

NCIS FACT SHEET

Intentional self-harm deaths of young persons in Australia

5961

intentional self-harm
deaths, 2001-2017

350

deaths per year
on average

13.8%

of all intentional
self-harm deaths

This fact sheet refers to deaths of people under 25 years of age due to intentional self-harm. These are collectively referred to as **youth self-harm deaths**.

Intentional self-harm was the 14th leading cause of death in Australia and the leading cause of death for people aged 15-24 years in 2018 (1). The largest increase in rate of suicide per 100,000 persons between 2009 and 2018 occurred among those aged 15-24 years (from 9.1 to 13.5 deaths per 100,000) (2).

National overview

There were 5961 intentional self-harm deaths of people aged under 25 years reported to an Australian coroner between 2001 and 2017, comprising 13.8% of all intentional self-harm deaths.

The highest number of deaths were reported in the 2017 calendar year (n=413).

The highest proportion of deaths were notified to a coroner in Queensland, followed by New South Wales and Victoria (Figure 1).

The lowest proportions of deaths were reported to a coroner in Tasmania (2.3%) and the ACT (1.6%).

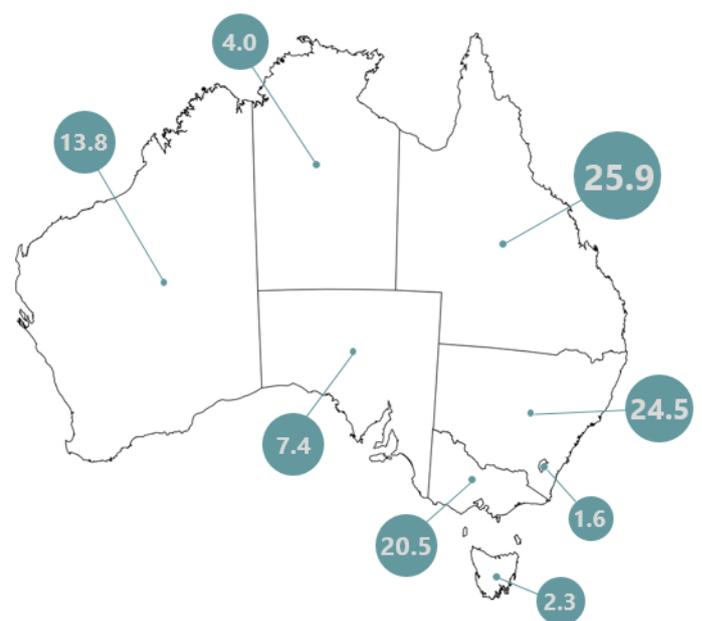


Figure 1. Proportion of youth self-harm deaths by jurisdiction of investigation, 2001-2017

The national rate of youth self-harm deaths per 100,000 was 5.3 in 2017 (compared to 5.0 in 2013 and 4.1 in 2009). Queensland, Western Australia, the Northern Territory and the ACT had higher rates in 2017 than the national average.

The Northern Territory was the jurisdiction with the highest rate of youth self-harm deaths across the 2009, 2013 and 2017 calendar years.

Rates of youth self-harm deaths were higher in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, the Northern Territory and the ACT in 2017 than they were in 2009.

By contrast, they were lower in Victoria and Tasmania in 2017 than in 2009.

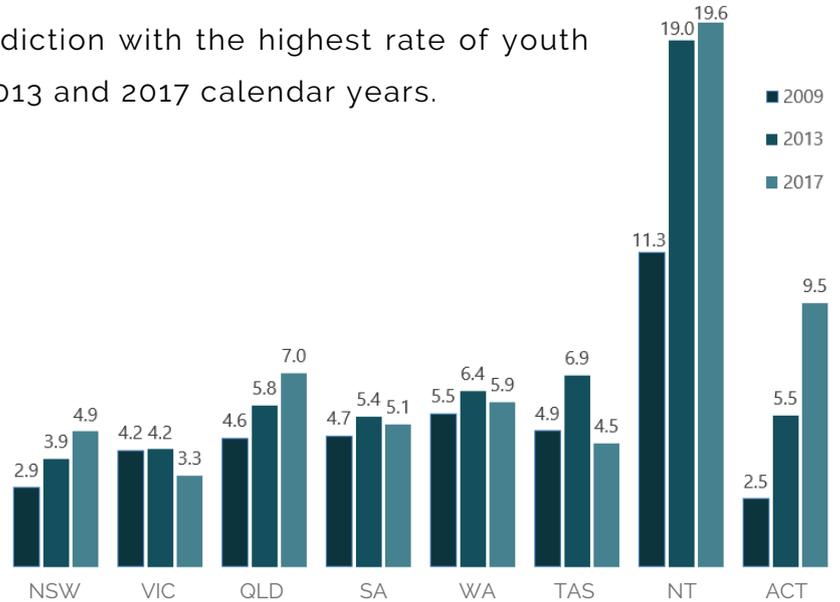
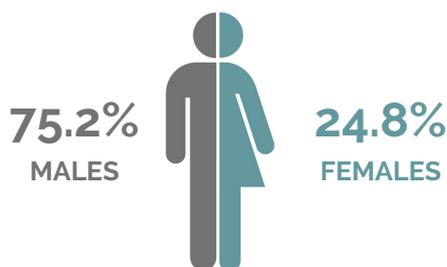


Figure 2. Rate of youth self-harm deaths per 100,000 by jurisdiction of investigation, 2009, 2013 and 2017

Sex and age range

Males comprised the majority of youth self-harm deaths (75.2%). This is consistent with the proportion of male self-harm deaths among those aged 25 years and over (76.9%).



