

Suicide in Japan

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Abstract

The suicide rates in Japan have been higher than the average of other OECD countries. Furthermore, there has been a sharp increase in suicide rates since 1998. As the latest effort to reduce suicide rate, the Japanese Government recently enacted the “Basic Law of Suicide Prevention” which aims at a comprehensive measure of suicide prevention. In the same vein of efforts, this study conducts an in-depth analysis on suicide in Japan. In the first part of this study, we analyze suicide rates among OECD countries with a particular effort made to gain insight into how suicide in Japan is different from suicides in other OECD countries. It takes advantage of an unbalanced panel data set on suicide rates across most OECD countries during the period 1980-2003 for different gender and age groups; the explanatory variables include various socio-economic variables. In the final part of this study, we look into the possible connection between the Japanese joint liability borrowing system and suicide since it has been documented that the increase in the suicide rate is most striking for those self employed. We theorize the possibility that Japanese joint liability borrowings may lead to suicides of borrowers through excessive pressures, and provide some empirical evidence to support our claim.

Keywords: Suicide; Joint Liability; Stigma
JEL classification: G21; I30; J17

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