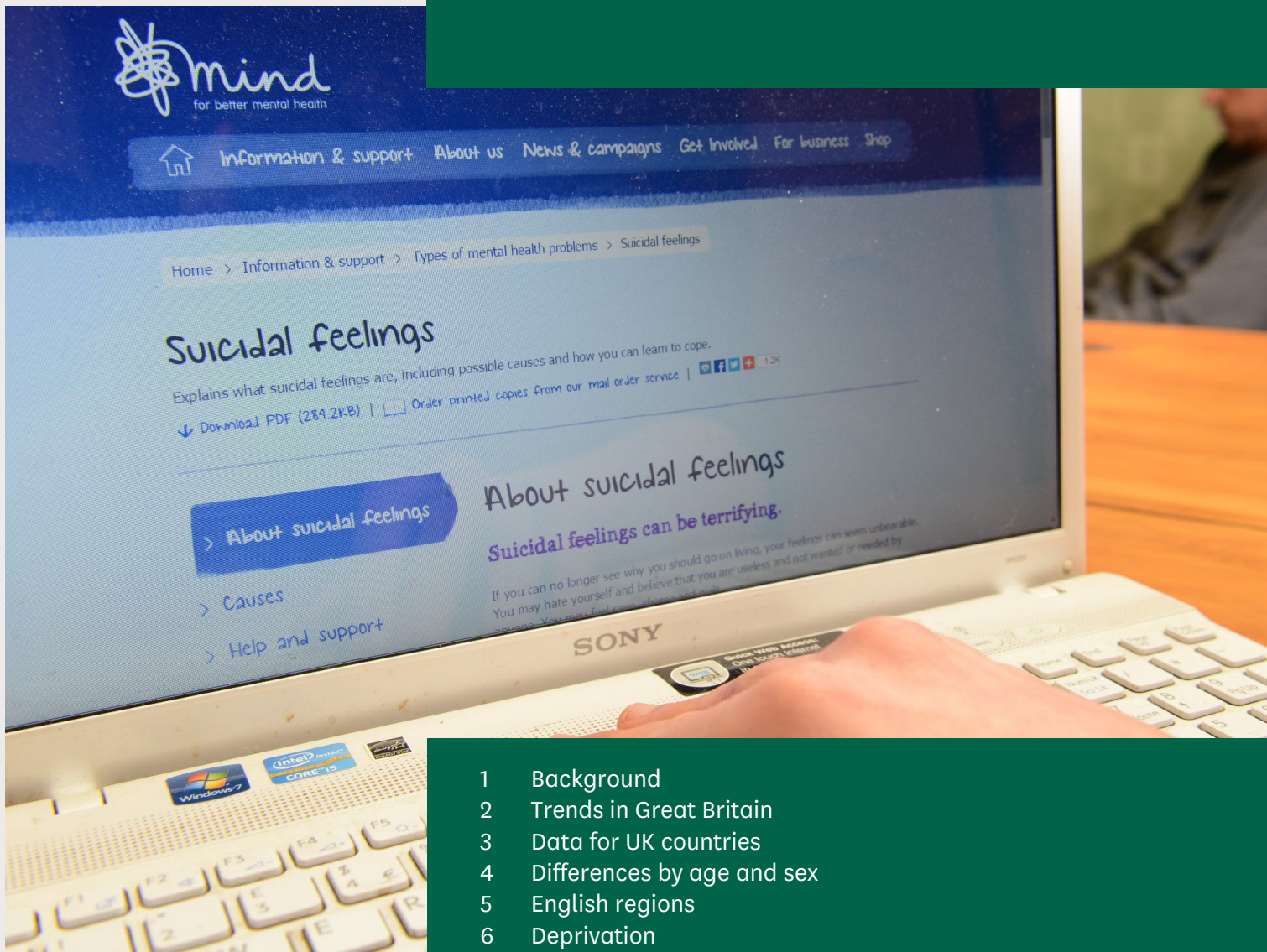


By Carl Baker
12 January 2024

Suicide statistics



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- 2 Trends in Great Britain
- 3 Data for UK countries
- 4 Differences by age and sex
- 5 English regions
- 6 Deprivation
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1 Background

If you are affected by the themes of this briefing paper, you can contact The Samaritans by calling 116123 in the UK and Ireland.

If you are covering a suicide-related issue, please follow the [Samaritans media guidance for reporting suicide](#) due to the potentially damaging consequences of irresponsible reporting.

This paper summarises data on suicide from the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) data on [Suicide in England and Wales](#), National Records of Scotland's [Probable Suicides](#) dataset, and [Northern Ireland data](#) published by NISRA.

The national statistics definition of suicide includes all deaths from intentional self-harm for people aged 10 and above, and deaths caused by injury or poisoning where the intent was undetermined for people aged 15 and above. More information is available in the [ONS methodology document](#).

