

Suicide rate remains 'stubbornly high'

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The Chief Coroner says the suicide rate is stubbornly high and disappointingly consistent.

Table 3. Provisional Suicide deaths reported to the Coroner by age and gender between July 2013 and June 2014 (n=529)

Age Group (years)	Males		Females		Total	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
10-14	2	1.32	4	2.77	6	2.03
15-19	25	15.49	21	13.80	46	14.87
20-24	50	30.06	8	5.02	58	17.81
25-29	37	25.81	9	6.09	46	15.79
30-34	33	24.73	16	11.10	49	17.85
35-39	27	20.77	8	5.59	35	12.82
40-44	33	22.17	19	11.53	52	16.58
45-49	36	24.08	13	8.04	49	15.74
50-54	35	22.82	21	12.80	56	17.64
55-59	27	19.87	8	5.57	35	12.52
60-64	28	23.43	5	3.98	33	13.46
65-69	11	10.41	2	1.81	13	6.01
70-74	11	14.24	3	3.62	14	8.74
75-79	6	11.32	2	3.30	8	7.06
80-84	13	35.61	3	6.49	16	19.34
85 +	11	38.62	2	4.06	13	16.73
Total	385	17.42	144	6.26	529	11.73

Graphic: CHIEF CORONER

The latest figures show the overall rate has dropped slightly, with fewer young people taking their own lives, but there is a continuing rise in suicides among older people.

529 people took their own lives in the year to June, down from 541 the year before. Taking the increasing population into account, the suicide rate has fallen to below 12 people per 100,000.



Judge Neil MacLean.

Photo: RNZ / Lauren Baker

But the Chief Coroner, Judge Neil MacLean, said there was a rise in the number of suicides among older people.

"The number in the over sixty-year-olds went up from 75 in 12/13 to 97 in 13/14. It's a raft of things like the loneliness of elderly people, the whole environment of rest homes and palliative care."

Judge MacLean said the number of suicides amongst people under 24 was significantly down, with 110 last year, compared to 144 the year before. He said these were some of the toughest and most tragic cases and attributed the fall to increased awareness, especially within community groups.

Prevention services for Maori not working - CASPER

A suicide awareness group has said services aimed at preventing Maori suicides are not working.

The Chief Coroner's latest figures show 108 people of Maori descent took their lives in the year to June, compared with 105 the year before.

Community Action on Suicide Prevention and Education Research (CASPER) said the fall in the overall suicide rate was pleasing.

But its operations manager, Leteisha Cornes, said the government money going into projects such as Kia Piki Te Ora was not effective enough.

"A lot of money's been put in from the Ministry of Health into Maori and specifically Maori youth suicide," she said.

"I think that's a reflection that what's going on there with all of that money and all of that support that they're trying to provide, that it's not working at all, and that we need to start looking at different approaches."