

Statistical bulletin

Suicides in England and Wales: 2019 registrations

Registered deaths in England and Wales from suicide analysed by sex, age, area of usual residence of the deceased and suicide method.



Release date: 1 September 2020 Next release: To be announced

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1. Main points

- In 2019, there were 5,691 suicides registered in England and Wales, an age-standardised rate of 11.0 deaths per 100,000 population and consistent with the rate in 2018.
- Around three-quarters of registered deaths in 2019 were among men (4,303 deaths), which follows a consistent trend back to the mid-1990s.
- The England and Wales male suicide rate of 16.9 deaths per 100,000 is the highest since 2000 and remains in line with the rate in 2018; for females, the rate was 5.3 deaths per 100,000, consistent with 2018 and the highest since 2004.
- Males aged 45 to 49 years had the highest age-specific suicide rate (25.5 deaths per 100,000 males); for females, the age group with the highest rate was 50 to 54 years at 7.4 deaths per 100,000.
- Despite having a low number of deaths overall, rates among the under 25s have generally increased in recent years, particularly 10- to 24-year-old females where the rate has increased significantly since 2012 to its highest level with 3.1 deaths per 100,000 females in 2019.
- As seen in previous years, the most common method of suicide in England and Wales was hanging, accounting for 61.7% of all suicides among males and 46.7% of all suicides among females.

If you are a journalist covering a suicide-related issue, please consider following the <u>Samaritans' media guidelines</u> on the reporting of <u>suicide</u> because of the potentially damaging consequences of irresponsible reporting. In particular, the guidelines advise on terminology and include links to sources of support for anyone affected by the themes in the article, such as <u>Samaritans</u>.

If you are struggling to cope, please call Samaritans for free on 116 123 (UK and ROI), email <u>jo@samaritans.org</u> or visit <u>the Samaritans website</u> to find details of the nearest branch. Samaritans is available round the clock, every single day of the year, providing a safe place for anyone struggling to cope, whoever they are, however they feel, whatever life has done to them.

Death registrations data for Northern Ireland and Scotland were unavailable at the time of analysis – our annual figures for the UK will be updated at a later stage.

The data described in this release do not cover deaths that occurred during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. For further information, please see the latest release of quarterly suicide death registrations in England

2. Suicides in England and Wales

Statistics on suicide are based on the year of death registration – because of death registration delays, around half of these deaths will have occurred in the previous year. See <u>Section 9: Glossary</u> and <u>Section 11: Strengths and limitations</u> for more information.

In 2019, a total of 5,691 (11.0 deaths per 100,000 population) suicides were registered in England and Wales. This remains in line with the rate observed in 2018 when there were 5,420 suicides registered (10.5 deaths per 100,000). Following several years of decline, the latest England and Wales suicide rate remains statistically significantly higher than the rates seen in recent years between 2014 and 2017.

Suicide rates for males and females remain consistent with 2018

Males continued to account for around three-quarters of suicide deaths registered in 2019 (4,303 male deaths compared with 1,388 female deaths). In 2019, the suicide rate for males in England and Wales was 16.9 deaths per 100,000 men; this remains consistent with the rate seen in 2018 (16.2 deaths per 100,000) and is the highest rate observed since 2000.

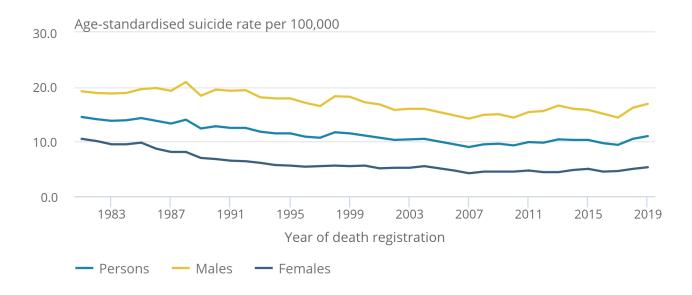
For females, there were 5.3 deaths per 100,000 women registered in England and Wales in 2019. While the latest rate is the highest seen since 2004, it remains consistent with the rate seen in 2018 (5.0 deaths per 100,000).

