



# 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.

## **Why this data is important**

Our latest data shows many Australians are doing it tough right now. However, our findings also confirm 'middle-age, middle-wage' workers are carrying a greater share of the economic burden.

It is critical for economic and policy decision makers to understand the human cost of the cost-of-living crisis and ensure investment in support services is targeted towards those who need it most.

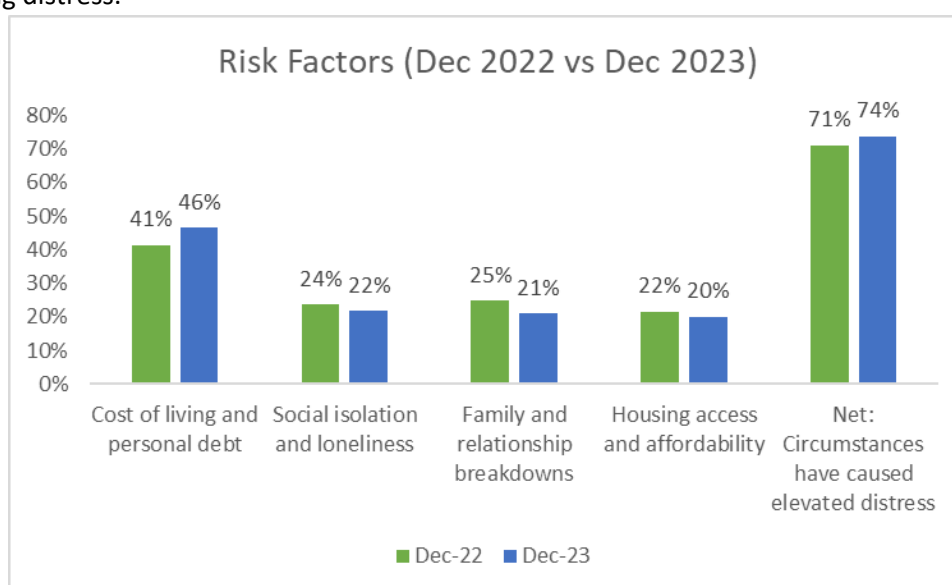
Together, we can turn evidence-based policy into action and save lives.

## **National findings**

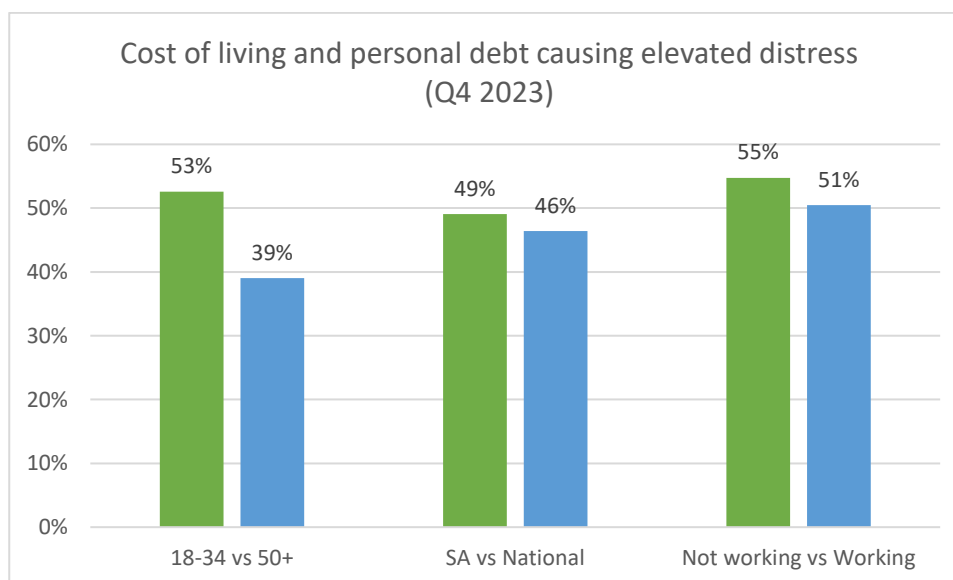
- Nearly three in four (74%) Australians say they have experienced elevated distress due to social and economic circumstances.
- Over nine in ten (92%) Australians believe that social and economic circumstances will still pose a significant risk to suicide rates in Australia this time next year.
- Nationally, elevated 'cost-of-living and personal debt' distress for all Australians increased from 41% to 46% (+5pp) in the past 12 months.
- Over a quarter (27%) of Australians know someone in their personal life or networks, who has died by or attempted suicide either directly (17%) or indirectly (13%).
- Over a quarter (27% - lower than the 12M average of 34%) of Australians now say they know someone in their personal life or networks, who has died by or attempted suicide either directly (17%) or indirectly (13%).
- Almost one in five (18% - consistent with 19%, the 12M average) Australians have been formally diagnosed with a mental health illness in the past 12 months, with 13% receiving treatment and 5% without treatment.
- 5.15% (lower than the 12M average of 20%) of Australians report having experienced suicidal behaviour in the past 12 months. Among these, one in ten (11%), have had serious thoughts of suicide, while 3% have made a suicide plan, and 1% have attempted suicide in the past 12 months.
- Nearly a fifth (17% - significantly lower than the 12M average of 23%) of Australians say they have visited, sought help or searched for advice from a suicide prevention service in the past 12 months.

