



BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- Suicide is the leading cause of death for people aged between 15-24.¹
- For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth, significantly higher rates of suicide are experienced compared to non-Indigenous youth.^{2,3}
- High rates of suicide are further experienced by young people who are LGBTIQ, or young people who live in rural or remote areas.⁴
- Research reports approximately 100-200 suicide attempts for every one suicide occur among young people.^{5,6}
- Research estimating lifetime prevalence of mental illness determined emergence of half of all mental illnesses by the age of 14 years, and 3 quarters by age 24.⁷
- Priority needs to be given to youth-specific early intervention strategies for investment, with particular priority on programs and services that are co-designed with young people.
- By implementing early intervention and prevention programs, resilience can be built early in life to enhance coping mechanisms when faced with adversity in later life.
- Risk factors for youth suicide include social determinants of health such as educational disadvantage, exposure to adverse life events, social and cultural disadvantage.⁸
- Barriers young people face to seeking help from an adult include embarrassment, uncertainty, concern at breaking trust of their friend, and feeling as though the situation would become worse if an adult was involved.¹⁰
- Research identifies most young people experiencing suicidality do not seek help from mental health services and are more likely to seek help from peers.⁹
- Suicide prevention strategies should be tailored to address the risk factors unique to young Australians and should match their help seeking behaviours.
- Programs that help build, strengthen, and promote protective factors of suicide are likely to reduce the risk of suicide among young people.

¹ Australian Institute for Health and Welfare. (2021). Deaths by suicide among young people, AIHW, available online at <<https://www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring/data/populations-age-groups/suicide-among-young-people>>.

² Department of Health. (2013). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide: origins, trends and incidence, available online at <<https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/publications/publishing.nsf/Content/mental-natsisps-strat-toc~mental-natsisps-strat-1~mental-natsisps-strat-1-ab>>.

³ Kessler, R.C., Berglund, P., Demler, O., Jin, R., Merikangas, K.R. & Walters, E.E. (2005). Lifetime prevalence and age-of-onset distributions of DSM-IV disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication, *Arch Gen Psychiatry*, 62(7).

⁴ Robinson, J., Bailey, E., Browne, V., Cox, G. & Hooper, C. (2016). Raising the bar for youth suicide prevention, *Orygen, The National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health*, Melbourne.

⁵ Beyond Blue. (2020). Suicide, available online at <<https://healthyfamilies.beyondblue.org.au/age-13/mental-health-conditions-in-young-people/suicide>>.

⁶ Goldsmith SK, Pellmar TC, Kleinman AM, Bunney WE, editors. (2002). Reducing suicide: a national imperative. *Washington, DC: National Academy Press*.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Beautrais, A.L. (2000). Risk factors for suicide and attempted suicide among young people, *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*.

⁹ Michelmore, L. & Hindle, P. (2012). Help-seeking for suicidal thoughts and self-harm in young people: A systematic review, *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behaviour*, 42(5).

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

- Over one-third of all deaths in people aged 15-24 are due to suicide.¹⁰
- 384 Australian young people (aged 18–24) died by suicide in 2019.¹¹
- 96 deaths by suicide occurred among children and adolescents (aged 5–17) in 2019.¹²
- Deaths by suicide represented 40% of all deaths in young people aged 15–17 and 36% of all deaths in those aged 18–24.¹³
- Over 80% of child suicides in 2019 occurred between the ages 15 to 17.¹⁴
- Northern Territory reported the highest rate of child suicide deaths for the period 2015-2019 (8.7 deaths per 100,000).¹⁵
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females aged 15-24 years experience high rates of suicide.¹⁶
- In 2019, one third of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child deaths were suicides.¹⁷
- 80% of child suicides among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were aged 15-17 years.¹⁸
- Australian research identified 71% of student participants had known someone with a mental health problem and 64% had known a peer with a mental health problem.¹⁹
- LGBTQA+ young people aged 16 to 17 are almost three times more likely to have attempted suicide in the past 12 months.²⁰
- LGBTQA+ young people aged 16 to 17 are almost five times more likely to have attempted suicide in their lifetime.

¹⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021). Causes of Death, available online at < <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/causes-death/causes-death-australia/latest-release#intentional-self-harm-suicides-key-characteristics>>.

¹¹ Australian Institute for Health and Welfare. (2021). Deaths by suicide among young people, AIHW, available online at < <https://www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring/data/populations-age-groups/suicide-among-young-people>>.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ NSW Commission for Children and Young People & Mental Health Commission of NSW. (2014). Support in tough times: encouraging young people to seek help for their friends, *NSW Commission for Children and Young People, Mental Health Commission of NSW, Sydney*.

²⁰ LGBTQI+ Health Australia. (2021). Snapshot of mental health and suicide prevention statistics for LGBTQI+ people, April 2021, available online at https://d3n8a8pro7vnm.cloudfront.net/lgbtihealth/pages/549/attachments/original/1620871703/2021_Snapshot_of_Mental_Health2.pdf?1620871703.

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