

Module 1- Overview of Suicide Statistics in Canada

Every day in Canada: STATS Canada

- 10-12 people die by suicide.
- Approximately 200 people attempt suicide.

In 2022:

- Suicide was the 13th leading cause of death among all Canadians, with 3,593 total deaths recorded.
- Suicide is still the second leading cause of death among individuals aged 15 to 34, behind accidents (unintentional injuries).

Suicide mortality rate by sex, 2020

- The mortality rate for males is more than three times higher than for females. *Males: 16.5 per 100,000, Females: 5.4 per 100,000*
- Females attempt suicide 3 to 4 times more often.

Most prevalent methods of suicide, 2020

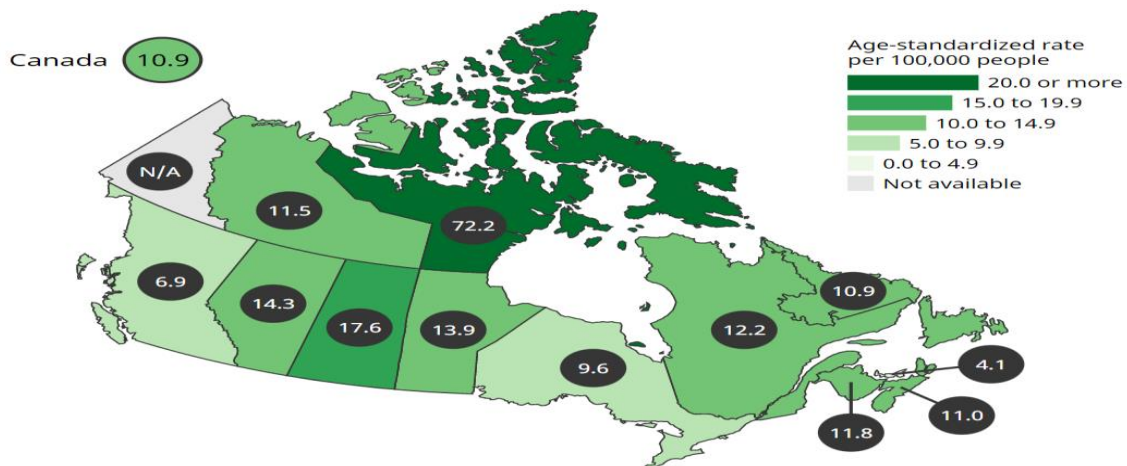
- More than half of all deaths by suicide are due to suffocation (including, hanging and strangulation).
- Poisoning is the second largest category more common with females: can include overdoses, household chemicals, carbon monoxide, pesticides, etc.
- Males commonly use strangulation, firearms and other (train, bridge jumping, etc.)
- According to the 2024 Canada Mental Health Association report on Mental health in Canada, **8,049 people died from opioid poisoning in Canada in 2023, the highest number of fatalities yet. (Not categorized as suicide)**

Self-reported suicide attempts by sex, 2020

According to the *Canadian Community Health Survey 2020*, more females than males report attempting suicide throughout their lifetime in Canada.

- 2.9% of males, 3.9% of females

Figure 1. Age-standardized suicide mortality rates per 100,000 people across Canada by province and territory, 2020



Suicide Rates among Indigenous Populations

- In Nunavut, the suicide mortality rate is 72.2 per 100,000 persons per year. Disproportionately, this affects adolescents and young adults.
- Suicide rates among Inuit are among the highest in the world.
- **First Nations:** 24.3 deaths by suicide per 100,000 persons per year. The rate among First Nations people living on reserve was higher than for those living off reserve, and higher among males than females.
- **Métis:** 14.7 deaths by suicide per 100,000 persons per year.
- Of particular concern is the high rate of suicide among Indigenous children under the age of 15.
- **Nationally**, the suicide rate among First Nations boys was **four times higher** than among non-Indigenous boys. It was **ten times higher** among First Nations boys **living on reserve**. (Statistics Canada report covering 2011-2016)
- **It is guessed that as many as 25% of accidental deaths recorded for Indigenous youth are unreported suicides.** (NAYSPS, Health Canada, 2013)

Suicide Rates among Autistic Individuals

- Suicide is a leading cause of premature mortality in autism spectrum disorder (ASD).
 - Suicide is the **2nd leading cause** of premature mortality in all autistic individuals, greater than heart disorders and cancer.
 - The rates of premature deaths by suicide among autistic individuals are more than **seven times higher** than the general population.
- Low support needs individuals with ASD are significantly more likely to die by suicide than high support needs individuals. **Both groups** are more likely than the general population to die by suicide.
- **Autistic females are significantly more likely than autistic males to die by suicide** (twice as likely).
- Hirvikoski et al., 2016 systematic review compiling data from 1995 to 2014 estimated prevalence of suicidal ideation among autistic individuals to be 72%.