Figure 1: All persons, males and females saw increases in suicide rates in 2019

Age-standardised suicide rates by sex, England and Wales, registered between 1981 and 2019

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Age-standardised suicide rates by sex, England and Wales, registered between 1981 and 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics - Suicides in England and Wales: 2019 registrations

Notes:

- 1. The National Statistics definition of suicide is given in Section 9: Glossary.
- 2. Figures are for persons aged 10 years and over.
- 3. Age-standardised suicide rates per 100,000 population, standardised to the 2013 European Standard Population. Age-standardised rates are used to allow comparison between populations which may contain different proportions of people of different ages.
- 4. Figures include deaths of non-residents, based on postcode boundaries as of May 2020.
- 5. Figures are for deaths registered, rather than deaths occurring in each calendar year. Because of the length of time it takes to complete a coroner's inquest, it can take months or even years for a suicide to be registered. More details can be found in <u>Section 7: Registration delays</u>.

3. Suicides by country

In 2019, the suicide rate in England was 10.8 deaths per 100,000 population (5,316 deaths). This is consistent with the rate observed in 2018 (10.3 deaths per 100,000) and is the highest rate seen since 2000. In Wales, there were 12.2 deaths per 100,000 population registered in 2019 (330 deaths); this is in line with figures seen in recent years.

Male and female suicide rates in England continue to increase

In England, a total of 4,017 deaths were registered as suicide among men in 2019, up 5.7% from the total in 2018 (3,800); however, this increase was not statistically significant. This equates to a male suicide rate of 16.7 deaths per 100,000 males in 2019, significantly higher than rates seen in other recent years, between 2015 and 2017, and the highest rate observed since 2000. The latest rate remains statistically significantly lower than that observed in 1981 when there were 19.3 deaths per 100,000 males in England.

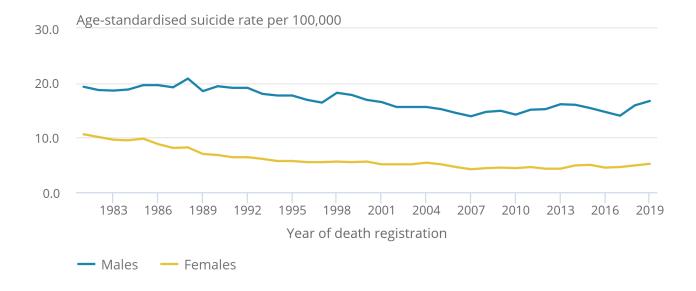
In 2019, a total of 1,299 deaths were registered as suicide among females in England, up from 1,221 deaths registered in the previous year. In recent years, there have been increases in the suicide rate among females in England with the 2019 rate (5.2 per 100,000) being the highest observed since 2004 and significantly higher than rates seen in 2016 and 2017.

Figure 2: The suicide rate for males in England in 2019 was the highest seen since 2000

Age-standardised suicide rates by sex, England, registered from 1981 to 2019

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Age-standardised suicide rates by sex, England, registered from 1981 to 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics - Suicides in England and Wales: 2019 registrations

Notes:

- 1. The National Statistics definition of suicide is given in Section 9: Glossary.
- 2. Figures are for persons aged 10 years and over.
- 3. Age-standardised suicide rates per 100,000 population, standardised to the 2013 European Standard Population. Age-standardised rates are used to allow comparison between populations which may contain different proportions of people of different ages.
- 4. Figures exclude deaths of non-residents, based on postcode boundaries as of May 2020.
- 5. Figures are for deaths registered, rather than deaths occurring in each calendar year. Because of the length of time it takes to complete a coroner's inquest, it can take months or even years for a suicide to be registered. More details can be found in <u>Section 7: Registration delays</u>.

Female suicide rate in Wales returns to that seen in 2017

Since 2016, the rate for females in Wales increased statistically significantly, up 72.5% from 4.0 deaths per 100,000 in 2016 (57 deaths) to 6.9 deaths per 100,000 in 2018 (97 deaths). In 2019, the suicide rate for females in Wales decreased to 5.8 deaths per 100,000 (82 deaths) – the same as the rate observed in 2017. However, because of the smaller number of deaths, the reduction in the female rate was not statistically significant.

