

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

Released by AIHW on 8 December 2021

- Updated data on ambulance attendances for self-harm behaviours between March 2018 and June 2021.
- A commissioned report prepared by the University of Melbourne which examines suicide patterns in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Updated ambulance attendance data update

- The release includes updated data between March 2018 and June 2021 in Victoria (VIC), Tasmania (TAS) and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). Data for New South Wales (NSW) and Queensland (QLD) have not been updated and are available for March 2018 to March 2021 for NSW and March 2020 to March 2021 for QLD).
- Comparing the same months across the reference years (e.g. from June 2018 to June 2021), the rate of ambulance attendances for suicidal ideation increased in VIC and the ACT, and remained generally stable in TAS.
- Across the snapshot months from March 2018 to June 2021, the rate of ambulance attendances for suicide attempts and self-injury were consistently higher in females than males in VIC and the ACT. Gender-specific self-injury data is not available for TAS, however data on suicide attempts shows the same pattern as VIC and the ACT.
- Although suicide attempt-related ambulance attendances are significantly higher in females than males, men are three times more likely to die by suicide than females.
- Comparing the same months across the reference years, the rate of ambulance attendances for suicide attempts and self-injury fluctuated in TAS and the ACT with no discernible trend.

Patterns of suicide in context of COVID-19 update

- The commissioned report uses data from the interim QLD Suicide Register, and the TAS and VIC Suicide Registers.
- Data included suspected suicides occurring in the 37 months before (1 January 2017 to 31 January 2020) and the seven months after (1 February 2020 to 31 August 2020) the first cases of COVID-19 were identified in Australia.
- From 1 January 2017 to 31 August 2020, there were 5,791 suicides recorded across QLD, TAS and VIC. Males accounted for over three-quarters of these suicides and more than 7 in 10 occurred among people aged 25-64 years.
- Of the four risk factors for suicide examined, relationship breakdown was the most frequently recorded by police with almost 1 in 4 cases.
- There was no significant change in the number of suicides during the pandemic, compared to pre-pandemic times. However, the number of young males who died by suicide during the COVID-19 period was higher than the expected.

Note: Clinical data from ambulance attendances only represents a portion of people experiencing suicidal and self-harm behaviours. Further data and integration of monitoring systems is needed to capture the true incidence of these behaviours. As ambulances do not attend all deaths, this data should not be relied on for statistics on deaths by suicide.

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