

S. Korean school suicides total 139 last year

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Nearly 140 South Korean school students killed themselves in 2012, according to a new government report that cited family problems, depression and exam stress as the main triggers.

The report, published this week by the Education Ministry, covered all students from elementary to high school.

The figure of 139 suicides recorded last year was the lowest for three years, but still worryingly high in a country with one of the world's highest overall [suicide rates](#).

Of the total, 88 were [high school students](#), 48 from middle school and just three from elementary school.

About 40 percent were motivated by family-related problems, while 16 percent were triggered by [depression](#) and 11.5 percent by exam-related stress.

Dozens of teenagers kill themselves every year around the time of South Korea's hyper-competitive college entrance exam, unable to cope with the intense scholastic and parental pressure to secure a place in a top university.

Last year's student suicide figure compared with 202 suicides in 2009, 146 in 2010 and 150 in 2011.

South Korea has the highest suicide rate among members of the

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, with an average of 33.5 people per 100,000 taking their lives in 2010, far higher than Hungary (23.3) and Japan (21.2) which ranked second and third.

The figure for South Korea equates to nearly 50 suicides a day and shows a steep increase from 2000 when the average incidence of suicide was 13.6 people per 100,000.

The capital Seoul has installed anti-[suicide](#) monitoring devices on bridges over the Han river after 196 people jumped to their deaths last year.

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