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Chief Coroner releases provisional annual suicide figures for the 2015/16 year

Chief Coroner Judge Deborah Marshall has today released the annual provisional suicide statistics, which show 579 people died by suicide in the 2015/16 year.

This is the highest number of suicide deaths since the provisional statistics were first recorded for the 2007/08 year, and follows last year's total of 564, which was then the highest total.

It's important to note, however, that the suicide rate per 100,000 population for this year (12.32) remains just lower than the 2010/11 year (12.65).

The rate of people dying by suicide has again remained consistent and shows New Zealand still has a long way to go in turning this unacceptably high total around.

Judge Marshall said there needed to be more discussion about suicide prevention and how family, friends and colleagues can identify someone at risk and help them get professional support.

"Everyone should recognise the importance of taking suicidal thoughts seriously and knowing where to get help."

This year's figures show:

- Female suicides have increased by 34 compared to last year, while male suicides have dropped by 19. The ratio of female to male suicides is 1 : 2.41, which is the closest since records began in 2007/08. Traditionally the ratio sits at about 1 female: 3 male.
- The 25-29-year-old age cohort recorded the highest number of suicide deaths (66), with the 20-24-year-old cohort behind on 60 suicide deaths. Last year the 20-24-year-old cohort had the highest number of suicide deaths with 61, followed by the 40-44-year-old cohort with 58 suicide deaths.
- Māori suicide death numbers are down by one from last year with 129. Within this total, Māori male suicide has dropped by 10 from last year and accordingly Māori

female is up by nine to 47, which is the highest number on record exceeding 38 Māori female suicide deaths in 2011/12 and 2013/14.

- The Canterbury Region has recorded its highest suicide total since records began in 2007/08, with 78 deaths, compared with the previous highest total of 74 in 2009/10. (Please note – these figures are based on DHB geographic region, which were adopted several years ago as the standard regional boundaries for the provisional coronial suicide statistics. Christchurch statistics used in earlier releases were based on Police district boundary, which covers a slightly different geographical area, and the totals are slightly different).

Note: The information provided relates to provisional suicide figures and will slightly differ from the Ministry of Health figures. They include active cases before Coroners where intent has yet to be established therefore may eventually be found not to be suicides. In addition Ministry of Health figures are recorded by calendar year.