



SUICIDE PREVENTION AUSTRALIA COMMUNITY TRACKER

The Suicide Prevention Australia Community Tracker is a quarterly survey that sheds light on the prevalence of suicidal behaviours, what social and economic issues are driving distress, and the impact of suicide in our community. It is designed to provide real-time, community-wide insights to policy makers, practitioners and the community and to support suicide prevention activities across Australia.

About the survey

Total sample size was 1024 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 20th -22nd February 2023. The survey was completed online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all Australian adults (aged 18+).

Distress levels and experience of suicide

- 74% of Australians reported experiencing elevated distress in February 2023 compared with the same time last year – a 3% increase on the previous quarter (November 2022).
- Three in ten (30%) Australians say they know someone in their personal life or networks, who has died by or attempted suicide in the past 12 months – an 8% decrease from November (38%).
- One in five (19%) Australians report having experienced suicidal behaviour in the past 12 months – a 3% decrease from November 2022.

Australians impacted by suicide	Aug-21	Aug-22	Nov-22	Feb-23	Change
Knows someone directly or indirectly who has died or attempted suicide	25%	31%	38%	30%	+5%
Yes, directly	15%	19%	24%	19%	+4%
Yes, indirectly	11%	15%	21%	15%	+4%
No	70%	66%	60%	66%	-4%
Don't know/prefer not to say	5%	3%	2%	2%	-3%

Risk factors

- Cost-of-living and personal debt remained the number one issue driving this elevated distress in February 2023 for the third quarter running (46%) – also up 5%, while social isolation and loneliness (26%) regained second place (+2%) compared with November 2022. Family and relationship breakdowns (24%) fell one spot to third (-1%).
- Cost of living and personal debt (46%) and unemployment and job security (21%) escalated the most amongst Australians the past three months (+5%). However, no changes occurred with respect to rankings aside from social isolation and loneliness and family and relationship breakdowns swapping places.

- Increased distress levels with respect to cost of living and personal was primarily driven by Australians aged 18-24 (58%, +13%) and 50-64 (48%, +11%) the past three months, as well as Australians in South Australia (58%, +31%) and those who identified as not working (64%, +17%).
- Increased distress levels with respect to unemployment and job security was primarily driven by Australians aged 18-24 (37%, +17%) the past three months, as well as Australians in South Australia (25%, +12%).
- Australians aged 18-24 years are more likely than all older age groups to say that social isolation and loneliness (43%) and unemployment and job security (37%) are causing elevated distress.

Causes of elevated distress	Nov-22	Feb-23	Change
Cost of living and personal debt	41%	46%	+5%
Social isolation and loneliness	24%	26%	+2%
Family and relationship breakdowns	25%	24%	-1%
Housing access and affordability	22%	23%	+1%
Unemployment and job security	16%	21%	+5%
Environment & climate change (including drought/natural disasters)	14%	16%	+2%
Social media, self-image & bullying	14%	13%	-1%
Alcohol and other drugs (including personal use/someone close)	11%	13%	+2%
New technology and social change	11%	12%	+1%
Exposure to suicide in others	10%	8%	-2%
Overall reporting levels of elevated distress	71%	74%	+3%

Help-seeking

- One in five (20%) of Australians say they have visited, sought help or searched for advice from a suicide prevention service in the past 12 months – down 6% compared to November 2022.
- Around seven in ten (68%) of those that have been formally diagnosed with a mental illness in the past year, have visited, sought help or searched for advice from a suicide prevention service in the past 12 months – down 12% compared to November 2022.
- 66% of those that report having experienced suicidal behaviour in the past 12 months, have also visited, sought help or search for advice from a suicide prevention service in the past 12 months – down 17% compared to November 2022.

Demographic breakdowns

- Women remain to be more likely than men to say that cost of living and personal debt are circumstances causing elevated distress (50% compared to 43%) and family and relationship breakdowns (28% compared to 21%) and housing access and affordability (27% compared to 19%). On the other hand, men are more likely than women to say that unemployment and job security (23 % compared to 18%) and new technology and social change (14% compared to 10%) are causing elevated distress.
- Younger Australians (18 to 34 years) are more likely than their older counterparts (50 years +) to say they have experienced elevated distress (beyond normal levels) due

to various circumstances, compared with this time last year (82% compared to 64%), which is up 5% since November 2022.

