



# Cost of Incontinence to Australia Tops \$100 billion

## New report from Deloitte highlights massive cost to the Australian economy

A new report from Deloitte Access Economics commissioned for the Continence Foundation of Australia, has revealed that the cost of incontinence to Australia in 2023 has increased to \$100.4 billion. The Continence Foundation of Australia is advocating for immediate action to address the condition that affects millions of Australians each year and places a significant burden on the economy.

The report found:

- There are an estimated 2.4 million men and 4.8 million women living with some form of urinary and/or faecal incontinence.
- Last year, the direct health cost of incontinence was \$66.6 billion
- There was an additional \$33.8 billion cost in lost wellbeing for those living with the condition.
- Wellbeing costs include days off work, unemployment due to the condition and seeking extra care and support.
- 71% of people living with incontinence are aged 65 and younger.
- By 2032, the number of Australians living with some degree of incontinence will rise to 8.6 million, representing 34.1% of the population.

“Incontinence is costing Australia a staggering amount of money annually in financial and wellbeing terms,” said Dr Gian Sberna, CEO, Continence Foundation of Australia.

“The findings of this report underscore the urgent need for comprehensive support, increased awareness, and better treatment options for the millions of Australians affected by this condition”.

Despite its prevalence, incontinence remains under recognised and under reported. The report highlights that 71% of people living with incontinence are aged 65 and younger, and the condition is especially common among residents of aged care facilities, where 70.9% experience urinary and/or faecal incontinence.

Those living with incontinence in rural and regional areas have reported concern in the accessibility of services highlighting gaps in referral pathways as well as challenges with coordinating care in healthcare settings. Additionally, there were concerns about a lack of capability in the general health and aged care workforce.

“Our own consumer survey in 2023 backs up the absence of routine data collection with a third of the respondents who hadn’t discussed the issue with a health professional saying they could be encouraged to do so if the professional raised it or if relevant information was displayed. Despite many people avoiding conversations about incontinence, they just need to be encouraged to talk about it to ensure positive outcomes. With the right support, we can improve the lives of millions of Australians and reduce the enormous economic and social costs associated with incontinence.”, said Dr Sberna.

There is a significant increase in the cost to the economy from the last report in 2010. While the data doesn't directly correlate between the reports (due to inflation and some reporting methodology changes) the latest report suggests it could be as high a 50% increase.

The Continence Foundation of Australia believes that while there isn't one single reason for this increase, there are a handful of contributing factors.

"In the first instance, we have an ageing population so there are certain realities of an older cohort that make them more susceptible to incontinence, but interestingly, there seems to be a significant number of people who are coming forward for diagnosis and treatment that are younger. Our own research and feedback from practitioners indicate that the stigma around incontinence is decreasing and that supportive friends and family are playing a huge role in people seeking treatment, with open and honest dialogue about their health concerns and conditions.", said Dr Sberna.

The report also projects that by 2032, the number of Australians living with some degree of incontinence will rise to 8.6 million, representing 34.1% of the population. This increase is driven by the aging population and underscores the need for proactive measures to manage the growing burden of incontinence on individuals and society.

More effort and investment are required to ensure that the impact of incontinence is better recorded, and support and treatment made available for all Australians. The Continence Foundation of Australia is calling on healthcare providers, policymakers, and the public to prioritise incontinence as a significant health issue. The Foundation is committed to raising awareness, reducing stigma, and advocating for better diagnostic and treatment options for all Australians.

### **About the Continence Foundation of Australia**

The Continence Foundation of Australia is a not-for-profit organisation and the national peak body promoting bladder and bowel control health, incontinence prevention, management, education, awareness, information and advocacy.

The Continence Foundation of Australia provides information, support and resources for individuals, carers and professionals.

### **Let's talk about Incontinence**

- Over 7.2 million Australians are affected by incontinence
- The majority of people affected by incontinence can be treated, better managed, or even cured
- In 2023, the total economic cost of incontinence was estimated to be \$100.4billion
- People should seek assistance:
  - Ask your GP or health professional
  - Call the Continence Foundation of Australia's National Continence Helpline on 1800 33 00 66 for free, confidential advice from Nurse Continence Specialists, Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm AEST
  - Visit [continence.org.au](https://continence.org.au)

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