

US suicide rates have increased since economic crisis began

November 4 2012

Suicide rates in the US have risen sharply since the economic crisis took hold in 2007, warn the authors of Correspondence published Online First in *The Lancet* today.

The authors analysed data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on suicide and [mortality rates](#) from 1999 through to 2010. While suicide rates in the US rose slowly between 1999 and 2007, the rate of increase more than quadrupled from 2008 to 2010, changing from an annual increase of 0.12 deaths by suicide per 100000 people in 1997 – 2007, to 0.51 deaths by suicide per 100000 people in 2008 – 2010.

Around 1500 additional suicides per year have taken place in the US since 2007, compared to the numbers that would have been expected if 1997 – 2007 trends had continued. The model which the authors used to analyse the data – which they recently used to estimate the effect of the recession on [suicide rates](#) in England – indicates that rising unemployment may account for around a quarter of the excess suicides observed in the US since 2007.

According the letter's lead author, Aaron Reeves, of the University of Cambridge, UK, "In the run-up to the US Presidential election, President Obama and [Mitt Romney](#) are debating how best to spur economic recovery. Missing from this discussion is consideration of how to protect Americans' health during these hard times. Suicide is a rare outcome of mental illness, but this means that these data are likely the most visible

indicator of [major depression](#) and [anxiety disorders](#) among people living through the financial crisis, as revealed by recent research in Spain and Greece."

Despite these conclusions, the authors point out that some countries, such as Sweden, have avoided increased rates of suicide during the [economic downturn](#), with the authors concluding, "The fact that countries such as Sweden have been able to prevent suicide rises despite experiencing major recessions reveals opportunities to protect Americans from further risks of suicide during the continued economic downturn. There is a clear need to implement policies to promote mental health resilience during the ongoing recession."

Provided by Lancet

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