

30 August 2024

Sandra Anderson  
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Tēnā koe Sandra

### Your request for official information, reference: HN200060954

Thank you for your email on 15 August 2024, asking Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora for the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

*Information regarding suicide statistics within both the general population and the healthcare workforce here in NZ. Specifically, I'm seeking the following details:*

*1. General Population Suicides - previous 5 years*

*1a) Annual Number of Suicides: Could you please provide the total number of suicides reported annually over the past five years, broken down by year?*

*1b) Demographic Breakdown: If available, I'd appreciate a breakdown by age group, gender, and ethnicity.*

*1c) Geographical Distribution: I'm also interested in the geographical distribution of suicides across different regions in New Zealand.*

*1d) Trends and Analysis: If you have any insights into trends or changes in suicide rates over the specified period, that would be very helpful.*

*2) Healthcare Worker Suicides - previous 5 years*

*2a) Resident Medical Officers (RMOs): The number of suicides among RMOs over the past five years, broken down by year and district.*

*2b) Senior Medical Officers (SMOs): The number of suicides among SMOs over the past five years, broken down by year and district.*

*2c) Nurses: The number of suicides among nurses over the past five years, broken down by year and district.*

*2d) Allied Healthcare Staff: The number of suicides among allied healthcare staff over the past five years, broken down by year and district.*

*3) Comparative Analysis:*

*3a) I'd like to compare the data on healthcare worker suicides with the suicide prevalence in the general population across different age groups:*

*3a) Youth (15-24)*

*3b) Adults (25-65)*

*3c) Seniors (65+)*

*This information is important to better understand the mental health challenges faced by our healthcare workers in comparison to the general population, which can help in shaping future support initiatives*

## Response

Information on suicide deaths in Aotearoa New Zealand is available online from Health NZ's Suicide Data web tool online here: <https://tewhatauora.shinyapps.io/suicide-web-tool/>

The web tool contains demographic and regional breakdowns, and data over time.

Please note that currently 2019 is the most recent year for which suicide deaths data is available, and data for this year is provisional. Data for 2020 will be made available in the web tool in December 2024.

After the close of a calendar year, there is a 12-18 months process to assign cause of death codes to the majority of deaths in that year. Health NZ's clinical coding team reviews the death certificate and health history of the deceased, to assign cause of death codes. Approximately 10% of deaths are referred to the Coroner each year to determine cause. Deaths which require a coronial inquiry can take 2-3 or more years for cause of death to be determined. We do not make mortality data available publicly until the majority of deaths have been assigned a cause of death, so that the data we release is complete and accurate. The Chief Coroner has noted delays in the time it is taking them to determine cause of death. Only a coroner can determine that a death was a suicide, so the release of data on confirmed suicides is dependent on coroner's completing the majority of their investigations.

The web tool also includes data on suspected self-inflicted deaths referred to the coroner to determine cause, which are referred to as deaths from suspected intentional self-harm. This data is available for later time periods.

With regards to questions 2 and 3, information on suicides by occupation is not available. Occupation data included in Health NZ's mortality data collection is a free text field which cannot be used to identify the occupation groups you have requested. In addition, we do not hold population data for these professions, so cannot calculate rates. This aspect of your request is therefore declined under section 18(g) of the Act, as this information is not held by Health NZ.

Suicide among our workforce is a sensitive and complex matter which we take very seriously. As context, whenever there is an unexplained death in our workforce, we ensure that wraparound support services are made available to staff and communities affected by the unexplained death for as long as is required. We also make appropriate enquiries to understand whether there are any potential contributory factors in the workplace that need to be investigated and addressed.

Further to the support services described above, we have a range of employee assistance programmes (EAP) in place across the motu which all our employees are encouraged to access if they are struggling with personal or professional issues. We are also committed to continuing to work with professional bodies and with unions representing our workforce, to ensure we provide a safe and positive workplace experience for all our people.

## **How to get in touch**

If you have any questions, you can contact us at [h.nzOIA@Tewhatauora.govt.nz](mailto:h.nzOIA@Tewhatauora.govt.nz).

If you are not happy with this response, you have the right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman. Information about how to do this is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or by phoning 0800 802 602.

As this information may be of interest to other members of the public, Health NZ may proactively release a copy of this response on our website. All requester data, including your name and contact details, will be removed prior to release.

Nāku iti noa, nā



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**Danielle Coe**

**Manager (OIAs) – Government Services  
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