Most data on suicide is presented by the year that the death was registered. Because it takes time to complete a coroner's inquest, it can take months or sometimes years for a suicide to be registered. This means the number of suicides registered in a year is not the same as the number occurring in that year.

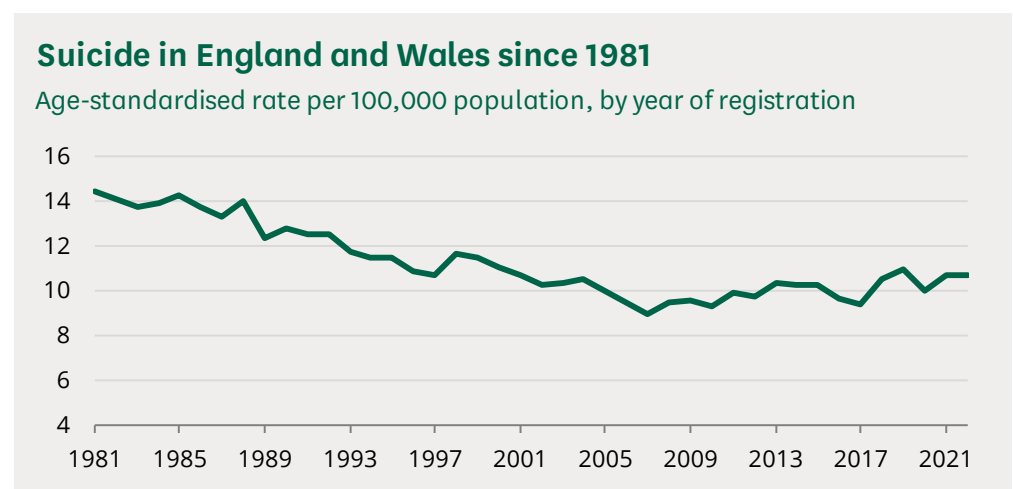
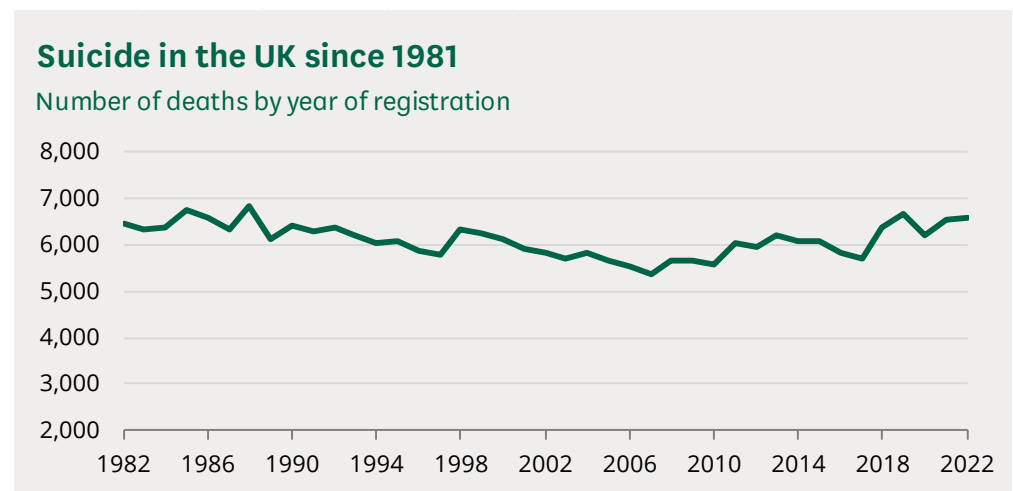
For policy issues on suicide please see our briefing paper [Suicide Prevention: Policy and Strategy](#).

2 Trends in the UK

In 2022 there were 6,588 deaths registered in the UK where the cause was recorded as suicide.

The first chart below shows trends since 1981 in the number of suicides, while the second shows the age-standardised mortality rate from suicide. This rate takes into account changes in population size and age structure, and so provides the most accurate way to compare trends over time. For example, in England the number of suicides registered in 2022 was 17% higher than in 2005, but the suicide rate was similar because the population has risen.

The suicide rate in England and Wales has declined by 26% since 1981. Most of this fall occurred before 2000. In 2022 the rate was higher than it had been in 2005-2012 and 2016-2017, but similar to the rate from 2013-2015 and 2018-2019.



