



SUICIDE PREVENTION AUSTRALIA COMMUNITY TRACKER

MAY 2025

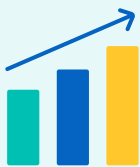
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The Suicide Prevention Australia Community Tracker is a quarterly survey that sheds light on the prevalence of suicidal behaviours, the social and economic issues 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.



This report focuses on survey participants who resided in Western Australia at the time of each survey.

High Level Overview



Close to **7 in 10** WA residents reported distress beyond normal levels since September 2022. **Distress peaked in March 2023**, affecting close to **4 in 5** residents.



Since September 2022, over **1 in 8** WA residents said that they have had **serious thoughts of suicide in the past 12 months**.

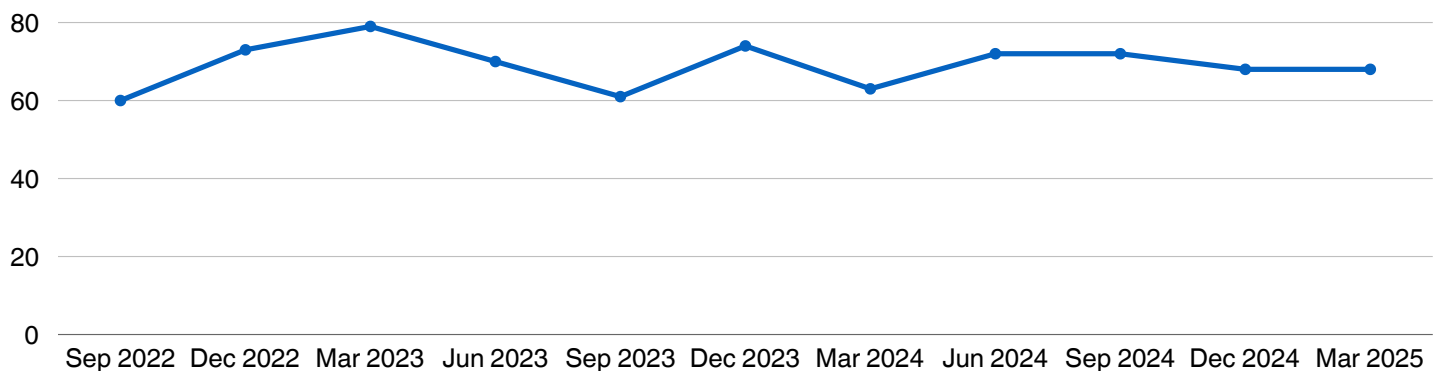


Cost-of-living and personal debt distress remained the top stressor for 11 quarters in a row. This was ahead of the no 2 stressor, family and relationship breakdown, by 20 percentage points.



