

Poisoning is a significant cause of self-harm injuries that result in hospitalisation and death in New Zealand. This fact sheet summarises some of the key statistics.

- 5,901 people were recorded as having died as a result of self-harm between 1990 and 1999, of which 38% were poisonings (including ingested, e.g. pain killer overdose, and non-ingested poisons, e.g. carbon monoxide inhalation).
- 25,180 people were hospitalised as a result of self-harm between 1993 and 2002, of which 90% were poisonings.
- The frequency of self-poisoning *fatalities* was 2.6 times higher for males than females, but the frequency of self-poisoning *hospitalisations* was 2.0 times higher for females than males.
- The numbers of male and female self-poisoning fatalities were highest between ages 15 and 50 years (Figure 1).
- Hospitalisations from self-poisoning were highest in males and females between 15 and 24 years of age.
- The number of fatalities from self-poisoning for males was consistently higher than the number for females across all ages.
- Female hospitalisations for self-poisoning peaked in the teenage years, compared to the early adult years for males.
- A higher number of females than males were hospitalised across all ages until 60 years of age.

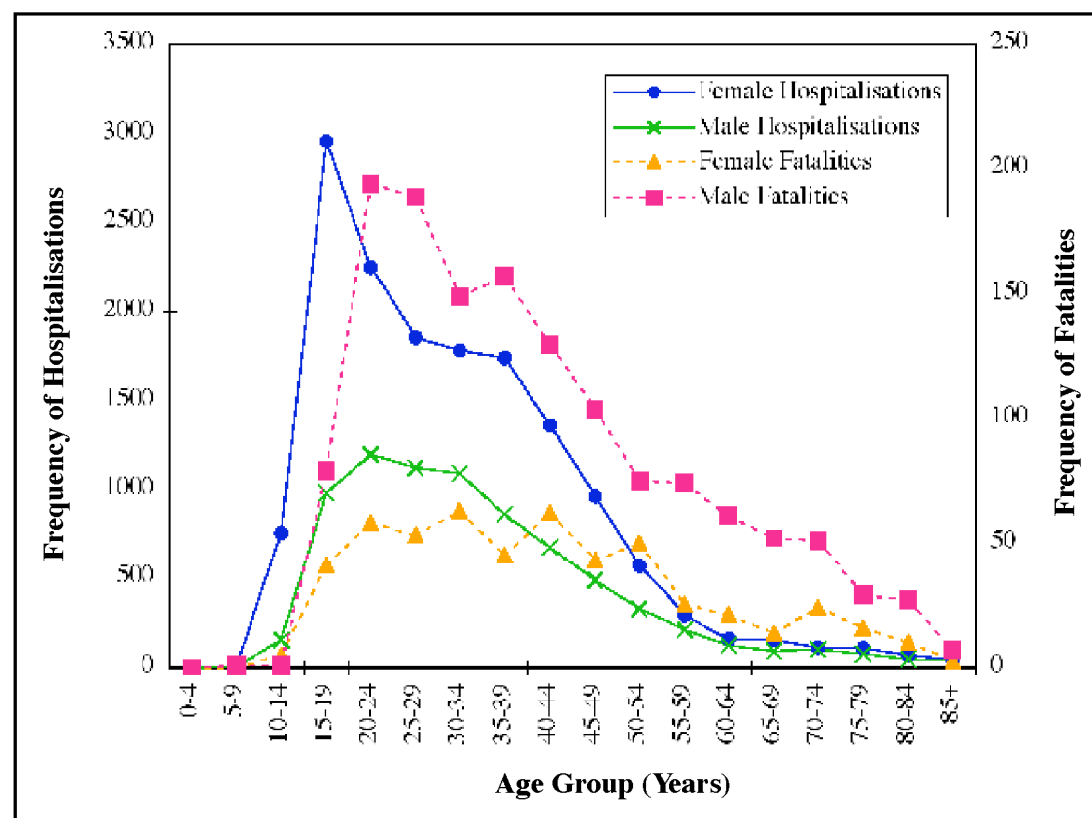


Figure 1: Frequencies of hospitalisations (1993-2002) and fatalities (1990-1999) in New Zealand resulting from self-poisoning by age.

- More females than males were hospitalised for the common poisoning agents (where there were more than 50 cases recorded), with the exception of toxic effects of other substances (e.g. motor vehicle exhaust) (Figure 2).
- While motor vehicle exhaust was the most common poisoning agent used by males and females in fatal self-poisonings, the number of male fatalities was five times higher than that for females.
- Hospitalisations from self-poisoning by analgesics, antipyretics and antirheumatics peaked in the late teens, whereas self-poisonings by psychotropics was high from ages 20 to 39 years (Figure 3).

Poisoning Agent Examples

Analgesics, antipyretics, antirheumatics: for example, paracetamol, codeine, non-steroid anti-inflammatories, aspirin.

Psychotropics: for example, antidepressants, antipsychotics.

Sedatives, hypnotics: for example, barbituates, benzodiazepine, anti-anxiety drugs, sleeping tablets.

