

State of the Nation in Suicide Prevention: A survey of the suicide prevention sector

A synopsis for Mental Health Coordinating Council members

[The State of the Nation in Suicide Prevention: A survey of the suicide prevention sector](#) was recently published by [Suicide Prevention Australia](#), the national peak body for the suicide prevention sector.

The Survey was designed and conducted to gather insights and knowledge from Suicide Prevention Australia members and the broader suicide prevention sector.

Mental Health Coordinating Council has put together this synopsis of the data as the Survey reports information useful to our members.

Highlights from the report

- 88% of respondents report an increased demand for services over the past 12 months.
- 76% of respondents state they require increased funding, support, or resources to meet increased demand, and 71% lacked the resources to meet the needs of priority groups.
- 83% of organisations state they have insufficient staff and volunteers to meet client needs.
- Over 50% of respondents report having access to the skills and training necessary to meet service delivery needs, while another 25% say they do not.
- 80% of respondents reported that the peer workforce is not appropriately funded or resourced, with 48% suggesting that they had seen little change in peer workforce funding and resourcing in the last 12 months (48%), suggesting greater clarity is required about peer workforce development in Australia
- While 95% of respondents believe they need access to reliable, accurate suicide prevention data, 48% don't have access to the data they need right now

Overview of findings

The sector remains **collaborative and adaptable**. Those surveyed reported ongoing changes in service types including adaption to digital technologies and development of new services, no longer driven by the pandemic but responding to demand for greater choice of services.

Eight out of ten respondents work with government agencies, other not-for-profit and community-based organisations.

Overwhelming support for a **whole-of-government approach** to address the social determinants of health that contribute to the risk of suicide is reported at 96%.

A significant share of **funding** remains short-term, with 55% reporting core funding streams secured for under three years.

Among the respondents, 57% rely on external funding grants to remain sustainable, increasing from 38% in 2020 and 50% in 2021.

And 40% of respondents report they **rely on volunteers** to operate.

The suicide prevention sector primarily **engages people with lived experience** through advisory groups and committees (28%), consultation activities including workshops and roundtables (23%), and lived experience networks that share information and opportunities for participation (23%).

Nearly 80% of respondents believe Australia needs a comprehensive fully funded Suicide Prevention Workforce Strategy.

In reporting on the state of the community, the survey found **cost of living pressures** and personal debt has overtaken others as the highest rated risk factor for suicide over the next 12 months, closely followed by social isolation and housing access and affordability.

September 2022