

Suicide

What this is about...

The increase of psycho-social disorders across all OECD countries is also reflected in New Zealand statistics. Suicides are one measure of such disorders, and while the earlier statistics may be marked by a tendency to call suicides 'accidents', the number of suicides among young people aged 15 to 24 years has trebled from 1948 to 1997.⁹¹ To assess the significance of this, we have measured the number of suicides by city and age.⁹²

What did we find ?

- New Zealand has the highest suicide rate in the world for males between 15 and 24 years old.⁹³ The high rate of suicide for this age group may be under-represented, as some suicides may be identified as road deaths where this age group is over-represented. While considerable attention has been given to youth suicide in recent years, it is also a concern amongst other age groups. For example, the last few years have shown a marked trend for 25 to 39 year olds to suicide, with rates within that age group doubling.
- European and 'Other' males and females have considerably higher rates of suicide compared to Maori and Pacific Islands groups. In addition, there is a considerably higher rate of suicide among males than females.
- Suicides and attempted suicides are usually the result of a complex interplay of longer-term risk factors and stressful immediate events. Research has identified four main factors that distinguish young people who make suicide attempts from other young people.⁹⁴ These include social and education disadvantage, and a history of exposure to multiple family and parental disadvantages during childhood and adolescence. The development during adolescence of significant mental health problems or adjustment and exposure to a serious or stressful life event immediately prior to the suicide attempt are also factors.

TOTAL SUICIDES, PER CITY, BY AGE (1993 TO 1997)

	10-14 yrs	15-24 yrs	25-39 yrs	40-59 yrs	60 yrs and over
Auckland	1	51	91	45	29
Manukau	3	49	47	34	19
North Shore	0	14	32	31	20
Waitakere	0	40	44	22	19
Wellington	0	34	39	36	16
Christchurch	1	79	91	65	33

Data Source: New Zealand Health Information Service

NUMBER OF SUICIDES, BY CITY (1993 TO 1997)

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Auckland	42	40	53	36	46
Manukau	21	31	34	39	27
North Shore	9	17	22	24	25
Waitakere	17	19	38	21	30
Wellington	27	23	29	31	15
Christchurch	49	54	50	52	64

Data Source: New Zealand Health Information Service

91 Statistics New Zealand. 2000. Looking past the 20th Century, a selection of long - term statistical trends that influence and shape public policy in New Zealand. Wellington.
92 Suicide is a statistically rare event and differences between cities are not significant. Any differences between cities will be attributable to different demographic characteristics.
93 Injury Prevention Research Centre. Suicides: Fact Sheet 1. The University of Auckland.
94 Beautrais, A. 1997. In Our Hands: The Research Evidence. Ministry of Health.