

Article

# Estimating suicide among higher education students, England and Wales: Experimental Statistics: 2017 to 2020

Estimates of suicides among higher education students by sex, age and ethnicity between the academic year ending 2017 and the academic year ending 2020. Based on mortality records linked to Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) student records, Experimental Statistics.

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# 1 . Main points

- The suicide rate for higher education students in the academic year ending 2020 in England and Wales was 3.0 deaths per 100,000 students (64 suicide deaths); this is the lowest rate observed over the last four years, although the small numbers per year make it difficult to identify statistically significant differences.
- Between the academic year ending 2017 and the academic year ending 2020, the male suicide rate for higher education students was statistically significantly higher (5.6 deaths per 100,000 students; 202 suicide deaths) compared with female students at 2.5 deaths per 100,000 students (117 suicide deaths); this is in line with the trend seen in the general population where suicide rates are higher among males.
- Between the academic year ending 2017 and the academic year ending 2020, higher education students in England and Wales had a significantly lower suicide rate compared with the general population of similar ages.
- When compared with the general population, the suicide rate for higher education students among those aged 20 years and under and those aged 21 to 24 years showed the biggest difference, with the rate in the general population being 2.7 times higher than that in students.
- Between the academic year ending 2017 and the academic year ending 2020, first year undergraduate males had a significantly higher suicide rate at 7.8 deaths per 100,000 students compared with those studying in other years (4.3 deaths per 100,000).

The statistics in this analysis focus on higher education students only. [Ad-hoc ONS estimates](#) from death registrations data without any linkage to Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) cover other students as well, for example, those in further education. We advise caution when comparing estimates.

If you are a journalist covering a suicide-related issue, please consider following [Samaritans' media guidelines on the reporting of suicide](#) and [their specific guidance for reporting on youth suicides](#) because of the potentially damaging consequences of irresponsible reporting. In particular, the guidelines advise on terminology and include links to sources of support for anyone affected by the themes in the article.

If you are struggling to cope, please call Samaritans for free on 116 123 (UK and ROI) or contact other sources of support, such as those listed on the [NHS Help for suicidal thoughts webpages](#). Support is available round the clock, every single day of the year, providing a safe place for anyone struggling to cope, whoever they are, however they feel, whatever life has done to them.

## Statistician's comment

"Today's data show that the suicide rate among higher education students have decreased over the last four years (academic years ending 2017 to 2020). However, low numbers of suicides per year make it difficult to identify significant differences.

"While higher education students have lower rates of suicides compared with the general population of similar ages, every suicide is a tragedy for those involved.

"This analysis aims to provide insight and help those who develop suicide prevention policies and initiatives among higher education students."

Julie Stanborough, Health Analysis and Life Events, Office for National Statistics

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## 2 . Overview

This article presents Experimental Statistics on suicides among higher education students in England and Wales between the academic year ending 2017 and the academic year ending 2020 (these refer to the 12 months ending July 2017 and the 12 months ending July 2020), using information from individual [Higher Education Statistics Agency \(HESA\)](#) student records linked to information from the death certificate. [Experimental Statistics](#) are those which are still in the testing phase; strengths and limitations are described in [Section 8](#).

The article updates our [previous suicide among higher education students article](#), looking at characteristics of student suicides to help monitoring of suicide prevention in higher education, based on the best available linked data.

We use the National Statistics definition of suicide in this article; see the [Glossary](#) for more information. Detailed information on the student suicide definition can be found in our [previous suicide among higher education students article](#). For example, the analysis does not include those studying in further education (FE), such as colleges and sixth form schools. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) performed the linkage for all suicides in those aged 17 years and over.

HESA collects, processes and publishes data about Higher Education (HE) in the UK. All HESA records are collected on the basis of the HESA reporting period. The reporting period is from 1 August to 31 July, for example, the academic year ending 2020, student record was collected in respect of the activity that took place between 1 August 2019 and 31 July 2020. See information on how the linkage was produced in [section 8](#).

Figures for student suicide are based on the date on which the death occurred. Because of late registration of deaths, figures for all HESA years are subject to change. This is particularly the case for the latest period (2019 /20) as it is based on deaths registered up to 31 December 2020. Estimates for this period should be interpreted with caution.

