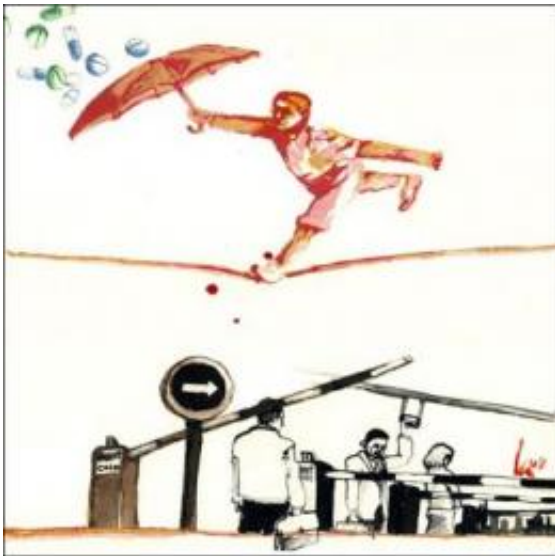


# First international index developed to predict suicidal behavior

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The first international index to predict suicidal behavior has been developed.  
Credit: SINC

Although thousands of people commit suicide worldwide each year, researchers and doctors do not have any method for evaluating a person's likelihood of thinking about or trying to commit suicide. An international group of scientists, in which the Hospital del Mar Research Institute (IMIM) has participated, has devised the first risk index in order to prevent suicides.

"It is of key importance to identify [suicidal thoughts](#) among people at

increased risk. The most important contribution that our study has made is an international risk index to estimate the likelihood of a person moving on from these thoughts to any one of the following behaviours – planning or trying to commit suicide", Jordi Alonso, head of the IMIM Healthcare Services Research Group, tells SINC.

The data used in the study, which also involved Josep M. Haro, a researcher at the Sant Joan de Déu Healthcare Park, and which has been published in the *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, come from the World Health Organisation (WHO) survey World Mental Health Surveys between 2001 and 2007, in which 108,705 adults from 21 countries responded to the Composite International Diagnostic Interview.

The study looks at suicidal behaviour rather than suicides that result in death, since it is based on interviews carried out with adults. The factors associated with such behaviour are – being female, younger age groups, lower levels of education, not living with a partner, being unemployed, suffering from certain [mental illnesses](#), having experienced troubles during childhood, and mental illnesses among parents.

## **We are all at the same risk**

Suicidal behaviour rates are similar in both developed and developing countries. In addition, "all the risk factors are similar for both these sets of countries, so the index used to determine the risk of suicidal behaviour is valid in both cases", the expert explains.

However, in terms of mortality as a result of suicide, there are significant variations around the world. For example, countries in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union have the highest rates (Lithuania, Belarus, the Russian Federation), and a large number of those who die from suicide suffer from mental illnesses.

Other decisive factors involved in suicides being enacted include religion (meaning there are very low suicide rates in Muslim countries), social support and access to weapons or lethal substances.

## **Below the average but on the rise**

In Spain, a country with a traditional Catholic culture with extended families, a relatively low prevalence of mental illnesses and significant restrictions on the use of weapons, suicide rates are low, at half the European average.

"However, this rate is on the rise, while in countries with higher rates it is falling", the researcher warns. In places such as the United States, for every death from suicide there are between three and four hospitalisations resulting from failed [suicide](#) attempts, and between 15 and 20 emergency room visits for the same reason.

"Our index for evaluating multiple risks could help to predict suicidal planning and attempts with a fairly high level of precision and help medical specialists to foresee such behaviour", concludes Alonso.

**More information:** Borges G, Nock MK, Haro Abad JM, Hwang I, Sampson NA, Alonso J, Andrade LH, Angermeyer MC, Beautrais A, Bromet E, Bruffaerts R, de Girolamo G, Florescu S, Gureje O, Hu C, Karam EG, Kovess-Masfety V, Lee S, Levinson D, Medina-Mora ME, Ormel J, Posada-Villa J, Sagar R, Tomov T, Uda H, Williams DR, Kessler RC. "Twelve-Month Prevalence of and Risk Factors for Suicide Attempts in the World Health Organization World Mental Health Surveys". *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* 71 (12): 1617 – 1628, 2010.

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