

# Suicide Prevention in Toronto

**Dr. David McKeown**  
**Medical Officer of Health**

November 17, 2014

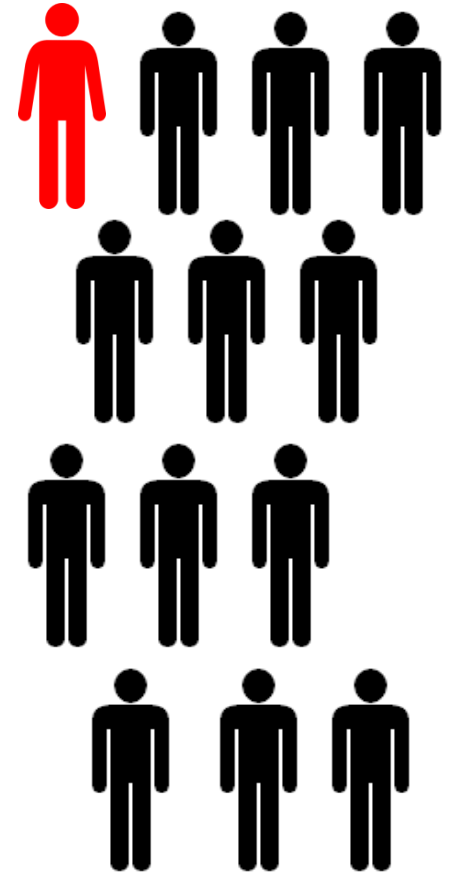


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# Why Examine Suicide Prevention in Toronto

- 3,500 deaths each year in Canada
- When suicidal ideation and attempts are taken into account, suicide affects 1 in 13 Canadians
- One of the most important but least talked about population health issues



- Suicide is an important but difficult issue
- Need for responsible reporting on suicide and proactive measures to prevent contagion
- Tips for reporting on or writing about suicide:
  - Provide information and resources to people thinking about suicide
  - Reporting guidelines: <http://www.mindset-mediaguide.ca/>

## **HELP IS AVAILABLE**

Crisis Lines (24/7)

Toronto Distress Centre: 416-408-HELP (4357)

Gerstein Centre: 416-929-5200

Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868

If you are in crisis and require emergency assistance,  
please go to the nearest hospital or call 911.

