

# Study: Suicide rates, an overview, 1950 to 2009

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Suicide ranked as the ninth leading cause of death in Canada in 2009, but among young people aged 15 to 34 it was the second leading cause, preceded only by accidents.

During 2009, there were roughly 238,000 deaths in Canada, 3,890 of which were attributed to suicide.

A total of 202 teenagers aged 15 to 19 committed suicide in 2009. While over time the suicide rate within this group has remained relatively stable, suicides are now responsible for a greater percentage of teenage deaths.

In 2009, nearly one-quarter (23%) of all deaths among 15- to 19-year-olds were due to suicide, more than double the proportion of 9% in 1974. This difference is primarily explained by decreases in accidental deaths in this age group during the same time period.

Although suicide was the second leading cause of death among teens in 2009, the majority of suicides occurred in the 40 to 59 age group. About 45% of all suicides occurred in this age group, compared with 35% in those aged 15 to 39, and 19% in those aged 60 and older.

The suicide rate for men in Canada is more than three times higher than the suicide rate for women. During 2009, 2,989 men committed suicide, representing a rate of 17.9 per 100,000. Among women, there were 901 suicide deaths, representing a rate of 5.3 per 100,000.

Although men are more likely to die from suicide, women are three to four times more likely to attempt suicide. Furthermore, females are hospitalized for attempted suicide 1.5 times more often than males.

In general, married people were the least likely to commit suicide compared with single, widowed or divorced individuals. For men, the suicide rate was the highest among single men, while for women, widows had the highest rate.

Hanging has been the most common method of suicide since 1992, but it is used less often at older ages. Over the 10-year period ending in 2009, an average of 55% of individuals aged 15 to 39 died as a result of hanging, compared with 30% of those aged 60 or older.

Suicides involving a firearm, on the other hand, were more common at older ages. About 12% of people aged 15 to 39 used a firearm, compared with 26% of those aged 60 and older.

Historically, suicide rates were fairly stable in the 1950s, after which they rose steadily from the 1960s through the early 1980s. The rate peaked at 15.1 deaths per 100,000 in 1983; by 2009, it had dropped to 10.7.

## Note to readers

*This release is based on an analytical article in *Health at a Glance*, which used data from the Canadian Vital Statistics Death Database. This database collects demographic and cause of death information annually from all provincial and territorial vital statistics registries on all deaths in Canada. Suicide data from this source are somewhat under-reported because of the difficult nature of classifying suicide and the time lag in determining this as the cause of death.*



The article "[Suicide rates: An overview](#)," in *Health at a Glance* (82-624-X, free), is now available from the *Key resource* module of our website under *Publications*.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Statistics Canada's National Contact Centre (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 613-951-8116; [infostats@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:infostats@statcan.gc.ca)) or the Media Hotline (613-951-4636; [mediahotline@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:mediahotline@statcan.gc.ca)).