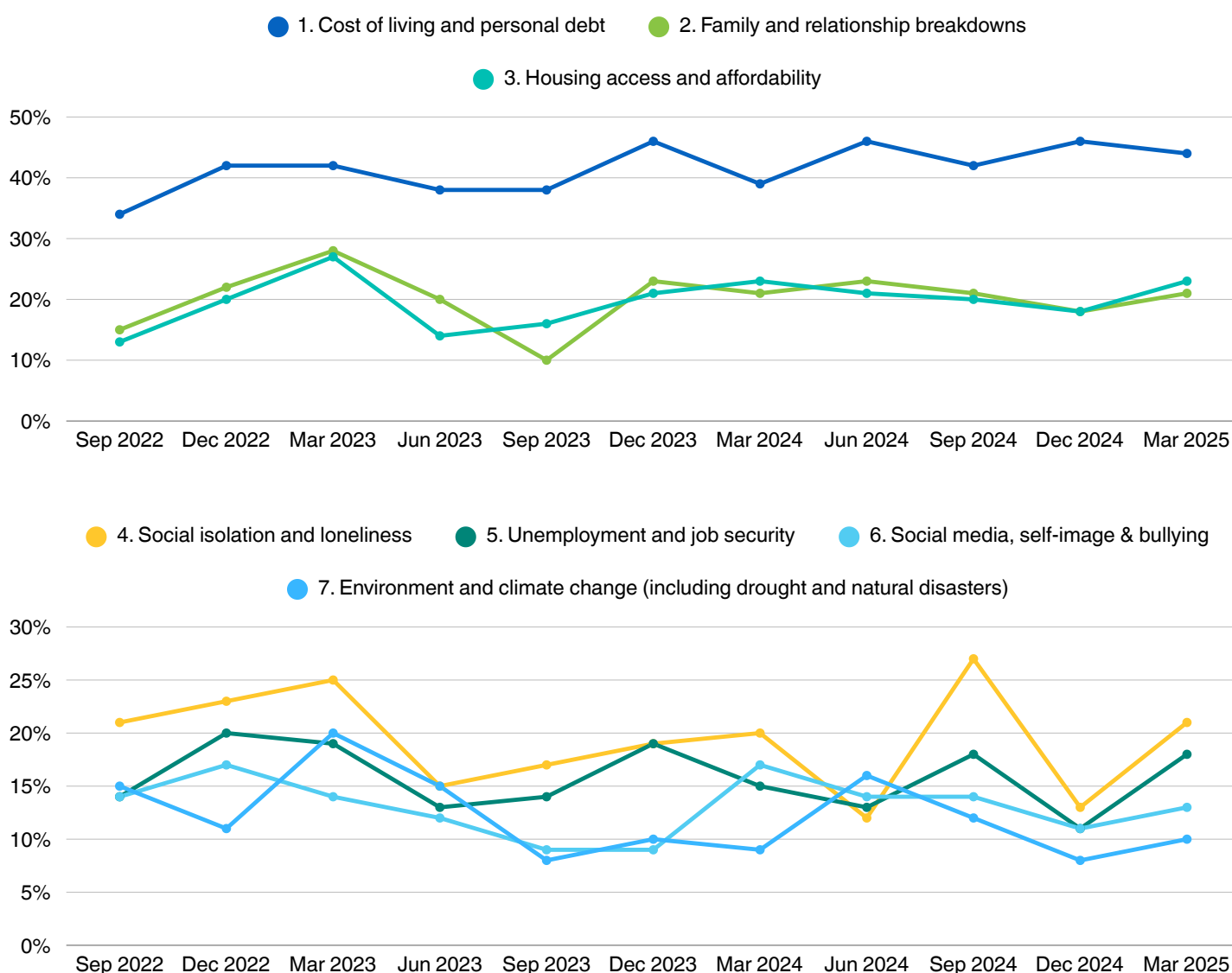
Despite consistent or higher levels of distress, **help-seeking levels have fallen** in WA, since 2022.

