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Australian Institute of
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Dog-related injuries



How many people are hospitalised due to dog-related injuries?

Almost 4,000 people were hospitalised in Australia in 2013–14 as a result of a dog-related injury—a rate of 17 cases per 100,000 population. In comparison, there were 572 drowning cases, 1,884 cases of poisoning by substances other than pharmaceuticals and 5,749 burns cases that resulted in hospitalisation in the same time period.

Who is hospitalised for dog-related injuries?

In 2013–14, 3,972 people were hospitalised as a result of a dog-related injury, with males (2,003 cases) and females (1,969 cases) hospitalised in similar numbers. Males (17.3 cases per 100,000 population) and females (16.7 cases per 100,000 population) also had similar rates of injury. The highest rate of injury occurred in children aged 0–4 (26.5 cases per 100,000 population).

Dog-related injuries were most common in children, with 689 children aged 0–9 hospitalised in 2013–14 (Figure 1)—405 of whom were aged 0–4. Below the age of 40, larger numbers of males than females were hospitalised for dog-related injuries, while more females than males were hospitalised in the older age groups.

What are the main causes of dog-related injuries?

Two main types of dog-related injury are identifiable in hospital data: dog bites and being struck by a dog. Hospitalisations due to dog bites are far more common than those due to being struck by a dog. In 2013–14, 3,644 (92%) of hospitalised dog-related injury cases resulted from being bitten by a dog, and 328 from being struck by a dog. The highest number of dog bite hospitalised cases occurred among children aged 0–9 (652 cases), while the largest number of cases due to being struck by a dog occurred in Australians aged 70 or over (93 cases) (Figure 2).

Quick facts

Nearly **4,000** people were hospitalised due to a **dog-related injury** in Australia in 2013–14.



Over **90%** of hospitalisations were due to **dog bites**, but in people aged 65 and over, being struck by a dog accounted for almost a quarter of cases.



