

## The cost of Osteoarthritis in Australia

Arthritis is an umbrella term that comprises over 100 different diseases that can affect people of all ages. While all arthritis conditions affect the joints, some types of arthritis also affect other parts of the body such as the skin, eyes and other organs. Importantly, arthritis is not just a condition of older age — it can affect babies, children, adolescents and younger as well as older adults. Arthritis is incredibly common — National Health Survey data indicate that around [15% of Australians are currently living with a form of arthritis](#) — and most of us will know a friend, family member or colleague who has the condition, even if the symptoms are not always visible.

Arthritis is most often associated with pain, stiffness and reduced function, all of which can profoundly impact a person's quality of life and ability to participate in work, family and social activities. Importantly, effective prevention strategies for arthritis are currently lacking and there is no cure. It's in this context that understanding the likely future burden of arthritis is critical. Forecasting the future burden allows us to plan for health care needs in the years ahead including the medical, surgical, nursing, and allied health workforce that will be needed to deliver care for the growing number of people with arthritis. We also see our projections as a valuable opportunity for raising community awareness about arthritis and its impacts, and to advocate for much needed research investment into prevention, identifying and evaluating new therapies and ensuring patients receive high value, cost-effective care that optimises outcomes.



### How many Australians are expected to be living with arthritis?

Based purely on expected population growth and ageing, [our new modelling suggests that 5.39 million Australians will be living with arthritis by 2040](#). That's an additional 1.28 million people with arthritis (or a 31% increase) relative to 2025 numbers. A high population growth scenario would put even greater strain on our health care system, with 5.56 million Australians forecast to have arthritis under this scenario.

In all projection scenarios that we examined, the highest burden of arthritis is expected to be borne by women. For osteoarthritis, the most common form of arthritis and the most common indication for hip, knee and shoulder replacement surgery, we have forecast that 3.11 million Australians will have the condition in 2040.

Looking at the age groups most affected, older adults will continue to form a major part of the osteoarthritis population but notably as our population grows, people of working age (the current millennials) will also be greatly impacted. Over 1.03 million people between the ages of 45 and 64 years are forecast to have osteoarthritis in 2040, with implications for work productivity and workforce participation. Notably, our modelling is conservative and does not incorporate any changes in rates of obesity or joint injury, both known contributors to the development of knee osteoarthritis.

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