

# The clergy's knowledge and attitude to suicidal behaviour

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## 1 Introduction

The clergy have great opportunities to prevent suicidal ideation and suicidal behaviour through intimate talks with the suicidal person, the bereaved, or through the teaching of confirmation classes.



## 2 Goals

The goal of the project is to uncover, analyse and illuminate the clergy's knowledge, experiences and attitudes toward suicidal ideation and suicidal behaviour, and on this basis compile educational material.



## 3 Method

Data was collected by means of a questionnaire administered to 914 pastors and by 47 qualitative interviews. Quantitative data was analyzed for differences in knowledge and attitude using regression modelling in SAS 9.4. The data from interview was analyzed manually. All the recorded interviews were transcribed and categorized into categories, which were then merged into themes. Collected interview data was used to interpret and support questionnaire data and to extend understanding of the pastors' role in the prevention of suicide.

## 4 Results

84% have wide experience with intimate talks about suicidal behaviour with suicidal persons. 33.5% have met persons who wish to receive euthanasia.

Almost half the ministers lack factual knowledge on suicidal behaviour, and they continue to use mythic allegations on attempted and completed suicides. Some ministers are uncertain if talking about suicidal ideation may lead to action, or whether suicide is contagious. The ministers have various attitudes to the following statements:

- Suicide is a human right (61.3%)
- The elderly have the right to commit suicide (65.3%)
- Young people have the right to commit suicide (69.4%)
- People have the right to choose when and how they want to die (72.7%)
- The right to die follows the right to live (58.3%)

More than 25% believe that suicide is a sin against God while 50% believe that suicide is a sin against others. More than half the ministers agree that the right to decide over our own life and death is limited by our obligations to our relations.



## 5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the clergy express that prevention is necessary. They call for further information and a closer collaboration with professionals like health professionals.

