

Peer Review Report

Review Report on Role of foreign-born status on suicide mortality in Spain between 2000–2019: an age-period-cohort analysis

Original Article, Int J Public Health

Reviewer: John O'Gorman

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EVALUATION

Q 1 Please summarize the main findings of the study.

The authors of this paper analyse suicide mortality in Spain for the period 2000 to 2019 and estimate age, period, and cohort effects for those who were native-born and for those who were foreign-born. They undertake a further analysis with those who were foreign-born, comparing those with and those without resident status. They report an increase in suicide deaths after 2010 for those who were foreign-born that was most marked for females for cohorts born around 1950. An increase was also apparent for native-born females for cohorts after the 1960s but it was less marked. The foreign-born increase was larger among those without resident status. The authors interpret their data within the framework of socioeconomic disadvantage and its effects on suicide rates, arguing that the global economic recession commencing in 2008, and felt significantly in Spain, drove an increase in rates among foreign-born residents, especially for those denied the health and economic benefits conferred by resident status. They also draw attention to an increase in suicide rates for females that is hidden by the relatively stable but higher suicide rate for males.

Q 2 Please highlight the limitations and strengths.

Identifying age, period, and cohort effects in time series data is controversial because of the linear dependencies among the first-order effects. The authors use two different methods of analysis and employ sensitivity analysis to demonstrate the robustness of their findings. Their results are interesting to those studying socioeconomic disadvantage and not just to a Spanish audience. They demonstrate that effects for disadvantaged groups (and for females) can be submerged within an overall stable trend set by a dominant group (i.e., native-born, resident males).

Q 3 Please provide your detailed review report to the authors. The editors prefer to receive your review structured in major and minor comments. Please consider in your review the methods (statistical methods valid and correctly applied (e.g. sample size, choice of test), is the study replicable based on the method description?), results, data interpretation and references. If there are any objective errors, or if the conclusions are not supported, you should detail your concerns.

The authors address an interesting question, with important implications for suicide prevention. The work is technically sound and the writing is clear.

My only concern with their analysis and interpretation is the “negative migratory balance” following 2010 referred to at ll. 218–221. The authors report “foreign-born individuals residing in Spain migrated massively to their original countries” and presumably were replaced, at least to some extent, by other migrants. The sources of migrants throughout the period were not reported by the authors and must be assumed to have been relatively fixed. If the source of migrant intakes had varied, it may be that a group with higher suicide mortality replaced groups with lower suicide mortality and this may have been responsible for the increase in suicide mortality among the foreign-born. The suicide mortality of migrant groups is known to track that for their country of origin, at least for the first generation (Ratkowsky & De Leo, *Open Journal of Medical Psychology*, 2013, 2, 124–133). This is admittedly speculative but the authors may wish to address it. Some minor points:

ll. 256–257: suggest “hardest hit” instead of “most hardly hit”.

I. 264: suggest “extensively” instead of “largely”.

I. 338: Reference 3 is incomplete.

I. 434: Reference 45 is incomplete.

PLEASE COMMENT

Q 4 Is the title appropriate, concise, attractive?

Yes

Q 5 Are the keywords appropriate?

Yes

Q 6 Is the English language of sufficient quality?

Yes

Q 7 Is the quality of the figures and tables satisfactory?

Yes.

Q 8 Does the reference list cover the relevant literature adequately and in an unbiased manner?)

Yes

QUALITY ASSESSMENT

Q 9 Originality



Q 10 Rigor



Q 11 Significance to the field



Q 12 Interest to a general audience



Q 13 Quality of the writing



Q 14 Overall scientific quality of the study



REVISION LEVEL

Q 15 Please make a recommendation based on your comments:

Minor revisions.