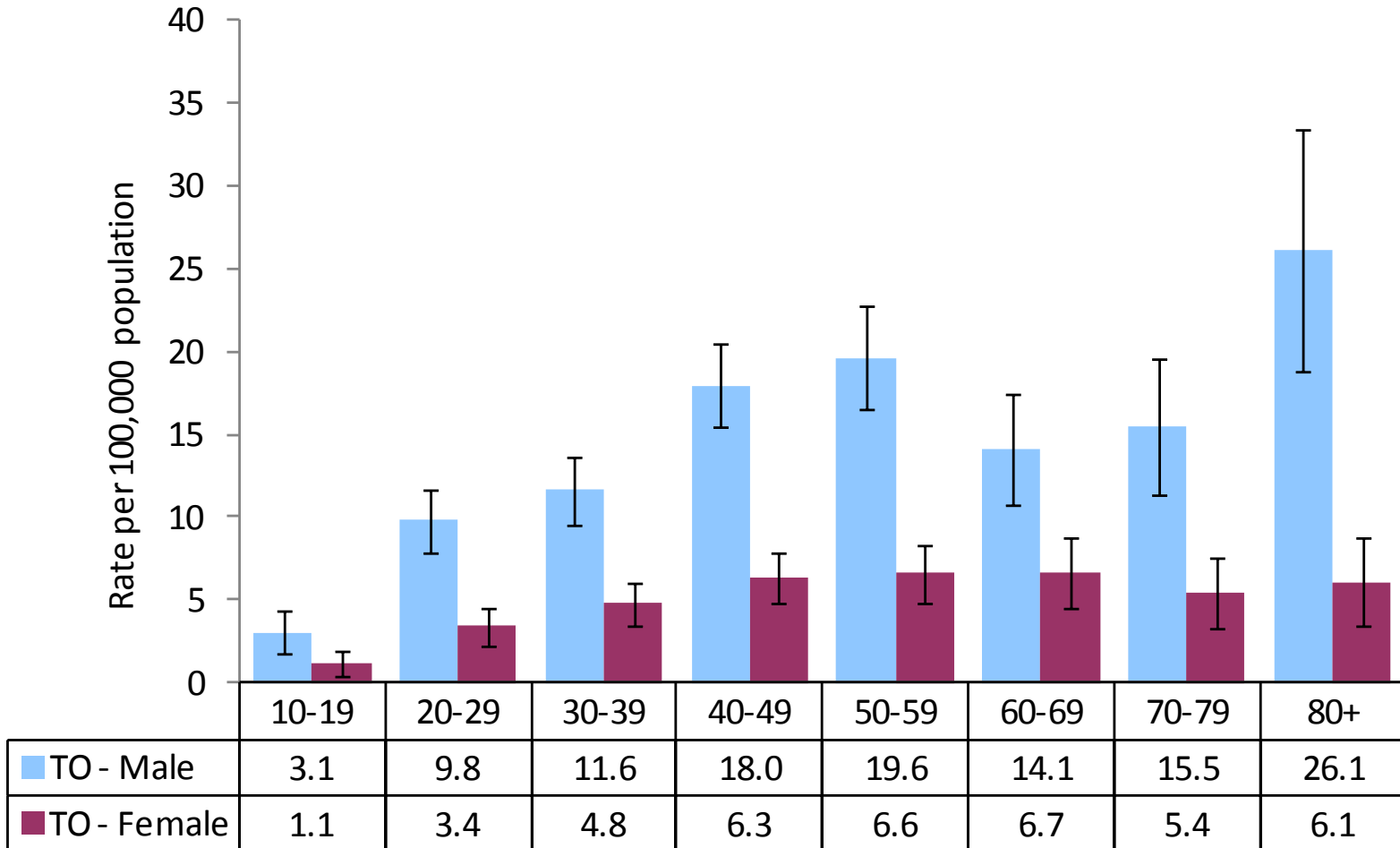
- Examined Toronto data and published evidence on risk and protective factors
- Reviewed existing suicide prevention strategies and evidence-based interventions
- Convened an expert advisory group consisting of Toronto researchers, clinicians and community experts

Suicide is an important public health issue in Toronto:

- 243 deaths in Toronto in 2009
- Leading and preventable cause of premature death
- Death by suicide is the tip of the iceberg of continuum of suicide-related behaviours
- Suicide not only results in a loss of life, it impacts survivors, family, friends and observers

# Mortality Rates from Suicide

## Mortality Rates from Suicide by Age and Sex in Toronto, 2005-2009



Notes: Error bars (I) denote 95% confidence intervals. TO: Toronto.

