

## Suicide rates in the United Kingdom, 2000–2009



**Date:** 27 January 2011

**Coverage:** United Kingdom **Theme:** Health

This bulletin presents the latest suicide figures for the UK, England, Wales, and Government Office Regions in England for the years 2000 to 2009. Rates previously published for 2002 to 2008 have been revised due to revisions in the mid-year population estimates.

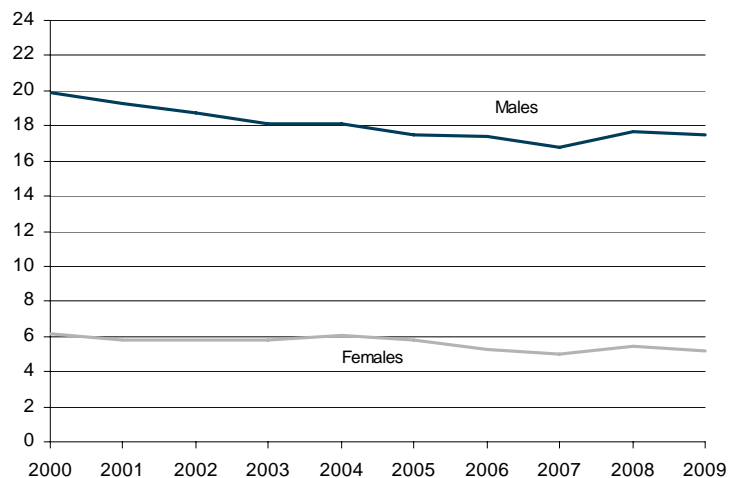
- In 2009 there were 5,675 suicides in the UK, 31 fewer than the number recorded in 2008 (5,706)

- There are more suicides in males than females. In 2009 there were 4,304 male suicides (17.5 per 100,000 population) and 1,371 female suicides (5.2 per 100,000)

- Across the 2000–09 period suicide rates were highest among males aged 15–44. In 2009 the rate for this group was 18.0 per 100,000 population. The lowest male suicide rate in 2009 was for those aged 75 years and over at 13.6 per 100,000<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 1. Suicide rates, ages 15 and over, United Kingdom, 2000–2009**

Age-standardised rates per 100,000 population



Source: Office for National Statistics, General Register Office for Scotland, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

- There is less variation between age groups in female suicides. In 2009 the rate was highest among women aged 45–74 at 5.8 per 100,000 and lowest among women aged 75 years and over at 4.7 per 100,000

Suicide figures for the UK, England, Wales, and Government Office Regions in England for 2000 to 2009 are presented below in Tables 1 and 2 for males and Tables 3 and 4 for females.

<sup>1</sup> Suicide figures are not produced for children aged under 15 years.

## United Kingdom

Since 2000 the number of suicides in people aged 15 years and over in the UK gradually decreased. Figures increased sharply by 329 in 2008 to 5,706, but fell by 31 in 2009 to 5,675.

There are more suicides among males than females. During the 2000–2009 period, the male suicide rate was highest in 2000 at 19.9 per 100,000. The rate continually declined to 16.8 per 100,000 in 2007 but increased to 17.7 per 100,000 in 2008. In 2009 the rate was similar to the previous year at 17.5 per 100,000.

Suicide rates for women have been consistently much lower than rates for men and have shown a steadily downwards trend. The rate was highest at the beginning of the period at 6.2 per 100,000 in 2000 and was lowest in 2007 at 5.0 per 100,000. The rate increased to 5.4 per 100,000 in 2008 and remained similar in 2009 at 5.2 per 100,000.

During the period, the highest suicide rates in the UK were among men aged 15–44. The rate for this age group in 2009 was 18.0 per 100,000. The lowest male suicide rates between 2000 and 2009 varied between those aged 45–74 and 75 and over. In 2009 the lowest rate was for those aged 75 and over at 13.6 per 100,000. For men aged 45–74, the rate was 17.4 per 100,000.

There has been less variation in suicide rates across the female age groups. Since 2005 rates have been highest among women aged 45–74, although they decreased from 6.7 per 100,000 in 2005 to 5.8 per 100,000 in 2009. Suicide rates were lowest among women aged 15–44 until 2008, although they were not significantly different to those for women aged 75 and over. In 2009 the rates for these groups were 4.9 and 4.7 per 100,000 respectively.

