

# Knowledge of and attitudes towards suicidal behaviour among selected professionals in Denmark

Agnieszka Konieczna, Bo Andersen Ejdesgaard

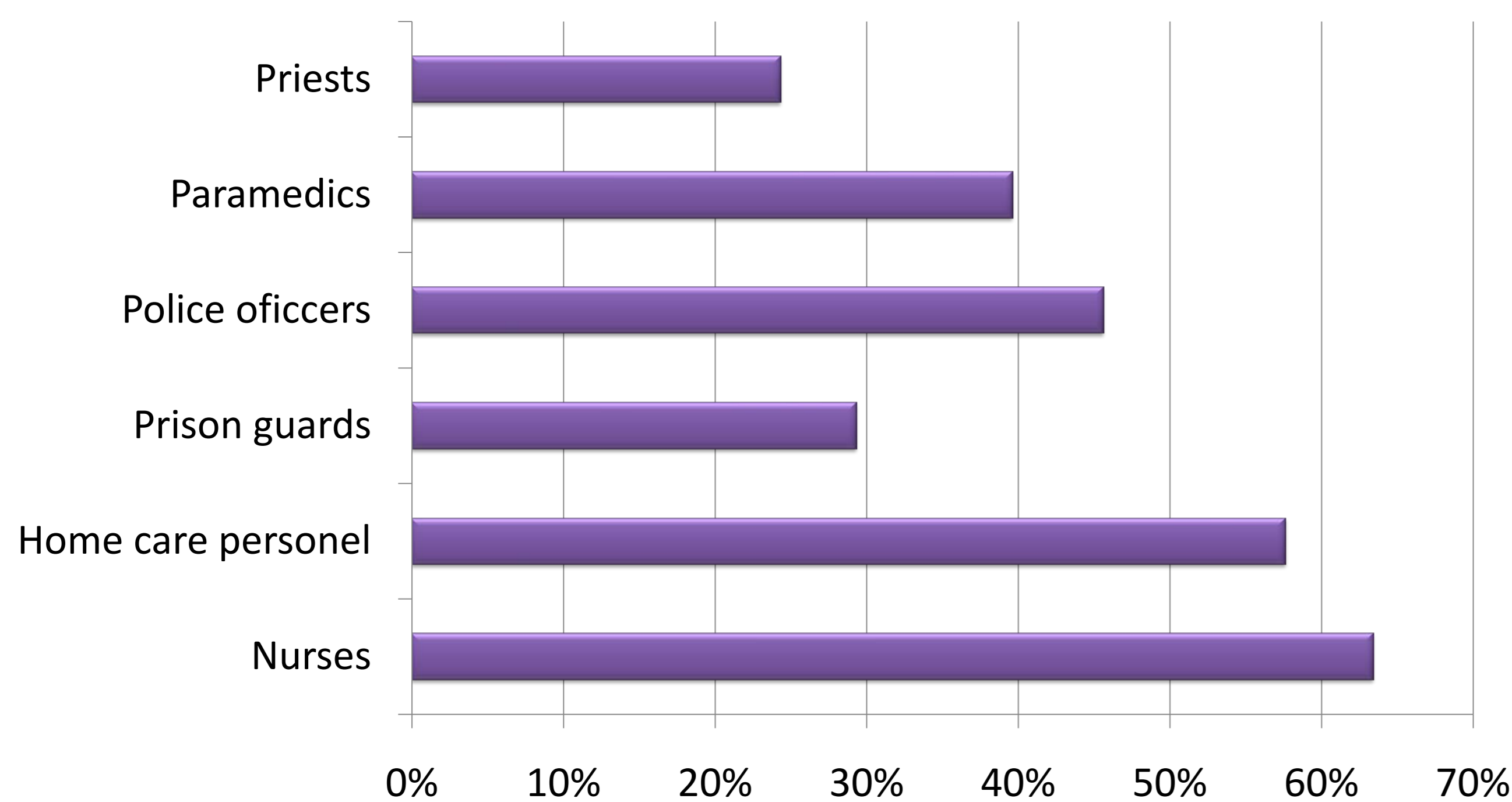
Centre for Suicide Research

Odense, Denmark

## OBJECTIVE

The aim of the study was to examine the knowledge of and attitudes towards suicidal behaviour among selected professionals in Denmark such as paramedics, home care personnel, nurses, priests, police officers, and prison guards.

**Figure 1.** Great knowledge about suicide among selected professionals



**Figure 2.** Attitudes towards suicide among selected professionals

	Priests n=341	Paramedics n=303	Police officers n=193	Prison guards n=348	Home care personnel n=139	Nurses (Reference Group) n=424
Suicide is a human right	0.29**		2.15**			1
Old people have a right to take their own lives	0.37***		4.04***	2.31**		1
Suicide can be justified under certain circumstances	0.49**		3.10***			1
Suicide is a cowardly act		5.92***	2.90**	5.82***		1
Suicide is a selfish act		2.71**	3.08**	2.68**		1
Suicide is a right to terminate incurable disease	0.23**	2.57**	4.66***	3.03***		1

\*p<0.05 \*\*p<0.01 \*\*\*p<0.0001

**Figure 3.** Feelings towards suicidal individuals in selected professionals

	Priests n=341	Paramedics n=303	Police officers n=193	Prison guards n=348	Home care personnel n=139	Nurses (Reference Group) n=424
Anxiety						1
Anger	0.47**			1.91**		1
Indifference						1
Urge to solicitude	0.43***	0.49**	0.57*	0.15***		1
Urge to rejection		0.16**		0.33*		1
Comprehension	0.62**	0.61*		0.39***		1
Compassion		1.89**	1.74*	0.46**	0.51**	1
Disgust				2.26*		1
Disquiet	1.97***	0.56*	0.59*	1.80**		1
Something else						1

\*p<0.05 \*\*p<0.01 \*\*\*p<0.0001

## METHOD

The data was gathered from interview and questionnaire among 1748 professionals. The data sample was analyzed for differences in knowledge and attitude using multiple logistic regression modelling in SAS 9.1.

## RESULTS

**Knowledge:** The knowledge was related to gender and profession, not to age and professional experience. The majority of the professionals (58%) had little knowledge of suicidal behaviour. Priests (OR=0.21), prison guards (OR=0.37) and paramedics (OR=0.60) displayed the poorest knowledge. In general, men (OR=0.67) were found to have poorer knowledge about suicidal behaviour than women.

**Attitudes:** Attitudes towards suicidal behaviour were most negative among priests and most positive among police officers. Police officers and prison guards accepted the right to commit suicide if the person were old, and most professionals, in particular police officers, paramedics, and prison guards, accepted suicide as a right to terminate incurable disease. Prison guards, paramedics and police officers in particular agreed that suicide was a selfish and cowardly act. Older, more experienced and religious professionals showed more negative attitudes towards suicidal behaviour than younger and less experienced professionals. Professionals with personal experiences of suicidal ideation demonstrated a more positive attitude towards suicidal behaviour than professionals with no personal experience.

**Feelings:** The professionals showed more sympathy towards suicidal individuals who were mentally ill and less sympathy towards those who used suicide attempts as a threat or to get attention (interview analysis). Prison guards and priests felt more disquiet, police officers and paramedics felt more compassion, than reference group nurses. Paramedics, prison guards, and priests felt less comprehension and urge to solicitude, priests felt less anger; prison guards and paramedics less need to reject than nurses.

