



SUICIDE PREVENTION AUSTRALIA

FACT SHEET: FIRST NATIONS + SUICIDE PREVENTION

2021

BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have poorer mental health and higher rates of self-harm and suicide than the general population in Australia due to experiences of discrimination, historical dispossession, the forcible removal of children, cultural suppression, and exclusion¹.
- The mental health, wellbeing and lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities continue to be affected by the cycle of intergenerational trauma, social marginalisation, dispossession, loss of cultural identity, community breakdown and the impact of colonialism².
- The rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to self-determination, justice and autonomy should underpin everything we do in suicide prevention.
- To tackle Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide, there needs to be well-funded whole-of-population suicide prevention solutions. Solutions need to be targeted programs and services designed by, led by and jointly implemented and evaluated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations in partnership with the communities targeted. Programs and services should focus on strengthening cultural identity and belonging, and use Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander concepts of social and emotional wellbeing, as well as reaching agreed targets under the National Closing the Gap agreement³.
- There is a lack of accurate and culturally competent data on the social determinants of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide. There are different means of collecting data on Indigenous status, suicide deaths and social determinants between the Commonwealth, States and Territories which hinder the targeting, tailoring, and assessment of suicide prevention strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- For more information on Suicide Prevention Australia's position on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People Suicide Prevention, please refer to our [policy position](#).

¹ Dudgeon, P., Calma, T., & Holland, C. (2017). The context and causes of the suicide of Indigenous people in Australia. *Journal of Indigenous Wellbeing, Te Mauri, Pimatisiwin*, 2(2), 5-15.

² Coroner's Court of Western Australia. (2019). Inquest into the 13 Deaths of Children and Young Persons in the Kimberley Region.

³ The National Closing the Gap agreement. 2020. Accessed at: <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement>

There are crisis services available 24/7 if you or someone you know is in distress:

Lifeline: 13 11 14

Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467

www.lifeline.org.au

www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au

Suicide Prevention Australia

Phone: 02 9262 1130

Email: admin@suicidepreventionaust.org

Web: www.suicidepreventionaust.org

STATISTICS

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people die from suicide at double the rate of the rest of the Australian population at 24.6 per 100,000 compared to 12.9 per 100,000 for non-Indigenous people for 2015–2019⁴.
- Suicide rates are still higher amongst young people, with males aged between 15–24 at 55 per 100,000⁵. Rates are rising amongst Indigenous women and there was a significant annual average rise in suicide rates of 5.8% between 2001–02 to 2015–16⁶.
- 195 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people took their own lives in 2019.
- Suicide is the leading cause of death for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, aged 5–17, who account for one-third (32.4%) of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child deaths⁷.
- Rates of self-harm for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are double for the rest of the Australian population.
 - The highest rates of self-harm amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders was for 15–19 year olds, with 668 hospitalisations per 100,000 people, whereas for the rest of Australians aged 15–19, the hospitalisation rate was 332 per 100,000 people
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females aged 15–19 recorded the highest rate of intentional self-harm hospitalisations (1,045 hospitalisations per 100,000 population), followed by those aged 20–24 (743)⁸.

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2020). 'Intentional self-harm in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people', *Causes of Death, Australia*, accessed online on 7 January 2021 at <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/causes-death/causes-death-australia/latest-release#intentional-self-harm-suicide-in-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people>

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ AIHW 2019. Deaths by suicide amongst Indigenous Australians. Accessed at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring/data/populations-age-groups/suicide-indigenous-australians>

⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2020). 'Intentional self-harm in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people', *Causes of Death, Australia*, accessed online on 7 January 2021 at <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/causes-death/causes-death-australia/latest-release#intentional-self-harm-suicide-in-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people>

⁸ AIHW 2019. Deaths by suicide amongst Indigenous Australians. Accessed at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring/data/populations-age-groups/suicide-indigenous-australians>

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