### **3 . Suicides among higher education students**

Linkage with Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA) data identified 319 students who died by suicide between the academic year ending 2017 and the academic year ending 2020, equivalent to a rate of 3.9 deaths per 100,000 students. Of these, 202 (63.3%) were males and 117 (36.7%) were females. Over the period, the median age at death has been 22 years, which is mostly consistent over time except for the academic year ending 2020 when the median age at death was 27 years.

There were 64 suicides among higher education (HE) students in the most recent period (the academic year ending 2020), which is equivalent to a rate of 3.0 deaths per 100,000 students. This is the lowest rate seen over the last four years, although the small numbers per year make it difficult to identify statistically significant differences (Figure 1).

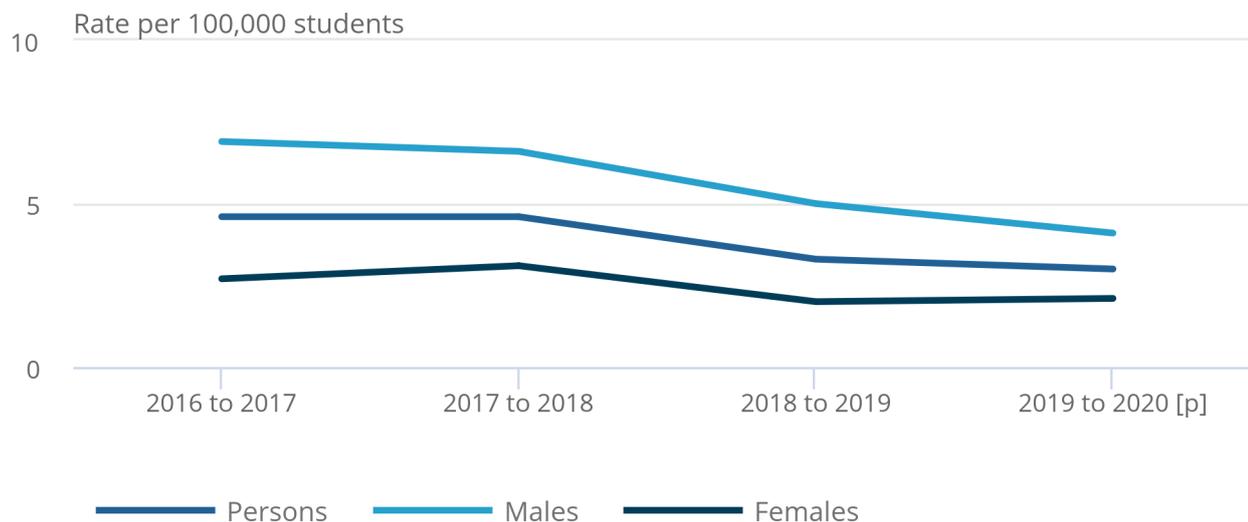
The Office for National Statistics (ONS) only knows about a death once it has been registered. For deaths caused by suicide, this generally means that around half of the deaths that occurred each year would be registered in the next year or later. The lower number of suicides among higher education students in the academic year ending 2020 could be genuine or explained by delays to coroner inquests, because of the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19). Figures in the academic year ending 2020 are provisional, to be interpreted with caution, and based on deaths registered up to 31 December 2020.

**Figure 1: The student suicide rate for persons in the academic year ending 2020 was the lowest seen over the last four years**

Rate by sex in England and Wales, between the academic year ending 2017 and the academic year ending 2020

Figure 1: The student suicide rate for persons in the academic year ending 2020 was the lowest seen over the last four years

Rate by sex in England and Wales, between the academic year ending 2017 and the academic year ending 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Estimating suicide among higher education students, England and Wales

Notes:

1. The National Statistics definition of suicide is given in [Section 7: Glossary](#).
2. Figures for the academic year ending 2020 are provisional. Deaths that occurred in 2020 may not be registered in 2020 because of the length of time it takes to complete a coroner's inquest, it can take months or even years for a suicide to be registered. More details can be found in [Section 8: Data sources and quality](#).
3. Figures are for persons aged 17 years and over.
4. The HESA academic year begins on 1 August and ends on the following 31 July.
5. Crude rates per 100,000 students registered with HESA.

## Higher education student suicide rate by sex and the type of study

Annual numbers of linked deaths are small, so we have aggregated these years to create a four-year combined rate to enhance robustness of the estimates.

The rate for suicide in female students is significantly lower than the rate in males (Figure 2). This is observed when looking at overall student suicides as well as looking at those studying full-time, those doing an undergraduate degree, and those in their first year or other years.

