



Málaga and Granada have highest attempted suicide rates in Andalusia

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Research news

A pioneering study led by the University of Granada (UGR) has revealed that Málaga is the province with the highest rate of attempted suicide in Andalusia, followed by Granada and Cádiz, respectively. Meanwhile, Huelva, Jaén and Seville are the provinces with the lowest rates of attempted suicide, respectively.

The average age of those attempting to commit suicide is 43 and attempts are more frequent during summer and on weekends. Moreover, almost half (46.66%) of suicide attempts occur between 16:00 and 23:00.



The findings, published in the journal PLOS One, are part of the doctoral thesis that Yolanda Mejías Martín is currently writing as a student on the UGR's Doctoral Programme in Clinical Medicine and Public Health. Mejías also works in the Department of Mental Health at the "Virgen de las Nieves" University Hospital, where people who have tried to commit suicide are hospitalised. Her professional experience motivated her to analyse the repercussions of suicidal behaviour, both for the patients themselves, and for their families and those closest to them.

In order to conduct the research, the author analysed data obtained from telephone call records at the Public Company for Health Emergencies of Andalusia (EPES). The data, which encompassed the period between 2007 and 2013 and all eight Andalusian provinces, included information on the characteristics of the individuals, as well the timing and severity of their attempts, based on the outcome of each call and the level of priority assigned to each one. Of the calls analysed, a total of 20,942 were suicide-related, which entails a global rate of 34.7 suicide attempts per 100,000 inhabitants for that period in Andalusia.

The lowest call rate for suicide attempts was in 2007 (32.4 per 100,000 inhabitants), while the highest was in 2013 (40.4 per 100,000 inhabitants), although there was no linear increase during the period under study.

With regard to the level of priority assigned to each call, out of the 20,942 cases of attempted suicide recorded, 84.07% were classified as non-delayable (it was necessary to act as quickly as possible but the patient's life was not in danger). Patients were taken to hospital in 72.52% of the cases, while 2.47% died (before or after treatment by the mobile team).

More suicide attempts among women than men

In terms of gender, the results show that the proportion of attempts was similar. Just over half of the suicide attempt-related calls in the region were for women (50.98%), with a rate of 36.3 per 100,000 inhabitants versus 33.1 per 100,000 inhabitants for men; a ratio of 1.10:1.

Although the healthcare teams responding to the emergencies took significantly more women than men to hospital following suicide attempts, the number of women for whom the medical emergency was resolved in situ was also greater.

The UGR researcher emphasises that the information obtained from these prehospital emergency services “provides valuable data on the characteristics and timing of suicide attempts, as well as on the priority assigned to these cases and their outcome. This data complements the information collected in studies of hospital emergency departments and population surveys. We thought we could obtain additional and more comprehensive information by studying the records of prehospital emergency services, given that there is no single database of suicide attempts, as there is for suicide statistics at the national level.”

The use of these records has also revealed problems in identifying suicide attempts, which may result in an underestimation concerning the frequency with which they occur. In this regard, one of the most novel contributions of this study has been the use of the definition of “suicide attempt” according to the EPES Information System (SIEPES).

Several studies confirm that the risk of suicide is considered higher for individuals who have already made a previous attempt, than for those who have not, regardless of their age and gender. “Therefore, we believe that if we identify the characteristics of the group of people who attempt suicide, we can intervene with more effective preventive measures”, concludes Mejías.

Bibliographic reference:

1. Mejías-Martín Y, Martí-García C, Rodríguez-Mejías C, Valencia-Quintero JP, García-Caro MP, Luna JdD (2018). Suicide attempts in Spain according to prehospital healthcare emergency records. PLOS One 13(4): e0195370.

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