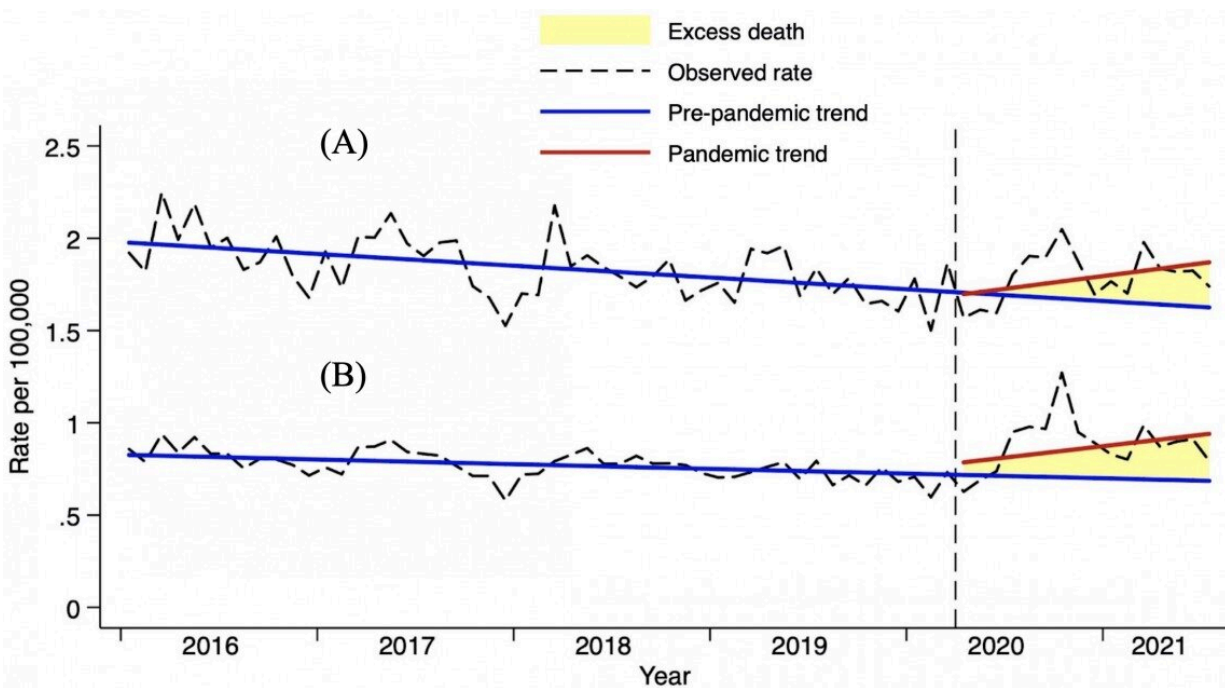


Significant increase in suicide rates in women and younger age groups during COVID-19 pandemic in Japan

September 13 2022



The observed rate of suicides in Japan between January 2016 and December 2021 (dashed line) for males (A) and females (B). The blue line indicates the pre-pandemic trend, while the red line indicates the pandemic trend. Credit: Eiji Yoshioka, Sharon J.B. Hanley, Yukihiro Sato, Yasuaki Saijo. *The Lancet Regional Health - Western Pacific*. May 30, 2022)Eiji Yoshioka, Sharon J.B. Hanley, Yukihiro Sato, Yasuaki Saijo. *The Lancet Regional Health - Western Pacific*. May 30, 2022

Studies have shown that death by suicide can increase during infectious disease epidemics. While increased community cohesion and mutual support may have initially decreased suicide risk during the COVID-19 pandemic, few studies have been conducted on the long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Japan.

A joint study by researchers at Hokkaido University and Asahikawa Medical University has analyzed trends in monthly [suicide](#) rates by age and gender from January 2016 to December 2021 in Japan using provisional mortality data in an interrupted time series analysis.

The group found that there were 1,208 excess suicide deaths for men and 1,825 for women between April 2020 and December 2021. While there was no statistically significant increase in overall suicide rates for men and women during the [pandemic](#) period, sub-group analyses revealed that there was a statistically significant increase in men aged 20–29 years and 40–49 years, and in women 20–29 years, 30–39 years, 50–59 years, 60–69 years and 70–79 years.

"Our results show that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on trends in [suicide rates](#) in Japan, specifically in women and in younger age groups," said Dr. Sharon Hanley, one of the study co-authors. "This indicates that governments and other agencies need to identify and provide appropriate additional support to socio-economically vulnerable subgroups of the population during the pandemic."

Associate Professor Eiji Yoshioka who led the study said, "Since the COVID-19 pandemic is still evolving, continued vigilance and close monitoring of suicide mortality rates as well as the mental health of the population remains a priority."

More information: Eiji Yoshioka et al, Impact of the COVID-19

pandemic on suicide rates in Japan through December 2021: An interrupted time series analysis, *The Lancet Regional Health—Western Pacific* (2022). [DOI: 10.1016/j.lanwpc.2022.100480](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lanwpc.2022.100480)

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