

Suicide is a major, traumatic issue for society, causing premature loss of life as well as the devastating impact on families, friends and wider social and community networks. It is often the end point of a complex history of events and risk factors, and there are ways in which individuals, communities, services and wider society can help prevent suicides. Torbay has had significantly higher levels of suicides in the population for a number of years making it a serious local issue.

### Why is this important?



Suicide is a tragic outcome for the person and all those around them. In Torbay, it is the leading cause of death of 15-34 year olds.

### What is the local context?



Torbay has had significantly higher suicide rates than the England average from 2014-16 onwards. This equates to around 20 people a year.

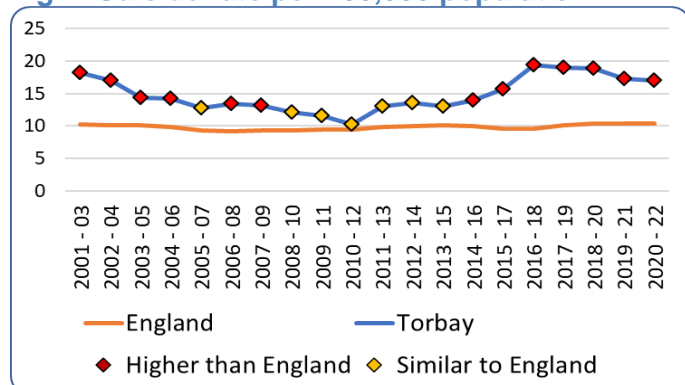
### What should we do?



Work to reduce the stigma of mental health, build support networks, reduce social isolation, and raise awareness of support services.

Suicide is defined here as all deaths where the underlying cause of death was recorded as intentional self-harm (people aged 10+) or injury/poisoning of undetermined intent (people aged 15+). This counts people by their area of residence not by the location where they died. Deaths are recorded by year of registration- this may be later than the year of death as deaths are only registered after an inquest has been concluded. Please note that 2022 suicide numbers are provisional.

**Fig 1: Suicide rate per 100,000 population**

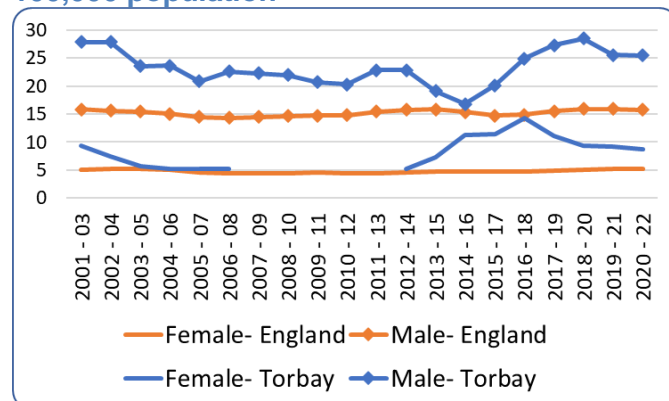


Source: Office of Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID)- [Public health profiles](#), Primary Care Mortality Database (PCMD), Office for National Statistics (ONS)- [suicides by quarter](#), ONS population estimates and projections, age standardised

Historically Torbay has had high suicide rates (Fig 1) although they decreased to almost England level in 2010-12 (3 years combined). The rate then increased and for the last 7 periods Torbay has again had statistically significantly higher rates than England. Torbay's rate is now on a gradual decline after the peak of 2016-18 although still far higher than the England average.

Men are far more likely to die by suicide than women which has consistently been the case (Fig 2). Torbay has much higher rates of both male and female suicides than England. In the middle of the last decade there was a momentary sharp increase in female suicides in Torbay and a reduction in male suicides. Following this, however, male suicides increased again and females decreased back down, remaining this way with an average of around 15 male and 6 female suicides per year for the last 6 years.

**Fig 2: Male and female suicide rates per 100,000 population**



Source: OHID- [Public health profiles](#), PCMD, ONS- [suicides by quarter](#), ONS population estimates/projections, age standardised

In England and Wales there is no evidence of any increase in suicide rates due to the Covid pandemic, unlike what had been expected. There were lower numbers registered in 2020 likely due to a decrease in male suicides at the beginning of the pandemic as well as disruption to inquests. In 2021 there was an increase in registrations due to the backlog. Rates in 2021 are consistent with those before Covid in 2018 and 2019. ([ONS](#))

Over the 13 years from 2010–2022 there were 229 suicides of Torbay residents (Fig 3) with 183 classed as intentional self-harm and 46 as poisoning/injury of undetermined intent. Around 3 out of 4 of the deaths were in males. Suicide numbers have risen since 2010 and there have now been around 20 suicides registered per annum for a number of years.