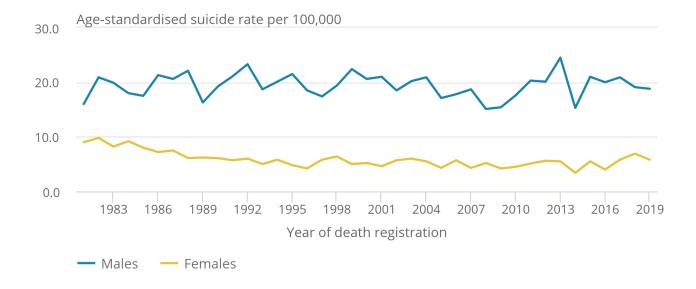
Across time, the male suicide rate for Wales shows a volatile pattern because of the smaller number of deaths. At the beginning of the time series in 1981, the rate was 16.0 deaths per 100,000 (165 deaths); this is not significantly different from the rate seen in 2019 (18.8 deaths per 100,000, a total of 248 deaths).

Figure 3: The male and female suicide rate in Wales in 2019 remained in line with 2018

Age-standardised suicide rates by sex, Wales, registered from 1981 to 2019

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Age-standardised suicide rates by sex, Wales, registered from 1981 to 2019



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- 1. The National Statistics definition of suicide is given in Section 9: Glossary.
- 2. Figures are for persons aged 10 years and over.
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- 4. Figures exclude deaths of non-residents, based on postcode boundaries as of May 2020.
- 5. Figures are for deaths registered, rather than deaths occurring in each calendar year. Because of the length of time it takes to complete a coroner's inquest, it can take months or even years for a suicide to be registered. More details can be found in <u>Section 7: Registration delays</u>.

4. Suicides in 2019 by English region and Wales

Among men, the area with the highest rate in 2019 was Yorkshire and The Humber (20.6 per 100,000); this rate was significantly higher than London, the North West, West Midlands and the South East. Both Yorkshire and The Humber and the South West had a statistically significantly higher rate of male suicide in 2019 compared with the overall male England rate (16.7 per 100,000).

Female suicide rate in Yorkshire and The Humber was significantly higher than England

For females, the highest rate in 2019 was also seen in Yorkshire and The Humber (7.3 per 100,000); this rate was statistically significantly higher than the North East, the area with the lowest rate (4.1 per 100,000), and the overall female England rate (5.2 per 100,000).

Significant increase in male suicide rate in the South East

Among men, the rate in the South East increased significantly from 13.5 per 100,000 (526 deaths) in 2018 to 16.8 per 100,000 (657 deaths) in 2019. For females, the rates seen in 2019 were generally consistent with those in 2018.

Suicide data from 1981 for English regions and data for local authorities in England and Wales can be found in the <u>accompanying datasets</u> as well on <u>Public Health England (PHE) Suicide Prevention Profiles</u>.

Figure 4: Yorkshire and The Humber had the highest male suicide rate in 2019

Age-standardised suicide rates for English regions and Wales, males, deaths registered in 2019

Notes:

- 1. The National Statistics definition of suicide is given in Section 9: Glossary.
- 2. Figures are for males aged 10 years and over.
- 3. Age-standardised suicide rates per 100,000 population, standardised to the 2013 European Standard Population. Age-standardised rates are used to allow comparison between populations that may contain different proportions of people of different ages.
- 4. Figures are for persons usually resident in each area, based on postcode boundaries as of May 2020.
- 5. Figures are for deaths registered, rather than deaths occurring in each calendar year. Because of the length of time it takes to complete a coroner's inquest, it can take months or even years for a suicide to be registered. More details can be found in <u>Section 7: Registration delays</u>.

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Figure 5: Yorkshire and The Humber had the highest female suicide rate in 2019

Age-standardised suicide rates for English regions and Wales, females, deaths registered in 2019

Notes:

- 1. The National Statistics definition of suicide is given in Section 9: Glossary.
- 2. Figures are for females aged 10 years and over.
- 3. Age-standardised suicide rates per 100,000 population, standardised to the 2013 European Standard Population. Age-standardised rates are used to allow comparison between populations that may contain different proportions of people of different ages.
- 4. Figures are for persons usually resident in each area, based on postcode boundaries as of May 2020.
- 5. Figures are for deaths registered, rather than deaths occurring in each calendar year. Because of the length of time it takes to complete a coroner's inquest, it can take months or even years for a suicide to be registered. More details can be found in <u>Section 7: Registration delays</u>.

