



Monday 6 February 2023

Coroners Court report shows concerning increase in suicides in 2022

Concerning figures released today by the Coroners Court of Victoria show that in 2022 the state recorded its highest number of annual suicides since the Court started collecting suicide data in 2000 – with a 9 per cent increase in suicides compared to 2021.

The findings are presented in the *Coroners Court Monthly Suicide Data Report – December 2022*, which is the first release of full year Victorian coronial suicide data for 2022 and includes comparative annual figures for 2018 to 2021.

The increase in 2022 is in contrast to the preceding four years, in which Victoria had seen a plateau in suicide numbers.

Most notably, the increase appears to have occurred in the latter part of 2022. From January to July the monthly number of suicides in Victoria had been consistent with previous years – approximately 58 suicides per month. However, from August to December the monthly number of suicides increased to 65 or more per month.

From reviewing the full year data, the Court considers that the higher numbers during August to December 2022 might signal an emerging trend.

Demographic analysis also showed that the most substantial increase last year was seen in the 65 years and older cohort, with a 32 per cent increase from 2021 to 2022.

Other key points from the report include:

- among males there was an 8 per cent increase since 2021.
- among females there was a 12 per cent increase since 2021.
- an increase of 21 per cent was observed among people aged 45 to 54.
- the proportion of suicides occurring in Metropolitan Melbourne versus Regional Victoria remained steady, not only between 2021 and 2022 but across the entire five-year period.

In Victoria all suspected suicides are required to be reported to the Court for investigation.

Through their investigations coroners observe that social isolation, mental health issues, substance abuse, familial conflict and financial pressures are common stressors in cases of suicide.

A majority of the suicides that occurred in 2022 continue to be investigated by coroners to understand the complex drivers contributing to these deaths and opportunities for prevention.

In addition to investigating individual deaths, the Court monitors and regularly shares data with State and Commonwealth governments to inform their work in suicide prevention.

The source of this data is the Victorian Suicide Register (VSR), the state's most accurate real-time database on suicides. The 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 VSR.

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Quotes attributable to Victorian State Coroner, Judge John Cain:

“It is troubling to see an increase in suicides emerge in the last few months of 2022.”

“It is not clear what is driving this increase – especially amongst those 65 and over – but we are monitoring closely to see if this trend continues.”

“Access to support is a vital part of suicide prevention. I welcome the improvements that have been made following the Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System and the strengthening of supports in Victoria as the recommendations continue to be implemented.”

“Suicide is complex and requires a multifaceted approach to minimise harm – sharing Court data helps to support this work across government, the prevention sector and the community.”

Access the report here: <https://www.coronerscourt.vic.gov.au/coroners-court-monthly-suicide-data-report-december-2022>