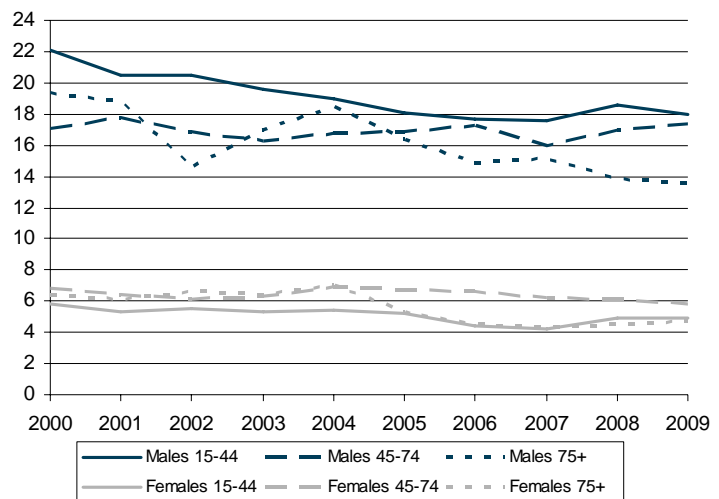
## England

In England the number of suicides among those aged 15 and over decreased over the 2000–2009 period. In 2000 there were 4,725 suicides compared with 4,390 in 2009. The lowest number of suicides was recorded in 2007 at 3,993. The largest yearly increase occurred between 2007 and 2008, rising by 289 from 3,993 to 4,282.

For males and females, suicide rates fell from 18.1 and 5.9 per 100,000 respectively in 2000 to 14.9 and 4.4 per 100,000 respectively in 2007. Rates increased in 2008 and 2009 to 16.1 per 100,000 for men and 4.8 per 100,000 for women.

Figure 2. Suicide rates by sex and age, United Kingdom, 2000–2009

Age-standardised rates per 100,000 population



Source: Office for National Statistics, General Register Office for Scotland, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

For men there has been no clear pattern in suicide rates across the age groups. Rates tended to be highest among those aged 15–44 and 75 and over and lowest among those aged 45–74 until 2005. Since then the highest and lowest rates have varied between the age groups. In 2009 the rate was highest in men aged 45–74 at 16.5 per 100,000, although this was not significantly different to the rates for those aged 15–44 at 15.9 per 100,000, or those aged 75 and over at 13.9 per 100,000.

The trend among women has been more consistent. Across the period, rates were lowest in those aged 15–44, varying from 5.2 per 100,000 in 2000 to 3.7 per 100,000 in 2007. The rate for this group in 2009 was 4.2 per 100,000. Rates tended to be highest in women aged 75 and over in the earlier part of the decade and then in women aged 45–74 in the latter part. In 2009, the rates for these groups were 4.8 and 5.5 per 100,000 respectively.

### Government Office Regions in England

Since 2000 suicide rates for males have tended to be highest in the northern regions and lowest in the East of England and London. In 2009 rates were highest in the North West, North East and South West at 19.8, 19.2 and 18.9 per 100,000 respectively. The regions with the lowest rates were London and the East of England at 13.6 and 13.7 per 100,000 respectively. The largest decrease in rates for men occurred in the North East between 2004 and 2005 where the rate dropped from 21.8 to 17.6 per 100,000.

There was no clear pattern in regional suicide rates among women. The highest rates were dispersed over the northern and southern regions. In 2009 female rates were highest in the North West and South West at 5.9 and 5.7 per 100,000 respectively, and lowest in Yorkshire and The Humber, the North East and the East of England at 3.6, 4.0 and 4.2 per 100,000 respectively. The largest annual decrease in female rates occurred in the South West between 2000 and 2001 where the rate fell from 6.6 to 4.2 per 100,000.

### Wales

The number of suicides in Wales gradually decreased over the 2000–2009 period, falling from 332 in 2003 to 258 in 2009. The largest yearly decrease occurred between 2004 and 2005 when suicides fell by 61 from 330 to 269.

