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### **Rural suicide rates**

Suicide rates are higher in rural areas compared to urban areas, according to 2013 suicide data released by the Ministry of Health (MOH).

Detailed 2013 suicide data just released by the MOH again shows suicide rates were higher in rural (12.5/100,000) compared to urban areas (10.8/100,000).

There were 78 rural suicides, accounting for 15% of all suicides in 2013. Most rural suicide deaths were men (55), 23 were female.

The suicide rates in rural men, aged 15-64, were higher than suicide rates in urban men, and higher than the national male suicide rate.

Rural Health Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand (RHANZ) chairperson, Dr Jo Scott-Jones, says these high rates suggest the need for a suicide prevention policy that is specifically tailored to address suicide risk in rural men of working age.

“We think there are particular pressures on rural people that may lead to these high rates, and we do know that issues like the ease of access to weapons for rural men in distress results in higher rates of suicide using firearms in this group,” he says.

“Rural people have particular issues accessing services, due to the lack of adequate transport and inability of central services to reach into rural communities. We need mental health services that can respond adequately to the needs of rural people.”

While suicide rates have been higher in rural areas compared to urban every year since 2010, the overall rate of rural suicides does seem to have declined over that period.

“This is good to see, but the problem with statistics is they represent in numbers an awful lot of emotional pain and hurt for families. Whenever we look at these numbers, the stories we hear are never far behind. It is important for us to continue to do everything we can to reduce the pain behind these numbers,” Dr Scott-Jones says.

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Note to Editors:

The Rural Health Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand was established in May 2012 and represents a united voice from across multiple rural sector organisations. Its aim is to provide solutions and influence policy affecting the health and wellbeing of rural communities [www.rhaanz.org.nz](http://www.rhaanz.org.nz).

Current members: <http://www.rhaanz.org.nz/membership/current-members/>