

Understanding Suicide Data in Wales

National Programme for Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention
December 2024



GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES

Y Weithrediaeth
Executive



Mental Health Helpline For Wales
Community Advice & Listening Line
Offering a confidential listening and support service

Freephone **0800 132 737**

Or text help to **81066**

Self-care and safety

- any discussion around suicide and self-harm can be distressing
- these slides may raise issues that make you feel uncomfortable
- please look after yourself, and step away if you need to
- if you feel you need immediate support, please contact a help-line:



Freephone: **0800 132 737**

Text help to: **81066**



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Data are people

While talking about population-level data it is important to remember that each number is an individual whose death may have been preventable, and whose death will be having a significant and enduring impact on many others



Things to consider when using suicide data

- while all suicide deaths are significant events, compared to other major causes of death, such as heart disease or cancers, numbers can seem relatively small, particularly when looking at numbers in a single year
- if that single year dataset is made smaller still e.g.: by dividing further by sex, age-bands, geographical area, or those combined, it becomes increasingly difficult to draw conclusions, or to make meaningful comparisons from one year to another
- more can be learned from observing trends in the data over several years

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Statistical bulletins from Office for National Statistics (ONS)

Deaths registered in-year after coroner inquest *(published annually)*

The screenshot shows the ONS website interface. At the top, the ONS logo is on the left, and navigation links for 'English (EN) | Cymraeg (CY)', 'Release calendar', 'Methodology', 'Media', 'About', and 'Blog' are on the right. A horizontal menu below the logo contains categories: 'Home', 'Business, industry and trade', 'Economy', 'Employment and labour market', 'People, population and community' (which is highlighted), and 'Taking part in a survey?'. Below the menu is a search bar with the placeholder text 'Search for a keyword(s) or time series ID' and a magnifying glass icon. A purple banner below the search bar reads 'census 2021 Data and analysis from Census 2021'. The breadcrumb trail is 'Home > People, population and community > Births, deaths and marriages > Deaths > Suicides in England and Wales'. The main heading is 'Suicides in England and Wales: 2023 registrations'. Below this is a sub-heading: 'Registered deaths from suicide in England and Wales, analysed by sex, age, area of usual residence of the deceased, and suicide method.' A white box contains the text 'This is the latest release. [View previous releases](#)'. At the bottom, there is a 'Contact:' section with 'Population Health Monitoring Group' and a 'Release date:' of '29 August 2024'. The 'Next release:' is 'To be announced'. The ONS logo is also present in the bottom left corner.



ONS Data

- data available from 1981
- reported annually, January to December (calendar year data)
- reports on previous year (2024 report presents 2023 data)
- reports coroner confirmed death registrations in-year (*In 2023, 39% of deaths registered occurred in 2023, 51% in 2022, and 10% in 2021 or earlier*)
- three quarters of deaths are males (consistent since mid 90's)
- **386** death registrations recorded for Wales in 2023
- 2023 saw an increase in registrations of 7.6% for England and Wales

Source: [Suicides in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)



ONS rates (2023)

- deaths per 100,000 (all-persons for Wales **14/100,000**)
- age-standardised rates - allows for differences in the age-structure of populations so that valid comparisons can be made
- rates differ in different groups – males **22/100,000**, females **6.3/100,000**
- rates differ in ages and at different age intervals (five-year groups below)
- **!Caution!** small numbers - the smaller the group the more caution needed in interpreting the data

Area of usual residence	Sex	Year of death registration	15-19 Rate per 100,000	20-24 Rate per 100,000	25-29 Rate per 100,000	30-34 Rate per 100,000	35-39 Rate per 100,000	40-44 Rate per 100,000	45-49 Rate per 100,000	50-54 Rate per 100,000	55-59 Rate per 100,000	60-64 Rate per 100,000	65-69 Rate per 100,000	70-74 Rate per 100,000
Wales	Persons	2023	7.6	8.4	16.8	23.3	19.1	18.1	19.1	19.6	15.2	9.5	13.7	10.1
Wales	Males	2023	9.4	11.0	28.3	37.6	32.1	27.3	30.8	30.5	22.1	16.5	21.5	18.4
Wales	Females	2023	5.6	5.5	5.2	9.7	6.9	9.3	7.9	9.3	8.7	2.8	6.4	[x]

Source: [Suicides in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk)



ONS rates (2023) comparing England and Wales

Age-standardised suicide rates for English regions and Wales, deaths registered in 2023



Each regions position can change year-to-year

In 2023, the rate of suicide registrations in Wales was almost twice the rate in London

Source: [Suicides in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk)



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Statistical bulletins from Office for National Statistics (ONS)

Suicide occurrences in-year *(published annually)*



English (EN) | [Cymraeg \(CY\)](#)

[Release calendar](#) | [Methodology](#) | [Media](#) | [About](#) | [Blog](#)

Home

Business, industry and trade

Economy

Employment and labour market

People, population and community

Taking part in a survey?

