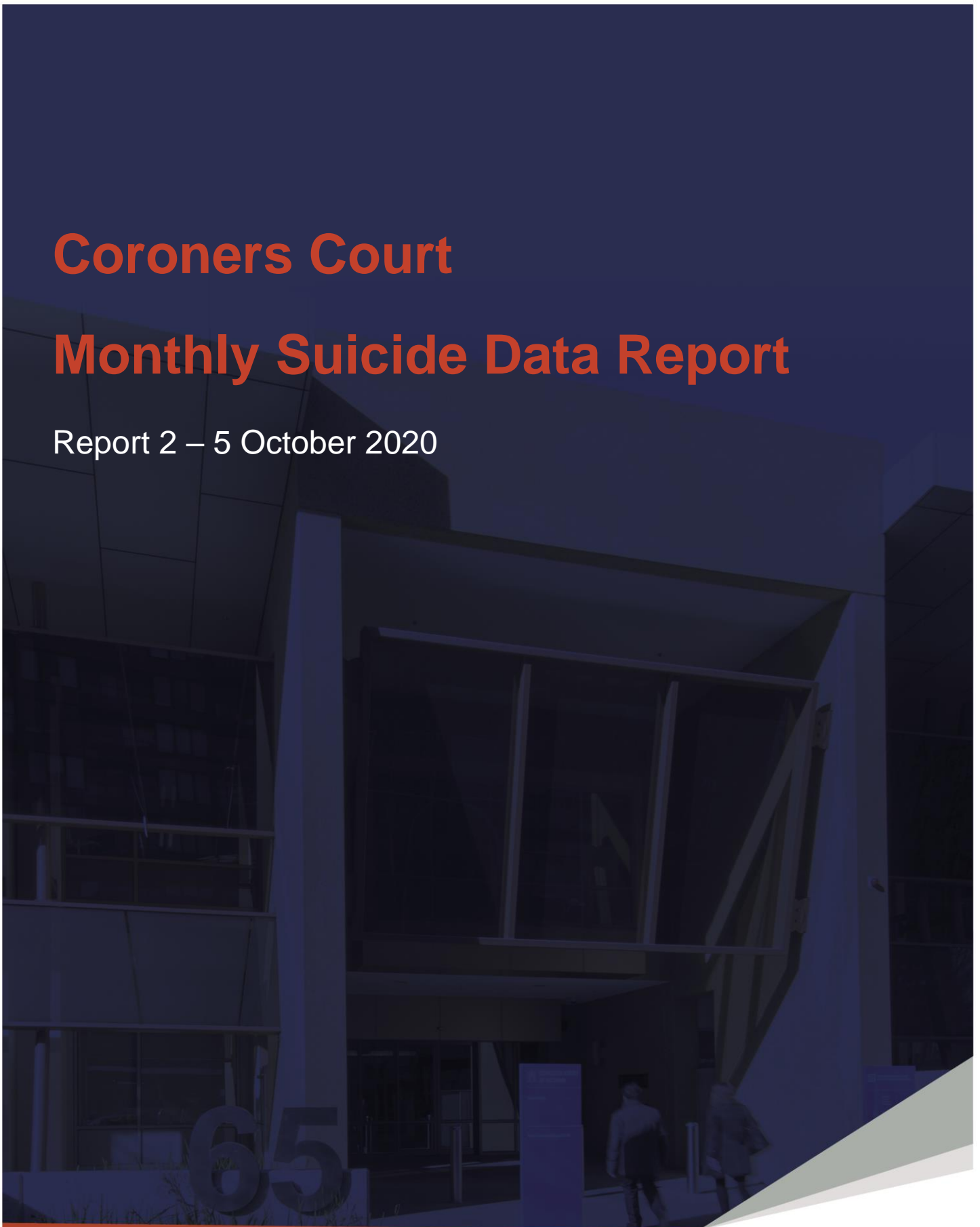


Coroners Court

Monthly Suicide Data Report

Report 2 – 5 October 2020



Coroners Court
of Victoria



WARNING: This following report includes information on suicides.

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Purpose

This report presents the September 2020 update to Victorian suicide statistics. This report was produced under the Coroners Court of Victoria's initiative to release timely and accessible data on suicide across the state.

Victorian Suicide Register

In Victoria all deaths from suspected non-natural causes including suspected suicides are required to be reported to the Coroners Court of Victoria. The Coroners Court reviews newly reported deaths on a daily basis to identify those that occur in circumstances consistent with suicide and adds these deaths to the Victorian Suicide Register (VSR).

The deaths included in the VSR are regularly reviewed as coroners' investigations progress and more is learned about the circumstances in which they occurred. Deaths may be removed from the VSR if investigation establishes they are likely not to be suicides; likewise, deaths initially missed may be added to the VSR as new evidence consistent with suicide is gathered. This is why data reported from the VSR may change over time. However, data changes are usually quite minor: analyses have shown that over time, the VSR coding team are consistently over 95 per cent accurate in identifying the cohort of deaths that are ultimately determined to be suicides.