Elevated distress compared to the past 12 months for any reason



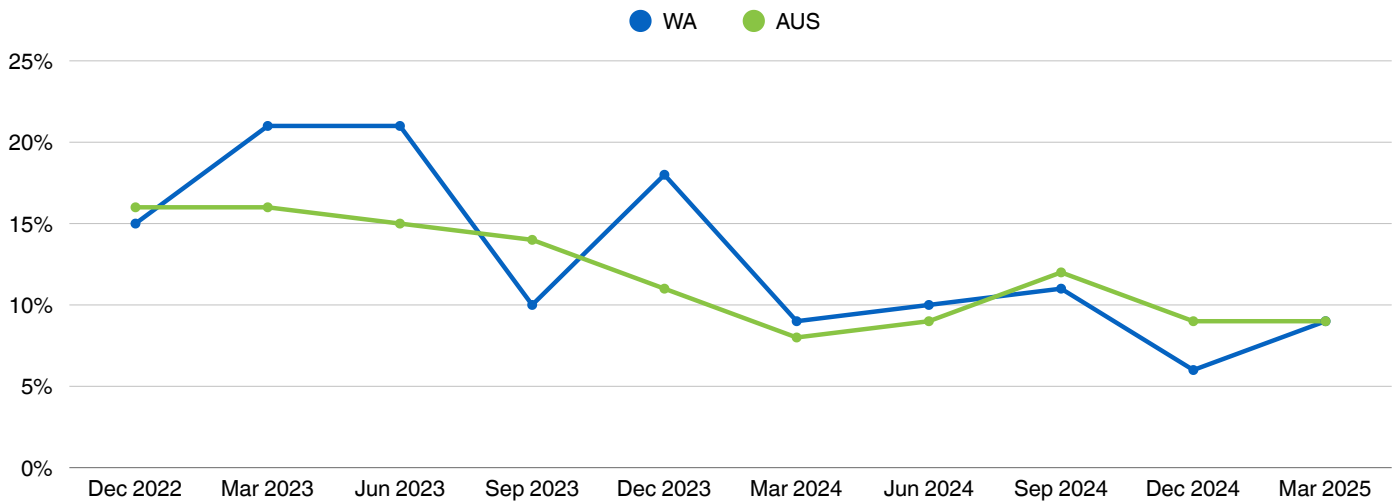
- Over the past 11 quarters, close 7 in 10 (69%) residents of Western Australia experienced elevated distress beyond normal levels compared to the same time last year due to social and economic circumstances.
- Distress peaked during the March 2023 quarter, affecting close to 4 in 5 (79%) residents of Western Australia. Cost-of-living and personal debt distress remained the top stressor for 11 quarters in a row.
- Different stressors were ranked 2nd highest at different times. Family and relationship distress was the 2nd highest stressor for 5 out of 11 quarters, followed by housing access and affordability for 4 quarters, and social isolation and loneliness for 2 quarters.

Top Stressors in Western Australia



| Causes of elevated distress (WA) | 11-Qtr Average |
|--|----------------|
| Cost of living and personal debt | 42% |
| Family and relationship breakdowns | 20% |
| Housing access and affordability | 20% |
| Social isolation and loneliness | 20% |
| Unemployment and job security | 16% |
| Social media, self-image & bullying | 13% |
| Environment and climate change | 12% |
| Overall reporting levels of elevated distress | 70% |