## Risk factors

- Cost-of-living and personal debt remained the number one issue driving elevated distress in December 2023 for the sixth quarter running (46%). While there were slight decreases in social isolation and loneliness (22%, -2pp), family and relationship breakdowns (21%, -1pp) and housing access and affordability (20%, -4pp) all continued to be in the top four of factors driving distress.



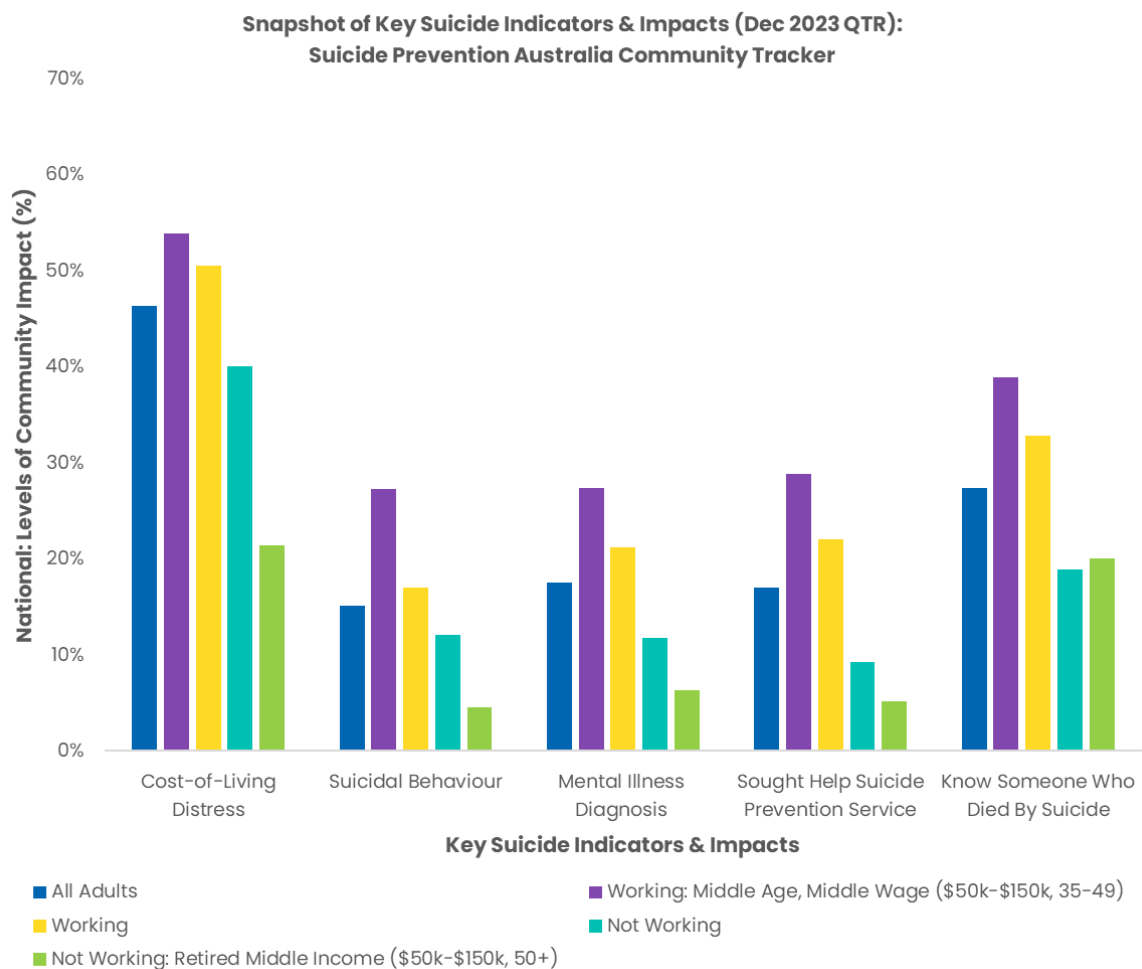
- Increased distress levels with respect to cost-of-living and personal debt was primarily driven by Australians aged 18-34 (53%) the past three months, as well as Australians in South Australia (49%) and those who identified as not working (55%).