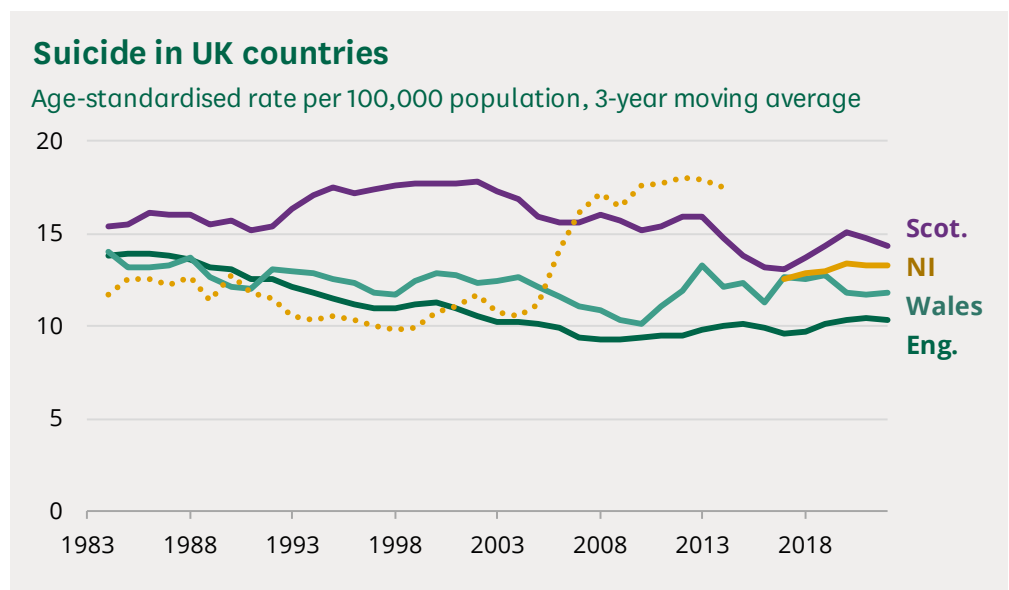
Sources: ONS, [Suicides in England and Wales](#) tables, Table 1; NRS, [Probable Suicides](#) tables, Table 1; NISRA, [Suicide Statistics](#), Tables 1 and 3

Note that a combined age-standardised rate for the UK is no longer published, so the second chart shows data for England and Wales only. Rates for the four UK nations separately (and a discussion of Northern Ireland data) is provided below in section 3.

In July 2018, the standard of proof used to determine whether a death is suicide was lowered in England & Wales. ONS have published [analysis of this change](#).

3 Data for UK countries

The chart below shows trends in the age-standardised mortality rate from suicide since 1983 in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Data here is presented as a three-year average. Rates fluctuate from year to year, partly due to random variation, so a three-year average can make it easier to see trends.



Sources: ONS, [Suicides in England and Wales](#) tables, Table 1; NRS, [Probable Suicides](#) tables, Table 1; Table 1; NISRA, [Suicide Statistics](#), Tables 1 and 3. Older Northern Ireland data is shown as a dotted line

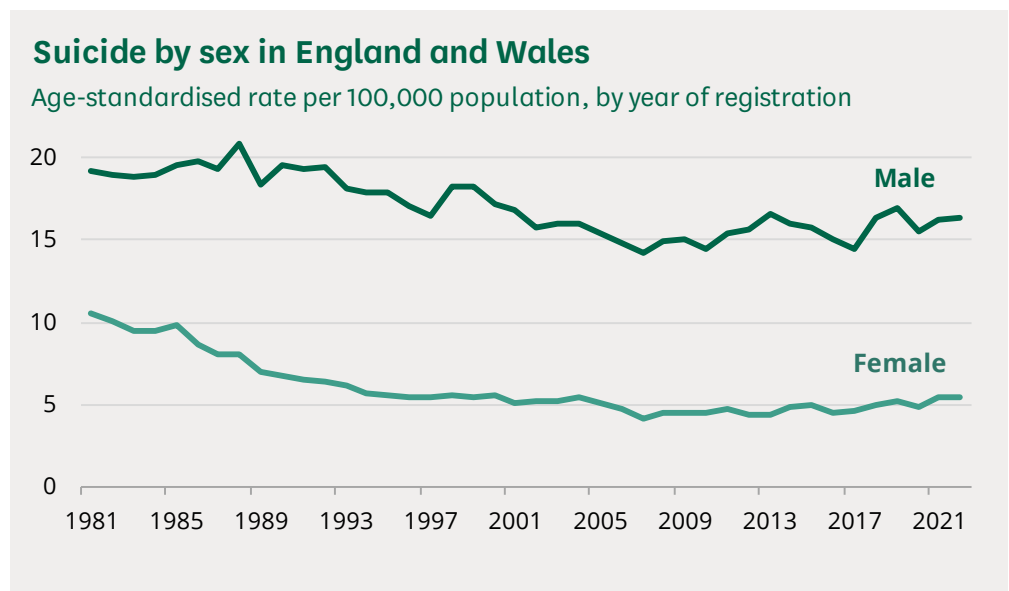
Figures for Northern Ireland were revised as a result of the [Review of Suicide Statistics Northern Ireland \(2022\)](#). As a result, figures from 2015 onwards are not comparable with previous years. This is shown as a gap in the orange line on the chart above. The increase in the mid-2000s corresponds with the centralisation of the Coroner's Service in Northern Ireland, which resulted in the clearing of long-standing cases.

