An Analysis into Global Suicide Trends and Their Relation to Current Events Through a Socio-Cultural Lens

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Abstract : We utilized country-level data on suicide rates from 1985 through 2015 provided by the WHO to explore global trends as well as country-specific trends. First, we find that up until 1995, there was an increase in suicide rates globally, followed by a steep decline in deaths. This observation is largely driven by the data from Europe, where suicides are prominent but steadily declining. Second, men are more likely to commit suicide than women across the world over the years. Third, the older generation is more likely to commit suicide than youth and adults. Finally, we turn to Durkheim's theory and use it as a lens to understand trends in suicide across time and countries and attempt to identify social and economic events that might explain patterns that we observe. For example, we discovered a drastically different pattern in suicide rates in the US, with a steep increase in suicides in the early 2000s. We hypothesize this might be driven by both the 9/11 attacks and the recession of 2008.