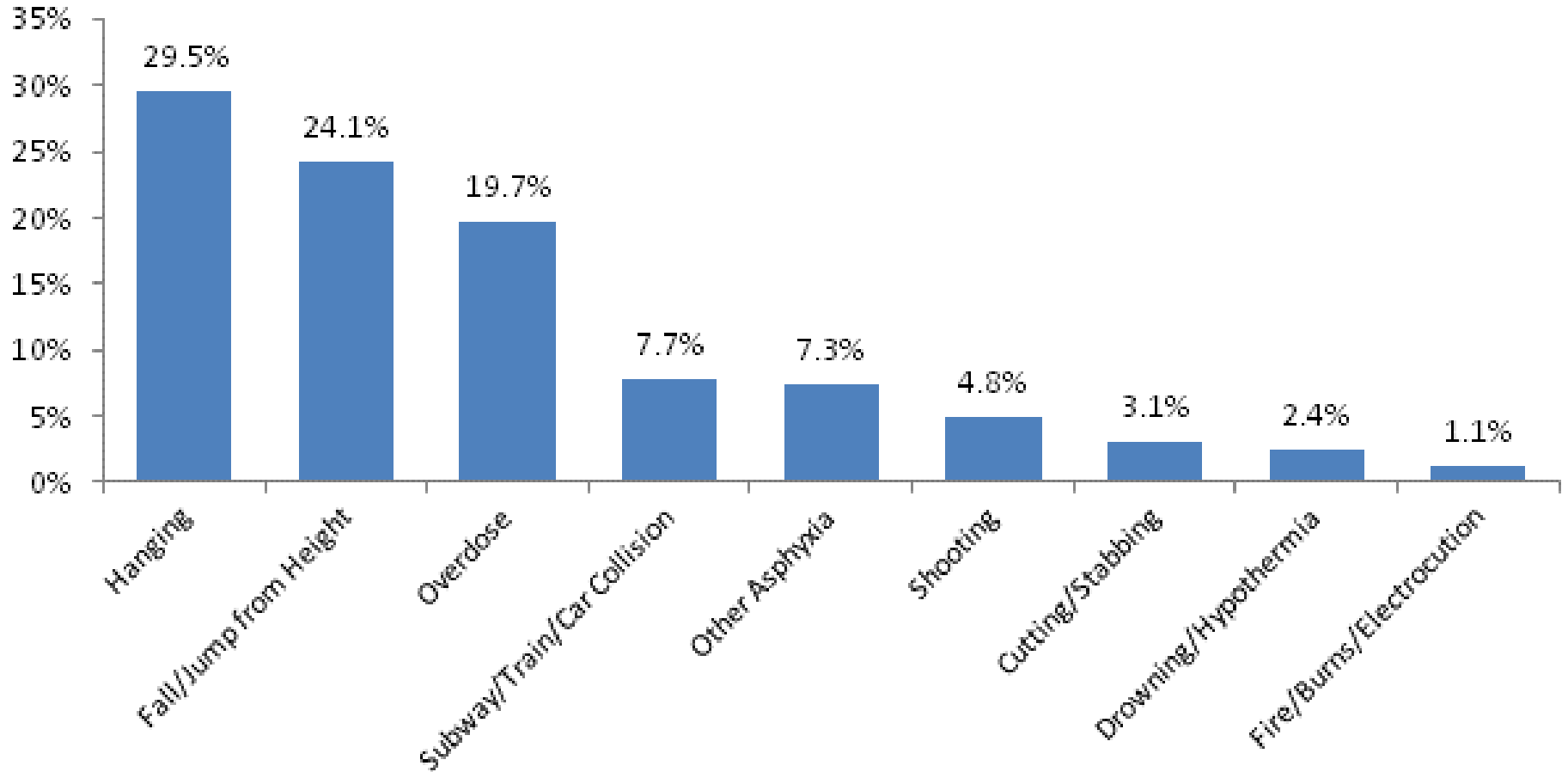
Data Source: Vital Statistics 2005-2009, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, IntelliHEALTH ONTARIO, Date Extracted: March 2013.

- Suicide disproportionately affects certain groups and there are multiple risk factors:
  - Mental illness
  - Substance misuse and abuse
  - Socio-economic disadvantage
  - Social isolation
- Populations who face risk in Toronto include elderly men, LGBTQ youth, urban Aboriginals, and incarcerated populations



# Means of Death by Suicide

## Means of Death for Suicide Deaths in Toronto, 1998-2011



Notes: 0.4% of data missing or suppressed due to low cell counts; sex breakdown not provided due to low cell counts.  
Data source: Suicide Deaths 1998-2011, Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario.

