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Legal euthanasia has not led to more cases in the Netherlands

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The introduction of legalised euthanasia in the Netherlands has not led to an increase in the number of cases according to a team of Dutch university researchers, writing in [The Lancet](#) magazine.

While there was a slight decrease in the years after euthanasia was made legal in 2002, assisted suicide has now returned to pre-legalisation levels of around 2.8% of all deaths, the researchers from four Dutch teaching hospitals and the national statistics office CBS found.

And while opponents of euthanasia had warned the legislation would lead to a sharp rise in involuntary euthanasia among terminally-ill patients, there has actually been a reduction in this sort of deaths, professor Bregje Onwuteaka-Philipsen from Amsterdam's VU university told the [Volkskrant](#).

Based on interviews with 6,000 doctors and research into 7,000 deaths, the team found just 300 cases of euthanasia where the patient had not given explicit consent in 2010, compared with around 1,000 in the years prior to legalisation.

Openness

'This is probably because there is more openness and doctors talk to their patients at an earlier stage,' Onwuteaka-Philipsen told the paper.

The researchers also found some 600 people forced an end to their own lives in 2010 by stopping eating and drinking. In around half of these cases, euthanasia had been refused.

Euthanasia is legal in the Netherlands under strict conditions. For example, the patient must be 'suffering unbearably' and the doctor must be convinced the patient is making an informed choice. The opinion of a second doctor is also required.

