

Coroners Court

Monthly Suicide Data Report

February 2021 update

12 March 2021

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WARNING: This following report includes information on suicides.

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Purpose

This report presents the February 2021 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 28 February each year for the period 2017-2021.

Table 1: Year to date suicide frequency in Victoria by deceased sex, to 28 February, 2017-2021.

Sex	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Male	81	77	104	104	81
Female	30	19	30	23	24
Total	111	96	134	127	105

2. Monthly frequency

Table 2 shows the monthly frequency and aggregate monthly¹ frequency of Victorian suicides for the period January 2017 through to February 2021.

Table 2: Monthly frequency and monthly aggregate frequency of Victorian suicides, 2017-2021. (*2021 data is part-year to 28 February.)

Month	Monthly frequency					Aggregate monthly frequency				
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021*	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021*
January	62	45	73	65	56	62	45	73	65	56
February	49	51	61	63	49	111	96	134	128	105
March	71	65	54	73		182	161	188	201	
April	50	63	57	52		232	224	245	253	
May	51	50	65	57		283	274	310	310	
June	52	52	54	55		335	326	364	365	
July	67	68	54	58		402	394	418	423	
August	59	56	62	60		461	450	480	483	
September	40	55	54	50		501	505	534	533	
October	62	64	65	51		563	569	599	584	
November	62	71	55	64		625	640	654	648	
December	69	60	64	51		694	700	718	699	

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.

3. Frequency by age group and sex

Table 3 shows the annual Victorian suicide frequency by sex and age group for January 2017 to February 2021.

Table 3: Annual suicide frequency by sex and age group, Victoria 2017-2021. (*2021 data is part-year to 28 February.)

Age group by sex	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021*
Male	507	518	542	521	81
Under 18	11	10	13	17	2
18 to 24	44	62	64	61	4
25 to 34	100	99	109	93	16
35 to 44	97	90	113	93	17
45 to 54	107	104	94	91	18
55 to 64	70	77	79	85	12
65 and over	78	76	70	81	12
Female	187	182	176	178	24
Under 18	5	5	8	2	3
18 to 24	19	20	19	16	3
25 to 34	35	42	27	43	7
35 to 44	33	33	29	36	5
45 to 54	41	24	32	27	3
55 to 64	24	31	27	26	3
65 and over	30	27	34	28	0
Total	694	700	718	699	105

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 2017 to 2021. 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 2017-2021. (*2021 data is part-year to 28 February.)

Location of fatal incident	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021*
Metropolitan	474	465	458	464	64
Regional	220	235	260	235	40
Total	694	700	718	699	105

Table 4b: Annual suicide proportion by location of fatal incident, Victoria 2017-2021. (*2021 data is part-year to 28 February.)

Location of fatal incident	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021*
Metropolitan	68%	66%	64%	66%	61%
Regional	32%	34%	36%	34%	38%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%