The rate for males was 5.6 deaths per 100,000 students (202 suicide deaths). Looking between categories, for example, first year undergraduate males had a statistically significantly higher suicide rate at 7.8 deaths per 100,000 students compared with those in other years (4.3 deaths per 100,000 students).

For females, the rate of suicide was 2.5 deaths per 100,000 students (117 suicide deaths), less than half that of males. Looking between categories, there were no significant differences for females.

### Figure 2: The overall student suicide rate was statistically significantly lower in females than males

Rate per 100,000 higher education students by sex (part- or full-time; undergraduate or postgraduate status and first year or other years), England and Wales, between the academic year ending 2017 and the academic year ending 2020 combined

#### Notes:

1. The National Statistics definition of suicide is given in [Section 7: Glossary](#).
2. Figures for the academic year ending 2020 are provisional. Deaths that occurred in 2020 may not be registered in 2020 because of the length of time it takes to complete a coroner's inquest, it can take months or even years for a suicide to be registered. More details can be found in [Section 8: Data sources and quality](#).
3. Figures are for persons aged 17 years and over.
4. The HESA academic year begins on 1 August and ends on the following 31 July.
5. Information on degree type, part- or full-time and year of study are based on information provided in the student record.
6. Crude rates per 100,000 students registered with HESA.

[Download the data](#)

## Higher education student suicide rate by age groups and the type of study

The overall student suicide rate among those aged 20 years and under (3.1 deaths per 100,000 students) is lower than the other age groups between the academic year ending 2017 and the academic year ending 2020. However, this rate was only statistically significantly lower than those aged 30 years and over. As with the general population, the rate of suicide increased as age increased. Those aged 21 to 24 years had a rate of 3.6 deaths per 100,000 students, followed by 4.6 in those aged 25 to 29 years. Those aged 30 years and over had the highest rate of suicide with 5.5 deaths per 100,000 students.

When comparing between categories within age groups, there are some significant differences. For those aged 20 years and under, and 21 to 24 years, the rate of death by suicide in those in their first year was statistically significantly higher than those not in their first years (other years). In those studying full time, students aged under 20 years had a statistically significantly lower suicide rate than those aged 30 years and over.

### Figure 3: The overall student suicide rate was lower in those aged 20 years and under than the other age groups

Rate per 100,000 higher education students by age groups (part- or full-time; undergraduate or postgraduate status and year of study), England and Wales, between the academic year ending 2017 and the academic year ending 2020 combined

**Notes:**

1. The National Statistics definition of suicide is given in [Section 7: Glossary](#).
2. Figures for the academic year ending 2020 are provisional. Deaths that occurred in 2020 may not be registered in 2020 because of the length of time it takes to complete a coroner's inquest, it can take months or even years for a suicide to be registered. More details can be found in [Section 8: Data sources and quality](#).
3. Figures are for persons aged 17 years and over.
4. The HESA academic year begins on 1 August and ends on the following 31 July.
5. Information on degree type, part- or full-time and year of study are based on information provided in the student record.
6. Crude rates per 100,000 students registered with HESA.
7. The number of suicides in individuals aged 20 years and under studying postgraduate degrees, and part-time were too small to create a rate.

[Download the data](#)

## Higher education student suicide rate by ethnic groups

The difference in suicide rates between ethnicities for the academic year ending 2017 to academic year ending 2020 is shown in Figure 4. The number of suicides was small in the "Black", "Asian" and "Other" ethnic groups, with 16, 22 and 18 suicides, respectively. When broken down by part-time/full-time, level of study or year of study, the number of suicides is smaller again, as reflected in the wide confidence intervals surrounding the rate of death. For this reason, caution should be used in the interpretation of these figures. Number of deaths and populations in ethnic minorities are too small to detect any significant differences.

The overall suicide rate was higher in the "White" ethnic group at 4.5 suicide deaths per 100,000 students than the three other groups. This is not statistically significant because the relatively smaller number of deaths resulted in more statistical uncertainty.