A briefing paper from the [Northern Ireland Assembly](#) provides more information.

4 Differences by age and sex

Suicide in England and Wales is three times more common among men than among women. The gap between sexes has increased over time and is slightly higher than the global gap between sexes recorded by the World Bank.¹

The chart below shows trends since 1981 by sex. The suicide rate among women has approximately halved since 1981. By comparison, the rate among men has fallen by 20%.

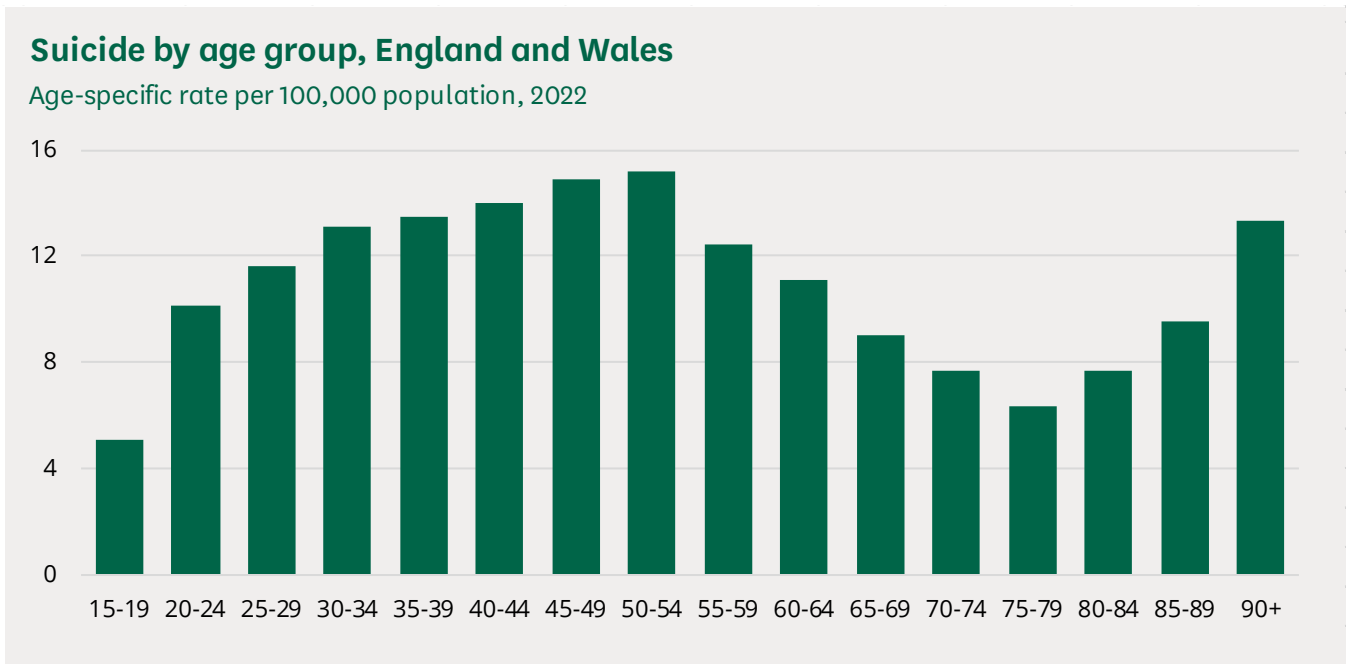


Source: ONS, [Suicides in England and Wales](#) tables, Table 1

Risk of suicide in England and Wales is usually highest among people aged between 45 and 54 and lowest among people aged under 20 and over 70. The 2022 data showed an increase in rates among those aged 90 and above. However, given that this age group has a lower population, it is not yet possible to say whether this is a trend.