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5. Suicide patterns by age

When looking at patterns of suicide by age, since the early 1980s rates have increased with age peaking among the middle-aged (45 to 54 years). Rates then decrease until the ages of 80 to 84 years, from which they begin to rise. See the accompanying <u>dataset</u>.

In 2019, males aged 45 to 49 years had the highest suicide rate at 25.5 per 100,000 (493 deaths). For females, the highest rate was seen among those aged 50 to 54 years with 7.4 deaths per 100,000 (154 deaths).

Suicide rates tend to increase in the oldest age groups for both males and females. Many factors contribute to this widely seen phenomenon around the world (for more information, see <u>Suicide in Older Adults</u>) such as psychiatric illness, deterioration of physical health and functioning, and social factors.

For age-specific suicide rates for five-year age groups from 1981 for England and Wales combined and separately, see the accompanying <u>dataset</u>.

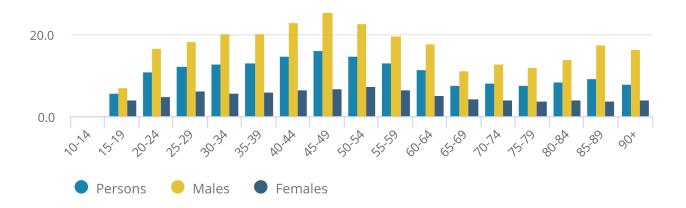
Figure 6: The highest suicide rates were seen among those aged 45 to 49 years for males and 50 to 54 years for females

Age-specific suicide rates by sex and five-year age groups, England and Wales, registered in 2019

Figure 6: The highest suicide rates were seen among those aged 45 to 49 years for males and 50 to 54 years for females

Age-specific suicide rates by sex and five-year age groups, England and Wales, registered in 2019





Source: Office for National Statistics - Suicides in England and Wales: 2019 registrations

Notes:

- 1. The National Statistics definition of suicide is given in Section 9: Glossary.
- 2. Figures are for persons aged 10 years and over.
- 3. Age-specific suicide rate per 100,000 population.
- 4. Rates were not calculated where there were fewer than three death registrations.
- 5. Deaths of non-residents are included in figures for England and Wales, based on postcode boundaries as of May 2020.
- 6. Figures are for deaths registered, rather than deaths occurring in each calendar year. Because of the length of time it takes to complete a coroner's inquest, it can take months or even years for a suicide to be registered. More details can be found in <u>Section 7: Registration delays</u>.

Significant increase in suicide rate in males aged 10 to 24 years, 25 to 44 years and 45 to 64 years since 2017

When looking at patterns of suicide rates by age over time, here we refer to broad age groups because of the rates being more volatile for the granular age groups referred to in the previous section.

Over time, males aged 10 to 24 years have always had the lowest rates. However, following a period of recent stability in the suicide rate for this group, in 2018 the rate increased significantly to 8.2 deaths per 100,000 males (440 deaths), and the rate has remained the same in 2019 (8.2) with 442 deaths.

From 1995 to 2009, males aged 25 to 44 years tended to have the highest suicide rates. Since 2013, men aged 45 to 64 years have had the highest age-specific suicide rates. Both age groups have seen significant increases since 2017 with rates in 2019 being 20.4 and 21.7 per 100,000 males, respectively.

At the beginning of our time series, from 1981 to 1990, men aged 75 years and over had the highest age-specific suicide rate. Since then, rates among this group fell the most to their lowest point in 2017 when there were 12.2 deaths per 100,000 males (249 deaths). In 2018, men of this age saw the biggest increase in their rate when compared with all other age groups, up significantly. However, in 2019 the rate returned to levels seen in 2017 with 13.9 deaths per 100,000 males.

