



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Office for National Statistics analysis reveals which professions have the highest risk of suicide

- New data analysis reveals suicide prevalence in England by occupation
- Female nurses and male construction workers have an elevated risk of suicide
- New toolkits have been published to provide guidance for employers on suicide prevention and responding to suicide in the workplace (postvention)

ONS analysis commissioned by Public Health England presents national suicide rates broken down by occupation for the first time in England.

An analysis of ONS suicide prevalence statistics for 2011-2015 has been carried out to gain a better understanding of factors that influence suicide, in order to inform the government's Suicide Prevention Strategy and help identify where inequalities exist amongst different groups.

To coincide with this, Public Health England (PHE), Business in the Community (BITC) and the Samaritans have joined forces to produce toolkits for employers on how to prevent suicide and how to minimise the impact when it does happen.

The new ONS analysis shows that suicides are less common for females than males, and that there are differences in the types of occupation where suicide is more common. For women, occupations with a high risk of suicide include nurses (23% above the national average), primary school teachers (42% above average) and those working in culture, media and sport (69% above average).

For men, low skilled labourers in construction had a risk that was three times higher than that the average for England; men working in skilled construction also had elevated risk. Both male and female carers have a risk of suicide that was twice the national average.

The set of toolkits produced by PHE, BITC and the Samaritans help employers take action around suicide prevention and support them when responding to the death of an employee caused by suicide. They include advice on steps employers can take to help their teams and providing them with the tools and support they need to prevent suicides.

Duncan Selbie, CEO of Public Health England, said:

"We must do more to make sure someone's job doesn't determine how likely they are to

die from suicide. Businesses need to treat mental health as seriously as physical health, and early action can stop an employee reaching a desperate stage. Simple actions can make huge differences - talking with a manager or colleague can help people get the support they need, and ultimately save lives.”

Suicide is one of the leading causes of death in people aged 20-64 in England, and is the biggest killer of young people between 20 and 34¹. There were 18,998 deaths caused by suicide in England between 2011 and 2015. On a national level, the rate of suicide has gradually decreased since 2015.

Key actions employers can take include introducing specialised suicide awareness prevention training for managers, mental health first aid training, and using internal communications as a function to foster a culture of openness about mental health.

Suicide in the workplace is extremely uncommon, but the postvention toolkit is there to help employers respond. There is no single or right way to act when this happens, but effective postvention plans can ensure that timely and appropriate care and support is provided for those affected.

Samaritans CEO Ruth Sutherland said:

“We spend a third of our lives at work and one fifth of us experience suicidal thoughts, so these resources are much needed. We shouldn’t stop there though, it is up to us to create a culture in our workplaces where people feel safe enough to talk about their feelings and get support if they need it.

“The effects of suicide can be devastating and they can reach far beyond immediate family and friends. Samaritans is proud to have worked with Public Health England, Business in the Community and other partners on these resources.”

XXX, CEO of Business in the Community, said:

“As well as looking after the mental health of their staff, employers need to have preparations in place to ensure that if the worst happens, they have the knowledge and skills to minimise harms. This way they can help everyone deal with the devastating consequences of suicide as best they can. That’s where these toolkits come in.”

For more information on the government’s suicide prevention strategy, visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/suicide-prevention-third-annual-report>

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For further information, please contact Naomi Ramage (020 368 20132) or Sean Kelleher (0787 9115 388) at Public Health England

¹ <http://visual.ons.gov.uk/what-are-the-top-causes-of-death-by-age-and-gender/>

Notes to Editors

1. The Samaritans have produced a set of guidelines for journalists on responsible and sensitive reporting of suicide. <http://www.samaritans.org/media-centre/media-guidelines-reporting-suicide>
2. You don't have to be suicidal to call the Samaritans. Whatever you're going through, call them free any time from any phone on 116 123 (this number is free to call and will not appear on your phone bill), email jo@samaritans.org, or visit www.samaritans.org to find details of your nearest branch.
3. ONS data on suicide by occupation 2011-2015 can be found. This analysis compared occupational suicide rates to the overall rate in England. The 'national average' refers to the rate of suicide in the broader population of England among men or women aged 20 to 64 years
4. Definitions of different types of construction workers:
Low skilled construction: Workers in this minor group assist the work of woodworking and building trade workers, electricians, plumbers, and painters and perform a variety of general laboring and construction tasks.
Skilled construction: Skilled construction and building trades erect steel frames, lay stone, brick and similar materials, construct and repair roofs, install heating, plumbing and ventilating systems, fit windows, doors and other fixtures, and apply coverings and decorative material to walls, floors and ceilings.
5. Public Health England exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. It does this through world-class science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and the delivery of specialist public health services.