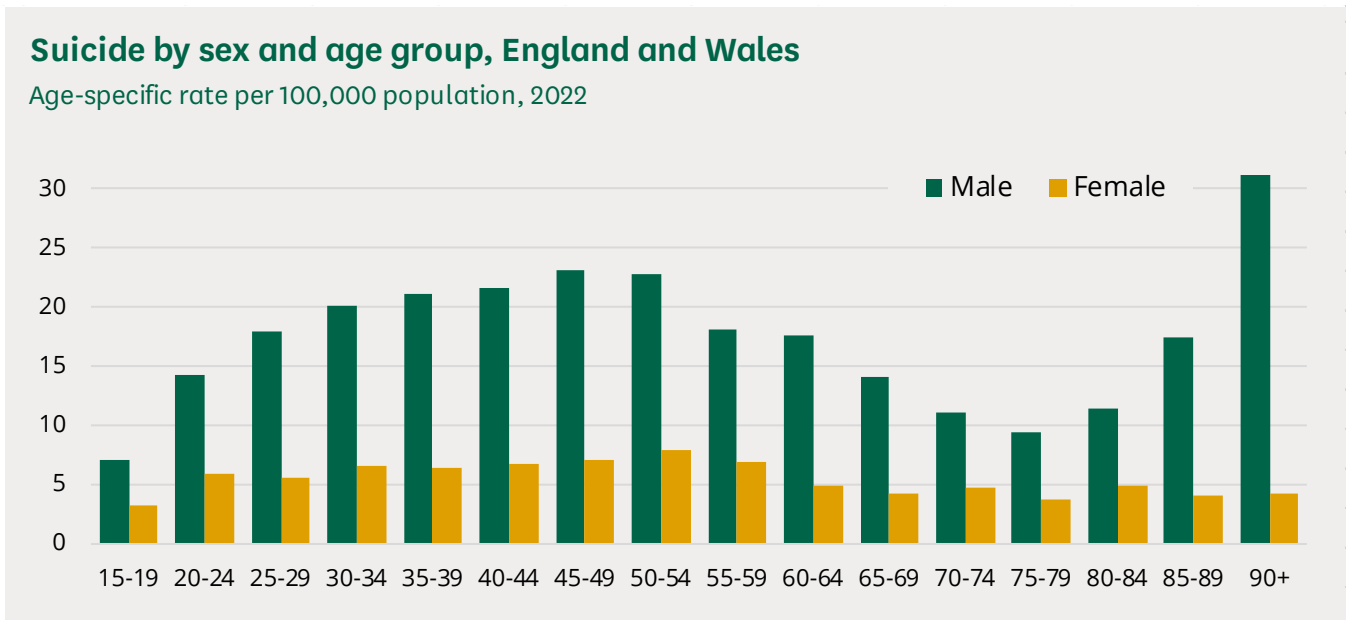
The chart below shows data for five-year age groups in 2022.

¹ WorldBank, [Suicide mortality rates](#), accessed 30 November 2022



Source: ONS, [Suicides in England and Wales](#) tables, Table 5

The chart below shows the same data broken down additionally by sex. It shows that both men and women have a broadly similar age pattern. As above, the suicide rate among ages 45 to 54 is usually the highest for both men and women. However, in 2022 the highest male suicide rate was among those aged 90+.



Source: ONS, [Suicides in England and Wales](#) tables, Table 5

Although the suicide rate is lower among younger age groups, this should be understood in the context of much lower mortality rates among young people. Among men aged 20-34, suicide was the [leading cause of death in England](#)

[and Wales](#), accounting for one quarter of all deaths registered in that age group in 2021.

Suicide by age since 1981

The graphic overleaf is a colour-coded heatmap showing trends in the suicide rate by age since 1981. Higher values are shown with orange shading and lower values are shown with purple shading. Values at neither extreme are shown in white or off-white.

Reading the graphic from left to right allows comparison between age groups in the same year. Reading from top to bottom allows comparison of a single age group over time.

The graphic shows that the most pronounced reductions in suicide rates were observed among older age groups (moving from orange to white and then to purple when reading downwards), while the suicide rate has risen among people aged 45-64 over the last decade.

The graphic suggests some evidence for a 'cohort effect' – the younger group aged 20-39 at higher risk of suicide in the late 1990s overlaps with the cohort now aged 40-59 now experiencing higher risk.

