

Why do more men than women commit suicide?

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Credit: George Hodan/public domain

Why do more men die when they attempt suicide than women? The answer could lie in four traits, finds scientists.

There are over 6,000 British lives lost to suicide each year, and nearly 75 per cent of those are male. However, research has found women are more likely to suffer from depression, and to attempt to take their own

life.

Scientists wanted to know why men's attempts at suicide were more likely to be fatal in a study published in the open-access journal *Frontiers in Psychiatry*.

Although men tend to choose more lethal methods than women do. It was found that even when men and women try to kill themselves using the same method, men are still more likely to die.

Prof. Gopikrishna Deshpande and his team from Auburn University in USA found there are four traits defined as "the acquired capability for suicide" which men are more likely to have than women.

The traits are fearlessness of death, [pain tolerance](#), emotional stoicism and sensation seeking. People experiencing a desire to commit suicide will not do so without first losing their fear of dying and developing the necessary pain tolerance to endure making a lethal attempt.

There is also a level of emotional stoicism that is needed to go through with a lethal act. Finally, some individuals, as a means of release, will actively pursue the sensations of pain that are related to suicidal action.

However, despite many explanations as to why men are more likely than women to exhibit these traits, it is up for debate whether these characteristics are innate or formed through life experience.

Deshpande believes that, if the specific brain networks that have been highlighted by this study are confirmed as being involved in suicidal action, then perhaps, "in the distant future techniques such as [deep brain stimulation](#), transcranial magnetic and electrical stimulation and focused ultrasound could be used to make individuals less suicidal."

They also noted that, in men, the networks involved motor regions which are more associated with action, while the networks in [women](#) were dominated by brain regions which determine the emotional state of a person.

Prof. Deshpande said: "this may support the fact that suicidal desire generally leads to decisive fatal action in males while in females, it manifests as depression, ideation and generally non-fatal actions."

More information: Gopikrishna Deshpande et al. A Neural Basis for the Acquired Capability for Suicide, *Frontiers in Psychiatry* (2016). DOI: [10.3389/fpsy.2016.00125](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2016.00125)

Provided by Frontiers

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