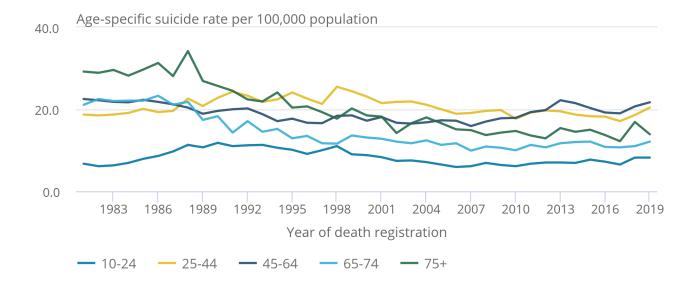
Generally, higher rates of suicide among middle-aged men in recent years might be because this group is more likely to be affected by economic adversity, alcoholism and isolation. It could also be that this group is less inclined to seek help. As well as being the most likely to die by suicide, it is also this middle-aged generation that are most likely to die by drug poisoning.

Figure 7: The suicide rates in males aged 10 to 24 years, 25 to 44 years and 45 to 64 years have been increasing since 2017

Age-specific suicide rates by broad age groups, males, England and Wales, registered between 1981 and 2019

Figure 7: The suicide rates in males aged 10 to 24 years, 25 to 44 years and 45 to 64 years have been increasing since 2017

Age-specific suicide rates by broad age groups, males, England and Wales, registered between 1981 and 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics - Suicides in England and Wales: 2019 registrations

Notes:

- 1. The National Statistics definition of suicide is given in Section 9: Glossary.
- 2. Figures are for males aged 10 years and over.
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- 5. Figures are for deaths registered, rather than deaths occurring in each calendar year. Because of the length of time it takes to complete a coroner's inquest, it can take months or even years for a suicide to be registered. More details can be found in <u>Section 7: Registration delays</u>.

The rate among females aged 10 to 24 years in England and Wales is the highest recorded since 1981

Despite having a low number of deaths overall, following a period of relative stability in the rate among females aged 10 to 24 years, since 2012 the rate has increased by 93.8% from 1.6 deaths per 100,000 females (81 deaths) to 3.1 in 2019 (159 deaths).

From 2008 to 2016, the rate among females aged 25 to 44 years remained stable. However, since 2016 the rate significantly increased from 4.6 (355 deaths) to 6.1 (476 deaths) per 100,000 females.

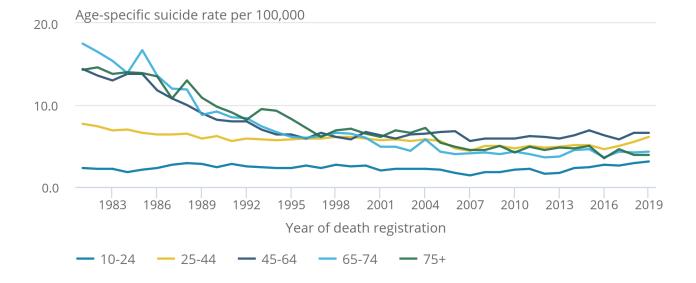
The most noticeable change over time for females in England and Wales is the substantial fall in the rates among those aged 45 years and over: from 1981 to 2019, the female rate had fallen by 54.2% for those aged 45 to 64 years, by 75.4% for those aged 65 to 74 years and by 72.7% for those aged 75 years and over.

Figure 8: There has been a fall in the rates among females aged 45 years and over since 1981 and a significant increase among 25- to 44-year-olds since 2016

Age-specific suicide rates by broad age groups, females, England and Wales, registered between 1981 and 2019

Figure 8: There has been a fall in the rates among females aged 45 years and over since 1981 and a significant increase among 25- to 44-year-olds since 2016

Age-specific suicide rates by broad age groups, females, England and Wales, registered between 1981 and 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics - Suicides in England and Wales: 2019 registrations

Notes:

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- 2. Figures are for females aged 10 years and over.
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- 4. Deaths of non-residents are included in figures for England and Wales, based postcode on boundaries as of May 2020.
- 5. Figures are for deaths registered, rather than deaths occurring in each calendar year. Because of the length of time it takes to complete a coroner's inquest, it can take months or even years for a suicide to be registered. More details can be found in <u>Section 7: Registration delays</u>.

6. Suicide methods

The percentage of suicides caused by hanging, strangulation and suffocation has increased in recent years

As in previous years, the most common method of suicide in England and Wales for males was hanging, strangulation and suffocation (all grouped together). In 2019, this accounted for 61.7% of all suicides among males (2,654 out of 4,303 deaths), increasing from 44.5% of suicides (1,643 out of 3,696 deaths) in 2001.