Suicide rate by age group in England and Wales since 1981: heat map

Age-specific rate per 100,000 population by year of registration

Key: Higher rate Lower rate

	Age group															
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85-89	90+
1981	4.6	9.2	12.1	12.1	13.6	15.6	16.7	19.1	19.2	18.4	18.6	19.6	19.9	18.9	16.4	19.7
1982	3.6	8.9	12.3	12.2	12.9	15.0	17.6	17.3	19.3	16.9	18.7	19.6	19.3	20.2	20.2	11.9
1983	3.8	8.8	11.0	11.6	13.8	15.2	16.2	17.4	17.8	17.7	18.3	18.3	20.1	18.2	18.9	12.3
1984	4.1	8.5	11.1	12.2	13.9	15.4	17.5	18.0	17.8	17.5	16.8	18.3	19.5	20.2	14.6	12.5
1985	4.3	9.8	11.5	13.4	12.9	16.0	17.4	17.3	18.4	18.8	19.3	18.8	20.2	20.3	16.0	10.8
1986	4.7	10.5	11.7	12.9	13.1	14.0	15.8	17.5	16.0	17.7	17.2	18.6	20.6	20.8	14.5	13.7
1987	5.5	11.5	11.5	13.7	13.2	13.9	16.4	14.9	15.6	16.8	15.9	16.2	15.3	18.9	17.1	14.6
1988	6.3	13.0	12.4	14.8	16.0	15.3	14.5	15.7	15.7	14.7	15.4	17.5	20.1	21.7	19.9	12.6
1989	6.0	12.4	12.8	13.8	13.9	13.1	14.0	14.4	14.9	12.3	12.6	12.7	16.3	16.7	17.3	11.5
1990	5.7	13.9	14.5	13.2	15.3	15.0	15.4	14.1	13.2	12.5	13.4	13.2	14.5	15.8	18.3	10.7
1991	6.1	13.0	13.8	15.0	15.8	15.3	16.3	14.5	12.9	11.4	11.3	10.8	13.1	15.8	16.6	11.2
1992	5.3	13.8	14.1	14.0	15.0	15.3	15.8	14.1	13.2	12.5	11.6	13.2	12.1	14.3	12.4	15.2
1993	5.0	14.3	13.6	12.9	13.8	15.0	14.4	13.4	12.9	10.1	11.4	9.8	12.6	14.1	16.3	13.0
1994	4.8	13.5	14.6	14.8	13.0	13.3	11.7	13.3	10.9	11.0	10.4	10.6	12.3	15.3	18.2	13.0
1995	4.8	13.1	14.8	14.1	14.3	16.7	12.3	13.2	11.7	10.3	9.2	9.2	11.5	13.4	14.6	10.1
1996	5.6	11.8	14.0	15.3	12.9	14.4	13.1	11.1	11.2	8.5	8.5	10.6	10.3	13.3	14.4	9.8
1997	5.5	13.4	14.0	13.7	13.4	12.9	13.9	11.3	10.8	9.3	8.3	9.2	9.4	11.1	13.7	11.5
1998	6.1	15.0	16.7	17.4	14.3	14.4	14.4	12.5	11.6	9.6	10.0	7.8	10.3	10.8	11.3	12.6
1999	5.5	12.3	15.3	15.6	15.3	14.5	13.9	12.3	11.4	10.0	9.7	9.9	11.0	11.8	15.0	10.3
2000	5.3	12.5	14.9	14.4	15.1	13.3	14.6	12.0	11.8	8.5	8.9	9.7	9.8	10.0	15.2	10.4
2001	5.6	10.3	12.9	14.4	13.8	13.0	14.0	12.7	11.8	9.4	8.0	9.2	10.1	9.5	12.8	12.3
2002	4.6	10.0	13.6	13.8	14.2	13.4	13.3	11.9	10.8	8.3	8.6	7.9	7.9	9.4	13.4	11.7
2003	4.2	10.6	12.0	14.2	14.1	14.2	13.0	12.1	10.6	9.1	7.2	8.6	10.2	9.7	10.1	14.2
2004	4.7	9.3	11.9	13.1	14.3	13.9	13.3	13.1	10.8	8.7	9.5	8.2	9.6	11.2	13.1	15.7
2005	4.2	8.6	10.0	13.0	14.0	13.6	14.3	13.0	10.8	9.3	7.8	7.4	7.1	10.5	12.5	13.5
2006	3.5	7.8	9.5	11.4	13.3	12.6	13.1	12.7	11.9	9.7	8.1	7.2	7.9	9.1	9.9	10.0
2007	3.6	7.4	8.9	12.2	12.9	12.5	11.6	11.6	10.6	8.8	7.5	6.1	7.5	9.8	9.6	7.1
2008	3.7	8.8	10.0	11.7	13.0	14.1	12.6	12.8	11.3	8.6	7.4	7.4	6.9	9.6	8.0	9.0
2009	3.7	8.2	10.9	10.0	13.9	14.2	13.4	12.7	11.8	8.7	7.4	6.8	7.8	9.4	9.2	9.1
2010	3.1	8.6	8.2	10.2	12.6	13.3	12.7	12.7	12.0	9.8	6.9	7.1	7.6	9.2	8.1	10.5
2011	4.0	8.6	9.3	10.3	13.1	15.4	14.3	15.0	11.7	9.2	7.2	7.9	7.4	9.0	9.8	8.4
2012	3.6	8.5	10.1	10.8	12.9	14.9	15.3	14.2	12.2	8.9	7.3	6.7	6.6	8.1	9.5	9.5
2013	3.9	8.3	8.7	10.7	13.7	15.3	15.6	14.8	13.9	10.6	7.5	7.7	7.7	9.1	11.6	11.1
2014	4.6	8.3	9.7	10.6	11.8	15.2	15.7	15.8	12.6	9.9	8.0	8.3	8.0	9.0	10.7	8.5
2015	5.5	8.8	9.8	11.2	11.8	13.7	14.5	14.3	13.4	11.0	8.4	8.0	7.7	9.6	10.2	12.4
2016	4.8	9.4	9.9	10.8	10.8	14.0	13.7	14.1	12.7	9.2	7.7	6.5	6.2	8.3	8.6	11.3
2017	5.4	7.7	9.7	10.5	10.8	13.0	14.6	12.9	11.4	9.4	8.0	6.7	7.8	6.4	10.0	8.9
2018	5.9	10.3	10.9	11.8	11.7	13.7	17.0	14.4	11.3	10.6	8.1	7.0	8.2	9.8	11.2	11.0
2019	5.6	10.9	12.5	12.8	12.9	14.5	15.9	14.8	13.1	11.5	7.8	8.4	7.7	8.5	9.4	8.3
2020	4.8	9.2	10.7	11.6	13.0	11.9	15.4	13.8	11.9	10.8	8.1	7.4	6.6	7.6	9.6	10.7
2021	6.3	11.0	11.7	12.3	13.4	13.9	14.7	14.9	12.6	10.6	9.2	7.0	7.9	6.9	8.5	8.0
2022	5.1	10.1	11.6	13.1	13.5	14.0	14.9	15.2	12.4	11.1	9.0	7.7	6.3	7.7	9.5	13.3

