

# The Crane Report



## SUICIDE RISK IN CONSTRUCTION – DATA ANALYSIS Section-8-SUMMARY

### ABSTRACT

This section presents an evidence-based analysis of suicide risk within the construction industry between 2015 and 2024. Whilst industry narratives frequently highlight certain trades, our findings clarify the specific occupations most at risk, with those working at height demonstrating significantly elevated vulnerability. Examination of mortality patterns, including COVID-19 impacts, reveals that both skilled and unskilled workers share structural risk factors, including financial insecurity and pressure to work despite personal or health crises. The data underscore systemic vulnerabilities that perpetuate both physical and mental health risks across the sector, challenging prevailing assumptions about high-risk trades.

Anthony Hegarty MSc  
DSRM Risk & Crisis Management

© 2025 Anthony Hegarty / DSRM. All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews or scholarly articles.



## Section 8 – Suicide Risk in Construction – Data Analysis

### Content links of Full Section-8 Report

- Investigating a Significant Period
- The Rise of Construction Industry Suicides
- The ONS Data
  - Introducing NOMIS
  - Working from Height – Suicide Risks Emerge
  - Roofers and Scaffolders take the Lead
  - Road Construction Operatives
- Extended Analysis
- The Impact of COVID-19
- Unskilled workers face acute risks of a different kind
- Mass Lay-offs – The Impact
- Did COVID-19 Impact Construction Industry Suicides?
  - What were other industry sources saying?
  - Did these observations match official records?
  - Did the DSRM investigation findings support either of the two opinions?
- Reconciling COVID-19 data with the apparent pains of the CIS system
- Section Closing Message





## Section 8 Summary – Suicide Risk in Construction: Data Analysis

This section reviews suicide data from 2015–2024 to identify which construction trades face the highest risks, and how national events like austerity, Brexit, and COVID-19 shaped outcomes.

Initial ONS tables, often cited by industry groups, highlighted general trades such as “construction n.e.c.” as the most vulnerable. But after recalculating suicide rates per 100,000 workers using NOMIS workforce data, a clearer picture emerged: scaffolders, roofers, and steel erectors consistently occupied the top-risk positions, largely due to their constant exposure to working at height. This raises questions about misclassified “accidental falls” where suicide may not have been ruled out.

The analysis also tracked wider social and economic pressures: austerity, housing crises, and Brexit created financial strain and insecurity, but COVID-19 became the defining stress test. Mortality data showed unskilled workers had the highest death rates during the pandemic, as many continued working despite risks. Yet suicide trends were complex: some trades rose sharply (e.g. roofers, scaffolders), while others declined. Overall, no universal surge was found, challenging claims that misclassified self-employment (CIS) or job insecurity alone drive suicide risk.

Instead, the evidence points to shared vulnerabilities across skilled and unskilled groups: financial precarity, low autonomy, stigma, isolation, and poor access to health services. These systemic weaknesses leave workers exposed to both physical illness and suicide risk, with COVID-19 acting as an intensifier rather than a singular cause.

**Conclusion:** Industry campaigns often overstate single structural causes (e.g. CIS) while overlooking the complex, layered pressures driving suicides. Accurate risk assessment must account for trade-specific exposure (particularly height work), long-term vulnerabilities, and broader socio-economic context.





## Investigation Stage 2 / Stage 3 - We Request Your Support

### Roadmap of the Investigation

#### Stage 1 – Desk-Based Investigation

Analysis of existing literature, statistics, international models, cultural influences, and industry narratives. (*This document.*)

#### Stage 2 – Survey of Experiences

In an online [survey](#) we are asking you to promote across the sector, designed to capture personal testimonies: what contributed to lives lost, and what brought others back from the brink. <https://www.dsrmrisk.com/survey>

#### Stage 3 – Industry Collaboration

Structured dialogues with construction firms, unions, and industry bodies to explore their views on root causes and the adequacy of current responses. We invite your input, thoughts, ideas, and what you see as solutions...*just a few lines* - “*What do you think is the problem?*” (This phase is currently running in parallel with Stage 2)

Please send your thoughts to: [contact@dsrmrisk.com](mailto:contact@dsrmrisk.com) (Anonymous is Okay)

#### Stage 4 – Expanded Data

Incorporation of data from Scotland and Northern Ireland (*not currently included in official ONS reporting*), alongside further refinement of UK-wide analysis.

Together, these stages aim to provide both evidence and lived experience, enabling a clearer understanding of risk and more effective prevention strategies.

### **Stage 4 will be the Final Crane Report.**

