

# Minimum wage legislation could reduce suicide in Asia, study finds

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Suicide is a leading cause of death worldwide, particularly among young people. Risk factors for suicide encompass a wide range of elements including structural issues that cause disparities in income.

Research shows that increasing social welfare expenditure, for example via a mandatory minimum wage, reduced suicide rates in the United States. However, it is not known to what extent such a policy is relevant globally.

To investigate, CUNY SPH Professor Mary Schooling and colleagues at the University of Hong Kong led a study published in *Social Science and Medicine* assessing the effect of the introduction of a minimum wage in Hong Kong on suicide rates. Specifically, they compared suicide rates before and after the minimum wage was introduced, allowing for existing trends, economic changes and population structure.

The study found that a minimum wage legislation decreased [suicide rates](#) by 13% in Hong Kong. Six hundred thirty-three suicides were prevented for the period from May 2011 to December 2016, the majority in older working aged men. These results provide new evidence that, similar to findings in Western settings, minimum wages may help to reduce suicide in Asia, particularly for working age men.

"This study shows the importance of structural factors, such as social welfare policies, to suicide prevention in a global context," says Dr. Schooling.

**More information:** Abigail A. Rath et al, The impact of the minimum wage on suicide rates in Hong Kong, *Social Science & Medicine* (2022). [DOI: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2022.115236](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2022.115236)

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