- Increased distress levels with respect to social isolation and loneliness was primarily driven by Australians aged 18-24 (34%, +14pp) the past three months, as well as Australians in South Australia (33%, +17pp).

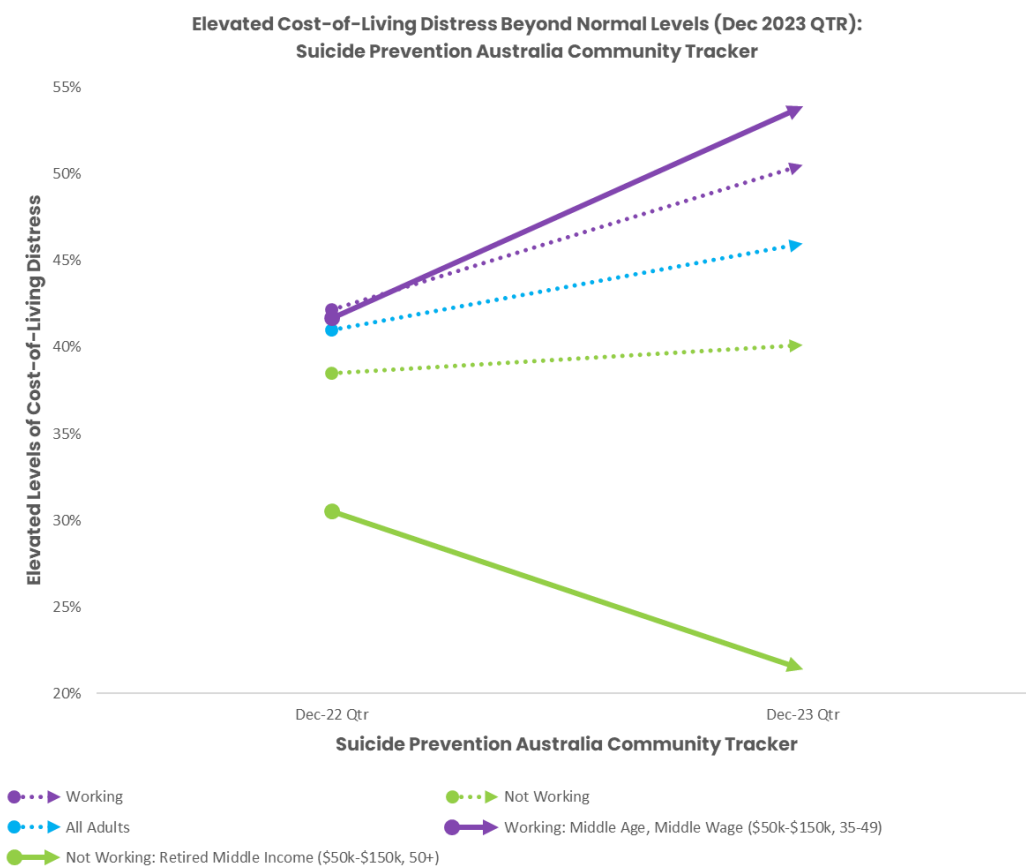
Causes of elevated distress	Sept-23	Dec-23	Change
Cost of living and personal debt	46%	46%	+0pp
Social isolation and loneliness	24%	22%	-2pp
Family and relationship breakdowns	22%	21%	+1pp
Housing access and affordability	24%	20%	-4pp
Unemployment and job security	19%	18%	-1pp
Environment & climate change (including drought/natural disasters)	11%	13%	+2pp
Social media, self-image & bullying	12%	11%	-1pp
Alcohol and other drugs (including personal use/someone close)	9%	10%	+1pp
New technology and social change	8%	10%	+2pp
Exposure to suicide in others	8%	6%	-2pp
<b>Overall reporting levels of elevated distress</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>+3pp</b>

