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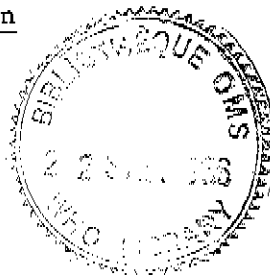
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SUICIDE TRENDS IN 24 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES 1972-1984

by

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## Introduction

This paper sets out to provide an overview of trends in suicide in 24 European countries over the period 1972-1984. All analyses are based on data collected by the various national governments and supplied to the World Health Organisation in Geneva. I am most grateful to W. Gulbinat, Senior Scientist in the Division of Mental Health, for making the suicide data bank available to me.

The use of official suicide statistics has been criticised and defended by innumerable social and medical scientists over the past century. There is probably common agreement that official statistics always underestimate the 'true' frequency of suicide and therefore the 'true' suicide rate. This is not, however, an insuperable problem. As noted by the WHO Working Group on Changing Patterns in Suicidal Behaviour in their 1982 Report [1],

"it is not the ascertainment of absolute rates that is so important, it is whether relative differences are due to systematic bias in reporting, or can be taken to mean real differences in the propensity to suicide of the different populations" (p. 2).

After assessing findings from a number of empirical studies, the Working Group "expressed confidence in the use of official suicide statistics from European countries for trend analysis ...." (p. 19). My own view is that is that, while the reliability of official suicide statistics might be adequate for establishing the magnitude and direction of changes over time within a particular country, apparent differences between countries cannot be treated with a similar degree of confidence. Ascertainment procedures and cultural biases are more likely to invalidate the latter type of comparison. For this reason, the analyses reported here are confined to secular trends and

variation by gender and age, separately for each country. I make no comments on differences in the incidence of suicide between pairs or sets of countries, although readers are, of course, free to use the data provided in any way they wish.

#### Trends in the suicide rate, 1972 onwards

Tables 1 and 2 show the annual suicide rate per 100,000 population aged 15 plus years for each year since 1972. Among men (Table 1) the trend has been upward in most countries, with the major exception of Czechoslovakia. In a number of other countries (e.g. Finland, Iceland, Portugal, Sweden) there has been no obvious pattern in the movement of rates over time. Among women also (Table 2) suicide incidence has tended to rise, although once again a number of contrary trends are also visible (e.g. Czechoslovakia, FRG, England and Wales). Figure 1 plots changes in the median suicide rate per 100,000 population aged 15 plus years from 1972-84. The trend for both males and females is clearly upwards. The median male suicide rate rose in all but three years of the series (the exceptions being 1974, 1980 and 1984), from 23.4 in 1972 to 33.2 in 1984 (an increase of 41.9%). The median female rate rose or remained steady in all but three years (1976, 1977, 1980), starting at 8.9 in 1972 and reaching 12.1 in 1983 and 1984 (an increase of 36.0%). Table 3 compares the mean suicide rate in 1983-84 (or the latest years available) with the mean rate in 1972-73. Significantly more countries registered an increase in the male suicide rate over the period than a decrease (19 versus 4;  $p < .001$ , 2-tailed sign test). Particularly noteworthy is the finding of a more than doubling of the rate in Ireland and Northern Ireland. In addition, Belgium, Iceland, Luxembourg and Norway reported increases of over 40%. Although the female suicide rate increased in more countries (16) than it decreased (8), the trend did not reach statistical significance. Again, there was a marked rise in Ireland (over 100%) and Northern Ireland (over 50%),

while a further two countries (Belgium, Portugal) registered increases of over 30%.

#### Male:female ratio

The ratio of the male:female suicide rate (per 100,000 population aged 15 plus years) in 1972-73 and 1983-84 (or the latest years available) is given in Table 4. In sixteen countries the ratio was greater in 1983-84 than in 1972-73 and in only four countries was it smaller. This trend was statistically significant ( $p=.012$ , 2-tailed sign test).

#### Changes in age-sex-specific rates

Mean age-specific suicide rates in 1983-84 (or the latest years available) are given in Tables 5 and 6. Among men (Table 5) suicide incidence tends to increase with age, with the peak rate found among 75 plus year olds. Only four countries have patterns which are markedly different: Finland and Norway, where no clear age-related trends are visible, and Poland and Scotland, where there is an inverted U-shaped pattern and the peak rate is in the 45-54 age group. It is also worth noting that in several countries with peak rates in the 75 plus age group, there is an additional peak in a younger age group, particularly 45-54 years (e.g. Austria, Czechoslovakia, FRG, Hungary, Sweden, England and Wales). Overall, nine of the twenty countries showed a peak in the 45-54 age group in 1983-84, compared to only three countries in 1972-73.

