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Social capital and suicide in 11 European countries: an ecological analysis.

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Abstract

BACKGROUND: "Social capital" refers to the existence of voluntary community networks and relationships based on trust, and the use of these networks and relationships to enable positive social action. Social capital is positively associated with selected indices of mental health.

METHODS: We performed an ecological investigation of the relationship between social trust (as one component of social capital) and national **suicide** rates in 11 European countries (n=22,227).

RESULTS: There was an inverse relationship between social trust and national **suicide** rates (i.e. the higher the social trust, the lower was the **suicide** rate), after controlling for gender, age, **marriage** rates, standardised income and reported sadness.

CONCLUSIONS: Social capital may have a **protective** effect against **suicide** at the national level. Multi-level analysis, taking into account both group-level and individual-level variables, would help clarify this relationship further and guide appropriate interventions at both the group and individual levels.

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