

Study uncovers suicide 'cluster'

A "cluster" of suicides among young adults has been identified in one of the most deprived parts of Scotland.

Experts at the University of St Andrews said they were the first to find a "persistent and remarkably consistent" geographical concentration of suicides.

They said the cluster was focused on the east end of Glasgow.

The study found that suicide rates among young adults had increased dramatically in the country's most deprived areas.

Health geographers Dr Daniel Exeter and Professor Paul Boyle analysed data from the 1981, 1991 and 2001 censuses.

Their work builds on recent research which found that between 1980 and 2000, young people (aged 15-44) in Scotland's poorest areas were more than four times as likely to commit suicide than those in its least deprived areas.

Dr Exeter, the project researcher, said: "The finding demonstrates that suicide is particularly high in the most deprived part of Scotland.

"The fact that this single cluster was consistent over two decades is remarkable."

The research showed that the east end of Glasgow has particularly high suicide rates among young adults but that this can be explained by the high levels of deprivation in this area.

Dr Exeter added: "Factors which are known to influence suicide, such as drug misuse, divorce and unemployment, are likely to be more common in such deprived areas."

The research has significant policy implications, according to the experts.

The Choose Life initiative funded by the Scottish Executive aims to reduce suicide rates by 20% between 2003 and 2013.

However, its initial report said that the only geographical focus deserving special priority was 'people in isolated or rural communities'.

Suicide prevention

Professor Paul Boyle, the project supervisor, said: "The results of this new study suggest that east Glasgow is an important area to target if the aim of realising such a significant reduction in suicide is to be achieved.

"Particularly since the 245 suicides identified in the most recent cluster represented 19% of all Scottish non-institutional suicides in that period."

Caroline Farquhar of Choose Life said that the research authors recognised that their work predated the launch of their suicide prevention strategy in December 2002.

She added: "Since that date every local authority area in Scotland has introduced and is implementing a local suicide prevention plan.

"There is still a substantial amount of work to be done in improving suicide prevention in Scotland and Choose Life welcome the breadth of partners now actively involved both nationally and locally in supporting suicide prevention work."



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Dr Daniel Exeter
University of St Andrews