Fact sheet 3
Statistics on suicide in Australia

Around 2,000 Australians die by suicide every year, affecting families, friends, workplaces and communities.

This fact sheet provides an overview of the available statistics on Australian suicide rates, trends and at-risk groups.

Australian suicide data and statistics

A death is classified as a suicide by a coroner based on evidence that a person died as a result of a deliberate act to cause his or her own death. If there is contrary evidence, a coroner may classify the death as having been caused by someone else (murder or manslaughter), or as accidental. If there is insufficient evidence, the coroner may not be able to reach a decision as to the cause of death.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is responsible for gathering national data and compiling the publication Causes of Death, Australia. The most recent edition, Causes of Death, Australia, 2011, was published in 2013. The statistics in this fact sheet reflect the data from this publication. The ABS has recently made significant revisions to the way in which suicide data is recorded in order to provide more valid and reliable information. These alterations include a two year revision process and improved coronial coding practices.

In 2011, 2,273 deaths by suicide were registered in Australia.

- This is an age-standardised rate of 9.9 per 100,000 in 2011.
- This compares with 1,543 deaths by motor vehicle accident in the same period.

- Suicide rates in Australia appear to have declined slightly over the last decade, from 2,320 in 2002 to 2,273 in 2011. However, caution must be exercised when interpreting such trends in the context of changing ABS and coronial practices.
- Males accounted for around 76% of deaths by suicide in 2011.
- Suicide accounted for 27.8% of all deaths amongst young men aged 15 to 24.
Suicide rates by age group and gender

Suicide rates are fairly similar for females of all ages, with the highest age-specific rate in the 85 years and over age group (7.8 per 100,000) and the lowest in the 65-69 years age group (3.5 per 100,000). The age-specific suicide rates for males show significant variations between age groups, with the highest being in the 85 years and over age group (32.1 per 100,000) and the lowest in the 15-19 years age group (10.4 per 100,000).

Figure 1 shows the suicide rate for various age groups for males and females in Australia in 2011.

**FIGURE 1:** Suicide rates, Australia 2011, five year age groups by gender

![Suicide rates by age group](image1)


Suicide rates by gender

Recent data suggest that suicide rates in Australia have declined since 2002. Figure 2 shows suicide rates from 2002 to 2011. Among males, suicide rates have dropped since 2002, but rates among females have remained fairly constant. Despite the slowly declining trend, males remain at profoundly elevated risk of completed suicide when compared to females.

**FIGURE 2:** Suicide rates by gender, 2002 to 2011

![Suicide rates by gender](image2)

Suicide rates by state/territory

The number of suicide deaths and the age-standardised rate per 100,000 people for each state and territory is shown in Figure 3.

It should be noted that the number of deaths can fluctuate greatly, particularly in smaller jurisdictions. The Northern Territory displays the highest recorded rate of suicide of any Australian state or territory.

FIGURE 3: Suicide rates by state/territory, 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
<th>Standardised death rate (per 100,000) 2006-2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>531</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>572</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>2,361</td>
<td><strong>10.7</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013. Suicides Australia, 2010-Catalogue No. 3309.0)

International comparison

The suicide rate in Australia is higher than some countries and lower than others. Making comparisons between countries is difficult due to the different ways of collecting data about deaths.

Figure 4 shows data collected by the World Health Organization. It should be noted that rates of suicide in other countries are not only affected by collection procedures, but also cultural differences in how suicide is viewed.

FIGURE 4: Suicide rates (number of deaths by suicide per 100,000) for males and females from selected countries around the world.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bahamas</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Australia</strong></td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States of America</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian Federation</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Korea</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>22.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>61.3</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Groups at risk of suicide

According to existing data, certain groups within the Australian community are at a higher risk of suicide. Some of these groups include:

- men
- young people
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and other sexuality, sex and gender diverse people (LGBTI)
- people in rural or remote communities
- people experiencing mental illness
- people who have previously attempted suicide or who engage in self-harm
- people bereaved by suicide
- people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, though within this broad population, there are substantial variations across cultures, age groups and gender.

It is important to remember that even though a person may fall into one or more of these groups, it does not mean that they will choose to take their own life. It simply means that, based on current data, people in these groups are at a higher risk of suicide than the general population.

More information

- National LGBTI Health Alliance – Mental health and suicide prevention project: http://www.lgbthealth.org.au/mindout
- Mental health & well being – information on the Australian Government’s role and contributions to mental health reform activities in Australia: https://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/Mental+Health+and+Wellbeing-1
- Research Centre for Injury Studies and the National Injury Surveillance Unit – a human injury Research Centre, part of the Flinders University Faculty of Health Sciences: http://www.nisu.flinders.edu.au
- Suicide Prevention Australia: http://www.suicidepreventionaust.org