

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) National Suicide and Self-harm Monitoring System data release

Ambulance attendances for suicide and self-harm

Released by AIHW on Friday, 7 July 2023

Data on ambulance attendances helps to increase understanding of suicide and self-harm behaviours in Australia. However, this data does not show the full extent of suicide and self-harm in Australia as ambulances are not always called to self-harm or suicide related incidents.

Ambulance attendances for non-fatal self-harm behaviours are coded as being for suicidal ideation (suicidal thoughts), suicide attempt or self-injury (without suicidal intent).

The National Suicide and Self-harm Monitoring System has been updated to include National Ambulance Surveillance System data to September 2022 for the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), Tasmania (Tas), Queensland (Qld) and Victoria (Vic), and to June 2022 for New South Wales (NSW).

In 2021, ambulances attended around 90,100 incidents that involved suicidal thoughts or behaviours across NSW, Vic, Qld, Tas and the ACT.

Across select states and territories, the general trend for the rate of ambulance attendances is outlined here:

- **NSW:** Increased attendances for suicidal thinking and suicide attempts between March 2018 to January 2021, before decreasing over 2021 and 2022.
- **Victoria:**
 - Decreased attendances for suicidal thinking from December 2020 until September 2022.
 - Attendances also decreased for suicide attempts from December 2020 to April 2022, before increasing again but remaining below December 2020 rates.
 - Self-injury attendance rates slightly increased over the time series until August 2021 before steadily declining back to March 2018 levels.
- **Queensland:** No clear trend direction can be seen as rates remained similar.
- **Tasmania:** Increased attendances for suicidal thinking, suicide attempts and self-injury from September 2021 until September 2022. *
- **ACT:** Decreased overall attendances for self-injury and suicidal thoughts. Suicide attempts have slightly increased. *

* Tasmania and the ACT attendance rates vary significantly from month-to-month due to smaller numbers.

Gender differences

While more males die by suicide compared to females in Australia, females have higher rates of self-harm or suicide attempts. Over time, general trends for the rate of ambulance attendances for:

- Self-injury tended to be higher for females compared to males, across NSW, Vic, Qld and the ACT.
- Suicidal thinking was similar for females and males across NSW, Vic, Qld and Tas
- Suicide attempts were higher in females than males in NSW, Vic and Qld.
- From around March to April 2022, Tas and the ACT attendance rates for suicide attempts were higher in females than males. Prior to this in the time series, there was no noted difference in rates.

Age and gender differences

When looking at combined data for ambulance attendances in NSW, Vic, ACT and Tas from June 2018 to June 2022, there are notable age and gender differences. Attendance rates for:

- Female self-injury, suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts generally decreased with age.
- Male suicide attempts were highest for the 25–44 years age group.
- Self-injury, suicidal thinking and suicide attempts were higher in females compared to males for the under 24 years age group. However, attendance rates for suicidal thinking were generally higher in males compared to females for the 25–44 years age group.
- Female self-injury in those under 25 years increased between March 2018 and August 2021, then declined overall from November 2021 to June 2022.
- Female suicide attempts increased in those under 25 years between March 2018 and March 2021, before steadily declining until June 2022.
- Male suicidal thoughts decreased from January 2021 onwards for all age groups, especially those under 65 years.
- Self-injury amongst individuals aged 45 years and older were similar across males and females.

[View the updated ambulance attendance data](#)

Suicidal thoughts and behaviours amongst LGBTIQ+ adults using data from the 2019 Private Lives 3 Survey

Released by AIHW on Friday, 7 July 2023

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer, asexual and other sexuality, gender and bodily diverse (LGBTIQ+) people are identified as a priority population for suicide prevention in Australia. However, there is currently no reliable national data on rates of suicide and self-harm among LGBTIQ+ communities in Australia.

Without reliable data, it is difficult to estimate the extent of which LGBTIQ+ individuals are impacted by suicide and self-harm.

The best estimates of suicide and self-harm amongst the LGBTIQ+ individuals come from surveys that have specifically targeted LGBTIQ+ communities. These surveys often use non-probability sampling, meaning the data may not be representative of all LGBTIQ+ Australians. Despite this limitation, surveys still provide valuable information that can inform Australian suicide prevention efforts.

The Private Lives 3 survey

‘Private Lives 3’ (PL3) is the third iteration of a national survey that investigates the health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ adults in Australia. The dataset is one of the largest in Australia, with 6,835 participants aged between 18 and 88 years.