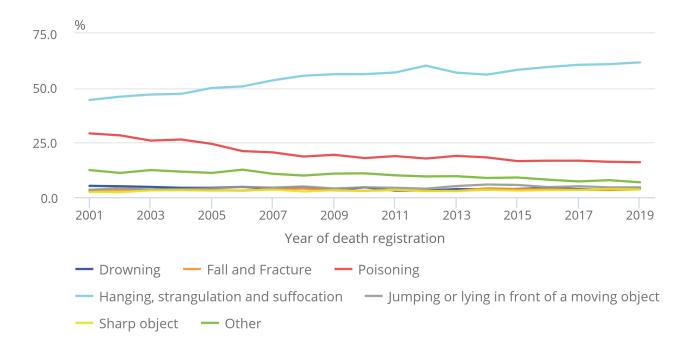
The second most common method of suicide was poisoning, accounting for 16.0% of all suicides among males (687 out of 4,303 deaths) in 2019, decreasing from 29.3% of suicides (1,081 out of 3,696 deaths) in 2001.

Figure 9: Hanging, strangulation and suffocation has been the most common suicide method among males since 2001

Proportion of suicide by method, males, England and Wales, 2001 to 2019

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Proportion of suicide by method, males, England and Wales, 2001 to 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics - Suicides in England and Wales: 2019 registrations

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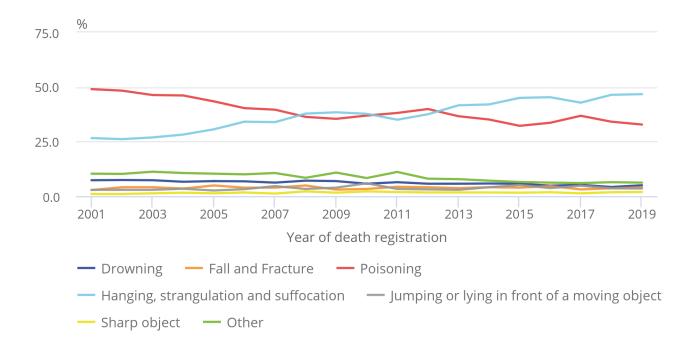
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- 3. Deaths of non-residents are included in figures for England and Wales, based on postcode boundaries as of May 2020.
- 4. Figures are for deaths registered, rather than deaths occurring in each calendar year. Because of the length of time it takes to complete a coroner's inquest, it can take months or even years for a suicide to be registered. More details can be found in <u>Section 7: Registration delays</u>.
- 5. "Other" category includes methods of suicide such as firearm, smoke, fire and flames, and unspecified events.
- 6. Table 15 in the Suicides in England and Wales dataset has more information regarding definitions.

Figure 10: Since 2013, hanging, strangulation and suffocation has been the most common suicide method among females

Proportion of suicide by method, females, England and Wales, 2001 to 2019

Figure 10: Since 2013, hanging, strangulation and suffocation has been the most common suicide method among females

Proportion of suicide by method, females, England and Wales, 2001 to 2019



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Notes:

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- 2. Figures are for females aged 10 years and over.
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- 4. Figures are for deaths registered, rather than deaths occurring in each calendar year. Because of the length of time it takes to complete a coroner's inquest, it can take months or even years for a suicide to be registered. More details can be found in <u>Section 7: Registration delays</u>.
- 5. "Other" category includes methods of suicide such as firearm, smoke, fire and flames, and unspecified events.
- 6. Table 15 in the Suicides in England and Wales dataset has more information regarding definitions.

Between 2001 and 2007, poisoning was the most common suicide method among females in England and Wales. Since 2013, this has changed to hanging, strangulation and suffocation with a widening in the gap between these two methods continuing in the latest year. In 2019, 46.7% (648 out of 1,388 deaths) of female suicides were from hanging, strangulation and suffocation – the highest percentage seen since 2001 (Figure 10).

Analysis reported in the academic literature has shown an increase in the proportion of suicides from hanging in the UK, particularly among women. This may be related to restrictions on the availability of other methods, such as drugs used in overdose, and to a misconception that hanging is a quick and painless way to die (for more information, see <u>Factors influencing the decision to use hanging as a method of suicide: qualitative study</u>).

