

Suicide risk factors mapped in Swedish national study

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The study, a collaboration between Lund University in Sweden and Stanford University, showed that the rate of suicide among men is almost three times that of women. Being young, single and having a low level of education were stronger risk factors for suicide among men, while mental illness was a stronger risk factor among women. Unemployment was the strongest social risk factor among women, whereas being single was the strongest among men.

Because the study covered a range of different diseases in both in-patient and out-patient care as well as [social factors](#), the researchers gained insight into which factors are particularly important to bear in mind when assessing the risk of suicide.

"Better strategies are needed for collaboration between different disciplines and wider society in order to reduce the risk of suicide for individuals who suffer from, for example, depression, anxiety, COPD, asthma and certain social [risk factors](#)", says principal investigator Professor Jan Sundquist.

Of those who committed suicide, 29.5% of women and 21.7% of men had visited a doctor in the two weeks prior to their suicide, and 57.1% of women and 44.9% of men had visited a doctor within the 13 weeks prior to their suicide.

"This shows that many had contact with the health service a relatively short time before committing suicide. The results have clinical

significance for those working in both primary care and other out-patient and in-[patient care](#), including psychiatry. Besides the health service, social support services may need to be involved in the work to reduce the number of suicides in society", concludes Jan Sundquist.

Results:

Depression (32-fold risk for suicide), anxiety (15-fold risk), COPD (3.05-fold risk), asthma (2.25-fold risk), stroke (1.67-fold risk) and cancer (1.72-fold risk). Those who have poor social networks are also at higher risk of suicide (e.g. divorced 2.25-fold risk).

The researchers used the Swedish population and health register and were therefore able to follow over seven million adults between 2001 and 2008. Of these, 8 721 committed suicide.

More information: Crump, C. et al. Sociodemographic, psychiatric and somatic risk factors for suicide: a Swedish national cohort study. *Psychological Medicine* FirstView Article / May 2013, pp. 1–11. [DOI: 10.1017/S0033291713000810](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0033291713000810), Published online: 23 April 2013

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