

Overview of Deaths by Suicide in Devon

Trigger warning – this report contains details of suicide statistics and methods which some readers may find difficult or distressing. If you are affected by any of the issues raised, please contact the Samaritans, Tel: 116 123 or via www.samaritans.org

The report is for professionals and other interested parties and aims to inform work on suicide prevention by providing an overview of deaths by suicide and undetermined injury among Devon residents, registered during the calendar years 2020 to 2022.

Deaths by suicide and undetermined injury are only registered after an inquest has taken place and therefore not all deaths will have occurred during this time period. A death is considered a suicide only when a coroner at an inquest has concluded that the person intentionally took their own life. Deaths by undetermined injury are where the coroner at inquest reaches an open or narrative verdict because the intention of the person is uncertain. Only open and narrative verdicts which are considered deaths by undetermined injury are included. Deaths of Devon residents are included in this audit whether they died in Devon or elsewhere in the country. This report uses the term suicide to refer to both suicide and undetermined injury deaths.

Data sources and definitions

Deaths included in this analysis have been sourced from Office for National Statistics published data, and from the Primary Care Mortality Database using the International Classification of Diseases (ICD10) codes X60-X84 (age 10+ only) and Y10-Y34 (age 15+ only), registered in the respective years. This is in line with the definitions used in the Public Health Outcomes Framework.

Suicide Numbers and Rates

Between 2020 and 2022, there were 277 registered suicide deaths in Devon. This represents an average of between 7 and 8 deaths a month.

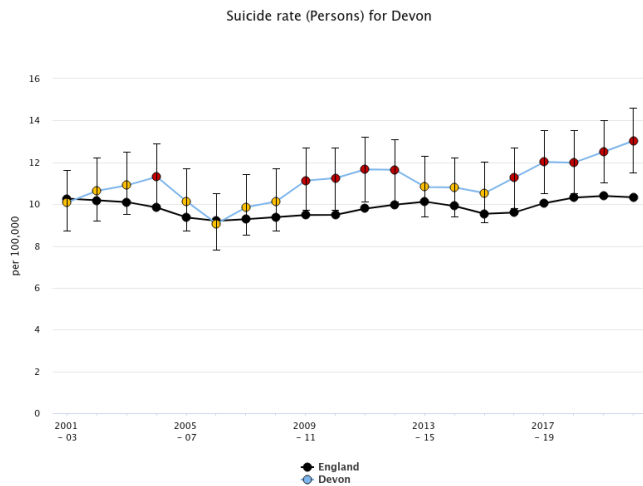
There were 75 deaths registered in 2020, 95 in 2021, and 107 in 2022. Note that numbers registered during 2020 were likely to be lower due to COVID pandemic restrictions impacting the ability of the coroners to carry out inquests, and therefore death registrations. The data for 2020-22 show that Devon has a suicide rate of 13.0 per 100,000 population, and this is

statistically significantly higher than the England rate of 10.3 per 100,000 population.

Suicide Trends

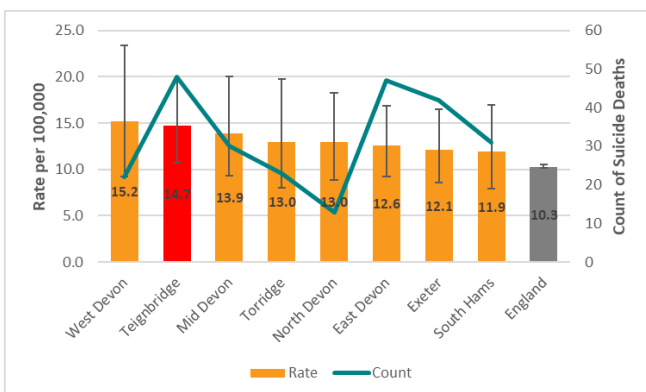
Figure 1 shows that the rate in Devon has increased for the last two reported periods, with the rate per 100,000 going from 12.0 in 2018-20, to 12.5 in 2019-21, to 13.0 in 2020-22. Red circles indicate where Devon has a statistically worse rate than England, and yellow circles indicate a statistically similar rate to England.