Source: ONS, [Suicides in England and Wales](#) tables, Table 5

Note that small differences from year to year or between age groups are unlikely to be statistically significant.

5 English regions

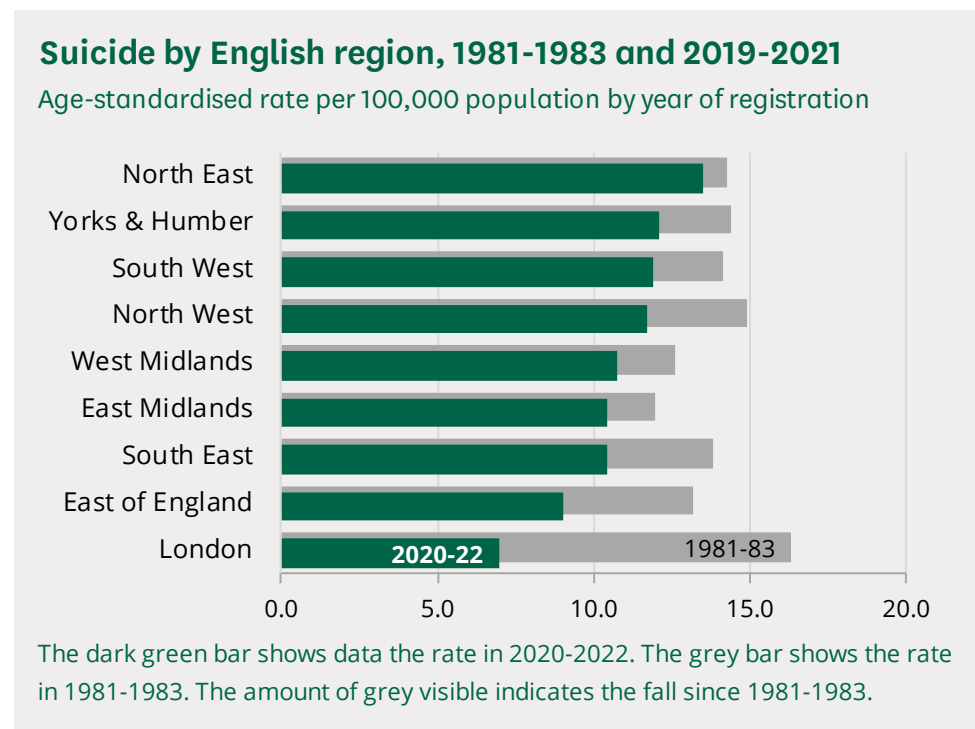
In the three years from 2020 to 2022, the suicide rate was higher in the North East and Yorkshire and The Humber regions than other parts of England. London had the lowest rate.

The suicide rate has fallen in all regions since 1981-1983, but the fall has been larger in some regions than others, most notably London.

The chart below shows the rate in 2020 to 2022 (green bar) overlaid with 1981 to 1983 data (grey bar). This means that the amount of the grey bar visible at the end of the green bar indicates the size of the fall since 1981.

For example, in the North East the rate was 14.3 per 100,000 in 1981-83 and was 13.5 in 2020-22 – a fall of 5%, so only a small area of grey is visible. In London the rate fell from 16.3 in 1981-83 to 7.0 in 2020-21 – a fall of 57% – so a large proportion of the grey bar is visible.