### Figure 4: The overall student suicide rate was higher in the White ethnic group

Rate per 100,000 higher education students by ethnicity, England and Wales, between academic year ending 2017 and academic year ending 2020 combined

**Notes:**

1. The National Statistics definition of suicide is given in [Section 7: Glossary](#).
2. Figures for the academic year ending 2020 are provisional. Deaths that occurred in 2020 may not be registered in 2020 because of the length of time it takes to complete a coroner's inquest, it can take months or even years for a suicide to be registered. More details can be found in [Section 8: Data sources and quality](#).
3. Figures are for persons aged 17 years and over.
4. The HESA academic year begins on 1 August and ends on the following 31 July.
5. Information on degree type, part- or full-time and year of study are based on information provided in the student record.
6. Crude rates per 100,000 students registered with HESA.
7. Other (including mixed) includes mixed - White and Black Caribbean, mixed - White and Black African, mixed - White and Asian, other mixed background, Arab, plus other ethnic background.
8. The number of suicides in individuals of Asian and Other ethnicity studying part-time, and Black and Other ethnic groups studying postgraduate degrees were too small to create a rate.

[Download the data](#)

## 4 . Comparison of suicides among higher education students and general population

The overall suicide rate in the general population (which includes higher education (HE) students) is statistically significantly higher (12.5 deaths per 100,000 general population) compared with students (3.9 deaths per 100,000 students) for the academic year ending 2017 to academic year ending 2020.

Looking at sex, the rate in males shows the greatest difference, with a rate of 5.6 in the student population compared with 19.0 in the general population. In females, the rate in students (2.5 per 100,000 students) was less than half that of the general population (6.0 per 100,000 general population) (Figure 5).

### **Figure 5: The suicide rate in the general population is statistically significantly higher than the rate among higher education students**

**Rate by sex in the general population (including higher education students) and in higher education students, England and Wales, between the academic year ending 2017 and the academic year ending 2020 combined**

**Notes:**

1. The National Statistics definition of suicide is given in [Section 7: Glossary](#).
2. Figures for the academic year ending 2020 are provisional. Deaths that occurred in 2020 may not be registered in 2020 because of the length of time it takes to complete a coroner's inquest, it can take months or even years for a suicide to be registered. More details can be found in [Section 8: Data sources and quality](#).
3. Figures are for persons aged 17 years and over.
4. For the general population, 30 years and over consists of those aged 30 to 64 years.
5. Crude rates per 100,000 students registered with HESA/General population.

#### [Download the data](#)

We compared the number of suicides in HE students with all suicides in the general population (including HE students) by age group. For the academic year ending 2017 to the academic year ending 2020, HE student suicides made up approximately:

- 12% of all suicides in those aged 20 years and under
- 7% in those aged 21 to 24 years
- 2% in those aged 25 to 29 years
- 1% in those aged 30 years and over

For each age group, the suicide rate is significantly higher in the general population. The rate in those aged 20 years and under and 21 to 24 years shows the biggest difference, with the suicide rate in the general population being 2.7 times higher than that in students.

### **Figure 6: The suicide rate in the general population across all age groups is statistically significantly higher than the rate among higher education students**

**Rate by age group in the general population (including higher education students) and in higher education students, England and Wales, between the academic year ending 2017 and the academic year ending 2020 combined**

#### **Notes:**

1. The National Statistics definition of suicide is given in [Section 7: Glossary](#).
2. Figures for the academic year ending 2020 are provisional. Deaths that occurred in 2020 may not be registered in 2020 because of the length of time it takes to complete a coroner's inquest, it can take months or even years for a suicide to be registered. More details can be found in [Section 8: Data sources and quality](#).
3. Figures are for persons aged 17 years and over.
4. For the general population, 30 years and over consists of those aged 30 to 64 years.
5. Crude rates per 100,000 students registered with HESA/General population.

#### [Download the data](#)

The student suicide rate for those aged 17 to 24 years was 1.7 per 100,000 students (25 suicide deaths) for the academic year ending 2020. This was statistically significantly lower than the rates seen in academic years ending 2017 and 2018. This is in line with the trend seen in the general population where the [suicide rate has declined among young people in recent years](#).



## 5 . Comparison of HESA-linked records with ONS previous estimates on student suicides

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has previously produced estimates on the [number of student suicides in England and Wales](#) based on the occupation recorded on the death certificate by the informant. However, these statistics are limited as they do not distinguish the type of student, those at university against those in further education (FE), for example, colleges and sixth form schools.

Secondly, the estimates rely on the information provided by the informant on the death certificate, which may be unreliable. For example, it would likely under-report part-time students if they had another occupation, or over-report if the estimates include past students that are yet to enter the work force.

