

Symposium | Suicide prevention : [Symposium 78] Suicide Prevention Laws in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan: Achievements, Challenges, and Future Directions

📅 Sat. Sep 27, 2025 3:50 PM - 5:20 PM JST | Sat. Sep 27, 2025 6:50 AM - 8:20 AM UTC 🏛️ Session Room 7 (Conference Room C)

[Symposium 78] Suicide Prevention Laws in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan: Achievements, Challenges, and Future Directions

Moderator: Shu-Sen Chang (National Taiwan University), Tadashi Takeshima (Taisho University)

[SY-78]

Suicide Prevention Laws in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan: Achievements, Challenges, and Future Directions

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[SY-78-01]

Historical development of Japan's suicide prevention: its attainments and challenges

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[SY-78-02]

Suicide Prevention Act and Action Plan of Korea

*Tae-Yeon Hwang¹ (1. Korea Foundation for Suicide Prevention (Korea))

[SY-78-03]

Suicide Prevention Act and Suicide Prevention Strategies in Taiwan

*SHU-SEN CHANG¹ (1. National Taiwan University (Taiwan))

[SY-78-04]

A Global Examination of Suicide Prevention Legislations

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Keywords : Suicide、Suicide prevention、Suicide prevention law

Suicide remains a critical global public health issue, accounting for over 700,000 deaths annually. In East Asia, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan have their national suicide rates above the global average level, with each recording a total number of 21037, 13978, and 3898 suicides in 2023, respectively. Recognizing suicide as a public health priority, these three nations have enacted comprehensive suicide prevention laws alongside other national strategies. Japan's Basic Act on Suicide Prevention, first introduced in 2006 and revised in 2016, represents a key national initiative in addressing the issue. South Korea followed with its Act on the Prevention of Suicide and the Creation of a Culture of Respect for Life in 2011, revising it multiple times in response to evolving challenges. Taiwan implemented its Suicide Prevention Act in 2019, marking a significant step forward in its national suicide prevention strategies. In this symposium, speakers from Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan will present the legislative history, implementation process, and subsequent revisions of these laws. They will discuss how these legal frameworks have shaped national suicide prevention strategies, resource allocation, and program development. Through an analysis of suicide trends before and after the introduction of these laws, the presenters will highlight key achievements, identify lessons learned, and explore ongoing challenges. The session will conclude with a panel discussion on future directions for strengthening suicide prevention laws and policies, focusing on the need for regional collaboration, a whole-of-government approach, and evidence-based interventions to further reduce national suicide rates.

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[SY-78-01] Historical development of Japan's suicide prevention: its attainments and challenges

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Keywords : suicide prevention、Japan、legal system

Japan has experienced three rapid increases in suicide deaths since the Asian-Pacific War: the first around 1955, the second around 1985, and the third beginning in 1998 and continuing until around 2011. In 2006, a sense of crisis over the increase in suicides led to the enactment of the Basic Act on Suicide Prevention by the Diet member's bill. Policies based on this Act, revisions to the Money Lending Business Act, and financial measures to encourage suicide prevention measures by local governments helped the number of suicides return to pre-surge level around 2016. The Basic Act was revised in 2016, transferring from the Cabinet Office to the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, and requiring prefectures and municipalities to establish suicide prevention plans. Furthermore, in 2019, a new act was enacted by a legislative act of the Diet. The purpose of this act is to designate only one general incorporated association as a designated corporation to promote research and study on suicide prevention and the utilization of the results. The enactment of this act has been criticized as an abandonment by the government of the fundamental principles of suicide prevention. Although suicide deaths in Japan have returned to pre-surge level, the country now faces a new challenge: the increase in suicides among students. Japan's suicide prevention policy should be improved. This can be accomplished by addressing several issues. These are "stagnation in analysis of the actual situation and policy research" and "stagnation in efforts that require a long-term perspective. In addition, a scientific and bottom-up suicide prevention network needs to be developed. Furthermore, survivors' participation in policy making is indispensable. It is necessary to consolidate the two existing suicide prevention acts into one act and make the necessary amendments.