Higher frequencies of youth self-harm deaths were associated with increases in age (Figure 3).

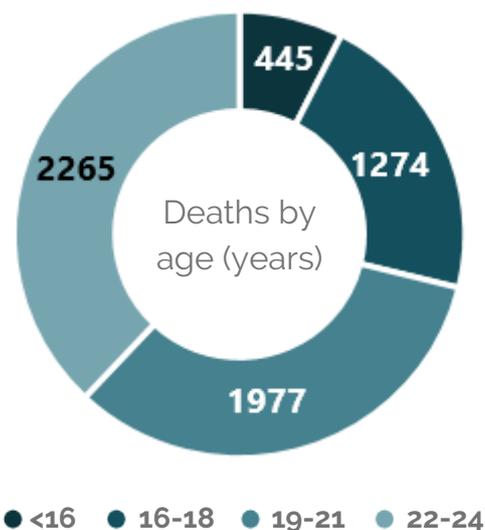


Figure 3. Frequency of youth self-harm deaths by age range (years), 2001 to 2017

Country of birth and indigenous origin

Where country of birth was known, over one in ten (13.6%, n=630) youth self-harm deaths were of people born outside Australia, compared to nearly one in four (24.1%) self-harm deaths of persons aged 25 years and over.

Among self-harm deaths of those born overseas, young people were nearly twice as likely to have been born in Asia (34.6%) or Oceania (30.5%) compared to persons aged 25 years and over (18.1% and 16.0%, respectively). By contrast, young people were significantly less likely to have been born in Europe (18.7%, compared to 54.1%). This may partly be explained by Australian immigration patterns.

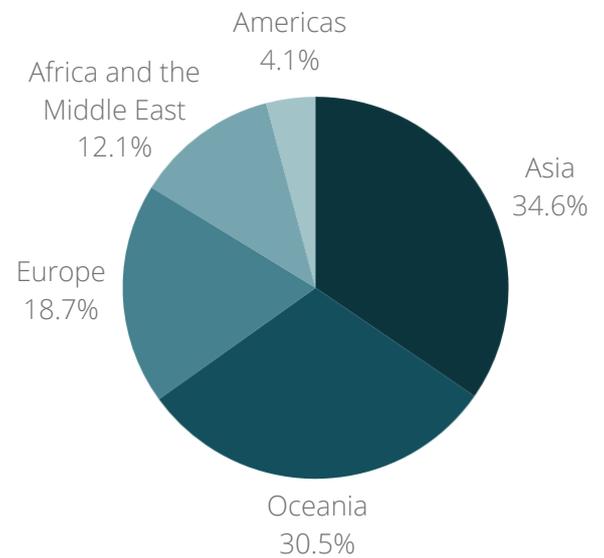


Figure 4. Proportion of youth self-harm deaths by continent of birth outside Australia, where known (n=630)

Young people identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander comprised 12.9% (n=738) of youth self-harm deaths. By contrast, the 2016 Census recorded that 4.7% of persons aged under 25 in Australia were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (3).

Young people who died due to self-harm were nearly four times more likely to be Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander compared to persons aged over 25 years (12.9% compared to 3.4%). Indigenous youth were more likely to be younger, female and unemployed than their non-indigenous counterparts.

