

Police roles and response to suicide

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Police Roles

1. Operational
2. Assisting the public
3. Suicide prevention

Operational Role

- Investigative role
- One protocol on death investigations
- Investigations would seek the cause of death
 - The cause of a sudden death is natural.
 - The cause of a suicide is self inflicted.
 - The cause of a murder is induced death.

Operational Role

What is sought in a suicide investigation?

- Signs of planning
- Suicide note
- Seek information from family and friends
- To conclude that the person was alone and the death was self-inflicted

WHEN IN DOUBT, THINK MURDER

Operational Role

Legal

- Ascertain that no other person assisted in suicide
- Preservation of scene
- Magisterial Inquiry
- Forensic & medico-legal examinations

Practical

- Assist the family and survivors
- Obtain direct information
- Medical attention in cases of attempted suicide

Assisting the Public

- Protect life in critical and life-threatening situations
 - The use of firearms
 - Handling of knives or sharp objects
 - Negotiations in serious situations
- Evaluate risk of suicide in less dramatic situations
 - Domestic Violence
 - Threats of self-harm or harm to others
 - Alcohol or drug abuse may elevate risk

Assisting the Public

- Referrals to other professionals
 - Immediate medical attention after an attempt
 - Crisis Intervention Team for persons who threaten harm
 - Various professionals for suicide survivors
- Notification of death
 - Support distraught family and friends
 - Help family mobilise own support network
 - Provide information

Suicide Prevention

- Indirect role
 - The fight against illicit drugs
 - Controlling anti-social behaviour
 - Fight against usury and illegal gambling
 - Various crisis situations

Suicide Prevention

- The Gatekeepers of suicide
 - Recognize behavioural patterns and other warning signs that may indicate a risk of suicide or other emotional problems
 - Actively intervene to explore with the person the level of risk without increasing it
 - Ensure that those at risk of suicide or other problems are referred and receive the necessary service

Suicide Prevention

- Departmental support
 - Acknowledge police culture and its promotion of self reliance and counter it by providing training, clear policies and support
 - Promote the culture that assisting fellow officer to seek mental health assistance is akin to backing him or her on the street
 - Provide tailor made confidential mental health assistance for the police officers

Suicide Prevention

- An obligation to provide sound statistics

Consider that the police are

 - The front liners
 - The sole agency responsible to investigate all cases of completed suicide and a good percentage of attempted suicides
 - Entrusted by law and a respected authority

Suicide Prevention

- Providing Sound Statistics

Develop a standard data collection tool

 - Assists police officers in obtaining all the necessary data in one form
 - An investigative aid
 - Provide standard data which is necessary for suicide prevention programmes

Suicide Prevention

- Providing Sound Statistics

Demographics

History of mental illness

Significant life events

Suicidal behaviour and ideation

Local Statistics 2003 - 2017

313 males
87.2 %
20.9 deaths per year

46 females
12.8%
3.1 deaths per year

359 completed suicides
23.9 deaths per year
7:1 ratio

Local Statistics 2003 - 2017

338 in Malta
22.5 deaths per annum
5.7 deaths per 100,000

8 in Gozo & Comino
0.5 deaths per annum
1.7 deaths per 100,000

302 Maltese nationals

57 foreigners

Local Statistics 2003 - 2017

Southern Harbour
Pop: 80,927
Suicides: 76
Rate: 6.3

Western
Pop: 58,055
Suicides: 40
Rate: 4.6

Northern Harbour
Pop: 126,781
Suicides: 103
Rate: 5.4

Northern
Pop: 63,091
Suicides: 58
Rate: 6.2

South Eastern
Pop: 63,392
Suicides: 61
Rate: 6.4

Gozo & Comino
Pop: 31,551
Suicides: 8
Rate: 1.7

Local Statistics 2003 - 2017

	Males	Females	
14 - 21	14	5	5.4%
22 - 35	65	8	20.6%
36 - 45	72	10	23.2%
46 - 60	87	13	28.2%
61 - 75	49	5	15.3%
+75	23	3	7.3%

*Youngest 14 years old, Oldest 98 years old
*354 cases, 5 cases: No Available data

Local Statistics 2003 - 2017

Distribution of methods of death per gender

	Hanging	Firearm	Jumping	Substance	CO Poison	Drowning	Self-Stabbing	Others
Male	165	43	70	9	9	5	7	5
% within Gender	52.7%	13.7%	22.4%	2.9%	2.9%	1.6%	2.2%	1.6%
Female	15	2	21	2	0	3	2	1
% within Gender	32.6%	4.3%	45.7%	4.3%	0.0%	6.5%	4.3%	2.2%
Total	180	45	91	11	9	8	9	6
% within Total	50.1%	12.5%	25.3%	3.1%	2.5%	2.2%	2.5%	1.7%

Local Statistics 2003 - 2017

Places where deaths by suicide were recorded by gender

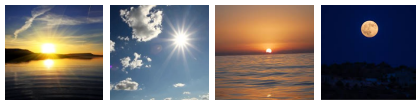
	Home	Private Garage	Public Area	Bastions	Cliffs	Bridge	Institution	Other
Male	148	46	35	26	7	6	18	27
% within Gender	47.3%	14.7%	11.2%	8.3%	2.2%	1.9%	5.8%	8.6%
Female	27	1	1	5	2	4	1	5
% within Gender	58.7%	2.2%	2.2%	10.9%	4.3%	8.7%	2.2%	10.9%
Total	175	47	36	31	9	10	19	32
% within Total	48.7%	13.1%	10.0%	8.6%	2.5%	2.8%	5.3%	8.9%

Local Statistics 2003 - 2017



	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter
Male	84	93	60	76
% within Gender	26.8%	29.7%	19.2%	24.3%
Female	15	8	9	14
% within Gender	32.6%	17.4%	19.6%	30.4%
Total	99	101	69	90
% of Total	27.6%	28.1%	19.2%	25.1%

Local Statistics 2003 - 2017



Why do **50%** of cases of drowning and **41.8%** of cases of jumping happen in the morning whereas we have a higher rate of cases of self-stabbing, CO poisoning and substance abuse in the evening and night?

Local Statistics 2003 - 2017

Why is there a higher rate of females who complete suicide on Thursday or Friday than on any other day?

Why do persons aged 14 to 21 prefer hanging, jumping and the use of firearms only as a method of death?

There were 16 persons who jumped off a bastion in the morning: 13 of who jumped between 05.45 and 09.00.

That is nearly 42% of all cases of jumping off bastions in three hours

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