Media alert
29 September 2021

Release of ABS Causes of Death data 2020

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has today released its 2020 Causes of Death data, which includes annual, national and state suicide information.

Media and communications professionals reporting on this data are encouraged to be responsible and accurate, as there is a potential risk to people in the community who may be vulnerable to suicide.

The ABS data follows the release of Australian Institute of Health and Welfare suicide monitoring data on Australian Defence Force members.

Everymind Project Lead Dr Elizabeth Paton says communicators are urged to consider the impact that frequent and prolonged reporting on suicide deaths may have on the community.

"With a high volume of reporting on suicide data this week, it is even more important for communicators to follow guidelines for safe and responsible discussion of suicide," Dr Paton says.

"This includes avoiding simplistic explanations for why a person has died by suicide, using correct terminology and non-stigmatising language and importantly, including help-seeking information.

"The Mindframe team asks communicators to remember that data does not show the full impact of suicide deaths. Each number represents an individual who was valued and who is missed."

Key points in the ABS Causes of Death data 2020

- In 2020, there was a decrease of suicide deaths from 3,318 deaths in 2019 (12.9 per 100,000) to 3,139 deaths in 2020 (12.1 per 100,000). This is the lowest national suicide rate recorded since 2016.

- Three-quarters of people who died by suicide were male. The suicide rate for males decreased by 6.1% between 2019 and 2020.

- The suicide rate for females decreased by 7.9% between 2019 and 2020.

- All jurisdictions except the Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory had a decrease in the number of suicide deaths between 2019 and 2020. The number of deaths increased in the Northern Territory but the rates decreased. Northern Territory had the highest rate of suicide (20.4 per 100,000 people).

To view more data, explanatory notes and infographics, please visit: mindframe.org.au/suicide/data-statistics

Mindframe resources for safe communication

- For general advice on safe reporting, refer to the Mindframe media guidelines

- For more guidance on communicating suicide data, visit the Mindframe data and statistics page
The Mindframe Expert Directory has expert spokespeople who can provide context and perspective.

Reporting on suicide data can impact the wellbeing of media and communications professionals. Journalism self-care resources are available.

**Media self-care**

Reporting on suicide data can impact the wellbeing of media and communications professionals. To support media professionals, the Mindframe team, in consultation with the DART Centre Asia Pacific, has developed journalism self-care resources for media professionals.

**Help-seeking information**

Adding help-seeking information to stories (online, print and broadcast) can provide somewhere for people who may be adversely impacted by the coverage to find professional support.

**National 24/7 crisis services:**

Lifeline: 13 11 14 | lifeline.org.au
Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467 | suicidecallbackservice.org.au
MensLine Australia: 1300 78 99 79 | mensline.org.au
Beyond Blue: 1300 224 636 | beyondblue.org.au

**Contacts**

The Mindframe team is available to support media professionals to report on topics relating to suicide to ensure the quality of reporting and the portrayal of these issues is safe and accurate.

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