- Men are more likely than women to report having experienced suicidal behaviour in the past 12 months (20% compared to 17%). Although the gap between male and female has shrunk compared to November 2022 (27% compared to 16%)
- Australians under the age of 50 years are twice as likely than those over 50 years to report having experienced suicidal behaviour in the past 12 months (24% compared to 12%). The difference has lowered compared to November 2022 (33% compared to 8%)

State and Territory Breakdown

Australians impacted by suicide	NSW Nov 22	NSW Feb 23	VIC Nov 22	VIC Feb 23	QLD Nov 22	QLD Feb 23	SA Nov 22	SA Feb 23	WA Nov 22	WA Feb 23	TAS/N T/ACT Nov 22	TAS/N T/ACT Feb 23
Knows someone directly or indirectly who has died or attempted suicide	40%	31% (-9%)	30%	30% (+0%)	38%	30% (-8%)	42%	23% (-19%)	39%	30% (-9%)	34%	38% (+4%)
Yes, directly	26%	22%	22%	16%	23%	18%	32%	15%	22%	17%	20%	27%
Yes, indirectly	21%	13%	20%	18%	22%	15%	21%	13%	25%	20%	18%	11%
No	58%	66%	64%	66%	59%	63%	54%	72%	60%	67%	66%	60%
Don't know/prefer not to say	2%	3%	1%	4%	3%	7%	4%	5%	1%	4%	0%	2%

Australians feeling distress	NSW Nov 22	NSW Feb 23	VIC Nov 22	VIC Feb 23	QLD Nov 22	QLD Feb 23	SA Nov 22	SA Feb 23	WA Nov 22	WA Feb 23	TAS/N T/ACT Nov 22	TAS/N T/ACT Feb 23
Circumstances have caused elevated levels of distress in the past 12 months	69%	77%	74%	74%	70%	66%	67%	76%	73%	79%	78%	73%
Suicidal behaviour (thoughts, plans, attempts)	NSW Nov 22	NSW Feb 23	VIC Nov 22	VIC Feb 23	QLD Nov 22	QLD Feb 23	SA Nov 22	SA Feb 23	WA Nov 22	WA Feb 23	TAS/N T/ACT Nov 22	TAS/N T/ACT Feb 23
% of individuals experiencing suicidal behaviour in the past 12 months	21%	17%	21%	19%	27%	18%	25%	23%	19%	22%	12%	18%

Causes of elevated distress – November 2022	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT
Cost of living and personal debt	41%	45%	41%	27%	42%	42%	42%	42%
Family and relationship breakdowns	24%	27%	23%	32%	22%	20%	20%	20%
Social isolation and loneliness	24%	25%	22%	28%	23%	21%	21%	21%
Housing access and affordability	20%	22%	23%	19%	20%	27%	27%	27%
Unemployment and job security	18%	16%	15%	12%	20%	12%	12%	12%
Environment & climate change (including drought/natural disasters)	16%	14%	11%	17%	11%	14%	14%	14%
Social media, self-image & bullying	13%	17%	11%	13%	17%	11%	11%	11%
Alcohol and other drugs (including personal use/someone close)	12%	11%	15%	12%	5%	10%	10%	10%
New technology and social change	8%	13%	9%	13%	16%	4%	4%	4%
Exposure to suicide in others	9%	9%	9%	13%	12%	11%	11%	11%
Overall reporting levels of elevated distress	69%	74%	70%	67%	73%	78%	78%	78%

Causes of elevated distress – February 2023	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT
Cost of living and personal debt	47%	47%	43%	58%	42%	39%	39%	39%
Family and relationship breakdowns	24%	26%	22%	27%	28%	19%	19%	19%
Social isolation and loneliness	25%	29%	24%	19%	25%	29%	29%	29%
Housing access and affordability	23%	24%	26%	17%	27%	20%	20%	20%
Unemployment and job security	24%	18%	20%	25%	19%	16%	16%	16%
Environment & climate change (including drought/natural disasters)	18%	17%	12%	6%	20%	16%	16%	16%
Social media, self-image & bullying	15%	15%	12%	11%	14%	5%	5%	5%
Alcohol and other drugs (including personal use/someone close)	12%	11%	12%	18%	20%	13%	13%	13%
New technology and social change	15%	11%	11%	13%	8%	8%	8%	8%
Exposure to suicide in others	7%	11%	7%	3%	12%	12%	12%	12%
Overall reporting levels of elevated distress	77%	74%	66%	76%	79%	73%	73%	73%

Note: TAS/NT/ACT figures combined in survey sample.