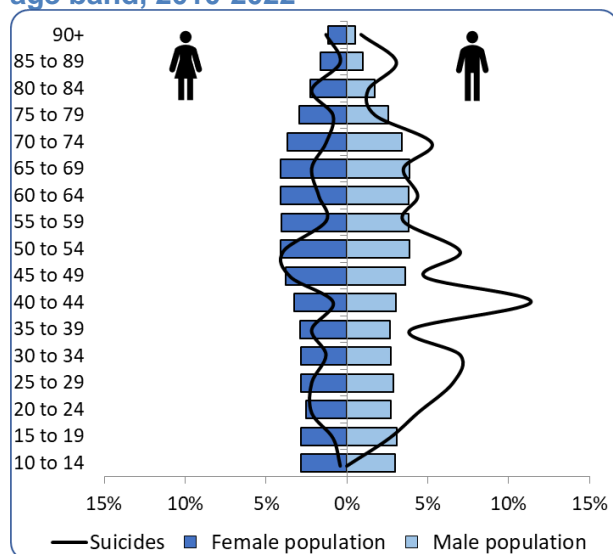
**Fig 3: Suicides, Torbay residents, 2010-2022**

Underlying cause	Males	Females	Total
<b>Intentional self harm</b>	126	57	<b>183</b>
<b>Undetermined intent</b>	37	9	<b>46</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>229</b>

Source: PCMD

Fig 4 shows suicides of Torbay residents compared to the population over the 13 years for males and females in each age band. Male suicides have a higher peak in the 40-44 year age band (26 suicides) followed by those aged 50-54, 30-34 and 25-29- each around 16 suicides. In England the highest numbers of male suicides for this period are in the 40-54 year age bands (ONS). Torbay female suicides are fewer and peak in 45-54 year olds- 17 suicides in the 2 age bands combined. This follows the national trend of higher numbers in these age groups for females.

**Fig 4: Suicides, Torbay residents by sex and age band, 2010-2022**

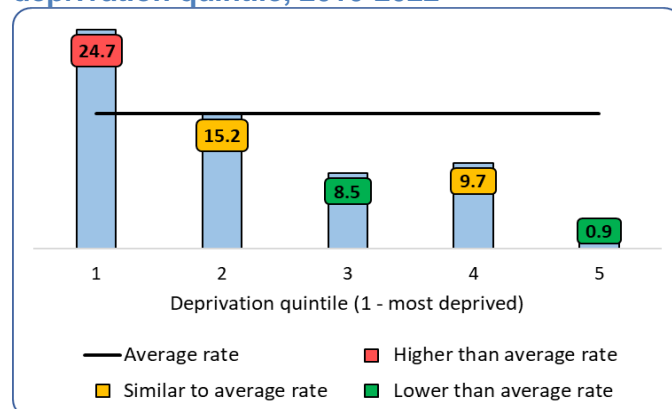


Source: PCMD, ONS population estimates and projections

The majority of suicides in the UK are in men. Research suggests men may be less likely than women to disclose or ask for help for suicidal thoughts or behaviours due to social expectations placed upon them (Samaritans, 2021). Middle aged men have consistently had the highest risk of suicide of any age group, particularly those on low incomes and living in deprived areas, with research showing risk increased by factors such as unemployment, relationship breakdown and not having the same sort of social networks as the majority of women have (Samaritans, 2020).

Research shows socioeconomic disadvantage including low income, unmanageable debt and poor housing are factors increasing people’s risk of suicidal behaviour (Samaritans, 2017). In Torbay, suicide rates are highest in the areas with the most deprivation (Fig 5). Quintile 1 is the suicide rate of residents of the most deprived areas, with a rate which is significantly higher than the other quintiles and the average rate. Quintile 5 is the least deprived, with a rate significantly lower than the average. Quintiles 2 and 4 are not statistically different to the average.

**Fig 5: Suicide rates, Torbay residents by deprivation quintile, 2010-2022**



Source: PCMD, Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019, ONS population estimates, age standardised

In the UK, the suicide rate during pregnancy and up to 6 weeks after was significantly higher in 2020 than in 2017-19. In 2018-20 suicide remains the leading direct (consequence of a disorder specific to pregnancy) cause of death 6 weeks to a year after pregnancy. (MBRRACE-UK, 2022)

Some findings of a 2023 ONS analysis of suicide rates across sociodemographic groups in adults in England and Wales, 2011-2021, using 2011 census data are:

- Disability- much higher rates in disabled people compared to the non-disabled
- Ethnicity- suicide rates highest in White and Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups
- Partnership status- highest rates in single people and lowest in those in a partnership
- Religion- higher in Other and Buddhist groups but generally lower with religious affiliation
- Socioeconomic status- higher in those who had never worked/long term unemployed followed by routine/semi-routine occupations

Locally, the [Torbay Suicide and Self-harm Prevention Plan 2022-23](#) details priorities for action to reduce suicide and self-harm in Torbay. The [Devon-wide Suicide Prevention Strategic Statement](#) is an overview of how partners are committed to work together to reduce suicides.

**References:**

MBRRACE-UK: [Saving Lives, Improving Mothers' Care](#), 2022

ONS: [Sociodemographic inequalities in suicides in England and Wales: 2011 to 2021](#), 2023

Samaritans:

- [Research Briefing: Gender and suicide](#), 2021
- [Out of sight, out of mind: Why less-well off, middle-aged men don't get the support they need](#), 2020
- [Dying from inequality, Summary report](#), 2017

References/links to data used are throughout the profile