Search for a keyword(s) or time series ID



Home > People, population and community > Births, deaths and marriages > Deaths

Dataset

Suicide occurrences, England and Wales



Contact:
Population Health
Monitoring Group

Release date:
29 August 2024

Next release:
To be announced



ONS occurrences

- data available from 1981
- updated annually
- confirmed registrations but reported by **year of death** (not year of registration)
- ONS report published in 2024 presents data up to 2022 (due to registration delays) so a retrospective dataset
- As registrations reported to ONS, records continually updated so dataset changes over time

ONS data: suicide occurrences and registrations

Area of usual residence [note 2]	Year of death occurrence	Persons Number of deaths
Wales	2022	294
Wales	2021	354
Wales	2020	375
Wales	2019	375
Wales	2018	372

numbers can change every year as registrations become known and records up-dated

2024 bulletin reports up to 2022 due to registration delays

Area of usual residence [note 2]	Year of death registration	Persons Number of deaths
Wales	2022	339
Wales	2021	347
Wales	2020	285
Wales	2019	330
Wales	2018	349

registrations for same years

Other ONS reports - Wales

Suicide by occupation 2011-2015 ages 20-64 (Jun 2019)

Major group occupations:

Males – skilled trade occupations,
and unskilled

Females – caring, leisure and other
service occupations

Source: [Suicide by occupation: Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)
published June 2019

Caution needed in
interpreting data presented over
a limited age-range (working-
age cohort) and four-year time-
range (2011-2015)

Consideration to be given to
vulnerability to suicide in those
who are unemployed or
experiencing financial strain



Real-time suspected suicide surveillance (RTSSS) WALES

sudden and unexplained deaths, as they occur, thought to be a possible suicide

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The screenshot shows the website for Real Time Suspected Suicide Surveillance (RTSSS) for Wales. The header includes the GIG CYMRU NHS WALES logo, the text 'Iechyd Cyhoeddus Cymru Public Health Wales', and navigation links for 'Complaints', 'Contact Us', and 'Cymraeg'. A search bar is present with the text 'All...' and a search button. Below the header is a navigation menu with links for 'Home', 'About Us', 'Topics', 'Careers', 'Services and Teams', 'Data', 'News', and 'Publications'. A 'Listen' button is also visible. The main heading is 'Real Time Suspected Suicide Surveillance'. Below this, a text box states: 'The Real Time Suspected Suicide Surveillance (RTSSS) for Wales was established in Public Health Wales on the 1st April 2022. s in the 'Talk to me 2' suicide and self-harm prevention strategy for Wales (2015-2022) was to establish surveillance systems to improve the quality of data and intelligence to inform prevention. One of these systems relates to the real-time capture of suspected suicide data, via Police-based data capture methods.' At the bottom, there are three teal buttons: 'Aims and Objectives More', 'About the Programme More', and 'Meet the Team More'.

RTSSS dataset in Wales

- police reported sudden deaths that are suspected suicides
- collated monthly, and reviewed monthly by national/regional leads
- second report 10th December 2024: [April 2023 – March 2024](#)
- data published annually due to ‘small’ numbers (statistically) ([England can publish monthly](#) as monthly number of deaths are similar to annual numbers in Wales)
- data are deaths in Welsh population (whether death occurs in Wales or elsewhere, so non-residents not included)
- reports crude rates and not age-standardised rates

RTSSS: second annual report April 2023 – March 2024

- **! Caution !** small time-limited dataset
- **350** deaths (rate for all persons 12.4/100,000) over 12-month period
- **76%** of deaths were in males
- highest age-specific rate was males 35-44 (35.6/100,000)
- regionally, North Wales had the highest rate, but this was not statistically different from the all-Wales rate
- **inequalities** prevail – rates in most deprived areas (15.8/100,000) were significantly higher than the all-Wales rate, and the rate in the least deprived areas (8.6/100,000)

RTSSS – associated factors (! drawn from small dataset!)