Until 2008 male suicide rates in Wales were higher than the UK rates. The highest rate in Wales was in 2003 at 23.1 per 100,000, compared with 18.1 for the UK in the same year. In 2009 the male suicide rates for Wales and the UK were similar at 17.4 and 17.5 per 100,000 respectively.

Rates tended to be highest in males aged 15–44, although they have fallen sharply in this age group from 29.7 per 100,000 in 2003 to 18.8 per 100,000 in 2009. Rates have been lower among men aged 75 and over and 45–74 and they have shown similar decreases. In 2009 the rates for these groups were 14.0 and 15.9 per 100,000 respectively.

Suicide rates for females were much lower than rates for males over the period. The rate peaked in 2003 at 6.6 per 100,000 and was lowest in 2007 and 2009 at 4.3 per 100,000. There was smaller variation across the female age groups than the male age groups. In 2009 the rates for those aged

15–44 and 45–74 were 4.1 and 4.5 per 100,000 respectively. Among women aged 75 and over, there were 7 suicides in 2009.

**Table 1. Male suicide rates: by country and Government Office Region, 2000–2009<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup>**

Country/Government Office Region	Rate per 100,000 population									
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
<b>United Kingdom</b>	19.9	19.3	18.7	18.1	18.1	17.5	17.4	16.8	17.7	17.5
<b>England</b>	18.1	17.5	16.8	16.6	16.5	16.1	15.4	14.9	15.8	16.1
North East	22.3	19.9	19.3	22.1	21.8	17.6	17.5	17.0	17.8	19.2
North West	21.7	20.6	17.7	17.7	18.1	19.6	18.3	18.5	17.7	19.8
Yorkshire and The Humber	17.3	17.3	17.6	16.0	17.6	17.9	15.3	16.3	17.0	15.4
East Midlands	18.7	18.4	16.7	16.8	16.4	16.1	14.9	15.2	14.0	15.2
West Midlands	19.9	19.5	17.9	17.1	16.0	14.7	14.6	12.9	17.1	15.8
East of England	15.0	14.7	16.7	15.5	14.8	15.0	14.1	14.3	15.9	13.7
London	15.6	15.9	15.6	15.5	15.5	15.2	14.6	13.3	14.3	13.6
South East	16.6	16.4	16.2	16.4	15.9	15.0	14.7	13.9	15.0	15.9
South West	19.3	18.6	16.6	16.9	17.2	16.5	17.1	14.5	15.8	18.9
<b>Wales</b>	22.9	23.1	21.0	23.4	22.9	18.8	19.4	20.3	17.1	17.4

1 The National Statistics definition of suicide is given below in the Background Notes and in Box 1.

2 Figures are for adults aged 15 years and over.

3 Rates per 100,000 population standardised to the European Standard Population.

4 Deaths of non-residents are included in figures for the UK, but excluded in figures for England, Wales and Government Office Regions.

5 Figures are for deaths registered in each calendar year.

Source: Office for National Statistics, General Register Office for Scotland, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

**Table 2. Number of male suicides: by country and Government Office Region, 2000–2009<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>**

Country/Government Office Region	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
<b>United Kingdom</b>	4,581	4,469	4,347	4,267	4,288	4,192	4,196	4,085	4,331	4,304
<b>England</b>	3,497	3,421	3,292	3,298	3,295	3,251	3,131	3,043	3,263	3,330
North East	218	193	188	214	213	175	177	169	180	194
North West	562	537	467	464	480	521	491	498	478	538
Yorkshire and The Humber	334	335	345	319	351	354	311	335	353	321
East Midlands	310	305	272	283	281	282	263	271	250	270
West Midlands	406	401	369	355	333	307	310	273	365	336
East of England	320	317	359	331	319	335	311	318	365	321
London	450	453	459	466	460	450	437	410	444	431
South East	529	519	515	529	512	492	483	464	498	530
South West	368	361	318	337	346	335	348	305	330	389
<b>Wales</b>	252	253	229	254	258	213	223	232	195	201

1 The National Statistics definition of suicide is given below in the Background Notes and in Box 1.

2 Figures are for adults aged 15 years and over.

3 Deaths of non-residents are included in figures for the UK, but excluded in figures for England, Wales and Government Office Regions.