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[SY-78-02] Suicide Prevention Act and Action Plan of Korea

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Keywords : Suicide Prevention、Suicide Prevention Act of Korea、National Suicide Prevention Policy

The Suicide Prevention Act was enacted in March 2011 as the suicide rate was surged. This act emphasizes the responsibilities of the central and local governments for suicide prevention and focuses on prevention and awareness improvement. To this end, the Minister of Health and Welfare establishes Action Plan every five years, and the central and local governments implement and evaluate annual suicide prevention plans. The government also perform the implementation of suicide surveys and psychological autopsies, integrate and manage suicide-related data, and establish and operate the national and regional suicide prevention centers to perform counseling, education, and crisis intervention tasks. The Suicide Prevention Act has been amended several times to reflect the latest suicide prevention programs, services and policies. The amendment in February 2022 included provisions of information on suicide attempt survivors from the police and fire departments to the local suicide prevention and community mental health and welfare centers (CMHC). The amendment in July 2023 incorporated measures for mandatory suicide prevention education in schools, public agencies, and medical and welfare facilities. The 5th Action Plan (2023-2027) aims to reduce the suicide death rate by 30% until 2027, through strengthening community-based suicide prevention policies and support for high-risk groups. This plan was structured around five major strategies and 15 key tasks. Firstly, in relation to the strategy of building Life Safety Network, the 5th Action Plan proposes expanding community-based suicide prevention programs and mental health screenings, mandating suicide prevention education, and introducing the Suicide Zero Town as a new project. The project is designed to implement community-specific suicide prevention programs at the township level, integrating various needed suicide prevention activities, including awareness campaigns, gatekeeper training, customized services for high-risk groups, and blocking access to suicide means.

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[SY-78-03] Suicide Prevention Act and Suicide Prevention Strategies in Taiwan

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Keywords : Suicide Prevention Act、Suicide Prevention Strategies、Taiwan

Taiwan's suicide rate more than doubled from 1990 to 2005, emerging as a major public health concern. In response, the National Suicide Prevention Center was established in 2005 to coordinate nationwide efforts. The Suicide Prevention Act, enacted in 2019, incorporated multiple strategies recommended by the World Health Organization, including public education, restricting access to means of suicide, improved media and online reporting practices, gatekeeper training, crisis hotlines, and aftercare services. Following the Act's implementation, Taiwan's suicide rate declined in 2020-2021. However, our research suggests this drop may have been influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, which restricted access to and reduced the opportunity to implement certain methods for suicide (e.g., charcoal burning), complicating assessments of the Act's effectiveness. Our qualitative study with journalists found that the Suicide Prevention Act influenced media reporting practices, such as avoiding sensational descriptions and using alternative terms for suicide methods (e.g., "falling" instead of "jumping"). However, concerns were raised about ambiguous regulations, difficulties in maintaining reader engagement without sensational reporting, and a perceived inability to report factual details. Journalists expressed a need for clearer guidance and concrete examples of violations. We also evaluated the national aftercare program for individuals who attempted suicide. While aftercare was associated with increased repeat suicide attempt hospital presentations, it also correlated with reduced suicide risk. These findings suggest that aftercare may encourage help-seeking and prevent suicide. Overall, these findings underscore the importance and complexity of evaluating the implementation and effectiveness of national suicide prevention legislation and its strategies in reducing suicide rates.

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[SY-78-04] A Global Examination of Suicide Prevention Legislations

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Keywords : suicide prevention、legislation、law、act、WHO recommendation

Background

Suicide, defined as the intentional act of ending one's own life, caused an estimated 700,000 deaths globally in 2019, accounting for 1.3% of total mortality and ranking as the third leading cause of death among individuals aged 15 to 29. Beyond individual loss, suicide imposes significant emotional, social, and economic burdens on families and communities. In response, the World Health Organization (WHO) has emphasized the importance of comprehensive national prevention strategies, as outlined in *Preventing Suicide: A Global Imperative* (2014) and *Live Life: An Implementation Guide for Suicide Prevention in Countries* (2021). While some countries have enacted suicide prevention legislation, the extent to which these align with WHO recommendations remains uncertain.

Method

The research team conducted searches on Google and Google Scholar using the terms "suicide prevention" in combination with "act," "law," or "legislation" to identify countries and regions with relevant legal frameworks. Retrieved texts were translated into English and analyzed. Drawing from the two WHO reports, twelve key domains were identified as benchmarks for effective suicide prevention. These included public education, responsible media reporting, school-based programs, treatment of mental illness and substance use, care for somatic conditions linked to suicide, early risk identification, crisis response, post-attempt intervention, employment support, and limiting access to lethal means. Each legislation was assessed for inclusion of these domains.

Results

As of April 30, 2025, eight countries—Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Guyana, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Taiwan, and the United States—and two regions—Puerto Rico and South Australia—have enacted suicide prevention legislation. Canada's 2012 law focuses solely on urging a national suicide prevention framework and addresses only public education. Guyana's 2022 law covers most domains, except employment support and limiting access to lethal means. Notably, only Taiwan and the Republic of Korea explicitly

address the restriction of lethal means in their legislations.

Conclusion

As a national policy instrument, suicide prevention legislation could play a critical role in integrating efforts and defining priorities for suicide prevention. Aligning such laws with the WHO's evidence-based guidelines, alongside ongoing monitoring and evaluation, is essential for enhancing and sustaining their effectiveness.