Furthermore, not all death records include occupation. The ONS produced a report on [suicide by occupation](#), which stated that between 2011 and 2015 there were 18,998 deaths recorded as suicide, of which 69.6% had information on the deceased's occupation; of the remaining 30.4%, the majority contained no information on the deceased's occupation because of this not being provided at the time of death registration.

We compared the number of suicides that had a student code taken from the death certificate (ONS mortality estimates) and the number of suicides that linked to a HE record (HESA-linked records as used in this analysis). We would expect the number of suicides to be higher in the ONS mortality estimate as this encompassed all students, whereas the HESA-linked analysis is restricted to students studying in HE and for a HE qualification.

On average, the number of suicides identified from HESA-linked records is 56% lower than the ONS estimates from death registrations only (Figure 7).

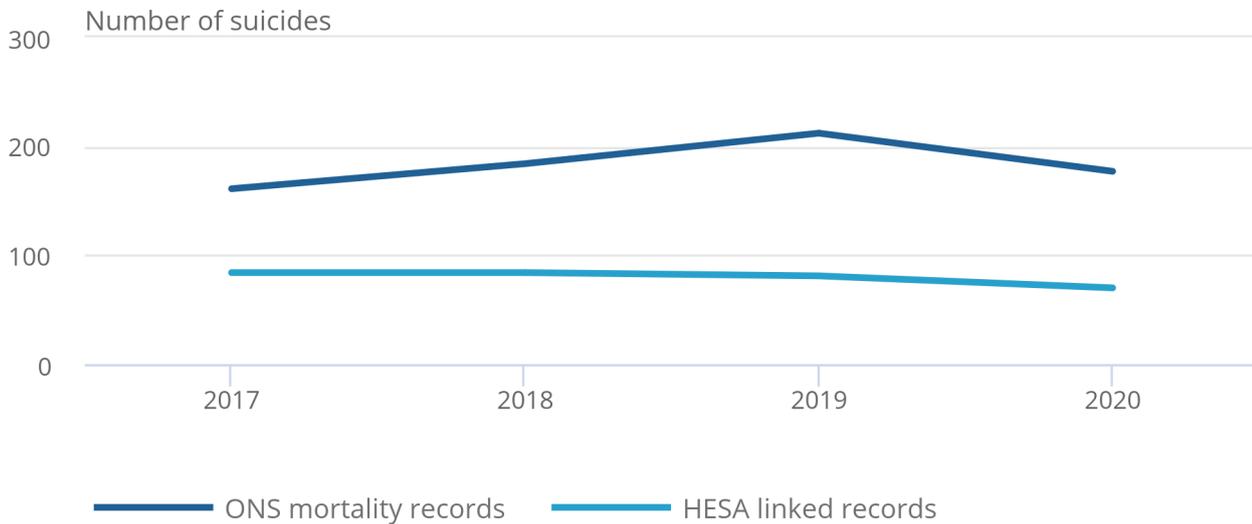
It is important to note that the analysis in this report is based on HE students. The ONS mortality estimate focuses on students whose death was registered in England and Wales but does not distinguish the type of student (for example, higher or further education), whereas the death records linked to HESA records only focuses on HE students whose death was registered in England and Wales.

## Figure 7: The number of suicides is higher based on ONS mortality estimates

Number of student suicides, deaths registered in England and Wales, 2017 to 2020

### Figure 7: The number of suicides is higher based on ONS mortality estimates

Number of student suicides, deaths registered in England and Wales, 2017 to 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Estimating suicide among higher education students, England and Wales

#### Notes:

1. The National Statistics definition of suicide is given in [Section 7: Glossary](#).
2. Figures are for persons aged 17 years and over.
3. Based on death registrations rather than death occurrences.

Table 1 shows that two-thirds (213 or 67%) of HESA records that linked to a suicide record had the occupation coded as a student; the occupations coded for the other 106 deaths are listed in Table 2.

There were 454 records that had an occupation coded as "student" on the death certificate that did not appear in the HESA linkage. This could be because of the fact they were studying in FE; such deaths would have been included in [ad-hoc ONS analyses of student suicide based on death registrations data only](#). They are included as part of Figure 7.

