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CHIEF CORONER RELEASES ANNUAL SUICIDE STATISTICS, LAUNCHES NEW WEB TOOL WITH MINISTRY OF HEALTH

For the first time, the Office of the Chief Coroner and the Ministry of Health will make available combined suicide statistics via a new [interactive web tool](#) providing a single comprehensive source of information on deaths by suicide in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Developed by the Ministry of Health in consultation with the Office of the Chief Coroner, the web tool provides detailed information from the Chief Coroner on the provisional suspected self-inflicted death statistics, and the latest confirmed suicide data from the Ministry of Health.

Information is presented by both calendar and financial year, and can be filtered by gender, age group, ethnicity and District Health Board.

“This web tool provides an easily navigable platform to access accurate, detailed information on deaths in these tragic circumstances. It also provides the ability to compare provisional and confirmed figures over time for people to better understand how these numbers are shifting,” says Chief Coroner Judge Deborah Marshall.

In the year to 30 June 2021, 607 people died by suspected suicide, compared to 628¹ the year before – a decrease of 21 deaths, and a drop in the suspected suicide rate from 11.8 deaths per 100,000 to 11.6.

“Understanding what a change in numbers and rates from one year to the next means is difficult because these numbers and rates can fluctuate considerably,” says Judge Marshall.

“But it is heartening to see that the year’s figures show fewer deaths overall.”

Among Māori populations there was a decrease in suspected suicides from 19.8 per 100,000 people to 15.8, but for Pacific populations there was an increase in the suspected suicide rate from 7.2 to 9.6.

More broadly, there was a decrease in suspected suicides for females and males in the 15-24 age range, from 12.6 to 11.4 among females and 22.7 to 22.2 in males.

“The suspected suicide rate and number has declined, which is encouraging. But it’s important to remember the many families who have lost someone, and I offer my sincere condolences to the families and friends of those who died by suspected suicide in the past year,” says Judge Marshall.

Director of the Suicide Prevention Office, Carla na Nagara, also acknowledges the tragedy reflected in the data, and says it will take more than two years of decreases to establish a trend.

¹ The 2019/2020 number was previously published as 654. This number has been revised. Please refer to note 2 below for more information.



“While it is encouraging that the numbers of suspected suicides are lower than last year, there are still far too many whānau, families and communities who have lost loved ones, and I extend my deepest sympathies to them,” says na Nagara.

It is the second consecutive year numbers have decreased, but na Nagara says the evidence shows there is a need to see a decline over at least a five-year period before a meaningful downward trend in suicide numbers and rates can be established.

“The Suicide Prevention Office will continue its efforts, alongside the Chief Coroner and communities all around Aotearoa, to address the complex issues that contribute to our suicide rates. We all have a part to play to prevent similar deaths from occurring.”

ENDS

Important notes:

1. Explore the interactive web tool here: <https://minhealthnz.shinyapps.io/suicide-web-tool/>
2. Some suicide statistics displayed in the web tool may differ from those previously published on the Coronial Services of New Zealand website, as the methodology used to identify suspected suicides has been refined to enable better information sharing with the Ministry of Health for the web tool. District Health Board and ethnicity rates have also been realigned with Ministry of Health data to ensure there is consistency and better comparability within the web tool.
3. The Chief Coroner releases statistics for suspected intentionally self-inflicted deaths, or suspected suicides, which are provisional because they include active coronial cases. These statistics total all suspected suicides, including those where the coroner has not yet established if the person intended to kill themselves. On completing a coronial inquiry, a coroner may rule that some deaths were not suicide.
4. A suicide is classified as confirmed by the Ministry of Health when the coroner determines the cause of death to be suicide, or there is enough information to suggest the coroner will find the cause of death to be suicide.