

Suicides and the economic cycle revisited: a long term approach

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Suicides are a major concern for public health as they can be seen as an indicator of emotional self-reported satisfaction and a good predictor of overall well-being.

In this study we examine how different economic and social aspects affected Portuguese suicide rates during the past one hundred years. We will place this exercise in the specific historical context of the XX century in Portugal, emphasizing the role that economic recessions and expansions had. Other aspects like wars, health care availability, political and legal vicissitudes and demographic changes are also considered. We find a robust association between a decline in the growth rate of real output and an increase in suicide rates. In this regard, while male suicide rates are non-negligible influenced by economic downturns and other social variables, female suicide rates are in general more responsive to wars.

Keywords: Suicide rates, Portugal, mental health, austerity.