Figure 1: Trends in suicide rates, England and Devon.



At district level within Devon, West Devon has the highest district suicide rate at 15.2 per 100,000, with Teignbridge the second highest at 14.7 per 100,000. Teignbridge is significantly higher than England, all the other district rates are statistically similar to England. Although West Devon has a higher rate than Teignbridge, it is similar to the England rate due to having wider confidence intervals because of smaller numbers of deaths. The confidence intervals represent the range between which we are 95% confident that the true overall rate lies.

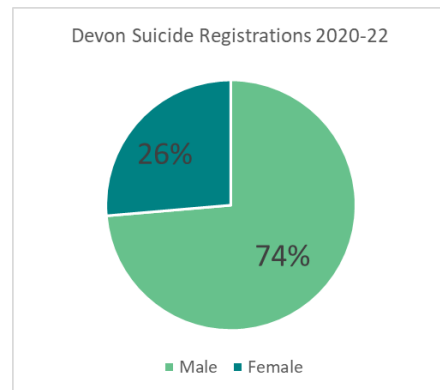
Figure 2: Suicide Rates and Counts by Devon Districts



Sex

Of the 277 suicide deaths registered between 2020 and 2022, 74% (204 deaths) were in men, and 26% (73 deaths) were in women, this is in line with the proportions seen nationally.

Figure 3: Percentage of Male and Female suicide deaths in Devon, 2020-22.

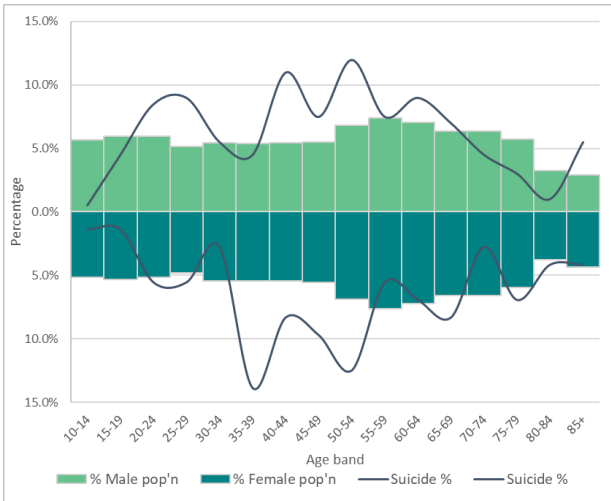


The male suicide rate for 2020-22 is 19.8 per 100,000 and this is statistically significantly higher than the England rate of 15.8. The female suicide rate for 2020-22 is 6.7 per 100,000 which is also significantly higher than the England rate of 5.2.

Ages

Figure 4 shows the percentage distribution of suicide deaths by sex and age band compared to the percentage distribution of the population of Devon. For both sexes, the highest percentages of deaths fall within the middle ages. The highest percentage of deaths were for 35-39 year olds in women (13.9% of female deaths) and for 50-54 year olds in men (11.9% of male deaths).

Figure 4: Percentage of suicide deaths by sex and age band (2020-22)

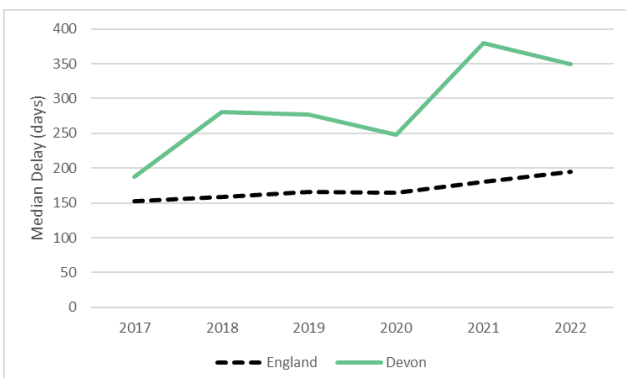


Registration Delays

Reported suicide figures are based on the number of suicide deaths registered in each calendar year, rather than the date on which the death occurred. The difference between these dates is known as the registration delay. The Covid pandemic impacted on the ability of the coroners to carry out inquests, which led to an increase in registration delays.