Table 6 presents age-specific rates among women for the latest years available. Again, the suicide rate usually increases with age, but the peak rate is found almost equally in the 65-74 age group (eight countries) and in the 75 plus age group (seven countries). In three countries the overall

picture is deviant: Denmark and Finland have an inverted U-shaped pattern, while there is no clear trend in Portugal. In common with the men, the female suicide rate is beginning to show an early peak in the 45-54 age group. Five countries showed this pattern in 1983-84 compared to only one in 1972-73.

Changes in age-sex suicide rates for men and women over the period under review are given in Tables 7 and 8, respectively. The findings are summarised in Table 9 and Figure 2. Among men, an increase in the suicide rate was noted in the majority of countries for all age groups. However, this trend only reached statistical significance in the 15-44 age groups. The greatest increase occurred in the 25-34 age group (+42.5%). Among women, there was an increase in the suicide rate of all age groups, except among 55-64 year olds. Again, the greatest increase was found in the 25-34 age group. Significantly more countries noted an increase than a decrease among 25-44 year olds, and 65-74 year olds. For all age groups up to 64, the rate of increase was greater for men than for women. Over the age of 64, either the difference was small (75 plus) or the female rate of increase exceeded the male rate of increase (65-74).

### Discussion

Between the early 1960s and the mid 1970s significantly more countries reported an increase in both male and female suicide rates than reported a decrease [1]. The same tendency has been noted for the period 1972-1984, although the trend reached statistical significance only for men. The doubling of the suicide rate in both the countries of Ireland might repay closer investigation.

Two major findings from the analysis of age-specific trends are also worth further consideration. The first is the emergence of a twin-peak

profile. Although suicide rates continue to show a direct relationship with age, more countries are now reporting a peak in a younger age-group (45-54 years) than formerly. In future years there might be a further consolidation of this twin-peak pattern, or else the age profile of suicide might change from a (more or less) linear to an inverted U-shaped pattern. The other finding to which attention should be drawn is the tendency for the 25-34 year age group to suffer the greatest increase in the suicide rate over the period under consideration. Given the concern expressed in the United States about a suicide 'epidemic' among teenagers and young adults (i.e. the 15-24 age group) during the last 10-15 years, a similar trend has been expected (and sometimes assumed to have occurred) in Britain and other European countries. This is clearly not the case. The rate of increase in the suicide rate has been marked in all age groups between 15 and 54 among men, and in the 25-44 age groups among women. The greater propensity to suicide in all these age groups requires a continuing research effort.

#### Reference

- [1] Changing Patterns in Suicide Behaviour: report of a WHO Working Group. Copenhagen, WHO Regional Office for Europe, 1982 (Euro Reports and Studies, No. 74).

Table 1. Crude suicide rate per 100,000 males aged 15 plus years  
in 24 European countries, 1972-1984

