

ATTEMPTED SUICIDE AMONG IMMIGRANTS IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES - AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction: The literature on suicidal behaviour among immigrants is scarce and little has been written from a comparative perspective.

Aims: The aim was to investigate whether suicide attempts are more common among immigrants than among their hosts, to map the differences between different immigrant groupings, and to analyse whether suicidal behaviours among immigrants and the populations of their countries of origin are related.

Methods: Data on suicide attempts (27,000 person-cases) originated from the WHO/EURO Multicentre Study on Suicidal Behaviour. Suicide attempt rates were calculated for each group. The immigrant groups were compared at each Center and across Centers. The completed-suicide rates of the home countries were compared to attempted-suicide rates in the immigrant groups using rank correlations.

Results: Twenty-seven of the 56 immigrant groups showed significantly higher suicide attempt rates than their hosts. Also, they tended to have similar rates across different Centers. There was a significant correlation between the country-of-origin suicide rate and the immigrant-group suicide attempt rate among those born there. However, Chileans, Iranians, Moroccans and Turks displayed high suicide-attempt rates as immigrants despite low suicide rates in the home countries.

Conclusions: The similarity of the groups' rates across Centers, and that of the suicidal behaviour in the countries of origin and among immigrants suggests strong continuity, which may be interpreted in cultural or genetic terms. The generally higher rates among immigrants in each Center and across Centers point to the influence of acculturative factors. Additional investigation into the specific characteristics of immigrant suicide attempters is needed.