Suicide and self-harm in Waterloo Region

The Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council and Region of Waterloo Public Health and Emergency Services are working together on a research project to better understand who is dying by suicide and who is attempting suicide in our community. We will use the findings to help organizations offer effective and relevant services that our community needs.

This is a snapshot from our Phase 1 findings of what we know about suicide and self-harm in Waterloo Region.

**Prevalence of mental illness and suicidal behaviour**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population who:</th>
<th>% in Waterloo Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have ever considered suicide*</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report having a mood disorder</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report symptoms of moderate/severe depression</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report having an anxiety disorder</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have ever planned suicide*</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have ever attempted suicide</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Statistically significantly higher in Waterloo Region compared to Ontario.

Those reporting **higher rates of mental illness and suicidal behaviour** include:

- Youth (15-24)
- Females
- Non-immigrants
- Indigenous peoples
- LGB individuals
- People with lower income
- People with less than high school education
- Single or divorced, separated or widowed people

**Prevalence of self-harm and suicide**

Each year in Waterloo Region, there are approximately:

- 1,700 police responses to suicide attempts
- 1,100 emergency department visits for self-harm
- 470 hospitalizations for self-harm
- 55 suicide deaths


**Are you:**

- feeling desperate and hopeless?
- alone with no one to talk to?
- worried you might hurt yourself or someone else?

**If you have:**

- had serious suicidal thoughts
- made a plan for suicide

For access to mental health, addictions, and crisis services in Waterloo Region call Here 24/7 at 1-844-437-3247. If it is an emergency, call 911 or go to your local hospital emergency department for support.

Source: Canadian Community Health Survey, 2015-16.
Emergency department visits and hospitalizations for intentional self-harm

In 2017 in Waterloo Region:

- **200** emergency department visits per 100,000 people
- **86** hospitalizations per 100,000 people

All rates are higher for:

- Females (more than 2x higher than males)
- Youth age 10-19 (4x higher than overall rates)

Rates are consistently **30-40%** higher in Waterloo Region compared to Ontario.


Suicide deaths in Waterloo Region

In 2015 in Waterloo Region:

- **10** deaths per 100,000 people or **55** deaths

Rates are higher for:

- Males age 50-59 (2 to 4x higher than females)

Among suicide deaths in Waterloo Region and Ontario:

- 20% known history of alcohol/drug abuse
- 45% history of treatment for mental health condition
- 25% known past suicide attempt
- 40% none of these risk factors


Suicide and self-harm trends in youth

Youth aged 10-24 have the highest rates of emergency department visits and hospitalizations for self-harm, especially females.

Among youth, rates in females 2 to 7.5x higher than males
Rates highest in females aged 15-18 (1,266 emergency department visits per 100,000 people)

Since 2009, emergency department visit rates for self-harm in Waterloo Region youth have steadily increased:

- 450% increase in 10-14 year olds
- 180% increase in 15-18 year olds
- 100% increase in 19-24 year olds

Self-harm rates for youth are increasing both locally and provincially, but at a faster pace in Waterloo Region.


For detailed research findings, see A Community Profile on Suicide and Self-Harm in Waterloo Region full report

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