63% mental health condition



53% previous history of self-harm



24% alcohol or substance use



20% domestic abuse perpetrator



65% previously known to police



13% bereavement



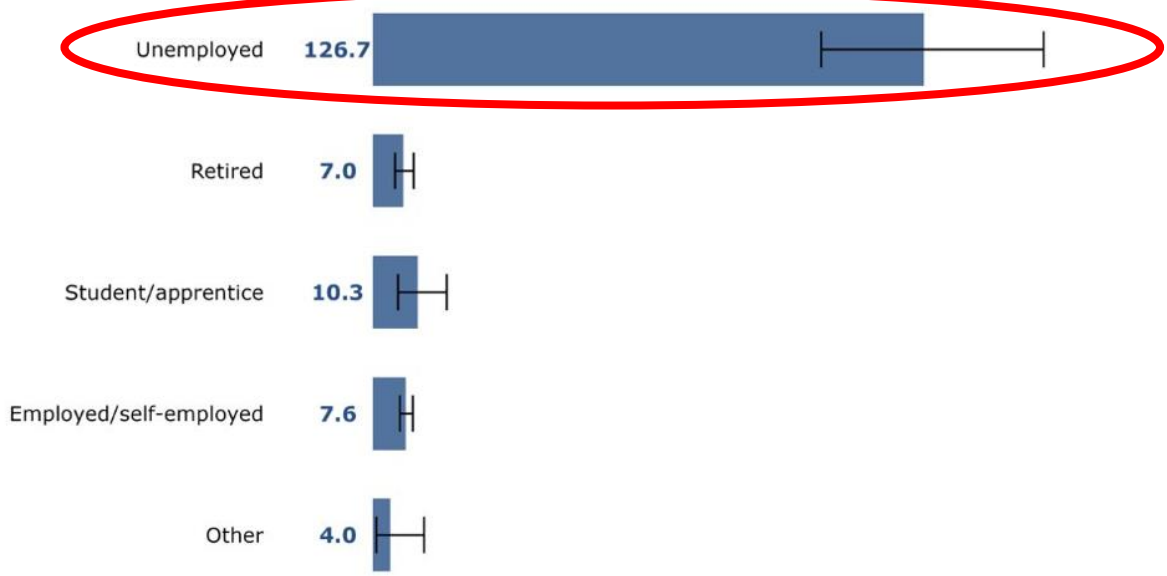
24% Long-term illness/ disability/ pain

26% relationship issues



RTSSS - unemployment

Deaths by suspected suicide by employment status*, crude rate per 100,000, aged 16+,
 Welsh residents, 2023/24
 Produced by Public Health Wales Observatory, using RTSSS data and Economic activity status data (ONS)

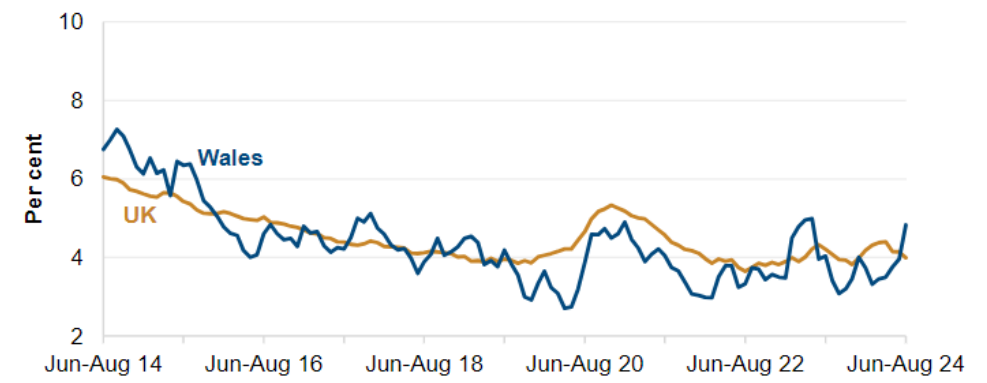


*84 cases had an unknown employment status therefore are not included

Source: [Annual Report: Deaths by suspected suicide 2023-24 - Public Health Wales](#)

Unemployment rate

Figure 3: Unemployment rate, 3 months to August 2014 to the 3 months to August 2024



Description of Figure 3: Line chart showing the unemployment rate has decreased overall in both Wales and the UK over the last 10 years.