Table 1: Number of student suicides compared with Office for National Statistics suicide records, England and Wales, 2017 to 2020

	<b>Number of records</b>
<b>HESA record linked to a suicide record with a student occupation code</b>	213
<b>HESA record linked to a suicide record without a student occupation code</b>	106
<b>Total linked records</b>	319
<b>Suicide record with a student occupation code that did not link to a HESA record</b>	454
<b>Total suicide records (linked and unlinked)</b>	773

Source: Office for National Statistics – Estimating suicide among higher education students, England and Wales

The most common occupation stated on the death certificate was “students” (67% of records), followed by “occupation not stated” (6%) and “nurses” (3%). The occupations stated could be part of the deceased’s education – for example, they could have been a student nurse, or could have been working while studying, for example, medical practitioners studying for an MSc or PhD. There were 57 occupations (22% of the suicides) that individually contributed to less than 1% of the suicides; these have been grouped together.

Table 2: Occupation of the linked records as stated on the death certificate, England and Wales, 2017 to 2020

<b>Occupation stated on the death certificate</b>	<b>Number of student suicides</b>	<b>Percentage of student suicides</b>
<b>Students</b>	213	67%
<b>Occupation not stated</b>	20	6%
<b>Nurses</b>	8	3%
<b>Ncos and Other ranks</b>	4	1%
<b>Inadequately described occupations</b>	3	1%
<b>Other stated occupation (57 individual occupations)</b>	71	22%
<b>Total linked records</b>	319	100%

Source: Office for National Statistics – Estimating suicide among higher education students, England and Wales

Table 3 shows the percentage breakdown of the type of study and whether the record linked to a suicide with a student occupation code on the death certificate. For the HESA records that linked to a suicide record with an occupation code, 79% were full-time. When looking at records without an occupation code of “student” only 26% were full-time; the majority were part-time followed by dormant. Dormant refers to a student who takes a year out for HE for non-study related reasons and was not actively studying at any time during the reporting period.

Table 3: Number of student suicides compared with Office for National Statistics suicides by mode of study, England and Wales, 2017 to 2020

	ONS Student		ONS Not student	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
<b>HESA Students</b>	213		106	
<b>Mode of study</b>				
<b>Full-time</b>	168	79%	28	26%
<b>Part-time</b>	13	6%	46	43%
<b>Sandwich</b>	13	6%	2	2%
<b>Dormant</b>	16	8%	27	25%
<b>Writing-up</b>	3	1%	3	3%

Source: Office for National Statistics – Estimating suicide among higher education students, England and Wales

Linking to HESA records has helped us to identify all HE student suicides. Estimates based solely on occupation recorded on the death certificate are limited as they rely on information provided by the informant. This has affected the quality of occupation recorded as we estimate that around a third of the records (who are more likely to be part time or dormant) are not reported as students (Table 3).

## 6 . Estimating suicide among higher education students in England and Wales data

[Estimating suicide among higher education students, England and Wales: 2017 to 2020](#)

Dataset | Released 31 May 2022

Estimates of suicides among higher education students by sex, age and ethnicity. Analysis based on mortality records linked to Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Student records.

## 7 . Glossary

### Suicide

This release is based on the National Statistics definition of suicide for those aged 17 years and over; this includes deaths from intentional self-harm and deaths caused by injury or poisoning where the intent was undetermined. Further information on the definition can be found in the [Suicide rates in the UK QMI](#).

### Student suicide

For the purposes of this analysis, a student is defined as a person registered at a higher education (HE) provider in the UK (which reports to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)) and who follows a course that leads to the award of a qualification or HE provider credit. Student suicide is defined as those who died by suicide or an event of undetermined intent before or on the end date of their studies and where the death was registered in England and Wales (Office for National Statistics (ONS) did not have access to deaths registered in Scotland or Northern Ireland for this study). For those cases without a study end date, the end date of the HESA year was used as an estimate (31 July).

## HESA

The [Higher Education Statistics Agency \(HESA\)](#) collects, processes, and publishes data about HE in the UK. HESA only collect information for UK publicly-funded higher education institutions. For more information, please visit [HESA's definition webpage](#).

### Record specific detail

The student record includes all students registered at HE providers who follow courses that lead to the award of a HE qualification or provider credit (largely a bachelor's degree (BA/BSc/MB/BDS and so on), a master's degree (MA, MSc) or higher degree (PhD). The student record includes those who are (or were) actively following a course at some time during the HESA reporting period.