7. Registration delays

Registration delays continue to increase in England and Wales

In England and Wales, all deaths caused by suicide are certified by a Coroner following an inquest and cannot be registered until the inquest is completed. This can take months or even years, and we are not notified of the death until it is registered.

In line with other mortality statistics, analysis presented here is based on deaths registered in a particular year, rather than those occurring each year. This allows for more timely publications, but it can make trends difficult to interpret, especially for smaller geographic areas.

For all-cause deaths in England and Wales, <u>around 96% of deaths that occur in a given year are registered in the same year</u>. This is lower for suicides, with 51% of suicide deaths registered in 2019 having also occurred in the same year.

Registration delays refer to the time between the date of death and its eventual registration after inquest. When calculating the average delay between occurrence and registration, the median is used rather than the mean, as the median is not affected by rare cases where it takes many years for the death to be registered. For suicides, the median registration delay for England was 166 days in 2019 (up from 159 days in 2018) and 165 days for Wales (up from 147 days in 2018).

Data on registration delays per country and local authority can be found in the associated datasets along with suicide registrations data by date of death.

Further information on registration delays and their impact can be found in the Suicide rates in the UK QMI.

8. Suicides in England and Wales data

Suicides in England and Wales

Dataset | Released 1 September 2020

Number of suicides and suicide rates, by sex and age, in England and Wales, registered from 1981 to 2019. Information on conclusion type is provided, along with the proportion of suicides by method and the median registration delay.

Suicides in England and Wales by local authority

Dataset | Released 1 September 2020

Number of suicides, suicide rates and median registration delays, by local authority in England and Wales, registered from 2002 to 2019.

Suicide occurrences, England and Wales

Dataset | Released 1 September 2020

Number of suicides and suicide rates, by sex and age, for England and Wales occurring from 1981 to 2018.

9. Glossary

Suicide

This release is based on the National Statistics definition of suicide; this includes all deaths from intentional self-harm for persons aged 10 years and over and deaths caused by injury or poisoning where the intent was undetermined for those aged 15 years and over. Further information on the definition can be found in the <u>Suicide</u> rates in the UK QMI.

Registration delay

Figures are based on deaths registered in each calendar year, rather than the date on which the death occurs. The difference between these dates is known as the registration delay.

Age-standardised mortality rate

Age-standardised mortality rate in this bulletin refers to a weighted average of the age-specific mortality rates per 100,000 people and standardised to the 2013 European Standard Population. Age-standardised mortality rates allow for differences in the age structure of populations and therefore allow valid comparisons to be made between geographic areas, the sexes and over time.

Age-specific mortality rate

Age-specific mortality rate is the total number of deaths per 100,000 people of an age group, used to allow comparisons between specified age groups.

Statistical significance

The term "significant" refers to statistically significant changes or differences based on unrounded figures. Significance has been determined using the 95% confidence intervals, where instances of non-overlapping confidence intervals between figures indicate the difference is unlikely to have arisen from random fluctuation.

10. Measuring the data

Statistics on mortality are derived from the information provided when deaths are certified and registered. These statistics are assessed fully compliant with the <u>Code of Practice for Statistics</u> and are therefore designated as National Statistics.

More quality and methodology information on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in the <u>Mortality statistics in England and Wales QMI</u>, the <u>Suicide rates in the UK QMI</u> and the <u>User quide to mortality statistics</u>.

Populations

Mortality rates are calculated using the number of deaths and <u>mid-year population estimates</u> provided by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Population Estimates Unit. Population estimates are based on the decennial England and Wales census estimates and use information on births, deaths and migration to estimate the mid-year population in non-census years.

Comparing with other statistics

Monitoring suicide rates is a requirement under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The statistics in this bulletin will be used to help monitor progress towards these goals. UK data on the SDG indicators can be explored on our <u>SDGs reporting platform</u>.

Scotland and Northern Ireland each produce their own suicide statistics. These statistics are compiled by <u>National Records of Scotland (NRS)</u> and the <u>Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)</u>.

Public Health England (PHE), via their <u>Suicide Prevention Profiles</u>, provide data on a wide range of indicators related to suicide including mortality and years of life lost due to suicide.