## Suicide Prevention Plan for Municipal Services:



- Embed suicide prevention in existing City strategies, programs and services
- Focus on groups disproportionately at risk

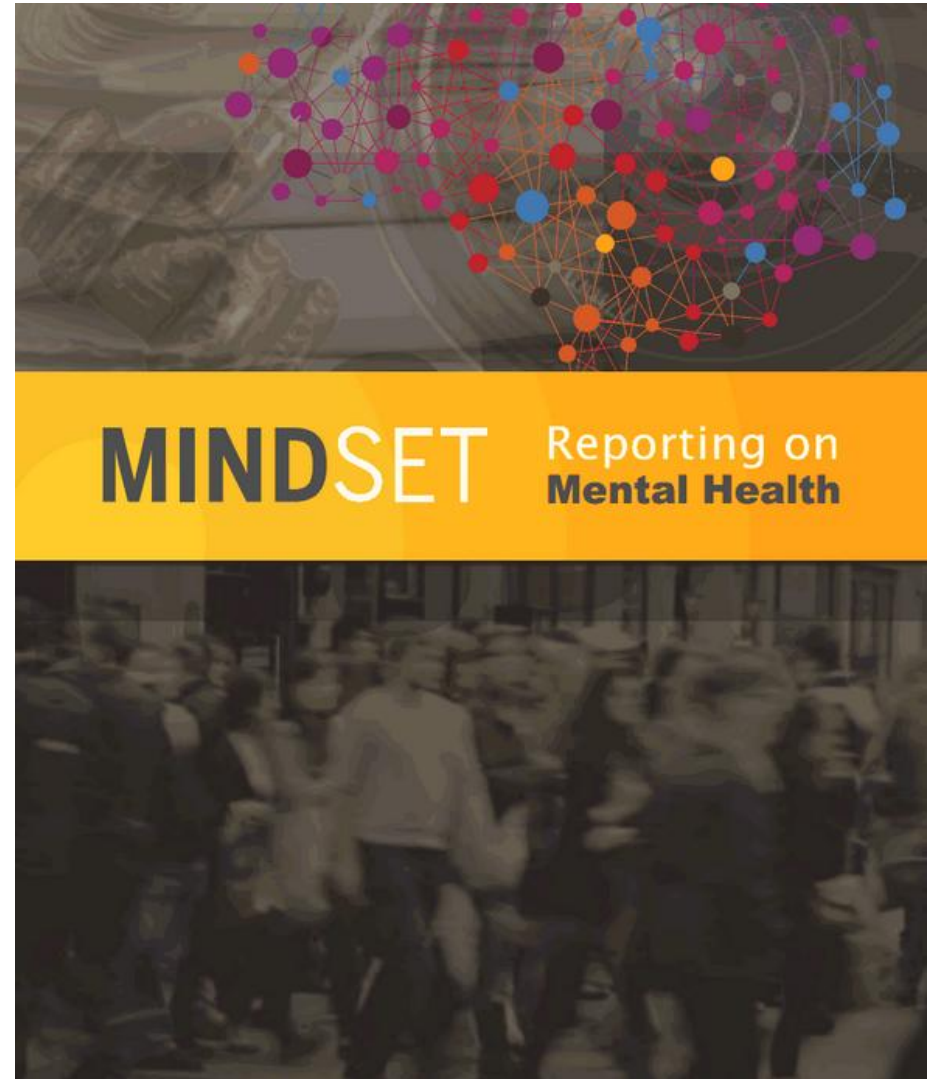
## Means Restriction:

- Restricting availability of drugs commonly used in overdose
- Platform Edge Door barriers on public transit system

# Platform Edge Doors, Copenhagen



- Public awareness and education
- Media reporting



## Gatekeeper training:

- Culturally competent training for social service and health care providers

## Community-based and school-based prevention programs



## Research and Data:

- More timely and accessible data on suicide deaths
- Collect data on socio-demographic indicators
- Collaborative suicide death review with the Chief Coroner for Ontario

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