The survey included questions on recent (last 12 months) and lifetime suicide attempts and suicidal thoughts. Experiences of suicidal thoughts or suicide attempts can be broken down by state, age, gender and sexual orientation.

What are the key findings?

- Around three-quarters (75%) of participants had experienced suicidal thoughts in their lifetime.
- Around one third (30%) of participants reported having attempted suicide in their lifetime.
- The prevalence of suicidal thoughts and attempts were similar across states and territories.
- Younger age groups were more likely to report lifetime or recent experiences of suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts compared to older age groups.
- The prevalence of suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts varied by sexual orientation. Pansexual and queer respondents reported the highest prevalence of recent and lifetime suicidal thoughts and lifetime suicide attempts.
- Trans and non-binary participants were more likely to have experienced recent and lifetime suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts compared to cisgender men and women.
- PL3 participants with a disability were more likely to report lifetime or recent experiences of suicidal thoughts and attempts than those without a disability.

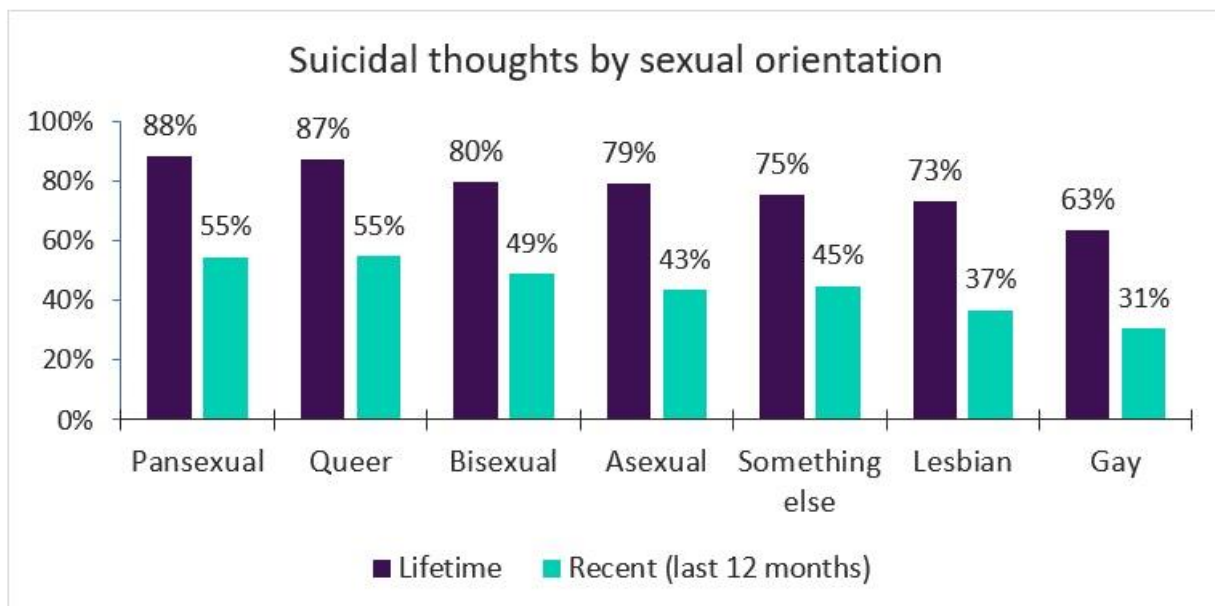
