

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**Men Aged 85+ Show Highest Rate of Suicide for All Age Groups in the Last Decade**

New analysis by ARC Centre of Excellence in Population Ageing Research (CEPAR ) Associate Investigator Dr Richard Burns shows that suicide rates for men aged 70 years and older have been consistently high over the last decade, with men aged 85+ reported as having the highest rates.

Dr Burns, based at the Centre for Ageing, Health and Wellbeing at the Australian National University, decided to look further into the data after discussions with his fellow CEPAR researchers at a 2015 Early Career Researcher Retreat.

In his paper recently published in the journal [Psychiatry Research](#) Dr Burns examined the sex and age trends in suicide rates in Australia over a 10 year period using Australian Bureau of Statistics data.

The paper stated that, although not a leading cause of death in older men, a number of studies have identified high suicide rates in older men. These high suicide rates amongst middle-aged and older males remain a significant public health issue that needs to be addressed.

That suicide is not the most significant cause of death in late life may explain public and scientific focus on suicide rates among younger male adults.

“This has considerable implications given an ageing population; a large baby-boomer cohort and improved life expectancy is increasing the number of male adults reaching ages over 70,” Dr Burns writes.

“Urgent action is needed to address this important public health issue in these men, which appears to have changed little over time, despite considerable investment of time and resources into suicide prevention and mental health services.”

Future analysis is needed to see the affect the ageing baby boomer generation will have on the rates and incidence of suicide in the older cohorts.

“At the moment, different agencies (e.g. AIHW, Blackdog) report on the suicide rates as they are released each year, but it really does require a long-term perspective to determine whether policies are having any systematic and long-term impact,” said Dr Burns.

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