

Financial crisis to blame for increased number of suicides in Italy

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(Medical Xpress) -- The global financial crisis has contributed to an increase in the rates of suicide and attempted suicide for economic reasons in Italy, new research shows.

A team of researchers, co-led by Roberto De Vogli, associate professor of [health behavior](#) and [health education](#) at the University of Michigan School of Public Health,

looked at data from 2000-10 and found an increase in [suicides](#) and attempted suicides for economic reasons during the entire period.

Using a [regression model](#) that compared time-trends for the crisis years

(2008-10) against those of the pre-crisis years (2000-07), this study estimated that, between 2008 and 2010, there were 290 excess suicides and attempted suicides due to economic reasons attributable to the [Great recession](#).

"These preliminary results have important policy implications. They suggest that, as seen in other European countries — for example, in Greece — the Great Recession and austerity packages designed to balance the budget deficit caused by the crisis, are causing significant human suffering in the general population," De Vogli said.

Research partners included Sir Michael Gideon Marmot, professor of epidemiology and public health at University College London, and David Stuckler, university lecturer in sociology, University of Cambridge. The study was partly funded by a grant from the Economic and Social Research Council.

In what the authors call "the first grassroots movement on mental health in Europe" widows of men who killed themselves had protested in May at tax offices in Bologna, Italy, claiming that, "austerity and tax collection put their husbands at risk." Yet, not all who heard their campaign believed in what some are calling "suicides by economic crisis", which prompted the team to analyze data compiled by the Italian Institute of National Statistics.

"Of course, these results need to be interpreted with caution. More research with better data is necessary to examine the impact of the crisis on suicides," De Vogli said. "However, trends in overall suicides in Italy are consistent with those of other [European countries](#), where suicides were falling before the crisis and rapidly reversed upon the onset of the 2008 financial collapse."

De Vogli added that he and the team are in favor of prompt policy

interventions to meet the social and economic needs of families and individuals who have lost their jobs, homes or business due to the 2008 financial crisis.

More information: The findings are detailed in "Excess suicides and attempted suicides in Italy attributable to the great recession," an article appears now in *JECH Online First* jech.bmj.com/content/early/2012/01/jech-2012-201607 and is to be published later in the print Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health.

Provided by University of Michigan

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