

Evidence on the wish to die in older people

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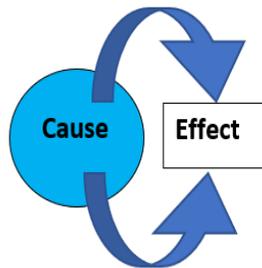


I want to die

A persistent wish to die can occur about 1% of older people without severe illness.¹

But only one seventh want to end their lives.

Death wishes are often ambiguous,^{1, 2} transient³ and do not always imply a genuine wish for death⁴



- Three quarters of those with a wish to die report being lonely and 60% have a clinical depression.¹
- In patients with progressive neurological disease, a wish to die is not related to cognitive or behavioural impairment but is strongly related to depression.⁵
- A wish to die is strongly influenced by the perception of being a burden,⁶ or the fear of pain.⁷
- Of assisted deaths in Oregon in 2020, 53% felt a burden and 33% had poor pain control or a fear of pain.⁸
- Half of 'unbearable suffering' is psychological and social and does not predict a wish to die.^{9, 10}
- In the UK, loneliness is associated with long-lasting depressive symptoms.¹¹

References

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