Source: Welsh Government analysis of LFS

Source: [Labour Market Overview: October 2024 \(headline results\) \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)



Learning from other RTSSS systems



Kent and Medway: Highlighting the relationship between domestic abuse and suicide

The Kent and Medway Suicide Prevention (SP) team have been conducting unique research into the links between domestic abuse (DA) and suicide since 2019. Using Real Time Suicide Surveillance (RTSS) data supplied by Kent Police, our research has shown that approximately 30 per cent of all suspected suicides in Kent and Medway between January 2019 and January 2022 have been impacted by domestic abuse (either as a victim, perpetrator or as a young person affected by the abuse). This case study was done jointly with the National Suicide Prevention Alliance and forms part of our suicide prevention resource.

Mental health | 30 Sep 2022



- Victims who are dying by suicide in the **middle of the abuse**
- Victims who are dying by suicide **months or years after the abuse has ended**
- Victims who are also thought to have been perpetrators of DA at some point in their relationships or lives
- Children and young people** living in households impacted by domestic abuse
- Perpetrators of domestic abuse**, the largest group. Including individuals who have been convicted, accused or who are under investigation for domestic abuse.

[Kent and Medway: Highlighting the relationship between domestic abuse and suicide | Local Government Association](#)

Implications for prevention – using different datasets

ONS data

- accurate, but not as timely (reported annually)
- coroner confirmed death registrations
- 40 years of data showing long-term trends relating to risk factors, groups, and places that can inform planned prevention measures (proactive)
- reports age-adjusted rates that allows for comparisons between groups and geographical areas that have different age profiles in their populations

RTSSSS data

- timely (reported monthly) but not as accurate
- police identified suspected suicides
- 1 year of data showing most recently observed associated factors
- enables more timely response to those bereaved or affected, and to identify clusters (reactive)
- reports crude or absolute rates which can help to determine how much resource is needed to act effectively. It is not as suitable for comparing between areas

Implications for prevention

- proportion of male suicides and complexity around their needs
- significance of socio-economic factors such as living alone; relationship issues; loss or bereavement; unemployment; living in more deprived or under-served communities
- significance of behavioural factors such as substance use, being exposed to violence/abuse
- potentially higher risk occupations (M – trades, F – caring/service)
- opportunities to respond in mental health services and wider health and care system

Implications for prevention



- review evidence of effective interventions (male suicide prevention) and develop mechanisms to hear male voices in Wales, to shape how we respond to needs and improve access to support



- work with colleagues in mental health services and primary care, and other front-line agencies to respond appropriately, based on evidence and continued learning, and to enable effective signposting to options for support



- recognise areas of disadvantage/under-served communities to focus provision and support e.g.: support after suicide, and work with agencies that help people to manage financial challenges, unemployment, housing



- strengthen links with other policy areas such as substance use, domestic abuse, to identify opportunities for intervention and support in the context of complex lives and needs

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Claire Cotter

National Programme Lead for suicide and self-harm prevention, NHS Wales Executive

If you want to know more about suicide prevention in Wales


SSHP Cymru | Training Hub
Suicide and Self harm Prevention


Search for training  Cymraeg

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[Home](#)

Suicide Awareness e-module

[Launch e-module](#) 



If you want to know more about suicide prevention in Wales

National Suicide and Self-harm Prevention Strategy for Wales [DRAFT]

<https://www.gov.wales/draft-suicide-and-self-harm-prevention-strategy>



National Advisory and Liaison Service for Wales

(for those who have been affected by a sudden or unexplained death that might be a suicide)

<https://nals.cymru/>

Help is at Hand Cymru

(an online resource for those who have been affected by a sudden death that might be a suicide)

<https://www.sshp.wales/en/help-is-at-hand/>

Knowledge and evidence base (SSHP Cymru Digital HUB)

<https://www.sshp.wales/en/knowledge-base/>

If you want to know more about suicide prevention in Wales

Samaritans Cymru

<https://www.samaritans.org/samaritans-cymru/> 

PAPYRUS Prevention of Young Suicide

<https://www.papyrus-uk.org/contact-us/> (to find offices in Wales)

MIND Cymru

<https://www.mind.org.uk/about-us/mind-cymru-mind-in-wales/>

Contact details

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