

## WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

*There is a decrease in attendance for routine medical checks in Australia, particularly in young people, where attitudes to healthcare have altered over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic despite virtual options being made available.*

## SIGNIFICANCE OF ISSUE:

**People delayed their GP appointments due to worry of COVID-19 exposure at the service or while using public transport to get there, that the health service would be too busy for them, or that they were breaking lockdown.**

More than 9.8% of Australians delayed their GP appointments, 7.3% delaying after-hours care and 12.2% delayed specialist appointments like the dentist. Further surveys found that 32% of people would avoid GP appointments, including 21% putting off pathology tests, with more than half (59%) worried that they would be exposed to COVID-19. Though there has been an increase in attendance as Australia has moved out of the pandemic, there is worry that normal screens and health checks being further delayed could impact the healthcare system in the future as symptoms become more pronounced or missed entirely. This is particular in young people, who were less likely attend their GP appointments than those aged over 85 years. This includes seeing a GP, a specialist, or even seeking emergency care. This strain on the healthcare system would also hospitals and emergency services.



## 2-3 KEY USERS:

David is a university student, new to Victoria. He did not have time to get to know the new city before lockdowns hit and thinks he can solve everything himself and be independent.

Will is a middle-aged man with family history of heart problems. He works a lot and has not been to see his GP for 3 years.



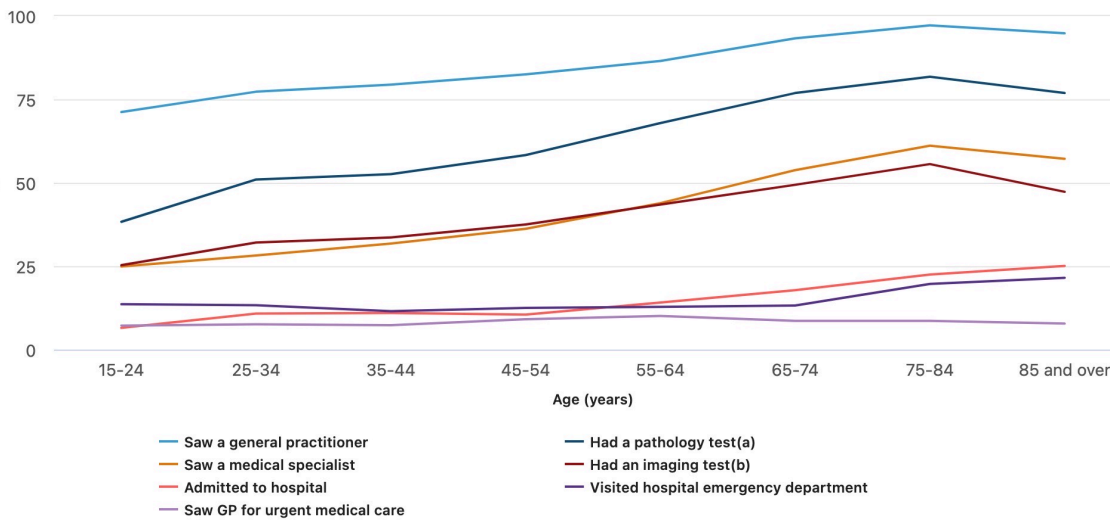
## 2-3 POINT OF VIEW STATEMENTS:

David has never had a regular GP before and is ineligible for Telehealth. He thinks he may have an infection, but it's not as bad as it was last week, so taking medicine from the pharmacy should be fine until he can get a better idea of what's wrong by himself.

Will's had slight arrhythmia lately but nothing drastic; he feels fine. He doesn't think a little heartbeat-skip is enough to attend urgent care when someone else could be in much more need of it.

**KEY IMAGES: (2-3 key images with annotation)**

Proportion of people 15 years and over, use of selected health services in the last 12 months



Australians, by age group (x-axis), who used health services over a 12-month period (2020-21). Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, patients Experiences in Australia: Summary of Findings 2020-21 financial year

(a) Excludes tests conducted in hospital.  
(b) Excludes tests conducted in hospital and dental imaging tests.

**INDUSTRY SECTORS:**

- Public & private health sectors
- Public & private hospitals
- GP Clinics
- Specialist Clinics
- Pathology Clinics & Labs
- Emergency departments & services

**THE MOST COMMON FEELINGS ABOUT USING HEALTH SERVICES WERE:**

- 59%** worried they would be around people with COVID-19 if attending health appointments
- 55%** felt it was safe to delay regular appointments if nothing has changed and they are feeling OK
- 36%** were worried health services were too busy
- 31%** did not feel safe visiting healthcare services in person
- 51%** said they would only seek medical help face to face in an emergency
- 43%** said they prefer to have their usual appointments over the phone or online at the moment

During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a significant drop in engagement with healthcare services for non-COVID health issues in Australia. In May 2020, the Continuity of Care Collaboration (CCC) conducted a survey of 729 people about access to healthcare.

**SOURCES OF INFORMATION:**

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Funded by