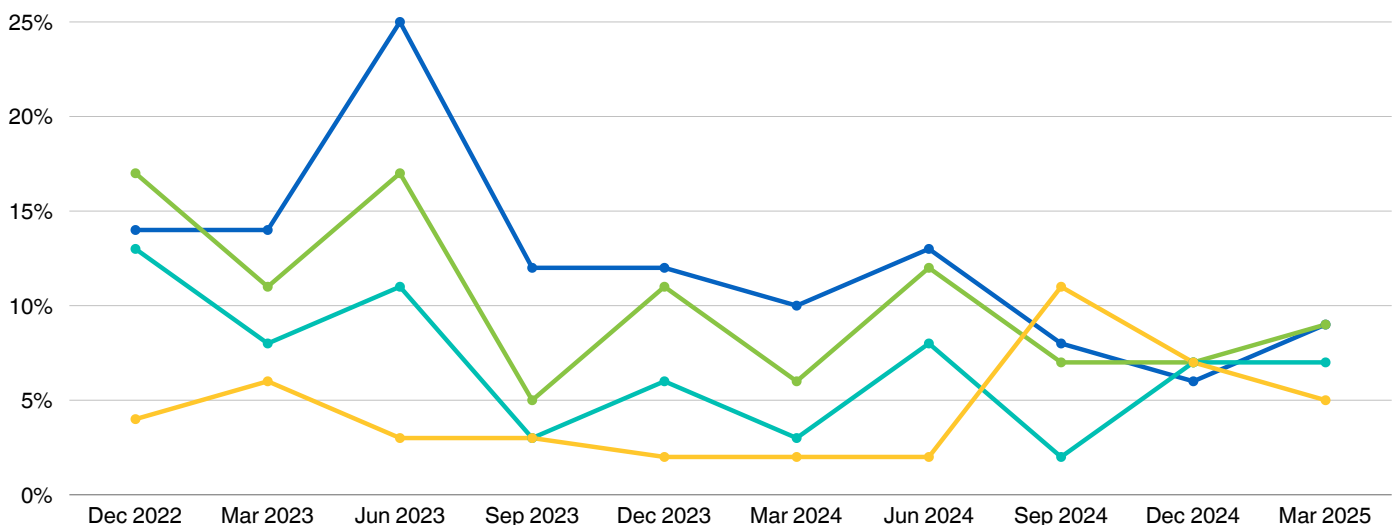
Suicidal behaviour



- Since December 2022, over 1 in 8 (13%) residents of Western Australia said they have had serious thoughts of suicide in the past 12 months, higher than the national average of 12% for the same time period. This is due to specific time periods where the percentage of those who had serious thoughts of suicide in WA exceeded the national average (March 2023, June 2023, and Dec 2023).
- State-wide, the percentage of people experiencing serious thoughts of suicide has fallen since 2022.