Data Source: Morbidity (1993-2002) and Mortality (1990-1999) Data, New Zealand Health Information Service, Ministry of Health, Wellington.

Poisonings were identified using the International Classification of Disease diagnosis codes for editions 9 (960.0-989.9) and 10 (T36.0-T65.9).

For further details on injury data visit our website:
<http://www.otago.ac.nz/ipru/Stats/>

Prepared by: MJ Trotter, SCR Stephenson, JC Simpson, DM Casey, June 2004

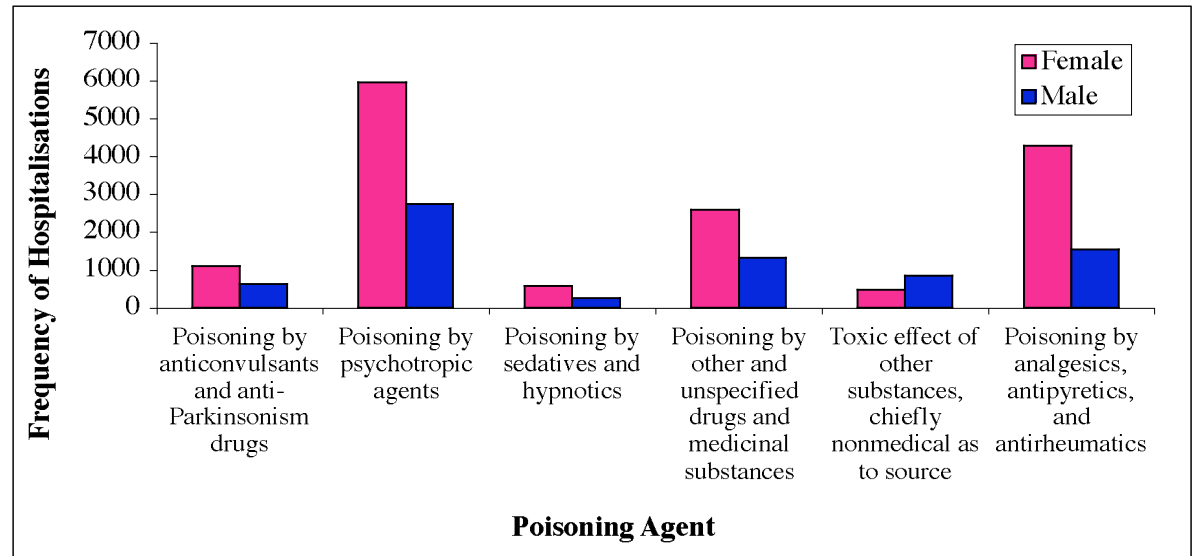


Figure 2. Hospitalisations from self-poisoning in New Zealand by poisoning agent and gender, 1993-2002.

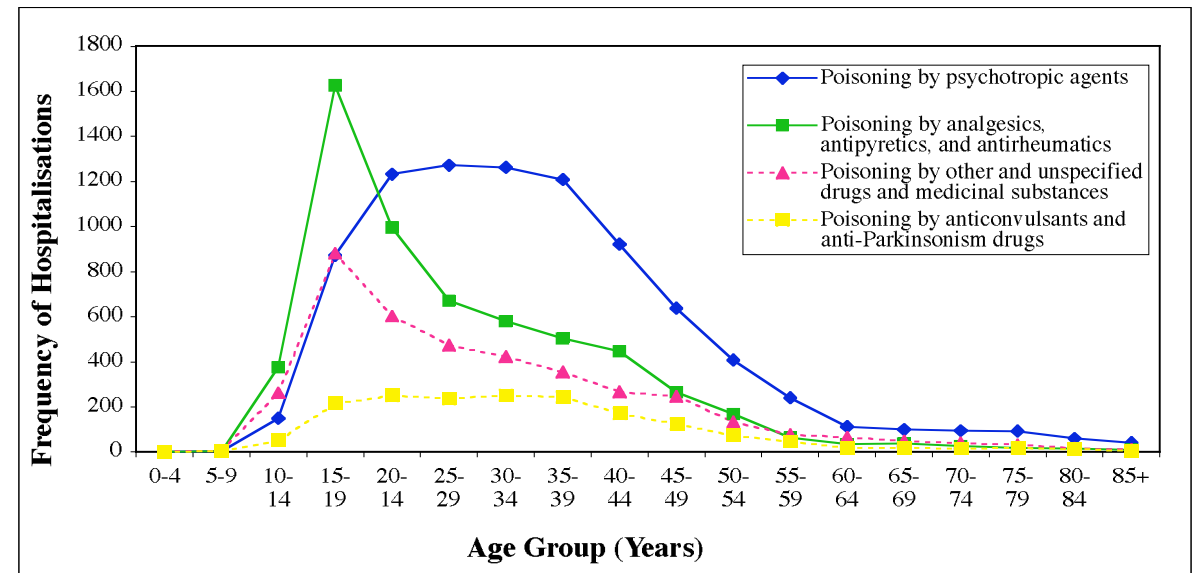


Figure 3. Hospitalisations from self-poisoning in New Zealand by poisoning agent and age, 1993-2002.