

# Juvenile delinquency linked to higher suicide risk

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Criminality can be an indicator of a higher risk of suicide in young people. A new study from Karolinska Institutet and the National Board of Health and Welfare shows that repeat offenders between the ages of 15 and 19 are three times more likely to commit suicide than young people who have not been convicted for a crime during these years.

"The association is clear, even when controlling for risk factors such as [substance abuse](#) and mental illness," says Emma Björkenstam of the National Board of Health and Welfare and Doctoral Student at Karolinska Institutet.

For the study, which is published online in the International Journal of Epidemiology, the researchers examined almost one million [young people](#) born between 1972 and 1981, and then followed them up with respect to [suicide](#) up to the ages of 25 - 34.

The results show a correlation between suicide risk and number of convictions, with a peak being reached at five or more. The group also included young people who had received more severe sentences, such as prison or probation. The same pattern was observed amongst young males and females, although the suicide rate was higher for the former.

The researchers controlled for a number of other variables, such as parental educational attainment, parental receipt of social assistance or disability pension, single parenthood, parental [mental illness](#) and substance abuse, and adoption. One finding was that the educational

level of the parents per se seems to have no impact on the risk of suicide.

"Our most important finding is how important it is to identify and support the young people who relapse back into crime," says Emma Björkenstam.

**More information:** Björkenstam E, Björkenstam C, Vinnerljung B, Hallqvist J, Ljung R

Juvenile delinquency, social background, and suicide - A Swedish national cohort study of 992 881 young adults

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