

Coroners Court

Monthly Suicide Data Report

November 2020 update

15 December 2020





WARNING: This following report includes information on suicides.

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

Purpose

This report presents the November 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 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.

Considerations when interpreting the data

Victoria's suicide frequency varies quite substantially from month to month. Additionally, there can be substantial variation in the monthly and annual frequency of suicides within particular cohorts. This variation, which is not unique to Victoria but is a feature of suicide data around Australia and internationally, usually results from random factors rather than underlying systemic issues or emerging clusters. The data therefore should be interpreted cautiously, with great care taken in drawing conclusions about any apparent increase or decrease that is observed.

Changes in reported frequencies over time

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 some data reported here may be different to what was reported in previous months.

However, data changes are usually quite minor: analyses have shown that over time, the VSR coding team are consistently 95% accurate or better in identifying the cohort of deaths that are ultimately determined to be suicides.

Monthly data update

1. Annual frequency in year to date

Table 1 shows the annual frequency of Victorian suicides as at 30 November 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 30 November, 2016-2020.

Sex	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Male	434	452	480	493	477
Female	161	171	172	161	168
Total	595	623	652	654	645

2. Monthly frequency

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

Table 2: Monthly frequency and monthly aggregate frequency of Victorian suicides, 2016-2020. (*2020 data is part-year to 30 November.)

Month	Monthly frequency					Aggregate monthly frequency				
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*
January	59	62	45	73	63	59	62	45	73	63
February	51	48	51	61	63	110	110	96	134	126
March	60	71	66	54	73	170	181	162	188	199
April	44	50	61	57	52	214	231	223	245	251
May	59	52	54	65	57	273	283	277	310	308
June	49	50	54	54	55	322	333	331	364	363
July	48	67	70	54	58	370	400	401	418	421
August	58	59	55	62	60	428	459	456	480	481
September	61	40	54	54	50	489	499	510	534	531
October	49	62	67	65	49	538	561	577	599	580
November	57	62	75	55	65	595	623	652	654	645
December	57	67	63	64		652	690	715	718	

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 during this period, 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 30 November.)

Age group by sex	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*
Male	475	503	530	542	477
Under 18	14	11	10	13	15
18 to 24	70	44	63	64	56
25 to 34	107	99	100	109	84
35 to 44	78	97	95	113	85
45 to 54	73	107	106	94	82
55 to 64	52	68	80	79	78
65 and over	81	77	76	70	77
Female	177	187	185	176	168
Under 18	3	5	5	8	2
18 to 24	21	19	21	19	15
25 to 34	31	35	41	27	41
35 to 44	31	32	33	29	35
45 to 54	38	42	25	32	25
55 to 64	30	24	32	27	23
65 and over	23	30	28	34	27
Total	652	690	715	718	645

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 30 November.)

Location of fatal incident	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*
Metropolitan	439	471	476	458	432
Regional	213	219	239	260	213
Total	652	690	715	718	645

Table 4b: Annual suicide proportion by location of fatal incident, Victoria 2016-2020 (*2020 data is part-year to 30 November.)

Location of fatal incident	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*
Metropolitan	67%	68%	67%	64%	67%
Regional	33%	32%	33%	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.