

## Suicide Rates Among Teens Aged 15 – 19 Years

### Alberta, 1970 to 2012

Suicide is a leading cause of death among youth aged 15 to 19 years. Leading risk factors for suicide vary by age, sex, cultural background and social environment. Known risk factors often occur in combination with each other and include one or more mental health disorders (e.g. substance use disorders, depression), impulsive behaviours, stressful life events (e.g. loss of a parent), family history of mental illness or substance use disorders, family history of suicide, abusive home environment, and exposure to suicidal behaviours by others.

A focus on early identification and intervention of mental health and substance use problems can be effective in reducing suicidal thoughts and attempts. Suicide is a relatively rare event making it difficult to predict when it might happen, even in the presence of multiple known risk factors.

### Teen suicide rate in 2012 consistent with levels seen in the 1970s and 1980s

In 2012, 44 (17.8 per 100,000 population) Alberta teens between the ages of 15 and 19 years committed suicide. This was a statistically significant increase from 2011 when 22 (8.9 per 100,000 population) teens committed suicide. However, the suicide rate for 2012 was consistent with rates seen during the 1970s through to the early 1990s. In general, suicide rates among teens aged 15 to 19 showed a decreasing trend through the 1990s before leveling. The lowest suicide rate was in 2003 when 15 (6.5 per 100,000 population) Alberta teens committed suicide.

