (or 21.9 per cent) since 2001. By 2026, the state will experience the full effect of the post-war baby boom, declining fertility rates after 1971, and increasing life expectancy. There will be a record high proportion of the population at post-retirement age and record low proportions of children and people of working age. Population growth will result in increased needs for health and community services, as well as for other basic infrastructure. Changing regional distributions, particularly population declines in inland areas, will create challenges in maintaining levels of health and other services.

Estimating the future incidence (new cases) and prevalence (existing cases = new + surviving cases) of disease and injury is useful for planning health services. Between 2001 and 2026 it is predicted that:

- New cases of cardiovascular disease will decrease by 6 per cent, while the number of people living with these diseases will increase by 2.5 per cent.
- New cases of non-insulin dependent diabetes will increase by 127 per cent, while the number of people living with diabetes will increase by 176 per cent.
- New cases of all cancers combined, and selected high volume cancers (colorectal cancer, breast cancer, prostate cancer, melanoma and lung cancer), will decrease, with the exception of lung cancer in women.
- The number of people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease will decline by 24 per cent overall, but this represents the combined effects of a 37 per cent decline in males and a 7 per cent increase in females.
- Hospitalisations for injury and poisoning will increase by 94 per cent.
- New cases of mental disorders will increase by 9 per cent, with the increase higher in females (15 per cent) than in males (3 per cent).
- The number of people with chronic musculoskeletal disorders (79 per cent), vision disorders (93 per cent), hearing loss (87 per cent), and dementia (107 per cent) will increase.

## **Introduction**

In 2003, the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal of New South Wales conducted a review of the state public health system and identified the need for NSW Health to develop a long-term vision and planning framework. Currently, NSW Health is in the process of developing a state health plan that will set strategic directions for the healthcare system over the next 20 years. This report provides an overview of: the current health status of the state population, population changes in the state between 2001 and 2026, and disease and injury projections for the state between 2001 and 2026.