

Samaritans Scotland: World Suicide Prevention Day Briefing

Deaths by suicide in Scotland: what does data tell us?

- In 2018 in Scotland, 784 people died by suicide - that's 15 lives lost every single week.
- Scotland's suicide rate increased by 15% from 2017 to 2018. While we need further data to know whether this increase represents a sustained trend, it is a powerful reminder of why we must continue to make suicide prevention an urgent priority across policy and services.
- Men are three times more likely to die by suicide than women
- Men aged 35-49 had the highest suicide risk of any group
- Among women, those aged 45-54 had the highest suicide rate
- While suicide rates continue to be highest among men and women in their middle years, there are some concerning signs that deaths by suicide are increasing among young.
- Between 2017 and 2018, the suicide rate among under 25s increased by 50%, reaching its highest level since 2007. The suicide rate for young men under 25 has increased year continuously since 2014.
- People living in the most deprived communities in Scotland are three times more likely to die by suicide compared to people living in the least deprived communities.

How is coronavirus affecting suicide risk?

- Throughout lockdown, Samaritans has continued to provide emotional support to our callers across the UK and Republic of Ireland over half a million times. One in four of these conversations has been with someone who is expressing suicidal thoughts or behaviours.

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- Common themes where callers express suicidal feelings included callers feeling anxious, isolated, hopeless about the future, trapped (e.g. “not seeing the end to this”), and a sense of loss (including loss of income, routine and social contact, because of lockdown).

- Covid-19 is affecting everyone – but not everyone is affected in the same way, and based on our ongoing research we are particularly concerned about three groups:
 - o Middle-aged men
 - o Young people
 - o People with pre-existing mental health conditions

- Coronavirus is disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable people in society and will exacerbate factors we know are related to suicide. However, it’s important to note that a rise in suicide is not inevitable and there are actions we can take to reduce these risks.

- The National Suicide Prevention Leadership Group - of which Samaritans Scotland is a member - have published a joint Covid-19 statement recommending that we build on the challenges and opportunities presented by the pandemic to create a long-term suicide prevention strategy in Scotland. A new unifying identity for suicide prevention in Scotland has recently been launched by the group called United to Prevent suicide (@TalkToSaveLives).