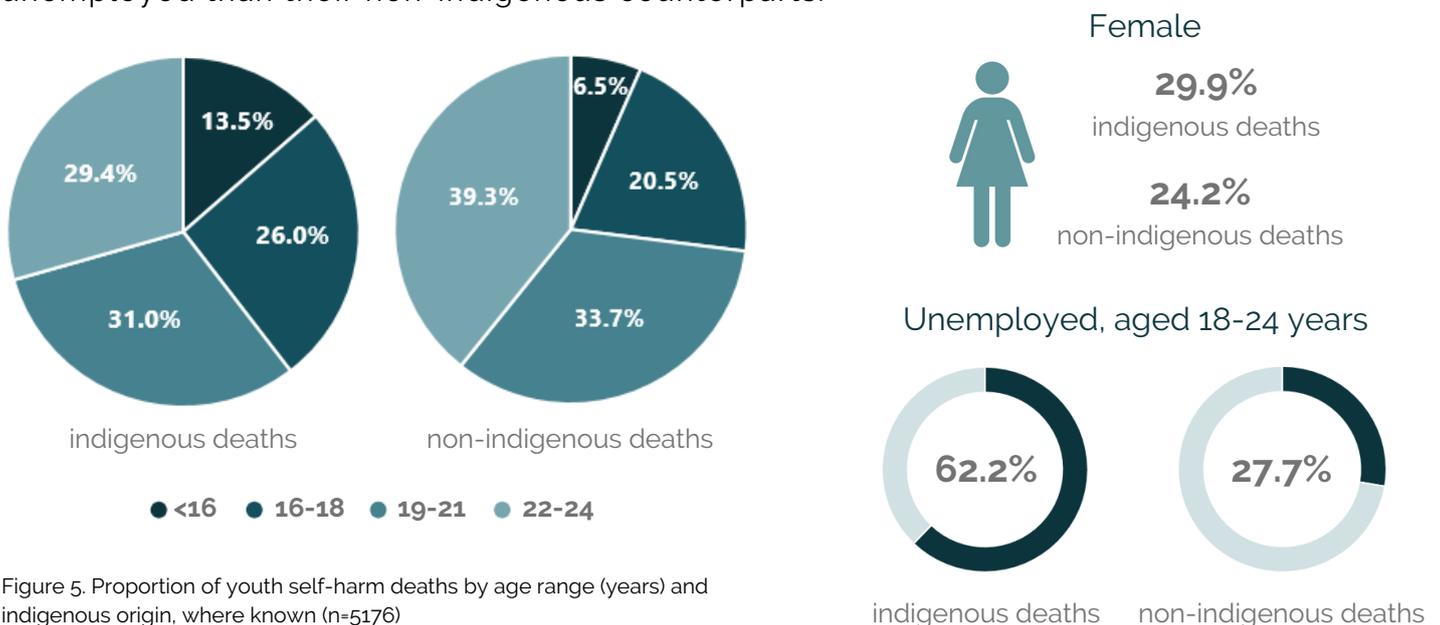


Figure 5. Proportion of youth self-harm deaths by age range (years) and indigenous origin, where known (n=5176)

Residential location, incident location and employment status

The majority of young people who died due to self-harm resided in Australia's major cities (59.9%), while nearly one fifth (19.7%) resided in inner regional areas.

However, young people were more likely reside in outer regional or remote areas of Australia compared to persons aged 25 years and over (Figure 6).

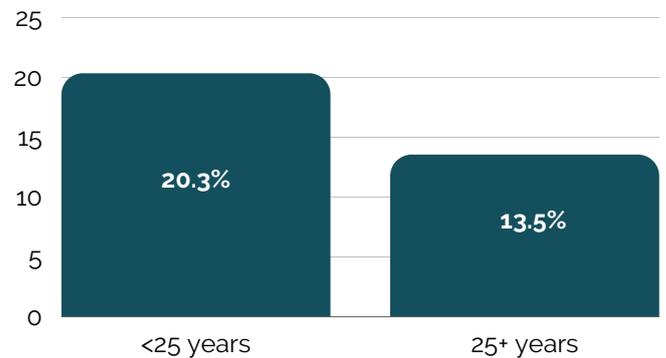


Figure 6. Proportion of self-harm deaths where deceased resided in outer regional, remote or very remote areas by age group

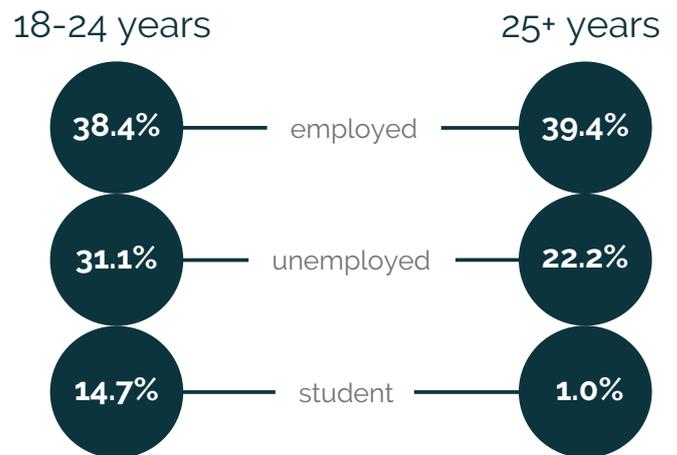


65.2% of fatal youth self-harm incidents occurred in a home location, compared to 69.8% of deaths among older age groups

There were 4753 self-harm deaths of young people aged 18 to 24 years.

Young people in this cohort were most likely to be employed (38.4%, n=1827).

A higher proportion of those aged 18 to 24 years were found to be unemployed (31.1%, n=1478) compared to those aged 25 years and over (22.2%).



1, 2. Australian Bureau of Statistics 2019, [Causes of Death, Australia, 2018](#)

3. Australian Bureau of Statistics 2019, [Census of Population and Housing: Reflecting Australia - Stores from the Census, 2016](#)

The data presented in this fact sheet was extracted from the National Coronial Information System (NCIS) in July 2020. The dataset extracted contained every fatality of a person aged under 25 years that occurred in Australia and was reported to an Australian coroner between 1 January 2001 and 31 December 2017. Cases were included where the death was coded as intentional self-harm, and where the coronial investigation had concluded and the case was closed on the NCIS. Population data was sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Visit the NCIS website for information on [data sources and limitations](#). To request a comprehensive data report, contact the NCIS or visit www.ncis.org.au.

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