



Ministry
of Defence

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Mr David Gee

24 May 2021

[request-751601-
e610a115@whatdotheyknow.com](mailto:request-751601-e610a115@whatdotheyknow.com)

Dear Mr Gee,

Thank you for your email of 28 April requesting the following information:

“Can you please tell me what the suicide rate is in the army for those aged under 18, relative to civilians of the same age?”

I'm aware of this information:

https://qbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fassets.publishing.service.gov.uk%2Fgovernment%2Fuploads%2Fsystem%2Fuploads%2Fattachment_data%2Ffile%2F972333%2F20210325_UK_AF_Suicide_National_Statistic_Accessible_Web_ready_2021_O.pdf&data=04%7C01%7Ccio-foi%40mod.gov.uk%7C1284aa34860f4212ee7908d90a4efb06%7Cbe7760ed5953484bae95d0a16dfa09e5%7C0%7C1%7C637552156599623190%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljojMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6IjEhaWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C3000&data=fmIHCJ5qEwWhWqmzPcWoY%2BnesxjSCWvn92tm8wnLyKI%3D&reserved=0

But the above only calculates a suicide rate for the 16-19 age group, and I am interested in the rate among 16 and 17 year olds, if known.”

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence, and I can confirm that all the information in scope of your request is held.

Between 1 January 2001 and 31 December 2020, there were six coroner confirmed suicides among UK regular army personnel aged under 18 (all of whom were male). This represents a rate of 11 per 100,000 personnel for the 20-year period.

For the 20-year period, the risk of suicide among UK regular army males aged under 18 was the same as the risk in males of the same age in the UK general population (SMR=189, 95% Confidence Interval = 69-411). A Standardised Mortality Ratio (SMR) where the 95% confidence interval encompasses 100 implies there is no statistically significant difference in rates when comparing the UK regular armed forces population with the UK general population.

Under Section 16 of the Act (Advice and Assistance) you may wish to note the following:

1. Defence Statistics Health compiles the Department's authoritative deaths database for all UK Armed Forces personnel who died whilst in Service going back to 1984. Information is compiled from several internal and external sources from which we release several internal analyses and external National Statistics Notices.
2. When providing statistics on suicides, Defence Statistics Health rely exclusively on the information provided by coroners in England and Wales and in Northern Ireland, and the Procurator Fiscal in Scotland. This ensures the Department's objectivity, as all accidental deaths and those resulting from violent action must be referred to these officials for investigation. For sake of brevity, these sources of information have been labelled collectively as "coroner's verdicts". There is an obligation for all accidental deaths, and those resulting from violent action, to be referred to these officials. Inquests are usually held within a few months of the death, but occasionally a few years may elapse, therefore some recent deaths may not have clearly defined causal information. In these cases, deaths are identified as waiting verdicts and are not included in this response.
3. The information presented includes coroner-confirmed suicides in line with the definition used by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in the publication of National Statistics. The National Statistics definition of suicide includes deaths given an underlying cause of intentional self-harm or an injury/poisoning of undetermined intent. In England and Wales, it has been customary to assume that most injuries and poisonings of undetermined intent are cases where the harm was self-inflicted, but there was insufficient evidence to prove that the deceased deliberately intended to kill themselves and thus given an open or narrative verdict by the coroner.
4. All deaths are coded to the International Classification of Diseases 10th edition (ICD-10) which is produced by the World Health Organisation (WHO). Information held in death certificates is analysed and assigned the appropriate ICD code to ensure that deaths included are only those which meet the National Statistics definition of Suicide and these may be a suicide, open verdict or narrative verdict conclusion from the Coroner. The ICD-10 codes are what define suicides and are: ICD-10 codes: X60-X84: intentional self harm; Y10-Y34d: injury or poisoning of undetermined intent; Y87.0 and Y87.2e: sequelae of intentional self harm, injury or poisoning of undetermined intent.
5. Figures are for regular personnel only.
6. Rates enable comparisons between groups and over time, taking account of the number of personnel in a group (personnel at risk) at a point in time. The number of events (i.e. deaths) is divided by the number of personnel at risk and multiplied by 100,000 to calculate the rate.
7. To make comparisons between suicide rates in the UK armed forces and the UK general population, an SMR is calculated which takes account of the different age structure in the two populations. The SMR is the ratio of the number of deaths observed in the armed forces to the number of deaths expected if the armed forces population had the same age specific rates as the UK general population in each year. An SMR over (or under) 100 indicates a higher (or lower) number of observed deaths than expected compared to the UK general population and represents whether the armed forces are at an increased or decreased risk of death compared to the UK population. An SMR of 100 implies there is no difference in rates when comparing the UK regular armed forces population with the UK population. An SMR where the 95% confidence interval encompasses 100 implies there is no statistically significant difference in rates when comparing the UK regular armed forces population with the UK general population.
8. For more information on calculating rates, SMRs and interpreting confidence intervals please visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/military-deaths-in-service-statistics-background-quality-reports>

If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact this office in the first instance.

If you wish to complain about the handling of your request, or the content of this response, you can request an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, Ground Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.gov.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review should be made within 40 working days of the date of this response.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may raise your complaint directly to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not normally investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website at <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely,

Personnel 2
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