These charts again show the age-standardised mortality rate, which accounts for differences in the size and age structure of the population between areas, and so provide the most helpful way to make comparisons.



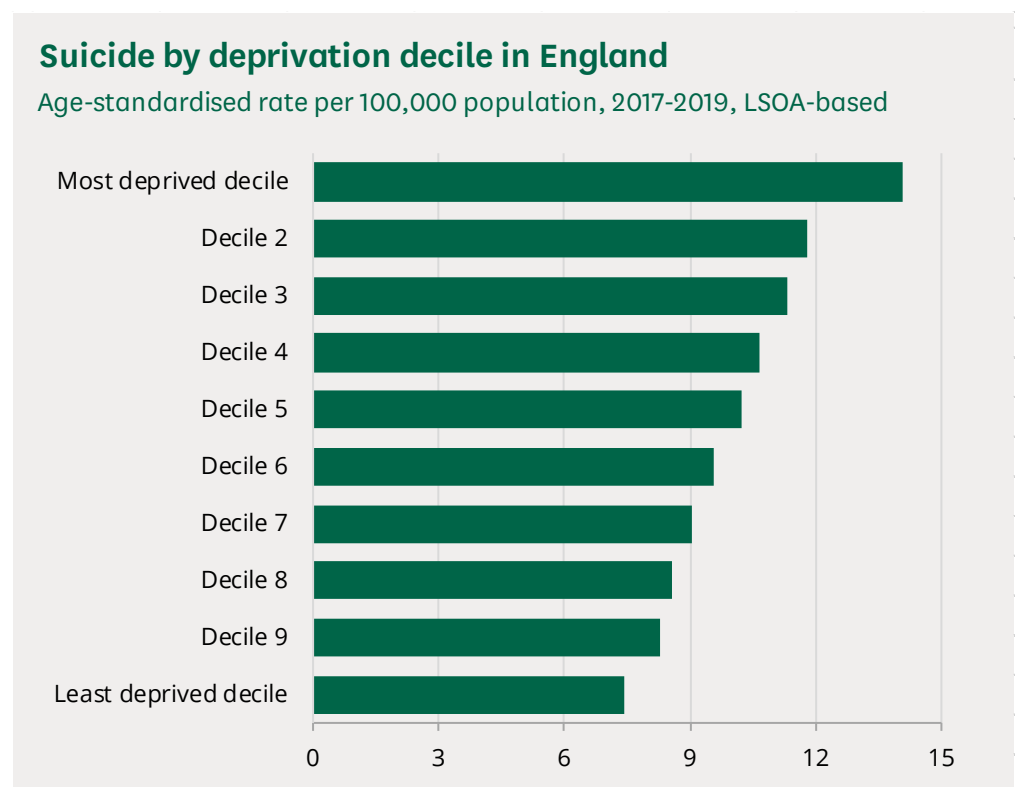
Source: ONS, [Suicides in England and Wales](#) tables, Table 4

Data on suicide by local authority is [available from ONS](#).

6 Deprivation

People living in the most deprived areas of England have a higher risk of suicide than those living in the least deprived areas. The suicide rate in the most deprived 10% of areas in England in 2017-2019 was 14.1 per 100,000, which is almost double the rate of 7.4 in the least deprived decile.²

The chart below shows the suicide rate broken down by deprivation in England, with areas split up into ten equal-sized parts ('deciles') based on the level of deprivation. You can find out more about what deprivation means and how it is measured in the Government's [Indices of Deprivation](#) publication.



Source: OHID, [Public Health Profiles](#)

In Scotland in 2021, the suicide rate was 2.6 times higher in the most deprived 20% of areas compared with the least deprived 20% of areas.³

² Note that this analysis, by LSOA deprivation decile, has not been updated for newer data than 2017-2019.

³ NRS, [Probable Suicides](#) tables, 5 September 2023, Table 5

7

Registrations and occurrences

As noted in the introduction, data on suicides is usually published based on the date of registration and not the date of occurrence, and it is at registration that the cause of death is finalised. Because registration takes several months on average, looking at the number of deaths registered in a particular year only gives a partial picture of the number of deaths occurring in that year.

Registration delays have increased in recent years. In England, the median delay between death and registration for suicides was 166 days for deaths registered in in 2019, 165 in 2020, 180 in 2021, and 195 days in 2022. In Wales the median delay was 165 days in 2019, 214 days in 2020, 291 days in 2021, and 309 days in 2022.

In England in 2022, one quarter of suicides were registered more than 309 days after they occurred. In Wales, one quarter of suicides were registered more than 437 days after they occurred.⁴

⁴ ONS, [Suicides in England and Wales](#) tables, Table 11

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