4 Figures are for deaths registered in each calendar year.

Source: Office for National Statistics, General Register Office for Scotland, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

**Table 3. Female suicide rates: by country and Government Office Region, 2000–2009<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup>**

Country/Government Office Region	Rate per 100,000 population									
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
<b>United Kingdom</b>	6.2	5.8	5.8	5.8	6.1	5.8	5.3	5.0	5.4	5.2
<b>England</b>	5.9	5.3	5.3	5.3	5.6	5.4	4.8	4.4	4.7	4.8
North East	6.0	4.1	4.8	5.3	7.7	6.3	4.7	4.3	4.9	4.0
North West	6.4	5.1	6.1	6.1	5.3	5.5	5.2	4.9	4.7	5.9
Yorkshire and The Humber	5.9	4.2	5.1	4.8	5.7	6.1	4.2	4.1	4.5	3.6
East Midlands	5.2	3.6	5.2	5.1	5.7	4.7	5.1	4.0	4.6	5.3
West Midlands	6.2	4.4	4.2	4.9	5.4	5.3	4.6	4.0	4.6	4.7
East of England	4.9	3.8	4.6	4.8	5.7	4.8	4.7	4.3	5.1	4.2
London	5.9	4.3	5.6	6.1	5.4	5.6	4.7	4.4	4.6	4.4
South East	6.0	4.1	5.9	4.8	5.2	5.8	5.3	4.4	4.6	5.2
South West	6.6	4.2	6.1	5.1	5.9	5.3	4.8	4.8	4.9	5.7
<b>Wales</b>	5.6	4.9	5.8	6.6	5.8	4.4	6.3	4.3	5.8	4.3

1 The National Statistics definition of suicide is given below in the Background Notes and in Box 1.

2 Figures are for adults aged 15 years and over.

3 Rates per 100,000 population standardised to the European Standard Population.

4 Deaths of non-residents are included in figures for the UK, but excluded in figures for England, Wales and Government Office Regions.

5 Figures are for deaths registered in each calendar year.

Source: Office for National Statistics, General Register Office for Scotland, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

**Table 4. Number of female suicides: by country and Government Office Region, 2000–2009<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>**

Country/Government Office Region	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
<b>United Kingdom</b>	1,543	1,463	1,479	1,464	1,562	1,479	1,358	1,292	1,375	1,371
<b>England</b>	1,228	1,131	1,138	1,132	1,215	1,157	1,044	950	1,019	1,060
North East	61	44	51	58	82	67	51	47	52	43
North West	180	143	174	173	156	156	145	139	135	167
Yorkshire and The Humber	122	90	109	104	121	128	91	90	99	80
East Midlands	91	63	91	91	104	85	95	73	83	103
West Midlands	136	99	96	111	121	118	101	89	101	110
East of England	115	88	107	119	133	113	113	104	124	102
London	172	134	169	192	167	170	151	139	147	139
South East	209	138	208	169	189	202	186	158	166	191
South West	142	90	133	115	142	118	111	111	112	125
<b>Wales</b>	68	59	75	78	72	56	77	57	71	57

1 The National Statistics definition of suicide is given below in the Background Notes and in Box 1.

2 Figures are for adults aged 15 years and over.

3 Deaths of non-residents are included in figures for the UK, but excluded in figures for England, Wales and Government Office Regions.

4 Figures are for deaths registered in each calendar year.

Source: Office for National Statistics, General Register Office for Scotland, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

## Results on the Office for National Statistics website

Suicide figures for the UK, England and Wales, England, Wales and Government Office Regions in England can be found in Microsoft Excel workbooks on the Office for National Statistics website at: [www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=13618](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=13618)

The two workbooks contain:

- results for the UK – age-standardised rates per 100,000 (with 95 per cent confidence limits) and numbers of suicides for 1991 to 2009. Data are available split by sex and broad age groups (15 and over, 15–44, 45–74 and 75 and over)
- results for England and Wales – age-standardised rates per 100,000 (with 95 per cent confidence limits) and numbers of suicides for England and Wales, England, Wales and Government Office Regions in England for 1991 to 2009. Data are available split by sex and broad age groups (15 and over, 15–44, 45–74 and 75 and over) (sex only for Government Office Regions)

