



Ministry
of Defence

Ministry of Defence
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Thank you for your email on 17 June 2022 requesting the following information:

Your report of suicides in the armed forces from 1984 to 2021 is very helpful for this study, particularly Figure 7 on page 11 and Figure 8 on page 13 which report on the method of suicide (attached).

We would be grateful if you could provide us with some further information regarding the data behind these two figures. More specifically:

- For Figure 7, are you able to provide the numbers of suicides for each method that cover the period from 1984 to 2021 rather than just the period from 2002 to 2021?
- *For Figure 8, are you able to provide the annual numbers of suicides for each of the three methods rather than just the suicide rates?*

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.

Table 1 presents the total number of UK regular Armed Forces male suicides by method, for the period 1984 to 2021.

Table 1: UK regular Armed Forces male suicides by method, numbers 1984-2021

Method	Number
Total	873
Hanging, strangulation and suffocation	337 p
Poisoning by gases in domestic use/other	187
Firearms and explosives	170 p
Poisoning by solid or liquid substances	54
Falling or jumping from a high place	29
Other ¹	26
Other and unspecified means	25 p
RTA	24
Rail incidents	21 p

Source: Defence Statistics Health

¹ Other includes Submersion (Drowning) (n=11), Cutting and piercing (n=9) and Air transport incidents (n=6).

^p These figures do not include deaths awaiting Coroner verdicts and therefore are provisional, subject to change in accordance with the outcome of coroner inquests.

Table 2 presents the number of UK regular Armed Forces male suicides by year for the period 1984 to 2021, for the three-most common methods of suicide.

Table 2: UK regular Armed Forces male suicides by the three most common methods and year, numbers
1984-2021

Year	Hanging, strangulation and suffocation n	Poisoning by gases in domestic use/other n	Firearms and explosives n
Total	337 p	187	170 p
1984	8	11	6
1985	12	7	3
1986	11	21	6
1987	9	11	0
1988	12	9	12
1989	8	11	11
1990	7	19	13
1991	12	21	7
1992	8	10	11
1993	9	16	5
1994	9	7	12
1995	7	9	16
1996	7	5	9
1997	9	9	4
1998	11	5	0
1999	13	2	4
2000	18	4	6
2001	9	1	4
2002	5	1	5
2003	8	1	7
2004	9	1	3
2005	15	1	2
2006	6	0	4
2007	3	0	0
2008	5	0	3
2009	10	1	2
2010	2	0	2
2011	13	0	0
2012	9	1	4
2013	3	1	1
2014	6	0	0
2015	4	0	1
2016	7	0	1
2017	10	1	2
2018	13	1	1
2019	14	0	1
2020	11 p	0	2
2021	5 p	0	0 p

Source: Defence Statistics Health

^p These figures do not include deaths awaiting Coroner verdicts and therefore are provisional, subject to change in accordance with the outcome of coroner inquests.

Under section 16 of the Act (Advice and Assistance), you may find it useful to note the following:

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 a number of internal analyses and external National Statistics Notices.

The information presented includes coroner-confirmed suicides and open verdict deaths 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.

The information presented includes coroner-confirmed suicides only.

Figures are for regular personnel and only those reservists who have died whilst on operational deployment. Figures only include male personnel.

Would you like to be added to our contact list, so that we can inform you about updates to statistics and consult you if we are thinking of making changes? You can subscribe to updates by emailing Analysis-Health-PQ-FOI@mod.gov.uk.

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](#).

Yours sincerely

Defence Statistics Health