

# Men and suicide

Middle-aged men (40 to 60) die by suicide more than anyone, including young people and women (Statistics Canada, 2019). Men are often socialized not to talk about their emotions. As a result, men as a group may mask their stress and deal with emotional pain through harmful behaviours and actions, and sometimes suicide, instead of seeking help (Ogrodniczuk & Oliffe, 2011).

Of Canada's 4,012 Suicides in 2019

**4,012** — 3,058  
were suicides by men.

**1,169** (the highest number) were by men between the ages 45 and 64 (Statistics Canada, 2019).

## Why are men at risk?

A few factors put men at risk of suicide:

- **Socialization.** Boys are often told not to cry, and men are told to “suck it up” and “take it like a man” when dealing with life’s pressures. Toughness and stoicism are expected; emotional vulnerability is seen as a blemish on their manhood. These expectations may discourage men from seeking help when they encounter mental health adversities and instead drive them to destructive coping strategies (Seager et al., 2014; Ogrodniczuk & Oliffe, 2011).
- **Means.** The means of suicide men use is often more lethal than those of women (Canetto & Sakinofsky, 1998).

## SUICIDE ATTEMPTS

Women attempt suicide twice as often as men, but men die by suicide three times as often as women (Public Health Agency of Canada, Centre for Surveillance and Applied Research, 2019).



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## Warning signs

Any significant change in behaviour or mood is a warning sign that someone may be thinking about suicide. For example:

- **Losing interest in a previously enjoyed hobby or activity**
- **Disconnecting from friends or family (not calling as much, not going out)**
- **Increased alcohol and/or drug use**
- **Higher levels of irritability or anger**
- **More risk taking with ambivalence about the consequences**
- **Denying or not experiencing feelings and emotions**
- **Making offhand or uncharacteristic comments of hopelessness or expressing feelings of being a burden to others**
- **Talking about wanting to die or taking their own life**
- **Looking for a way to take their own life or already having a plan**

(American Association of Suicidology, 2018)

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## What can reduce risk?

Factors that can build resiliency in men:

- **Tendency to look for support when needed.** Men who seek help for overwhelming emotions are more likely to get it before they consider suicide.
- **Comfort with showing and expressing emotion.** Men who embrace their emotions and the importance of sharing them with others are better able to cope, as they are more likely to deal with them before they become overwhelming.
- **Positive, supportive, and close relationships with family, friends, coworkers, etc.** Supportive people can be asked for help and offer it; they provide a safety net when a man is struggling.

(Houle et al., 2008; American Psychological Association, 2005).

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## RESOURCES & INITIATIVES

**Buddy Up.** A men's suicide prevention communications campaign: a call to action to men, by men.

[bit.ly/34Oy6LL](https://bit.ly/34Oy6LL)

**Tough Enough to Talk About It.** A program for men working in trades, industry, and agriculture.

[bit.ly/3tnOzYa](https://bit.ly/3tnOzYa)

**Man Therapy.** An interactive website that encourages men to address their mental health and seek help if necessary. [bit.ly/33b8LlF](https://bit.ly/33b8LlF)

**DUDES Clubs.** Spaces that facilitate a participant-led community for men's wellness. [bit.ly/3qoCMH8](https://bit.ly/3qoCMH8)

**HeadsUpGuys.** Online information and resources to encourage help seeking among men at risk for depression and suicide.

[bit.ly/3GpWzMO](https://bit.ly/3GpWzMO)

**Men's Sheds.** Community-based safe and friendly environments where men can learn practical skills, develop new interests, work on meaningful projects, connect with other men, and talk about their problems.

[bit.ly/33wT1ZK](https://bit.ly/33wT1ZK)

## What can we all do to help reduce suicide among men?

Individually, we can create a safe space to share and express emotions through open, non-judgmental conversation and gentle questioning.

If someone you know is exhibiting warning signs, talk with them. You can start by mentioning your concerns: “I haven’t heard from you much these days. Is everything okay?” Keep the conversation going by asking questions and listening to what they’re saying. You don’t have to offer solutions. If you’re still worried about them, ask: “Are you thinking about suicide?” If they say yes, don’t panic. Let them know you’re there for them and help them access mental health supports, including giving them the crisis line number, 1-833-456-4566.

We as individuals can show and express emotion, ask for help when it’s needed, and let everyone else know that it’s okay to do that, too. We can also have more meaningful conversations by asking, “How are you really doing?” if we think they may be struggling.

## What can communities do to help reduce suicide among men?

Workplaces can make employee resources well known, easily accessible, and confidential.

Healthcare providers can identify men who may be thinking about suicide by being alert to subtle cues that may indicate they are struggling, such as body language and tone of voice. Better training is needed to ensure that these professionals are able to detect depression among men (Ogrodniczuk & Oliffe, 2011; Paraschakis et al., 2016).

## What can men do to stay mentally healthy?

1

**MAINTAIN STRONG SOCIAL CONNECTIONS** by prioritizing friendships and good relationships with loved ones and by participating in peer support programs or other social activities.

2

**SHOW AND EXPRESS YOUR EMOTIONS AND SEEK HELP WHEN YOU NEED IT** by letting those around you know you’re struggling and by asking for help or connecting with workplace or community resources.

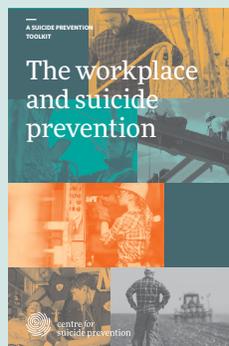
3

**PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR FRIENDS** and, if you’re worried about someone, start a conversation. Ask questions and listen to what they’re saying. Let them know you’re there for them, and encourage them to reach out to others.

Learn more about the steps  
to be taken at work in our

### Workplace and Suicide Prevention Toolkit.

[csprev.ca/workplace](https://csprev.ca/workplace)



## References

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### ABOUT THE CENTRE FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION

**Anyone** can learn to identify someone at risk of suicide and get them help.

#### Call us.

We are the Centre for Suicide Prevention. For 40 years we've been equipping Canadians with knowledge and skills to respond to people considering suicide. We can equip you too. We educate for life.

### ABOUT THE MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION OF CANADA

The Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) is a catalyst for improving the mental health system and changing the attitudes and behaviours of Canadians around mental health issues.



If you are in crisis, call 1.833.456.4566.  
First Nations people and Inuit can also call 1.855.242.3310

[hopeforwellness.ca](https://hopeforwellness.ca)  
[suicideprevention.ca/need-help](https://suicideprevention.ca/need-help)

VISIT [SUICIDEINFO.CA](https://SUICIDEINFO.CA) FOR MORE RESOURCES



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