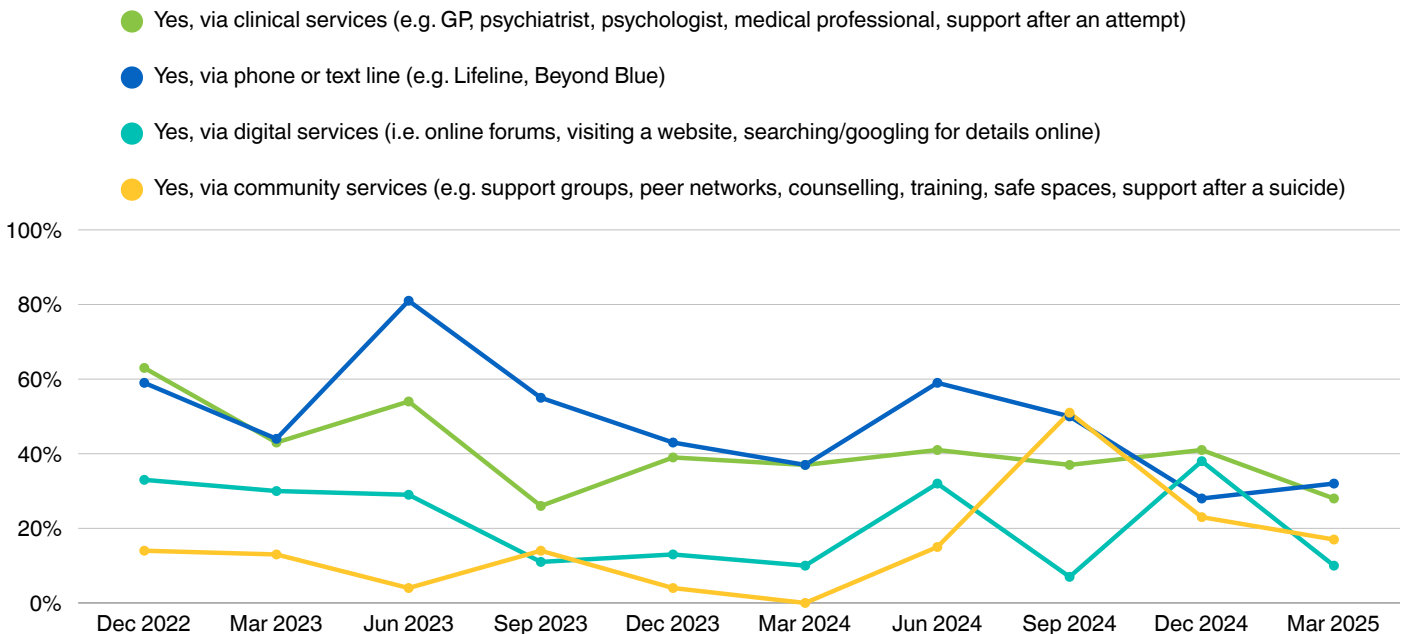
Help-seeking behaviour

- Yes, via clinical services (e.g. GP, psychiatrist, psychologist, medical professional, support after an attempt)
- Yes, via phone or text line (e.g. Lifeline, Beyond Blue)
- Yes, via digital services (i.e. online forums, visiting a website, searching/googling for details online)
- Yes, via community services (e.g. support groups, peer networks, counselling, training, safe spaces, support after a suicide)



- Help-seeking behaviour amongst all residents of Western Australia for all service types has fallen since 2022.
- There was a spike in people seeking help via community services in the September 2024 quarter, surpassing all other services.
- The gap between clinical services and other support options is narrowing.

Help-seeking behaviour of those who experienced suicidal behaviour



- For those experiencing suicidal behaviour, phone and text lines were more prevalent over clinical services. Over time, however, the differences between services have lessened.

Implications for suicide prevention in Western Australia

The WA Community Tracker data highlights a sustained and concerning level of elevated distress across the state, with social and economic pressures continuing to take a toll on the community.

With nearly 7 in 10 WA residents reporting distress beyond normal levels for the past 11 quarters — and distress peaking in March 2023, affecting close to 4 in 5 residents — it is clear that financial pressures, relationship breakdown, and housing access and affordability are significantly impacting people's sense of wellbeing. Cost-of-living has remained the top stressor for 11 consecutive quarters, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive economic and social support measures as part of suicide prevention efforts. According to the WA Council of Social Service, a model two-parent family's income was insufficient to cover essential living costs, with weekly expenses exceeding income by \$60.77.¹

Sadly, more than 1 in 8 WA residents have experienced serious thoughts of suicide in the past year. Despite this, help-seeking behaviour has declined since June 2023 across all service types. Given the cost-of-living pressures, this suggests that people are either unable to afford clinical services or unwilling or unaware of alternative digital, text and phone services when they need it most. This may be due to barriers such as cost, stigma or - particularly relevant for WA - distances and lack of service availability.

The narrowing gap between those seeking help from clinical services versus other support options suggests people maybe looking beyond traditional healthcare for assistance.

Given many of the causes of distress are not mental health issues, this also suggests a greater need for other sources of support for people experiencing suicidal distress due to financial pressures or relationship breakdown. It also underlines the need for whole-of-community approach to suicide prevention, ensuring that people can access help in multiple ways, whether through mental health services, financial and social support programs, or community-led initiatives.

Key policy asks for suicide prevention in Western Australia

- **Access to timely data:** Western Australia is one of the only states that still does not have a suicide death register. Reliable, timely, and meaningful data and evidence helps to drive better policy, practice and outcomes as well as more effective service provision.
- **Suicide prevention legislation:** Introduce a Suicide Prevention Act in Western Australia to embed a whole-of-government approach, ensure clear accountability, and mandate suicide prevention efforts across all relevant departments. Legislation would provide the framework needed for long-term, coordinated reform, similar to South Australia's model and the planned Act in New South Wales.
- **Guidelines in emergency departments:** Implement consistent, state-wide guidelines for responding to suicidal distress in emergency departments. This includes best-practice pathways for compassionate care, timely follow-up, and access to aftercare services. The emergency department is often the first point of contact for people in crisis — it must be equipped to support, not retraumatise.

1. Western Australian Council of Social Service. (2024). *2024 Cost of Living Report*.
<https://www.wacoss.org.au/library/2024-cost-of-living-report/>

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The Suicide Prevention Australia Community Tracker is undertaken in partnership with YouGov Australia. Total sample size was around a thousand adults for each nationwide survey. The survey was undertaken online each quarter. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all Australian adults (aged 18+). This data focuses on residents of Western Australia.