Assisted Suicide: helpful facts and points to raise with your MP

**Current UK Law**

Euthanasia is illegal in the UK under the common law offence of murder.

Assisted suicide is illegal in the UK under the [Suicide Act 1961 section 2](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Eliz2/9-10/60/section/2), which states that a person: “who aids, abets, counsels or procures the suicide of another, or an attempt by another to commit suicide, shall be liable on conviction on indictment to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 14 years.”

**Countries/states where assisted suicide is legal**

* Oregon state
* Washington state
* California
* Colorado
* New Jersey
* Canada
* Switzerland

**Countries where euthanasia and assisted suicide are legal**

* The Netherlands
* Belgium

**Facts and Figures**

* In the **Netherlands**, there were 1923 cases of euthanasia in 2006, in 2017 this had risen to 6,585.
* In October 2020, the **Dutch** government said it would permit doctors to euthanise terminally ill children aged between 1 and 12
* In **Belgium** in 2002 when euthanasia was introduced, just 24 people were euthanised, in 2016/17 it was 4,337 cases
* In **Belgium** the youngest child to be euthanised was 9 years old
* Since assisted suicide was legalised in **Canada**, at least 7,949 people have died
* In **Canada**, the government is also seeking to expand the existing assisted suicide law to allow more people to take it up as an option
* In **Oregon**, the latest figures for 2019 showed a total of 188 assisted suicides, up from 178 in 2018.
* In **Oregon** in 2019, the percentage of patients who cited fear of being a burden rose to three in five (59%)
* Over the last 20 years, the number of assisted suicides in **Oregon** has grown over 1,000%
* In **Oregon**, six in ten of those ending their lives in 2019 said they were afraid of being a burden on their families, friends and caregivers
* In **Switzerland**, the numbers have increased from 43 in 1998 to more than

1,000 in 2015 according to the Federal Statistics Office.

**Assisted suicide would put pressure on the most vulnerable**

* Figures from Washington and Oregon States (where assisted suicide is an option for someone who is terminally ill with a prognosis of death in 6 months or less) show that of those patients who died in 2018 under each State’s Death with Dignity Act, 51% and 54%, respectively said that they were concerned that they would be a burden on family, friends/caregivers if they continued to live
* Once state-sanctioned killing becomes legal, it is inevitable that vulnerable people will feel pressured to end their lives.
* No law can be made completely safe and even the prominent assisted suicide advocate, Lord Falconer has admitted this when he said: “*I don’t think you can ever have a system that is completely watertight.”*

**On polls showing public support for assisted suicide**

* The reality is that when you explore the views of the public more deeply, initial support for assisted suicide fades away when consideration is given to how the law would work in practice. A poll of 2,055 British adults saw a figure of 73% initial support for assisted suicide fall to 43% for and 43% against.

**Other useful points**

* The Association of Palliative Medicine, representing over 1,200 palliative medicine doctors – i.e. those medical professionals most used to death and dying ‘*strongly oppose any change in the law to licence doctors to supply or administer lethal drugs to a patient to enable them to take their own lives.’*
* No disability group supports a change in the law (including Scope, Disability Rights UK and Not Dead Yet UK)
* Good law-making is not dependent on public opinion.

*Please note: sources can be provided for all the points made above on request.*