



## AIHW media releases

04 Nov 2021

### New insights into suicide and self-harm in Australia, including potentially-modifiable risk factors

This media release contains information some readers may find distressing as it refers to data about suicide and self-harm, child abuse and neglect, and family and domestic violence

Australians collectively lost more than 145,000 years of healthy life in 2019 due to suicide and self-harm, according to a new report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

The report, *'The health impact of suicide and self-inflicted injuries in Australia, 2019*, updates and extends data from the [Australian Burden of Disease Study 2018](https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/health-conditions-disability-deaths/burden-of-disease/overview) (<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/health-conditions-disability-deaths/burden-of-disease/overview>) to calculate the combined impact on individuals of dying prematurely from suicide (the fatal burden) and of injury and illness from self-harm (the non-fatal burden). This is measured using Disability-adjusted Life Years (DALY).

'Behind the numbers presented in this report, are people who have died due to suicide or experienced self-harm,' said AIHW spokesperson Richard Juckes.

'This report has been funded through the [National Suicide and Self-harm Monitoring System](https://www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring/) (<https://www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring/>) and is part of the AIHW's ongoing contribution to the national effort to prevent suicide and self-harm in Australia. It's important we build our understanding of suicide and self-harm to inform policy development that will save lives.'

In 2019, Australians lost 145,703 years of healthy life due to suicide and self-harm– representing around 3% of the total burden of disease and injury in Australia, and 10% of total burden among those aged 15 to 24 years. Nearly all (99%) of the burden of suicide and self-harm was due to dying prematurely (fatal burden).

On average, persons lost 42 years of life due to dying from suicide in 2019. This was much higher than leading causes of death such as coronary heart disease (12), dementia (7) and lung cancer (17); and similar to road transport injuries (43) and drug use disorders (41). Suicide is among the top 5 causes with the highest average years of life lost each year. Three-quarters of the total burden of suicide and self-harm injuries in 2019 occurred in males, and it was highest among those aged 25–34.

The highest rates of burden (DALY) from suicide and self-harm were among people living in Remote and Very remote areas, being 2.3 times higher than in Major cities. In addition, burden (DALY) rates among people living in the most disadvantaged socioeconomic areas was twice as high as those in the least disadvantaged socioeconomic areas, Mr. Juckes said.

Four potentially modifiable risk factors were included in analyses as having sufficient evidence in the literature of a causal association with suicide. These included child abuse and neglect during childhood of persons aged 5 years and over; alcohol use among persons aged 15 years and over; illicit drug use among persons aged 15 years and over; and intimate partner violence against females aged 15 years and over. The study estimated that almost half (48%) of the burden of suicide and self-inflicted injuries is estimated to be due to these four risk factors.

'Child abuse and neglect during childhood was consistently the leading behavioural risk factor contributing to the burden of suicide and self-inflicted injuries in both males and females aged 5 years and over between 2003 and 2019. In 2019, it contributed one third (33%; 12,031 DALY) of the total burden in females and 24% in males (25,690 DALY),' Mr. Juckes said.

There were 3,318 deaths by suicide in Australia during 2019 and 3,139 in 2020. There were more than 28,600 hospital admissions due to intentional self-harm in 2019–20.

More recent data about suicide and self-harm in Australia are included in other AIHW reports and updates available on the [AIHW Suicide and self-harm monitoring website](https://www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring/data/ambulance-attendances) (<https://www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring/data/ambulance-attendances>), including the recently updated [Deaths by suicide in Australia](https://www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring/data/deaths-by-suicide-in-australia) (<https://www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring/data/deaths-by-suicide-in-australia>), [Social factors and deaths by suicide](https://www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring/data/behaviours-risk-factors/social-factors-suicide) (<https://www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring/data/behaviours-risk-factors/social-factors-suicide>), [Suspected deaths by suicide](https://www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring/data/suspected-deaths-by-suicide) (<https://www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring/data/suspected-deaths-by-suicide>) and [Ambulance attendances](https://www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring/data/ambulance-attendances) (<https://www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring/data/ambulance-attendances>).

The burden of disease research released today complements data in the other reports mentioned above by combining fatal and non-fatal outcomes into a summary measure which estimates the overall impact of suicide and self-harm on the health of Australians,' Mr. Juckes said.

Background:

The AIHW encourages journalists to use the Mindframe guidelines when reporting on statistics about suicide and self-harm.

<https://mindframe.org.au/suicide/communicating-about-suicide/mindframe-guidelines>  
(<https://mindframe.org.au/suicide/communicating-about-suicide/mindframe-guidelines>).

<https://mindframe.org.au/need-help/self-care> (<https://mindframe.org.au/need-help/self-care>).

[https://mindframemedia.imgix.net/assets/src/uploads/Media\\_professionals\\_self-care\\_tips.pdf](https://mindframemedia.imgix.net/assets/src/uploads/Media_professionals_self-care_tips.pdf)  
([https://mindframemedia.imgix.net/assets/src/uploads/Media\\_professionals\\_self-care\\_tips.pdf](https://mindframemedia.imgix.net/assets/src/uploads/Media_professionals_self-care_tips.pdf)).

National Crisis Services:

Lifeline 13 11 14 [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au) (<http://www.lifeline.org.au>).

Blue Knot Helpline and Redress Support Service (Support for adult survivors of childhood trauma and abuse)

1300 657 380 [blueknot.org.au/survivors/blue-knot-helpline-redress-support-service/](http://blueknot.org.au/survivors/blue-knot-helpline-redress-support-service/)  
(<http://projects.aihw.gov.au/PRJ02193/Publications/blueknot.org.au/survivors/blue-knot-helpline-redress-support-service/>).

1800RESPECT (support for people impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse)

1800 737 732 [www.1800respect.org.au](http://www.1800respect.org.au) (<http://www.1800respect.org.au/>)

National Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline 1800 250 015

Media enquiries: Elise Guy, AIHW: Mob. 0468 525 418

For embargoed media copies of the report: [media@aihw.gov.au](mailto:media@aihw.gov.au)

## Release

- The health impact of suicide and self-inflicted injuries in Australia, 2019 | 04 Nov 2021

---

Last updated 1/11/2021 v3.0

© Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2021 