### Data collection periods

All HESA records are collected on the basis of the HESA reporting period. The reporting period is from 1 August to 31 July, for example, the academic year ending 2017 Student record was collected in respect of the activity that took place between 1 August 2016 and 31 July 2017.

[More information on HESA](#) can be found on their website.

### Ages included

The ONS performed the linkage for all suicides in those aged 17 years and over. Hence, comparisons with suicide rates in the general population have been made based on those aged 17 years and over.

### Crude suicide rate

Crude suicide rate is defined as total suicide deaths per 100,000 population, or:

(Total suicide deaths divided up Total population) multiplied by 100,000

### Statistical significance

The term "significant" refers to statistically significant changes or differences based on unrounded figures. Significance has been determined using the 95% [confidence intervals](#), where instances of non-overlapping confidence intervals between figures indicate the difference is unlikely to have arisen from random fluctuation.

## 8 . Data sources and quality

Statistics on mortality are derived from the information provided when deaths are certified and registered.

The release uses the National Statistics definition of suicide, which is consistently used by government departments, agencies and the devolved administrations across the UK.

More quality and methodology information on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the mortality data were created is available in the [Mortality statistics in England and Wales QMI](#), the [Suicide rates in the UK QMI](#) and the [User guide to mortality statistics](#).

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) was provided with annual files that contained individual Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) records from academic years ending 2017 to 2020 for the UK. This contained the records of any student studying in a higher education (HE) institute for a HE qualification. The data were processed securely and linkage was approved by the National Statistician's [Data Ethics Advisory Committee](#).

Duplicates (for example, the same student death appearing in each year they studied) were removed from the dataset so that each unique person only appeared once in the dataset.

The ONS extracted suicides for the registration period 2016 to 2019 and provisional suicides for 2020 registrations. The codes were extracted for all intentional self-harm and injury or poisoning of undetermined intent, which is the National Statistics definition of suicide.

There was no unique identifier available on both datasets for linkage. The variables available to be used as our linkage key were limited to names (first names and surnames, and middle names where available), date of birth, sex, postcodes and academic year/year of death.

More information on the linkage can be requested by emailing [health.data@ons.gov.uk](mailto:health.data@ons.gov.uk)

### Definition of "student"

The term "student" can often be interpreted to mean anyone engaged in study, from those in school, for example, studying for GCSEs, to those engaged in apprenticeships, further education or other forms of study. In this analysis, the term student does not include:

- those registered as studying wholly overseas and postdoctoral students
- overseas students who were not resident in England and Wales at the time of death
- those students registered with an institution covered by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)

Students registered with an institution covered by the ESFA includes:

- apprentices that are not linked to a HE provider
- those in further education colleges (except those studying a HE qualification in FE colleges in Wales in the academic year ending 2020)
- those in workplace learning, community learning, and education and training provision taken at general further education colleges, sixth form colleges, special colleges (agricultural and horticultural colleges, and art and design colleges) and specialist colleges
- students studying for a non-HE qualification (for example, GCSE or FE qualification)

Caution should therefore be exercised when comparing rates of student suicide contained within this report, which relate only to those in HE and as such represent a proportion of all students. Other studies may define "student" more broadly.

## Limitations

In England and Wales, all suicides are certified by a coroner following an inquest. The death cannot be registered until the inquest is completed, which can take months or possibly years and we are not notified that a death has occurred until it is registered. The only exception to this is when someone will be charged with a criminal offence in relation to a death. In this instance, the coroner must adjourn the inquest and they may carry out an "accelerated registration". The full details of these deaths are not recorded until the inquest is complete, but the majority are eventually coded as assaults and therefore would not be included in the suicides data.

In 2020, the median delay in registering a suicide in England was 165 days. In Wales it was 214 days with some deaths having a delay of over a year. For this reason, the incidences of suicide in the academic year ending 2020 are likely to be an under-estimate.

More information can be found in the Registration delays section of the [Suicide in the UK](#) report.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Professor David Gunnell and Professor Louis Appleby for their invaluable comments on this piece of work. In addition, we would like to thank Department for Education, Office for Students and Universities UK for their support and guidance.

## 9 . Related links

[Estimating suicide among higher education students, England and Wales: 2001/02 to 2016/17: Experimental Statistics](#)

Article | Released 25 June 2018

Estimates of suicides among higher education students by sex, age and ethnicity. Analysis based on mortality records linked to Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Student records.