### Middle-age, middle-wage workers are doing it tough



- The proportion of middle-age, middle-wage Australians who say they have visited, sought help or searched for advice from a suicide prevention service, either directly or indirectly, in the past 12 months has halved since November 2022 (Nov-23: 25%, compared to Nov-22: 52%).

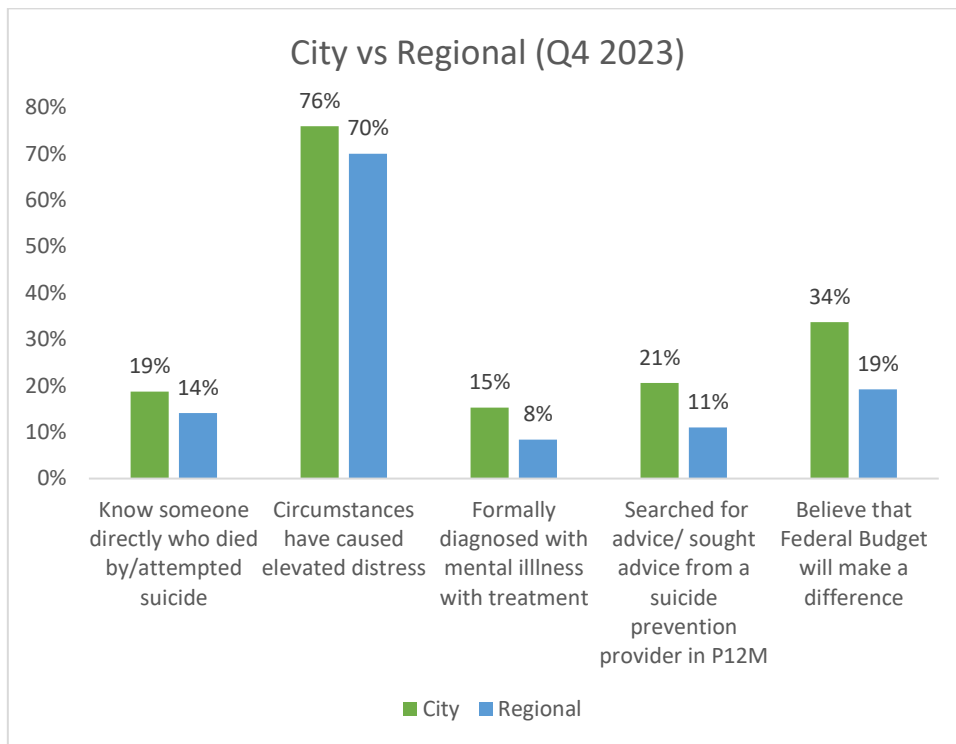
- Seeking help, or advice from a clinical service on suicide prevention either directly or indirectly in the past 12 months remains the top way middle-age, middle-wage Australians are seeking help this wave (14%), though it has fallen by 23% since November 2022.
- Encouragingly, middle-age, middle-wage Australians are 7% less likely than they were in November 2022 to say social and economic circumstances have caused them elevated distress over the past 12 months, but still three in four (74%) say this.
- Similarly, social isolation and loneliness (-17%), family and relationship breakdowns (-13%), and alcohol and other drugs (-9%) have all declined this wave as key social causes of elevated distress since November 2022.
- Cost of living and personal debt has increased by 11% this quarter as a cause of elevated distress among middle-age, middle-wage Australians since November 2022 (54%, compared to 43%)



