

For Immediate Release

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

Joint Release by Hokkaido University and Asahikawa Medical University.

An estimated 1208 excess suicide deaths for men and 1825 for women were recorded during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Japan through December 2021, with the impact being greatest in women and younger age groups.



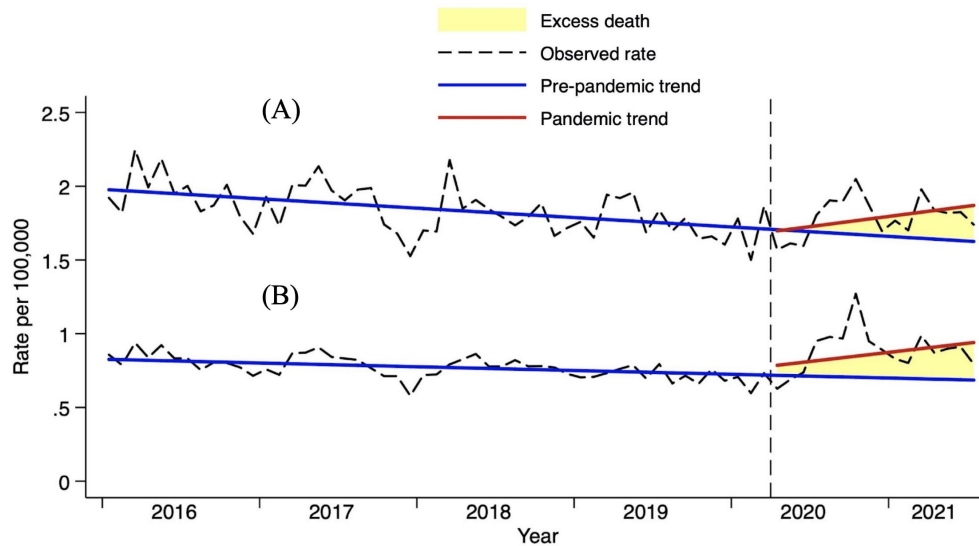
(StreetVJ/Shutterstock).

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 analysed 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 1208 excess suicide deaths for men and 1825 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

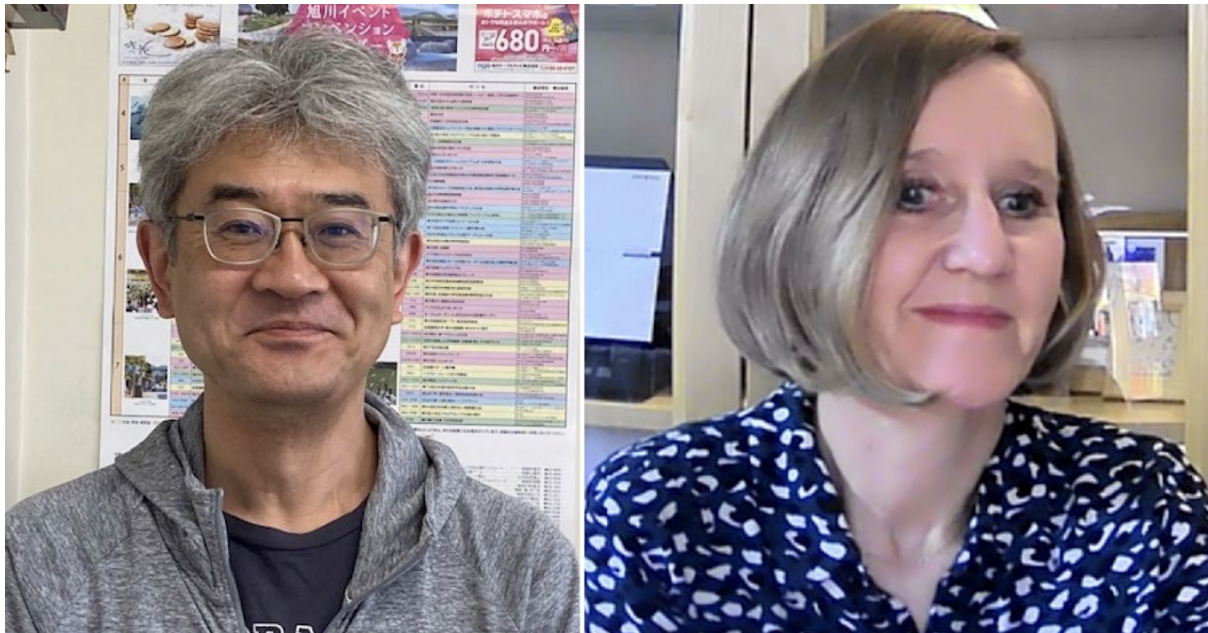
men aged 20 – 29 years and 40 – 49 years, and in women 20 – 29 years, 30 – 39 years, 50 – 59yrs, 60 - 69 years and 70 – 79 years.



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 (Eiji Yoshioka, Sharon J.B. Hanley, Yukihiro Sato, Yasuaki Saijo. *The Lancet Regional Health - Western Pacific*. May 30, 2022).

“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 stressed, “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”.



Eiji Yoshioka (left), Asahikawa Medical University, and Sharon J. B. Hanley (right), Hokkaido University, key authors of the current study (Photo: Eiji Yoshioka, Sharon Hanley).

Original Article:

Eiji Yoshioka, Sharon J.B. Hanley, Yukihiro Sato, Yasuaki Saijo. [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*. May 30, 2022.
DOI: 10.1016/j.lanwpc.2022.100480

Funding:

This work is supported by a Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan (MEXT; 21K10462).

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