Suspected Undiagnosed Autism

- In a 2022 study by Cassidy et al in England, 372 coroners' inquest records of suicide deaths were analyzed.
 - 10% were suspected to have had undiagnosed autism based on evidence of elevated autistic traits in psychological autopsy interviews.
 - 29 of the families of the deceased were interviewed and they found significant evidence of elevated autistic traits in 41% of the deceased individuals.

2SLGBTQ+

- Self-reported suicidal ideation and suicide attempts in lifetime are significantly higher among those of sexual or gender minority status.
- *Suicidality among sexual minority and transgender adolescents: a nationally representative population-based study of youth in Canada* (CMAJ, 2022)

- Self-reported gender as “Other” (could be transgender, non-binary, genderqueer etc.):
 - 77.6% reported suicidal ideation in the previous year.
 - 42.8% reported suicide attempts in lifetime.
- Among sexual orientation, girls attracted to girls.
 - had the highest rates of SI (46.7%)
 - an attempt ever in lifetime (20.6%) followed by those attracted to >1 gender (could be bisexual, pansexual, etc.) 14.3%.
- Those who identified as transgender:
 - 58.4% reported suicidal ideation in the previous year.
 - 39.9% reported a suicide attempt ever in lifetime.
 - It has been suggested that trans individuals are 2x more likely to die by suicide.

Why are LGB people at higher risk for suicide?

- Discrimination manifesting as bullying, physical violence, rejection (leading to isolation); this is especially prevalent among LGB youth who are at higher risk for suicide than LGB adults.
- Lack of support from family members, which can also lead to isolation.
- Predisposition to depression, anxiety and substance abuse.
- LGB individuals who consider suicide face the stigma of being different in sexual orientation and the stigma of suicide in general.
- Institutional prejudice (laws and public policies which create inequalities and/or do not provide protection from sexual orientation-based discrimination).

(Fact Sheet: Sexual Minorities and Suicide, the Mental Health Commission of Canada)

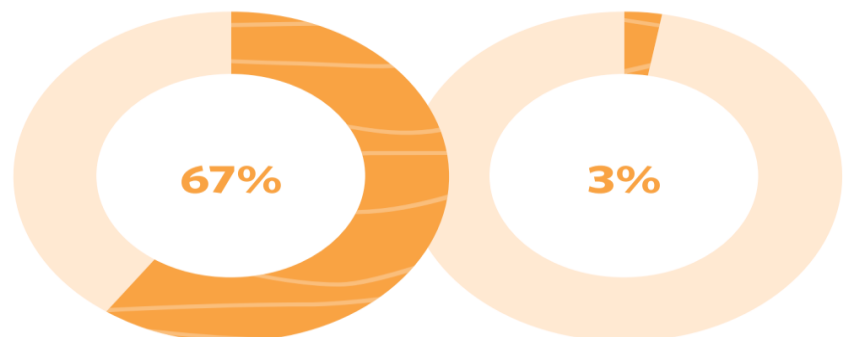
Why are transgender people at higher risk for suicide?

All the same reasons as sexual minorities, **PLUS:**

- Experience of discrimination (transphobia) in the form of physical or verbal harassment, physical or sexual assault.
- Stress related to fear of transitioning, including the potential backlash and life disruption, as well as considering the risks and sometimes lengthy time periods involved.
- Gender dysphoria, or distress related to a conflict between one’s physical or assigned gender and the gender with which they identify.

(Fact Sheet: Transgender People and Suicide, the Mental Health Commission of Canada)

67% of transitioning people thought about suicide pre-transition and only **3%** post-medical transition (Bailey et al., 2014).



- The Canada Suicide Prevention Service has experienced a significant increase in calls since the start of the pandemic, with the number of interactions rising from 2,375 in March 2020 to 6,700 in October 2020.
- Kids Help Phone listed suicide among the top five reasons youth sought support between April and September 2020.
- One in ten Canadians (10%) experienced thoughts of suicide since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Thoughts or feelings of suicide were more common for certain groups, e.g., LGBTQ2+ (28%), people with existing mental health issues (27%) or disabilities (24%), Indigenous people (20%), people with low income (14%), and parents with young children living at home (13%).
(CMHA and UBC survey, May 11 and September 12, 2020)
- The trend based on past natural disasters is that there is a delayed effect and an increase in suicidality among men in the two years that follow. Research concludes that access to proper support following the pandemic can alleviate this risk.