**Definition**

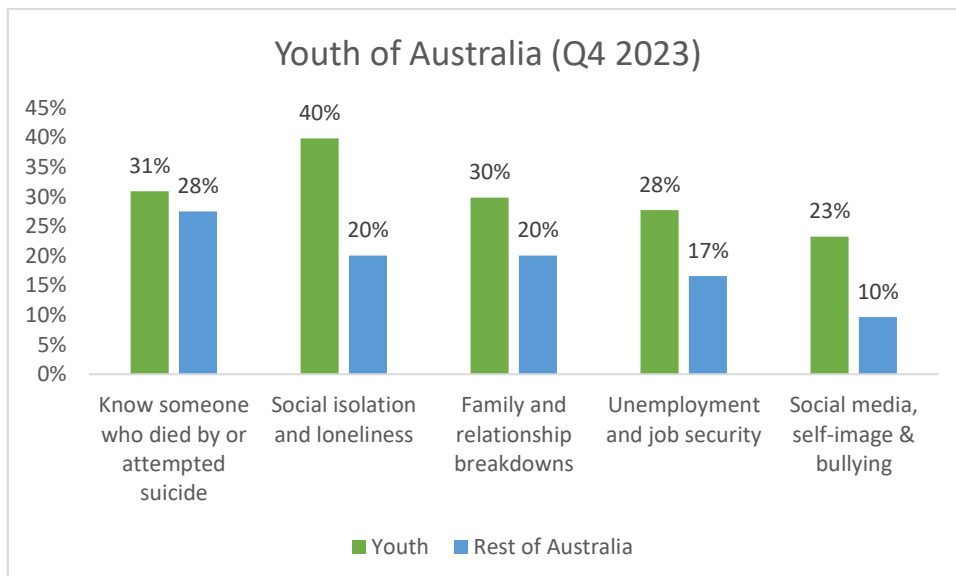
Middle-age, middle-wage workers are those aged 35-49 years and earning a household income of \$50k-\$150 in Australia.

**City vs Regional**



- Those living in cities are more likely to know someone who died by or attempt suicide and are more likely to cite elevated distress levels.
- Those living in cities are also more likely to receive treatment for mental illness and seek for advice from a suicide prevention provider in the past 12 months
- Those not living in cities are less hopeful that the Federal Budget will make a difference

## Youth



- Youth in Australia are more likely to know someone who died or attempted suicide and experience certain risk factors compared to the rest of Australia.