Results by sexual orientation

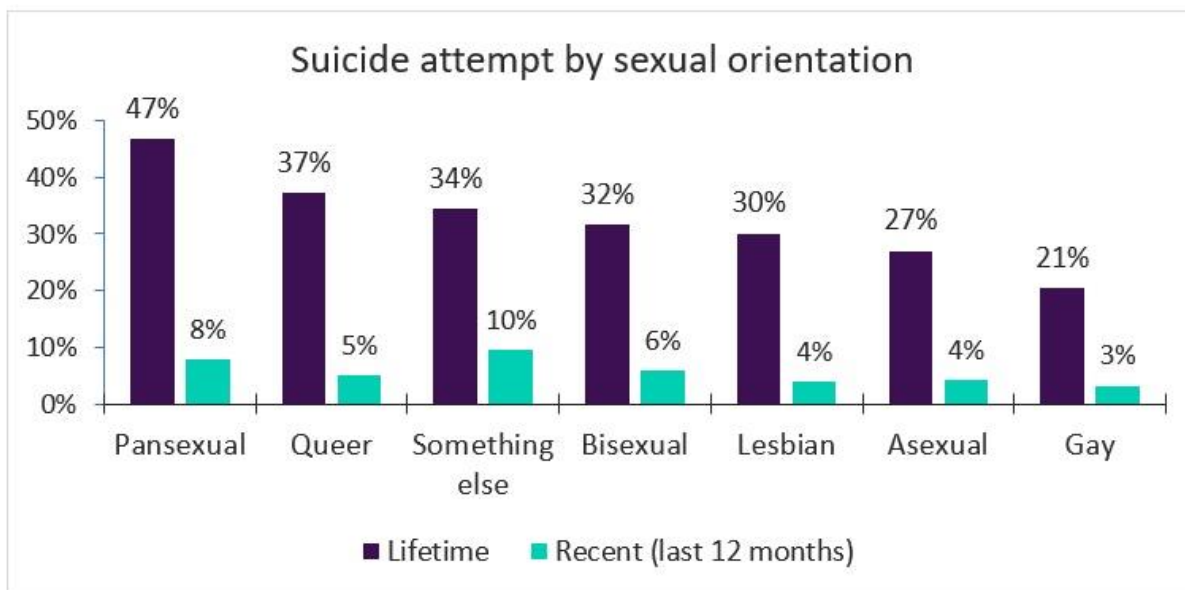
The prevalence of suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts varied based on sexual orientation:

- Pansexual (88%) and queer (87%) participants reported the highest prevalence of lifetime suicidal thoughts, followed by bisexual (80%) and asexual (79%) participants, participants categorised as ‘something else’ (75%), lesbian participants (73%) and gay participants (63%).

- Recent suicidal thoughts were reported by 55% of both pansexual and queer participants, 49% of bisexual participants, 45% of respondents categorised as 'something else', 43% of asexual participants, 37% of lesbian participants and 31% of gay participants.
- Nearly half (47%) of pansexual participants reported having attempted suicide in their lifetime, followed by queer participants (37%), 'something else' (34%), bisexual (32%), lesbian (30%), asexual (27%) and gay (20%) participants.
- Participants in the 'something else' sexual orientation category were most likely to report a recent suicide attempt (10%), followed by pansexual (8%), bisexual (6%), queer (5%), asexual (4%), lesbian (4%) and gay (3%) participants.

Note: Participants who identified themselves as heterosexual, 'prefer not to label' or 'something different' were grouped together as 'something else'.