The VSR has been in operation since 2012 and is the most accurate and timely data source for suicide in Victoria. VSR data is regularly shared with the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Victoria Police, health services, and other bodies engaged in suicide prevention to inform their work.

Table 1. Year to date frequency

Table 1 shows the year to date frequency of Victorian suicides as at 30 September for each year from 2016 to 2020. This year to date frequency has been relatively steady over the past five years, with the 2020 frequency slightly lower than in 2019. Approximately three out of four suicides each year are among males.

Table 1: Year to date suicide frequency in Victoria by deceased sex, to 30 September, 2016-2020.

Sex	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Male	360	354	380	399	391
Female	129	147	140	135	139
Total	489	501	520	534	530

Table 2. Monthly frequency

Table 2 shows the monthly frequency and aggregate monthly¹ frequency of Victorian suicides for the period January 2016 through to September 2020.

Table 2: Monthly frequency and monthly aggregate frequency of Victorian suicides, 2016-2020. (*2020 data is part-year to 30 September.)

Month	Monthly frequency					Aggregate monthly frequency				
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*
January	59	62	53	73	63	59	62	53	73	63
February	51	48	51	61	63	110	110	104	134	126
March	60	72	66	54	73	170	182	170	188	199
April	44	51	63	57	52	214	233	233	245	251
May	59	52	54	64	57	273	285	287	309	308
June	49	50	54	55	55	322	335	341	364	363
July	48	67	70	54	57	370	402	411	418	420
August	58	59	55	62	61	428	461	466	480	481
September	61	40	54	54	49	489	501	520	534	530
October	49	61	67	66		538	562	587	600	
November	57	62	75	55		595	624	662	655	
December	56	63	63	64		651	687	725	719	

1 The aggregate monthly frequency is the sum of frequencies for all months so far in each year. For example, the aggregate monthly frequency in March of a year is the sum of the monthly frequencies in January, February and March for that year.

The monthly frequencies fluctuated quite substantially, between 40 suicides (September 2017) and 76 suicides (November 2018). However, the monthly aggregate frequency data shows that these monthly fluctuations tend to even out over the course of the year. This demonstrates the importance of not attributing too much significance to the suicide frequency in any one month; instead the broader trend should be examined.

Table 3. Frequency by age group and sex

Table 3 shows the annual Victorian suicide frequency by sex and age group for 2016 to 2020. Most suicides occur among those aged between 25 and 55.

Table 3: Annual suicide frequency by sex and age group, Victoria 2016-2020. (*2020 data is part-year to 30 September.)

Age group by sex	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*
Male	474	499	539	543	391
Under 18	14	11	10	13	13
18 to 24	70	44	63	64	44
25 to 34	107	98	100	109	70
35 to 44	78	96	97	114	66
45 to 54	73	106	109	94	65
55 to 64	51	67	83	79	63
65 and over	81	77	77	70	70
Female	177	188	186	176	139
Under 18	3	5	5	8	1
18 to 24	21	19	21	19	12
25 to 34	31	35	41	27	34
35 to 44	31	32	33	29	30
45 to 54	38	43	26	32	17
55 to 64	30	24	32	27	19
65 and over	23	30	28	34	26
Total	651	687	725	719	530

While in most groups the frequency to date in 2020 indicates consistency with previous years, two groups require some further commentary.

The frequency of suicides among males aged under 18 years was 13 in the first nine months of 2020, which is approximately equal to the full-year frequency for this group in earlier years. This does not necessarily mean there is an increasing suicide trend among young males; suicide is very rare in this age group and random fluctuation is therefore expected. The deaths are currently under coronial investigation to identify any potential underlying issues.

Similarly, there were 70 suicides in the first nine months of 2020 among males aged 65 years and over. This is slightly elevated compared to what would be expected based on previous years; the 30 September year to date frequency for this group was 66 in 2016, 57 in 2017, 46 in 2018, and 49 in 2019. Again, this does not necessarily mean there is an underlying trend or increase in the suicides, and all deaths are currently being investigated by coroners.

Table 4. Location

Table 4a shows the annual suicide frequency by location (metropolitan or regional) for the years 2016 to 2020. Table 4b shows the same data, but represented as proportions of all suicides rather than as frequencies.

Table 4a: Annual suicide frequency by location, Victoria 2016-2020 (*2020 data is part-year to 30 September.)

Location	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*
Metropolitan	438	469	481	458	349
Regional	213	218	244	261	181
Total	651	687	725	719	530

Table 4b: Annual suicide proportion by location, Victoria 2016-2020 (*2020 data is part-year to 30 September.)

Location	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*
Metropolitan	67%	68%	66%	64%	66%
Regional	33%	32%	34%	36%	34%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

According to table 4b, approximately two-thirds of Victorian suicides each year in 2016-2020 occurred in metropolitan locations. The 2020 part-year frequency data in table 4a is consistent with full-year frequencies being consistent with what occurred in 2019.