Suicide figures for Scotland and Northern Ireland are available at the following links:

General Register Office for Scotland

[www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/statistics/theme/vital-events/deaths/suicides/index.html](http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/statistics/theme/vital-events/deaths/suicides/index.html)

Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

[www.nisra.gov.uk/archive/demography/publications/annual\\_reports/2009/Table6.14\\_2009.xls](http://www.nisra.gov.uk/archive/demography/publications/annual_reports/2009/Table6.14_2009.xls)

## Background Notes

1. Suicide is defined as deaths given an underlying cause of intentional self-harm or injury/poisoning of undetermined intent. In England and Wales, it has been customary to assume that most injuries and poisonings of undetermined intent are cases where the harm was self-inflicted but there was insufficient evidence to prove that the deceased deliberately intended to kill themselves (Adelstein and Mardon, 1975). This cannot be assumed in children due to the possibility that these deaths were caused by unverifiable accidents, neglect or abuse. Therefore, only adults aged 15 years and over are included in the figures.
2. For National Statistics purposes, data are selected using the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) codes outlined in Box 1 below.
3. ONS holds mortality data for England and Wales. Figures for the UK include data kindly provided by the General Register Office for Scotland and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.



4. ICD-10 was introduced in Scotland in 2000 and in England and Wales and Northern Ireland in 2001.

<b>Box 1 National Statistics definition of suicide</b>		
<b>ICD-9</b>	<b>ICD-10</b>	<b>Description</b>
E950–E959	X60–X84	Intentional self-harm
E980–E989 <sup>1</sup>	Y10–Y34 <sup>2</sup>	Injury/poisoning of undetermined intent
	Y87.0 / Y87.2 <sup>3</sup>	Sequelae of intentional self-harm / event of undetermined intent

<sup>1</sup> Excluding E988.8 for England and Wales.

<sup>2</sup> Excluding Y33.9 where the coroner's verdict was pending in England and Wales.

<sup>3</sup> Y87.0 and Y87.2 are not included for England and Wales.

5. Previous analyses (Registrar General for Scotland, 2001, Brock and Griffiths, 2003) found that the change from the Ninth (ICD-9) to the Tenth (ICD-10) Revision did not affect the number of suicides overall. This means that the figures presented are comparable across the period covered.
6. Figures are for deaths registered in each calendar year.
7. The increasing use of narrative verdicts by coroners may have affected the number of deaths classified as intentional self-harm in England and Wales. An article titled 'Narrative verdicts and their impact on mortality statistics in England and Wales' will be published in *Health Statistics Quarterly* No 49 (Spring 2011) on 22 February 2011.
8. On 13 May 2010, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) published revised mid-year population estimates for 2002 to 2008 due to methodology improvements. Therefore, suicide rates for all areas have been revised for these years. The latest population estimates for the UK can be found at [www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=15106](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=15106)
9. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the Media Relations Office.
10. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.
- © Crown copyright 2011.

## References

Adelstein A and Mardon C (1975) Suicides 1961–1974. *Population Trends* **02**, 48–55

Brock A and Griffiths C (2003) Trends in suicide by method in England and Wales, 1979–2001. *Health Statistics Quarterly* **20**, 7–18

Registrar General for Scotland. (2001) *Annual Report 2000. Appendix 2. The introduction of ICD10 for cause of death coding in Scotland*. Available at

[www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/statistics/publications-and-data/annual-report-publications/00annrep/index.html](http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/statistics/publications-and-data/annual-report-publications/00annrep/index.html)

.....

### Next publication:

January 2012

### Issued by:

Office for National Statistics, Government Buildings, Cardiff Road, Newport NP10 8XG

### Media contact:

Tel: Media Relations Office 0845 6041858

Emergency on-call 07867 906553

Email: [media.relations@ons.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:media.relations@ons.gsi.gov.uk)

### Statistical contact:

Tel: Lynsey Kyte 01633 456736

Email: [mortality@ons.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:mortality@ons.gsi.gov.uk)

Website: [www.ons.gov.uk](http://www.ons.gov.uk)