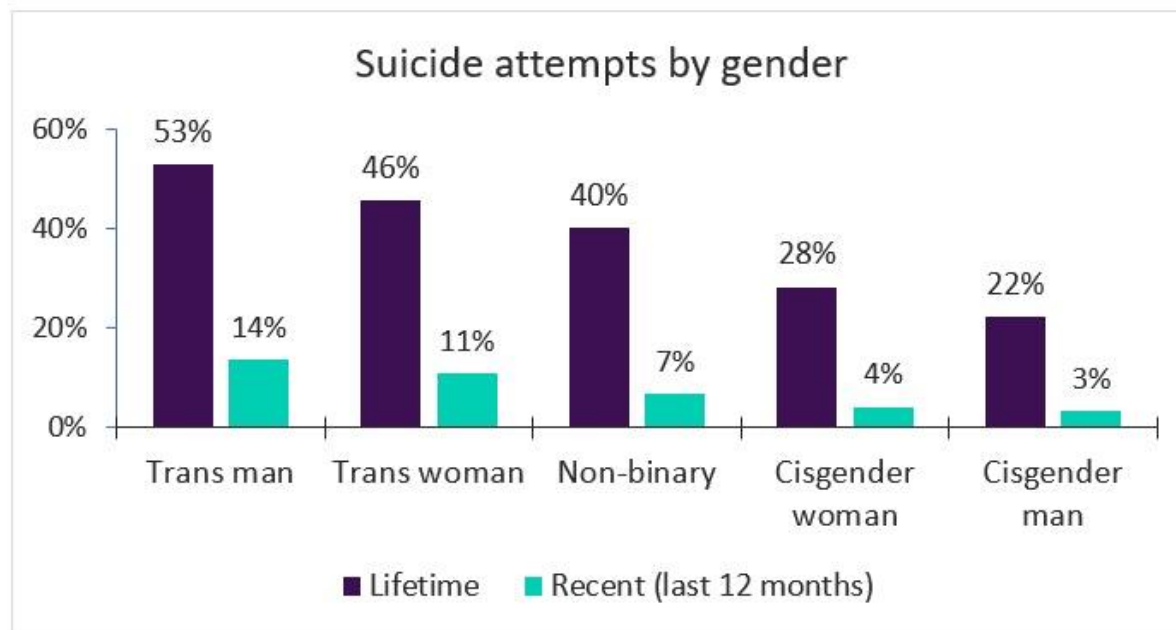
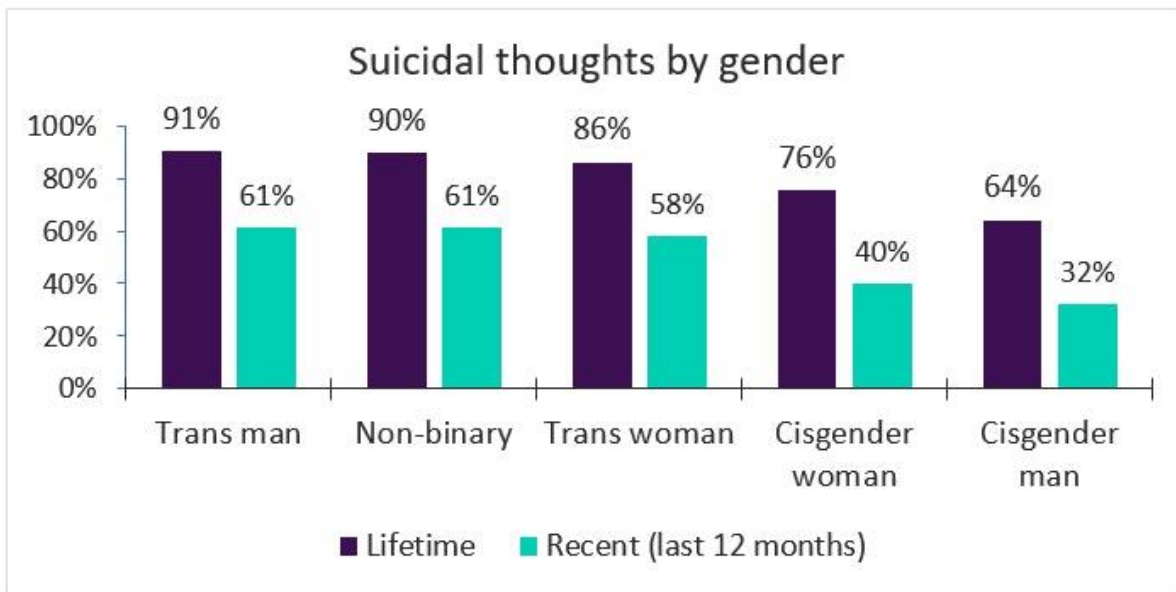




Results by gender identity

Trans and non-binary participants were more likely to have experienced recent and lifetime suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts, compared to cisgender participants.

- Trans men (91%), non-binary participants (90%) and trans women (86%) had the highest lifetime prevalence of suicidal thoughts, followed by cisgender women (76%) and cisgender men (64%).
- More than half of trans men reported having attempted suicide in their lifetime (53%), compared with around one fifth of cisgender men (22%).



Participants with an intersex variation/s

Survey recruitment specifically targeted people with an intersex variation/s but the sample size (N = 47) was too small to make statistically meaningful comparisons with other groups.

Though, as current research into the experiences of people with and intersex variation/s is limited, the Private Lives 3 National report presents data from the 47 participants in a dedicated chapter.

Of the 47 participants with an intersex variation/s:

- Almost half (49%) reported having experienced suicidal thoughts in the past 12 months.
- Almost nine in ten (87%) reported experiencing suicidal thoughts in their lifetime.
- Over one in ten (12%) reported a suicide attempt in the past 12 months.
- Almost half (49%) reported a suicide attempt in their lifetime.

Results by disability or long-term health condition status

The PL3 survey asked participants whether they have a disability or long-term health condition.

- Participants who reported having a disability (85%) or were unsure whether they have a disability (85%) were most likely to have experienced suicidal thoughts in their lifetimes, compared to participants without a disability (64%).
- Participants who reported having a disability (54%) or being unsure about having a disability (53%) more likely to have experienced recent suicidal thoughts, compared to participants without a disability (29%).
- Lifetime suicide attempts were twice as common in participants who reported having a disability (40%), compared to participants without a disability (20%).

[View the AIHW summary of LGBTIQ+ suicide and self-harm data](#)

[View the La Trobe University Private Lies 3 national report](#)