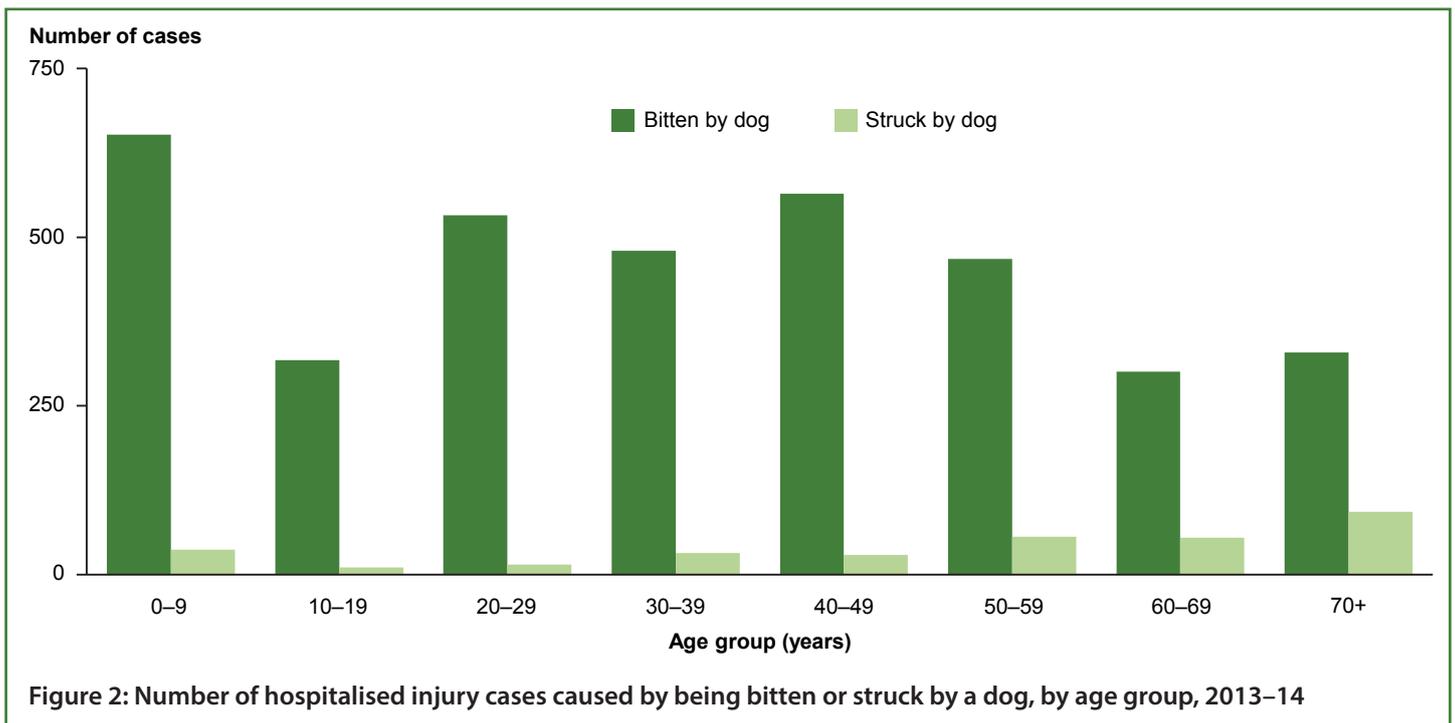
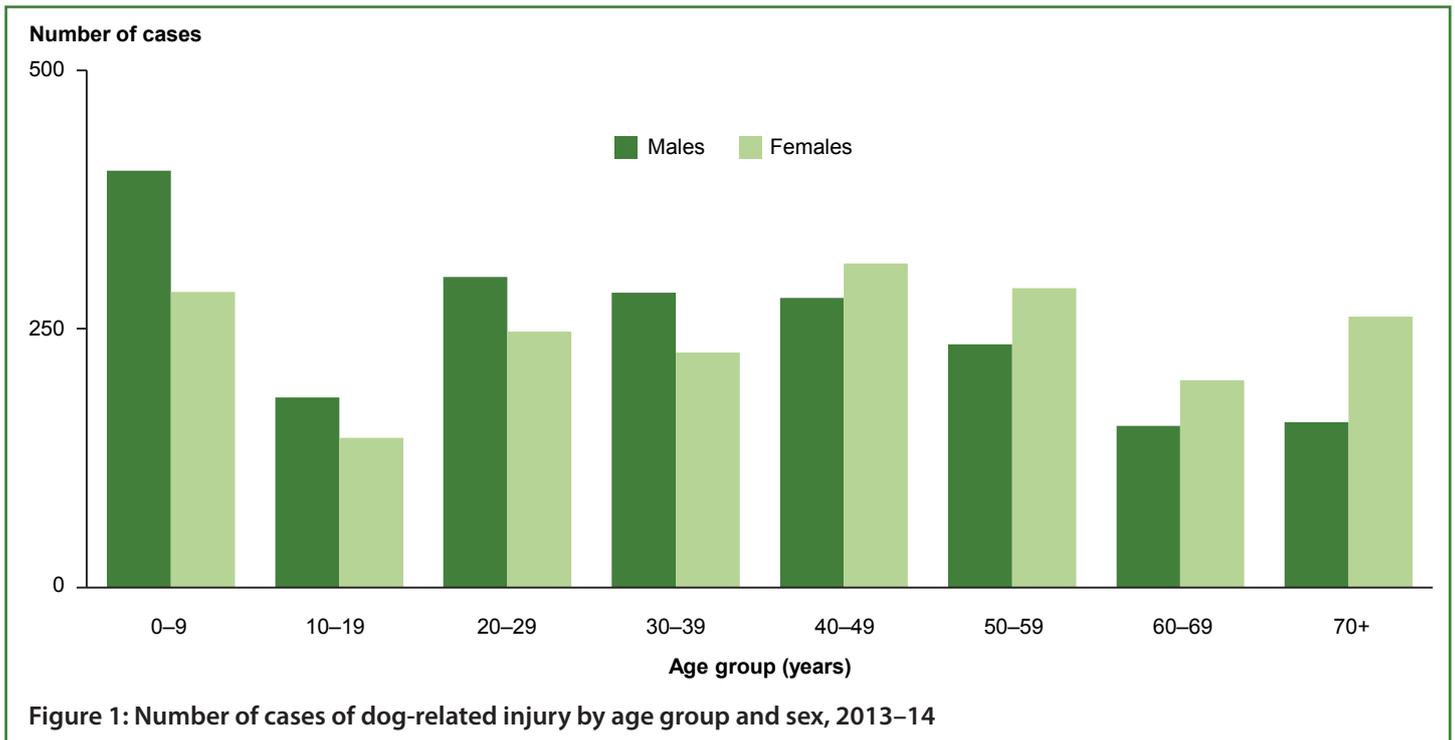
Overall, the **most common body parts injured** were the wrist or hand (42%), and the head (23%). For children aged 0–9, injuries to the head were more common (74%).



In this fact sheet

'Dog-related injury case' are those classified in the International statistical classification of diseases and related health problems, 10th revision, Australian modification (NCCC 2012) as *Bitten or struck by dog* (W54). Within this code we can identify cases where people were *Bitten by a dog* (W54.0) and cases where people were struck by a dog (W54.8).

The data were sourced from the AIHW's National Hospital Morbidity Database for 2013–14, which covers all (admitted) episodes of care in Australian hospitals. Records with a mode of admission reported as a transfer from another hospital were excluded to reduce double counting.



