Youth suicide

After the consistent decline in the youth suicide rate in the late 1990s, there has been no similar improvement since then.

Indicator Description
Youth (15 to 24 year-olds) suicide rates.

Why This Is Important
Youth suicide is the most extreme indicator of negative well-being and has implications for families, schooling, peer culture, health, work and other community contexts.

Research indicates that suicide is associated with depression, hopelessness, adjustment difficulty and severe stresses or life crises, including bullying, intimidation or relationship break-ups.

The Youth ‘07 publication on health and wellbeing of the secondary school students undertaken by The University of Auckland reported that same/both-sex-attracted students were more likely to report serious thoughts about attempting suicide (39%) compared to opposite-sex-attracted students (13%) (Rossen et al., 2009). It also showed that one fifth of same/both-sex-attracted students attempted suicide in contrast to 4% of opposite-sex-attracted students.

Under New Zealand’s National Administration Guideline 5, schools are required to provide a safe physical and emotional environment. Schools have a key preventative role to play in supporting students across the curriculum in building youth self-esteem (including cultural identity), teaching social skills and facilitating healthy youth and peer cultures. Schools can be most effective when working in partnerships with parents and communities to support youth well-being.
How We Are Going

After the steady decline in the youth suicide rate in the late 1990s, there has been no similar improvement since then. Between 1996 and 2000 the suicide rate for 15-24 year olds dropped by 8.6 percentage points, from 26.7 suicides per 100,000 in 1996 to 18.1 suicides per 100,000 in 2000. In 2010 there were 113 youth suicides, a rate of 17.7.

Youth suicide rate per 100,000, by age group and gender (2010)

Males are much more likely to commit suicide than females. This has been a constant trend since 1996. In 2010 the male youth suicide rate (23.8) was more than twice that of the female rate (11.3). However, the Youth '07 and Youth '12 studies both indicate that, within secondary schools students, females are more likely to attempt suicide. In 2012, 6.2% of female students in their secondary school sample had attempted suicide compared to 2.4% of males (Clark et al., 2013).

Suicide rates increased for Maori males from 28.6 in 2010 to 46.6 in 2012, though the level of increase is likely due to small fluctuation in the smaller population group.

Youth suicide rate per 100,000 15 to 24 year-olds, by ethnic group and gender (1996 to 2010)
In 2010, the suicide rate among the 15 to 19 year-old sub-category (16.4) was lower than the rate among 20 to 24 year-olds (19.0). The highest number (46) and rate (32.8) of suicides when divided by age group and gender were observed in males aged 20 to 24.

Youth suicide rates also differ markedly among different ethnic groups. Young Māori are more likely to commit suicide than non-Māori. In 2010 the Māori youth suicide rate (35.3) was more than 2½ times the non-Māori rate (13.4).

Where To Find Out More

For other labour market and social outcomes of education see the indicators:

- Educational attainment in the adult population
- Impact of education on income
- Unemployment rate by highest qualification
- Graduate income premium

References


- World Health Organisation’s country reports on suicide: [www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/suicide/country_reports/en/](http://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/suicide/country_reports/en/)