

Coroners Court

Monthly Suicide Data Report

October 2020 update

12 November 2020





WARNING: This following report includes information on suicides.

For help or information contact **Beyond Blue** on 1300 224 636, or **Lifeline** on 13 11 14.

Purpose

This report presents the October 2020 update to Victorian suicide statistics. This report was produced under the Coroners Court of Victoria's initiative to release timely and accessible data on suicide across the state.

Victorian Suicide Register

In Victoria all deaths from suspected non-natural causes including suspected suicides are required to be reported to the Coroners Court of Victoria. The Coroners Court reviews newly reported deaths on a daily basis to identify those that occur in circumstances consistent with suicide and adds these deaths to the Victorian Suicide Register (VSR).

The deaths included in the VSR are regularly reviewed as coroners' investigations progress and more is learned about the circumstances in which they occurred. Deaths may be removed from the VSR if investigation establishes they are likely not to be suicides; likewise, deaths initially missed may be added to the VSR as new evidence consistent with suicide is gathered. This is why data reported from the VSR may change over time. However, data changes are usually quite minor: analyses have shown that over time, the VSR coding team are consistently over 95% accurate in identifying the cohort of deaths that are ultimately determined to be suicides.

The VSR has been in operation since 2012 and is the most accurate and timely data source for suicide in Victoria. VSR data is regularly shared with the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Victoria Police, health services, and other bodies engaged in suicide prevention to inform their work.

Monthly data update

1. Annual frequency in year to date

Table 1 shows the annual frequency of Victorian suicides as at 31 October each year for the period 2016-2020. This year to date frequency has been relatively steady over the past five years, with the 2020 frequency slightly lower than in 2019. Approximately three out of four suicides each year are among males.

Table 1: Year to date suicide frequency in Victoria by deceased sex, to 31 October, 2016-2020.

Sex	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Male	396	403	435	452	427
Female	142	156	152	148	153
Total	538	559	587	600	580

2. Monthly frequency

Table 2 shows the monthly frequency and aggregate monthly¹ frequency of Victorian suicides for the period January 2016 through to October 2020.

Table 2: Monthly frequency and monthly aggregate frequency of Victorian suicides, 2016-2020. (*2020 data is part-year to 31 October.)

Month	Monthly frequency					Aggregate monthly frequency				
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*
January	59	62	53	73	63	59	62	53	73	63
February	51	47	51	61	63	110	109	104	134	126
March	60	71	66	54	73	170	180	170	188	199
April	44	50	63	57	52	214	230	233	245	251
May	59	52	54	65	57	273	282	287	310	308
June	49	50	54	54	55	322	332	341	364	363
July	48	67	70	54	58	370	399	411	418	421
August	58	59	55	62	60	428	458	466	480	481
September	61	40	54	54	50	489	498	520	534	531
October	49	61	67	66	49	538	559	587	600	580
November	57	62	75	55		595	621	662	655	
December	57	63	63	64		652	684	725	719	

1 The aggregate monthly frequency is the sum of frequencies for all months so far in each year. For example, the aggregate monthly frequency in March of a year is the sum of the monthly frequencies in January, February and March for that year.

The monthly frequencies fluctuated quite substantially, between 40 suicides (September 2017) and 75 suicides (November 2018). However, the monthly aggregate frequency data shows that these monthly fluctuations tend to even out over the course of the year. This demonstrates the importance of not attributing too much significance to the suicide frequency in any one month; instead the broader trend should be examined.

3. Frequency by age group and sex

Table 3 shows the annual Victorian suicide frequency by sex and age group for 2016 to 2020. Most suicides occurred among those aged between 25 and 55.

Table 3: Annual suicide frequency by sex and age group, Victoria 2016-2020. (*2020 data is part-year to 31 October.)

Age group by sex	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*
Male	475	497	539	543	427
Under 18	14	11	10	13	13
18 to 24	70	44	63	64	50
25 to 34	107	97	100	109	75
35 to 44	78	96	97	114	74
45 to 54	73	106	109	94	73
55 to 64	52	66	83	79	69
65 and over	81	77	77	70	73
Female	177	187	186	176	153
Under 18	3	5	5	8	1
18 to 24	21	19	21	19	12
25 to 34	31	35	41	27	37
35 to 44	31	32	33	29	35
45 to 54	38	42	26	32	22
55 to 64	30	24	32	27	20
65 and over	23	30	28	34	26
Total	652	684	725	719	580

In the previous (5 October 2020) monthly report, a potential elevated suicide frequency was noted in 2020 among males aged under 18 years and males aged 65 years and over. While the frequencies in these two groups are still somewhat elevated compared to what would be expected based on previous years, there were not a substantial number of suicides in either group in October 2020.

The October update to Table 3 suggests that there may be an emerging elevated suicide frequency among women aged 35 to 44 years. However, at this stage it is not possible to discount the effects of random fluctuation; the deaths are currently under coronial investigation to identify any potential underlying issues.

4. Metropolitan Melbourne and Regional Victoria

Table 4a shows the annual suicide frequency by location of fatal incident (Metropolitan Melbourne or Regional Victoria) for the years 2016 to 2020. Table 4b shows the same data but represented as proportions of all suicides rather than as frequencies.

Table 4a: Annual suicide frequency by location of fatal incident, Victoria 2016-2020 (*2020 data is part-year to 31 October.)

Location of fatal incident	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*
Metropolitan	439	467	481	458	391
Regional	213	217	244	261	189
Total	652	684	725	719	580

Table 4b: Annual suicide proportion by location of fatal incident, Victoria 2016-2020 (*2020 data is part-year to 31 October.)

Location of fatal incident	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*
Metropolitan	67%	68%	66%	64%	67%
Regional	33%	32%	34%	36%	33%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Approximately two-thirds of Victorian suicides each year in 2016-2020 occurred in metropolitan locations. Based on the 2020 part-year frequency data in table 4a, it appears that full-year 2020 suicide frequencies in Metropolitan Melbourne and Regional Victoria should be very similar to what was observed in 2019.