Body region injured

The region of the body injured differs by age and by the type of dog-related injury. Overall, the most commonly injured body parts for dog-related injuries were the wrist and hand (1,659 cases, or 42%) and the head (911 cases, or 23%). For children aged 0–9, 73% (503 cases) of dog-related injuries were to the head. For people struck by a dog, 37% of injuries were caused to the knee and lower leg. For those bitten by a dog, 45% of injuries were to the wrist or hand (Table 1).

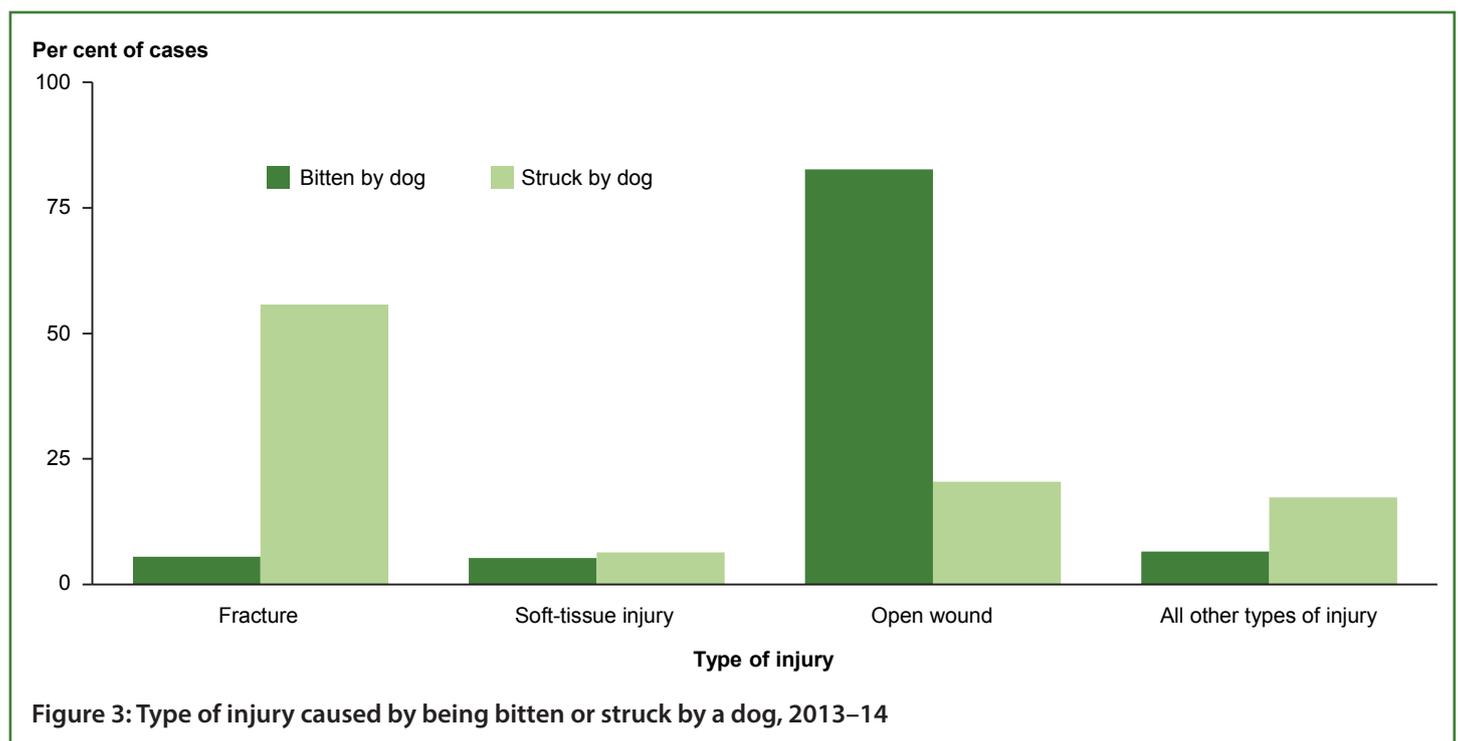


Table 1: Selected body regions injured, by type of dog injury, by age group, 2013–14

	0–9 years				All ages			
	Bitten by dog		Struck by dog		Bitten by dog		Struck by dog	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Head	480	74	23	62	856	23	55	17
Elbow and forearm	22	3	4	11	433	12	29	9
Wrist and hand	67	10	0	0	1,626	45	33	10
Knee and lower leg	25	4	6	16	327	9	121	37
All other regions combined	58	9	4	11	3242	89	238	73
Total	652	100	37	100	3,644	100	328	100