## State and Territory Breakdown

Australians impacted by suicide	NSW Sep 23	NSW Dec 23	VIC Sep 23	VIC Dec 23	QLD Sep 23	QLD Dec 23	SA Sep 23	SA Dec 23	WA Sep 23	WA Dec 23	TAS/NT /ACT Sep 23	TAS/NT /ACT Dec 23
Knows someone directly or indirectly who has died or attempted suicide	31%	30%	29%	27%	24%	25%	25%	31%	29%	25%	41%	24%
Yes, directly	17%	19%	16%	17%	16%	14%	14%	26%	14%	14%	24%	12%
Yes, indirectly	18%	14%	15%	13%	12%	12%	16%	5%	18%	18%	19%	12%
No	67%	67%	67%	71%	73%	72%	71%	65%	65%	69%	57%	74%
Don't know/prefer not to say	2%	3%	4%	2%	3%	3%	4%	4%	6%	6%	2%	2%

Australians feeling distress	NSW Sep 23	NSW Dec 23	VIC Sep 23	VIC Dec 23	QLD Sep 23	QLD Dec 23	SA Sep 23	SA Dec 23	WA Sep 23	WA Dec 23	TAS/NT /ACT Sep 23	TAS/NT /ACT Dec 23
Circumstances have caused elevated levels of distress in the past 12 months	72%	75%	74%	74%	68%	73%	81%	72%	61%	74%	73%	76%
Suicidal behaviour (thoughts, plans, attempts)	NSW Sep 23	NSW Dec 23	VIC Sep 23	VIC Dec 23	QLD Sep 23	QLD Dec 23	SA Sep 23	SA Dec 23	WA Sep 23	WA Dec 23	TAS/NT /ACT Sep 23	TAS/NT /ACT Dec 23
% of individuals experiencing suicidal behaviour in the past 12 months	18%	15%	21%	14%	15%	13%	17%	19%	16%	22%	20%	10%

Causes of elevated distress – September 2023	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT
Cost of living and personal debt	46%	48%	42%	58%	38%	52%	52%	52%
Housing access and affordability	24%	23%	26%	33%	16%	22%	22%	22%
Social isolation and loneliness	25%	26%	19%	29%	17%	23%	23%	23%
Family and relationship breakdowns	24%	21%	20%	30%	10%	32%	32%	32%
Unemployment and job security	22%	19%	16%	16%	14%	16%	16%	16%
Social media, self-image & bullying	14%	11%	13%	18%	9%	9%	9%	9%
Environment & climate change (including drought/natural disasters)	13%	10%	12%	15%	8%	9%	9%	9%
Alcohol and other drugs (including personal use/someone close)	10%	6%	11%	10%	9%	10%	10%	10%
Exposure to suicide in others	9%	7%	6%	11%	10%	5%	5%	5%
New technology and social change	8%	8%	6%	12%	5%	5%	5%	5%
<b>Overall reporting levels of elevated distress</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>73%</b>

Causes of elevated distress – December 2023	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT
Cost of living and personal debt	46%	47%	46%	49%	46%	47%	47%	47%
Social isolation and loneliness	26%	21%	17%	23%	19%	22%	22%	22%
Family and relationship breakdowns	21%	22%	17%	28%	23%	17%	17%	17%
Housing access and affordability	22%	19%	20%	19%	21%	18%	18%	18%
Unemployment and job security	19%	16%	15%	22%	19%	19%	19%	19%
Environment & climate change (including drought/natural disasters)	15%	10%	12%	18%	10%	21%	21%	21%
Social media, self-image & bullying	14%	9%	10%	9%	9%	9%	9%	9%
Alcohol and other drugs (including personal use/someone close)	10%	11%	8%	14%	11%	10%	10%	10%
New technology and social change	13%	8%	6%	10%	8%	12%	12%	12%
Exposure to suicide in others	6%	7%	5%	2%	6%	7%	7%	7%
<b>Overall reporting levels of elevated distress</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>73%</b>

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

## **About the survey**

The Suicide Prevention Australia Community Tracker is undertaken in partnership with YouGov Australia. Total sample size was 1035 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 16th - 20th November 2023. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all Australian adults (aged 18+).