



# More Nova Scotians died by suicide in 2021 than ever before: province



By [Callum Smith](#) Global News

Posted May 26, 2022 5:58 pm EST



**WATCH:** New data from the province indicates 142 Nova Scotians lost their lives to suicide last year. The number is the highest on record and shows a jump from 2020, but is comparable to numbers from years prior. As Callum Smith reports, advocates and the government agree more needs to be done to support Nova Scotians. Warning: disturbing content.

***Warning: This story contains content that may be disturbing to some readers. Discretion is advised.***

Both advocates and the Nova Scotia provincial government are concerned by the number of suicides reported in the province last year — and both sides agree more needs to be done.

The 2021 total from the province shows 142 people died by suicide, [up from 121 in 2020](#). Between 2015 and 2019, the number of people varied from 134 to 140. 142 is the highest number on record from the provincial data, which dates back to 2008.

Kelly Mitchell lost her 14-year-old daughter, Aidaen, to suicide back in 2019. Being in the small town of Yarmouth combined with Aidaen's young age made it harder to access necessary care, she says.

Mitchell wanted to help other families prevent similar tragedies and opened an ever-growing youth wellness room — now called Aidaen's Place — for youth to socialize and connect with volunteers.

“It was part of our healing but more so, it was just a service that didn't exist,” she says in a phone interview from Yarmouth. “There's nothing like it. Nobody does it.”

“You usually see youth that might travel away for sports three or four times a year,” Mitchell, the founder of Aidaen's Place, says. “We see youth that go on suicide watch three or four times a year.

“This isn't supposed to happen. This isn't a way of life, but it's a cycle that they're not getting help for so they can't get out of it.”

The provincial data doesn't indicate the age of people lost, but Mitchell worries about the younger population, pointing to social media, bullying, racism and COVID as some of her main concerns.

Psychologist Dr. Simon Sherry says while the pandemic impacts everyone, “there are some groups of people particularly affected adversely and part of that would be our youth, teenagers and young adults, seem to be especially hard hit by the pandemic.”

Sherry says the province's 2020 suicide prevention framework is a good start but, needs more detail and commitments.

Brian Comer, the minister for the Office of Mental Health and Addictions, says one life lost is one too many, and the province is using recent survey data to help inform next steps.

“[It will help] us understand really unique situations because it often varies from community to community,” he says. “But as you mentioned, there is a gap and we still have to work hard to lower that number.”

“It’s a significant issue,” he tells Global News in a phone interview Thursday. “I think we have made some notable progress in the last number of years with the suicide prevention framework, but obviously when you see numbers like that, we definitely have more work that needs to be done, for sure.”

*Anyone experiencing a mental health crisis is encouraged to use the following resources:*

- ***Mental Health & Addictions Provincial Crisis Line: 1-888-429-8167***
- ***Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868 (toll-free) Available 24/7 or Text CONNECT 686868***
- ***Emergency: 911***