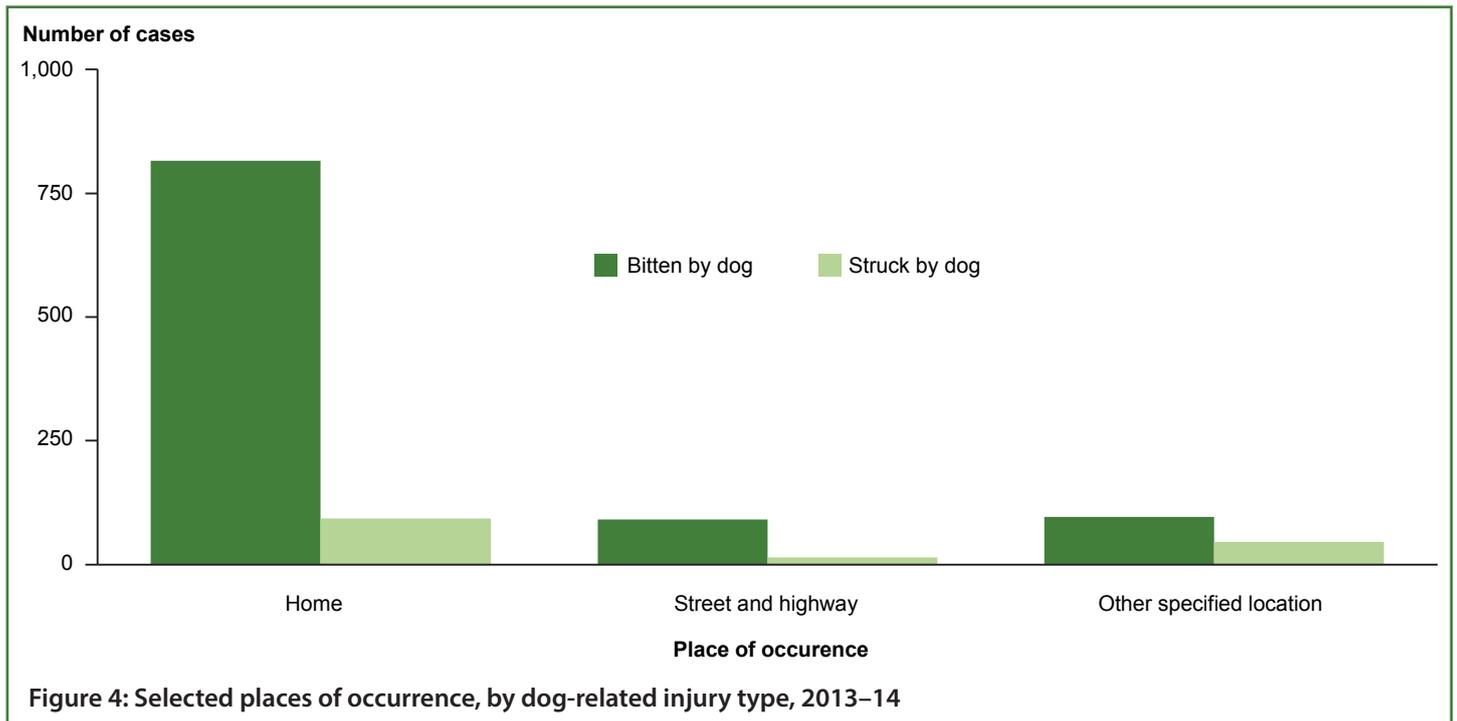
Types of injury

Overall, the most common injury sustained as a result of a dog-related injury was an open wound (3,080 cases). The type of injury sustained varied according to whether the person was bitten or struck by a dog. People who were bitten by dogs mainly had open wound injuries (3,013 cases) followed by fractures (200 cases) (Figure 3). Over half (56%) of all people who were struck by dogs had fractures (183 cases); the next most common injury was an open wound (67 cases). Dog bites that break the skin and cause open wounds can lead to serious infections. Of cases of hospitalised dog bite injury that resulted in an open wound, 654 had an infection (88%).



Place of occurrence

The place of occurrence was not recorded for a large proportion of dog-related injury hospitalisations (69% or 2,746 cases). For cases which did have a place of occurrence listed the home was the most common location (74%) (It is not possible to tell whether 'home' referred to the patient's home or another person's home). Children 0–9 years had the highest proportion (91%, 287 cases) of dog-related injuries that occurred in the home. The home was also the most common location overall for both dog bites and being struck by a dog—77% (816 cases) and 58% (93 cases) respectively (Figure 4).



References

NCCC (National Casemix and Classification Centre) 2012. The international statistical classification of diseases and related health problems, 10th revision, Australian modification (ICD-10-AM), Australian Classification of Health Interventions (ACHI) and Australian Coding Standards (ACS), 8th edn. Wollongong: University of Wollongong.

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