NSW Health

NSW Suicide Monitoring System

Data to July 2024

27 September 2024

NSW GOVERNMENT

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Introduction

This report provides estimates of suspected and confirmed suicides in NSW since 2020 from the NSW Suicide Monitoring and Data Management System.

Warning

The following report contains information about the collection and reporting of suicide data in NSW. NSW Health acknowledges that behind these numbers are people, their families and their friends who are deeply affected by suicide. Some people may find the content of this report confronting or distressing. If affected in this way, please contact:

Beyond Blue, 1300 22 4636, www.beyondblue.org.au or Lifeline, 13 11 14, www.lifeline.org.au

What is the NSW Suicide Monitoring and Data Management System?

The NSW Suicide Monitoring and Data Management System is a collaboration between the NSW Ministry of Health, Department of Communities and Justice, the State Coroner and NSW Police. It estimates the number of recent suspected and confirmed suicides in NSW, using data collected by NSW Police and the State Coroner.

Where does this suicide data come from?

All suicides or suspected suicides in NSW are reported to the Coroner. Data on these Police notifications of suspected suicides are obtained from the "JusticeLink" information system managed by NSW Department of Communities and Justice. As well as the initial Police advice, records are searched for potential indicators of suicide in other fields. These include the manner or place of death, and whether the person communicated their intention to family and friends. Each potential suicide death record is then screened manually by the Department of Communities and Justice to confirm the classification of suspected or confirmed suicide.

How accurate is this data?

The data about suspected suicides are an estimate. A final determination of the manner of death can only be made by the Coroner after detailed enquiry. This will mean that there may be small differences in the number of suicides between reports for the same reporting period. The numbers reported for the most recent month may be underestimated due to time taken to record a report of a death. Evidence from Suicide Registers in other states shows that initial Police advice is usually accurate. However, once all facts are known some suspected suicide deaths are found to be due to other causes, and some deaths initially thought to be accidental are found to be due to suicide.

This report will differ from suicide statistics reported by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), which count suicide deaths which have been confirmed or are being finalised through the coronial process. ABS reported the number of suicide deaths in NSW was 963 in 2019, 910 in 2020, 894 in 2021 and 911 in 2022. National and state reports may also differ slightly in how they count years and locations of death. Some deaths occur in one year and are registered in another, and some deaths occur in a location in a different state from the person's address.

Current findings

There have been 542 suspected or confirmed suicide deaths reported in NSW from 1 January to 31 July 2024.

Suspected suicide deaths in NSW

Table 1 Monthly frequency

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
January	78	100	78	89	82
February	65	56	72	67	72
March	86	85	97	87	70
April	57	74	92	70	73
May	63	77	75	87	84
June	67	66	65	75	86
July	83	72	90	92	75
August	85	63	72	73	-
September	73	64	80	77	-
October	63	78	73	82	-
November	75	71	75	70	-
December	88	93	72	69	-
Total	883	899	941	938	542

Table 2 Gender and age group

	Full year				1 January to 31 July				
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total	883	899	941	938	499	530	569	567	542
Under 18	29	30	24	23	20	21	17	13	7
18-24	95	78	77	84	57	49	43	51	29
25-34	164	165	160	148	93	100	99	98	84
35-44	131	162	179	166	78	88	102	98	104
45-54	167	150	166	181	93	88	103	110	105
55-64	132	126	163	160	72	69	103	99	94
65-74	78	86	84	93	43	51	49	52	62
75-84	49	62	58	59	22	39	33	35	33
85 plus	38	40	30	24	21	25	20	11	24
Female	222	231	210	205	115	139	132	120	127
Under 18	9	15	10	9	5	11	9	7	1
18-24	18	20	21	20	9	13	14	14	4
25-34	41	36	39	34	22	21	24	21	25
35-44	32	46	37	45	15	28	23	26	16
45-54	46	39	33	34	25	22	21	22	24
55-64	33	29	35	29	14	18	22	15	23
65-74	20	22	16	18	13	11	9	8	22
75-84	13	13	11	9	7	10	7	5	7
85 plus	10	11	8	7	5	5	3	2	5
Male	661	668	730	733	384	391	436	447	415
Under 18	20	15	14	14	15	10	8	6	6
18-24	77	58	56	64	48	36	29	37	25
25-34	123	129	120	114	71	79	74	77	59
35-44	99	116	142	121	63	60	79	72	88
45-54	121	111	133	147	68	66	82	88	81
55-64	99	97	128	131	58	51	81	84	71
65-74	58	64	68	75	30	40	40	44	40
75-84	36	49	47	50	15	29	26	30	26
85 plus	28	29	22	17	16	20	17	9	19

Table 3 Location of usual residence

	Full year				1 January to 31 July				
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Greater Sydney	464	438	525	481	247	254	317	296	282
Rest of NSW	409	455	404	433	244	273	245	252	251
Overseas/ Interstate	9	6	10	21	7	3	5	16	8
Total	883	899	941	938	499	530	569	567	542

Information about methods

Deaths have been coded as suspected suicides using a two-stage process of (i) computerised screening followed by (ii) manual review and checking by experienced staff from the NSW Department of Communities and Justice.

All deaths in the NSW JusticeLink database in 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024 were screened. Deaths were flagged as “Suspected Suicides” if the apparent cause of death was described as suicide or suspected suicide, or if key fields included words suggesting specific suicide methods, that the person had left a note or indicated to their family or others that they intended to end their life. All deaths flagged as “Suspected Suicide” were then manually checked against other information, including the Coroner’s determination where this was available.

Deaths were also flagged for screening if they met any of three other criteria. First, if the death occurred in circumstances that are sometimes due to suicide, such as drug overdoses or single vehicle accidents. Second, if Police had recorded that the person had previously attempted to end their life. Third, if the person had experienced recent stressors such as relationship breakups or job loss. All of these records were manually checked, and some were re-classified as “Suspected Suicide” deaths.

People with a recorded residential address in NSW were allocated to Capital City Geographical Area (Greater Sydney, Rest of NSW) using Australian Bureau of Statistics definitions. Rest of NSW includes the Level 4 Statistical Areas (SA4s) of Richmond - Tweed, Coffs Harbour, Grafton, Mid North Coast, Newcastle and Lake Macquarie, Hunter Valley, New England and North West, Central West, Far West and Orana, Murray, Riverina, Capital Region, Illawarra, Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven. Central Coast and Blue Mountains regions are included in Greater Sydney. People with an interstate or overseas address, or no address but a residency status of Overseas Visitor were classified as interstate or overseas visitors.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria for reporting

Issue	What is included	What has been corrected	What is excluded
Month and Year of death	Deaths occurring in 2020, 2021, 2022 ,2023 and 2024	Date of death is unknown for some records – the date of recording of death has been used for those records	Deaths occurring prior to 2019, even if registered in 2019 or 2020
Place of death	Deaths occurring in NSW, or involving a NSW resident and investigated by the State Coroner	Records where the place of death is unknown or missing are assumed to have occurred in NSW	Three records were excluded, one in 2019 and two in 2020. See note (1) below
Address of the person	All records; Totals include records where the address of the person is not known	No correction	No exclusion
Age group	All records; Totals include records where age is not known	No correction	No exclusion
Gender	All records; Totals include records where gender is not known or other	No correction	No exclusion

Notes

(1) Three deaths of interstate residents were excluded where the incident occurred in the state of residence, but death occurred in a NSW hospital. These incidents were investigated by that state's Coroner and would be included in reporting in that state. A small number of incidents occurred in NSW and involved NSW Police and the Coroner, but death occurred after transfer to an interstate hospital: these are included in the figures in this report.

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