In England, the median registration delay for deaths registered in 2022 was 195 days (180 days in 2021), this is the longest delay since 2001. In Devon the median registration delay in 2022 was 349 days (380 in 2021). See Figure 5.

Figure 5: Median Registration delays for suicide deaths



Place of Death

53% of the suicide deaths in Devon occurred at home, and 34% occurred elsewhere, as shown in Table 1. Note that place of death can be different from the place of the suicide attempt.

Table 1: Suicides by Place of death (2020-22)

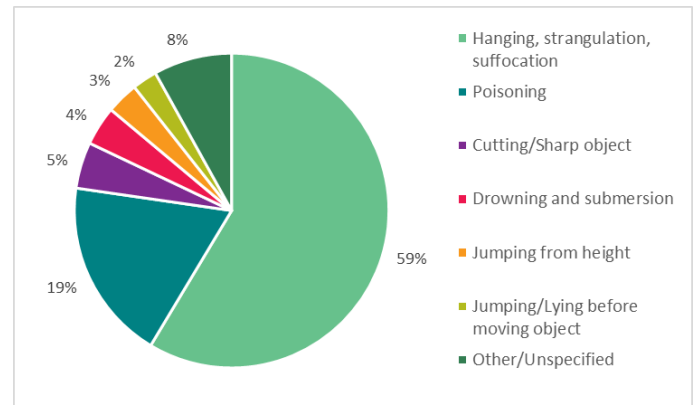
	No. Deaths	% of Deaths
Home	145	53%
Public Place/Other	94	34%
Place of care	34	13%

Method

Hanging/suffocation is the most common method used (59% of deaths) followed by poisoning (19%), see figure 6. These are the most common methods for both men and women and is similar to the picture seen nationally.

For Devon in 2020-22 these two methods accounted for 76% of male suicide deaths and 82% of female suicide deaths.

Figure 6: Percentage of Suicide deaths by Method

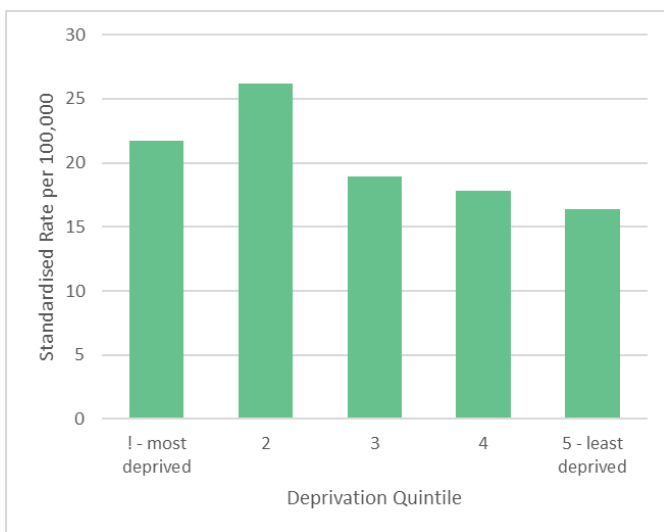


Deprivation

A rapid evidence review of eighteen studies from the UK and Republic of Ireland found that there was a strong association between area level deprivation and suicidal behaviour, where suicidal behaviour increased as deprivation increased (Samaritans, 2017).

Figure 7 shows the suicide rate for Devon is higher in the more deprived areas than the least deprived.

Figure 7: Suicide rate by deprivation quintile



References

Samaritans (2017) Socioeconomic Disadvantage and Suicidal Behaviour. Available from https://media.samaritans.org/documents/Socioeconomic_disadvantage_and_suicidal_behaviour_-_Full.pdf