With a focus on England particularly, NHS Digital produce an <u>annual compendium</u>, bringing together an array of data related to deaths by suicide.

User-requested data

Special extracts and tabulations of suicide (and other causes of mortality) data for England and Wales are available to order for a charge (subject to legal frameworks, disclosure control, resources and agreement of costs, where appropriate). Such requests or enquiries should be made via email to health.data@ons.gov.uk. Our charging-policy is also available.

11 . Strengths and limitations

Strengths

A robust method is used for the analysis: age-standardised rates allow for differences in age structure of populations and therefore allow valid comparisons to be made between the sexes and different occupations.

We only refer to groupings that have at least 20 deaths. For these, reliable age-standardised rates can be calculated, reducing the likelihood of the findings being a result of chance. In our <u>accompanying datasets</u>, rates have been marked as unreliable where there are fewer than 20 deaths, and we have not produced age-specific rates for age groups with fewer than three deaths.

Suicide deaths are compiled using information supplied when a death is registered, which gives complete population coverage.

The release uses the National Statistics definition of suicide, which is consistently used by government departments, agencies and the devolved administrations across the UK.

Quality assurance procedures have been undertaken throughout all stages of the analysis to minimise the risk of error.

Limitations

Registration delays

In England and Wales, when someone dies unexpectedly a Coroner investigates the circumstances to establish the cause of death. The investigation, referred to as an "inquest", is a process that can take months and in some cases years. The length of time it takes to hold an inquest creates a gap between the date of death and the date of death registration, referred to as a registration delay. For deaths caused by suicide, this generally means that around half of the deaths registered each year will have occurred in the previous year or earlier.

Change in the standard of proof used by Coroners in England and Wales

In England and Wales, all deaths caused by suicide are certified by a Coroner. In July 2018, the standard of proof used by Coroners to determine whether a death was caused by suicide was lowered to the "civil standard" – balance of probabilities – where previously a "criminal standard" was applied – beyond all reasonable doubt. It is likely that lowering the standard of proof will result in an increased number of deaths recorded as suicide, possibly creating a discontinuity in our time series. We are currently investigating the impact of this change on the data, and we will report the findings soon.

See <u>Suicides in the UK: 2018 registrations</u> and our <u>QMI</u> for more information.

12. Related links

Deaths related to drug poisoning in England and Wales: 2018 registrations

Bulletin | Released 15 August 2019

Deaths related to drug poisoning in England and Wales from 1993 onwards, by cause of death, sex, age and substances involved in the death.

Suicide in Wales since 1981

Article | Released 27 June 2019

A compendium of analysis, including suicide over time by age, sex and method and new analysis of suicide risk by occupation in Wales.

Drug-related deaths and suicide in prison custody in England and Wales: 2008 to 2016

Article | Released 25 July 2019

The risk of suicide and drug-related deaths among prisoners, based on confidential matching of data from HM Prison and Probation Service and Office for National Statistics (ONS) mortality records.

Middle-aged generation most likely to die by suicide and drug poisoning

Article | Released 13 August 2019

How age links to suicide and drug-related deaths.

Who is most at risk of suicide?

Article | Released 7 September 2017

Created in collaboration with the Samaritans, this article discusses factors such as marital status and levels of deprivation in relation to suicide.

Estimating suicide among higher education students, England and Wales: Experimental Statistics

Article | Released 25 June 2018

An article created using mortality data linked to Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data to estimate suicides among higher education students by sex, age and ethnicity.

Suicide by occupation, England: 2011 to 2015

Article | Released 17 March 2017

Analysis of deaths from suicide in different occupational groups for people aged 20 to 64 years, based on deaths registered in England between 2011 and 2015.

Official suicide statistics for Scotland

Web page | Updated as new data become available

Official suicide statistics for Scotland, provided by National Records of Scotland (NRS).

Official suicide statistics for Northern Ireland

Web page | Updated as new data become available

Official suicide statistics for Northern Ireland, provided by Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA).

Samaritans statistics report

Report | Released December 2019

Pulls together data on deaths by suicide for the UK and Republic of Ireland.

Coroners statistics: 2018

Report | Released 9 May 2019

Annual data on deaths reported to coroners, including inquests and post-mortems held, inquest conclusions recorded and finds reported to coroners under treasure legislation.