

Increased risk of suicide during university studies

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Students in tertiary education run double the risk of suicide compared with those who have previously been enrolled in university studies, according to a new study from Karolinska Institutet published in the online journal *BMJ Open*.

The registry study included everyone living in Sweden from the ages of 18 to 39 between the years 1993 and 2011 (approximately five million individuals). Given that the risk of [suicide](#) is known to be lower in [people](#) with an academic qualification than those without, the researchers decided to focus on the comparison between people in [higher education](#) and former students in order to ascertain the effect of the period of studies itself.

It was found that people currently in [education](#) were over twice as likely to commit suicide as those who had previously studied at university, even after controlling for factors such as age and time period.

What lies behind is not known

"So it seems as if it's while studying that people run a higher risk of suicide," says Christine Takami-Lageborn, medical student and prospective doctoral student at Karolinska Institutet's Department of Clinical Neuroscience. "As far as we know, there are no previous national studies covering all suicides amongst students, in Sweden or elsewhere."

Precisely what lies behind this higher risk is not known. For example, the researchers have not examined if there is a difference between study programmes or whether students are more stressed or susceptible to [mental health problems](#) than other people.

Higher risk of dying regardless of cause

"Our main point is that suicide is preventable and that students are a readily accessible group, reachable through facilities like the [student welfare service](#), which is an important resource," says Ms Takami-Lageborn. "The study indicates the importance of identifying students in the risk zone, which should be possible to do."

The study also shows that students run a higher risk of fatal accident and of dying regardless of cause than people who have completed their academic studies.

More information: Christine Takami Lageborn et al. Ongoing university studies and the risk of suicide: a register-based nationwide cohort study of 5 million young and middle-aged individuals in Sweden, 1993–2011, *BMJ Open* (2017). [DOI: 10.1136/bmjopen-2016-014264](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2016-014264)

Provided by Karolinska Institutet

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