Country	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Austria	44.9	42.5	45.2	47.4	43.6	45.3	47.2	47.2	47.8	51.3	53.2	50.1	50.1
Belgium	28.2	27.3	28.1	27.4	28.4	32.0	34.8	35.6	36.0	37.0	37.6	37.7	40.7
Bulgaria	20.5	20.7	22.8	23.4	25.5	26.6	24.7	25.7	24.5	24.7	27.9	24.9	31.0
Czechoslovakia	47.1	44.0	44.9	42.6	40.8	43.2	42.4	40.1	39.8	40.6	40.2	39.6	37.7
Denmark	39.4	38.2	44.0	38.8	39.2	39.9	36.0	40.7	52.4	49.0	46.4	46.1	45.3
Finland	51.6	49.4	53.1	52.6	54.7	54.0	53.7	51.7	52.9	49.2	48.5	50.1	N/A
France	30.7	29.9	29.9	30.0	29.8	30.3	32.0	35.0	35.9	36.5	38.9	40.6	N/A
F.R.G.	34.5	35.8	36.2	35.8	37.2	38.3	37.7	36.1	34.9	36.1	36.1	34.8	34.1
Greece	5.3	5.4	6.1	4.6	5.0	6.2	5.5	5.3	6.0	6.1	6.5	6.9	N/A
Hungary	67.6	67.1	74.5	70.7	73.9	71.6	77.5	82.1	83.1	82.3	80.7	86.5	87.3
Iceland	16.7	30.0	21.3	18.3	17.9	22.8	28.7	30.6	16.9	14.3	17.5	36.8	41.0
Ireland	6.3	7.3	8.7	9.7	11.6	8.6	9.2	12.3	11.9	13.2	14.6	N/A	N/A
Italy	10.9	10.8	9.8	10.4	10.5	11.7	12.2	12.8	13.1	12.7	N/A	N/A	N/A
Luxembourg	26.2	24.2	23.5	N/A	N/A	N/A	34.7	34.0	24.5	31.4	41.7	40.9	32.5
Netherlands	13.7	13.3	14.8	14.5	15.8	15.2	14.5	15.4	16.6	15.6	16.6	18.4	19.0
Norway	17.2	17.3	21.5	18.6	21.1	22.2	22.7	22.5	23.4	24.6	26.2	26.7	27.6
Poland	27.2	26.1	24.7	25.6	27.1	27.8	30.0	28.8	N/A	N/A	N/A	28.0	31.8
Portugal	18.9	19.1	18.5	18.9	19.6	19.5	20.1	21.2	15.5	15.5	16.4	19.5	19.4
Spain	9.2	8.5	7.9	8.3	8.4	8.4	8.3	8.5	9.2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sweden	37.3	37.4	36.4	35.2	33.6	35.9	33.1	35.6	34.5	30.7	34.5	33.7	33.8
Switzerland	37.0	35.9	38.1	42.4	41.5	43.7	43.7	43.7	46.0	42.0	43.4	45.1	44.0
UK - England and Wales	12.3	12.5	12.6	12.0	12.8	12.9	13.2	13.8	14.0	14.5	14.6	14.6	14.8
UK - Northern Ireland	5.9	5.8	7.3	6.8	7.9	7.1	7.0	9.9	9.8	N/A	10.0	15.3	12.7
UK - Scotland	13.1	13.8	14.1	12.1	13.3	13.1	14.5	15.2	16.8	17.7	18.8	17.6	18.3

N/A - Not Available

Source: WHO data bank

Table 2. Crude suicide rate per 100,000 females aged 15 plus years  
in 24 European countries, 1972-1984

Country	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Austria	18.6	17.5	18.5	17.6	17.0	18.8	17.8	18.2	18.3	18.4	17.5	18.6	17.8
Belgium	13.0	11.9	13.0	14.6	14.4	16.8	17.6	18.6	19.8	18.3	17.1	19.3	18.7
Bulgaria	8.8	8.9	9.7	9.5	10.4	10.2	10.0	11.2	10.3	10.1	11.0	9.2	11.9
Czechoslovakia	17.1	14.8	15.4	15.1	14.5	13.6	14.9	13.1	13.8	12.8	13.3	12.1	12.2
Denmark	22.8	23.8	23.6	23.6	22.6	22.6	23.7	24.9	27.9	26.5	26.1	24.9	25.7
Finland	12.8	13.1	13.3	13.2	12.9	13.3	12.0	12.1	13.2	11.9	13.0	12.1	N/A
France	12.0	11.2	11.3	11.5	11.5	12.6	12.6	13.4	13.9	13.9	14.7	15.3	N/A
F.R.G.	17.8	18.5	18.5	18.2	18.5	19.5	18.4	17.6	16.9	17.2	16.0	16.7	15.4
Greece	2.0	2.5	3.1	2.6	2.3	2.6	2.0	2.4	2.4	2.6	2.6	2.5	N/A
Hungary	26.4	26.5	28.9	27.2	30.2	31.7	33.5	33.4	33.2	36.1	32.9	33.1	32.2
Iceland	8.4	8.3	8.1	10.6	5.2	5.1	3.7	4.9	12.1	4.8	8.2	8.1	7.9
Ireland	2.4	2.7	2.4	4.1	4.8	4.7	4.9	4.1	6.1	5.4	5.2	N/A	N/A
Italy	4.7	4.4	4.5	4.4	4.5	4.8	4.8	5.4	5.8	5.1	N/A	N/A	N/A
Luxembourg	12.1	9.8	9.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	11.5	16.6	7.9	10.4	11.6	14.1	14.0
Netherlands	8.7	10.0	9.9	9.3	9.3	9.0	10.7	11.7	9.5	10.0	10.6	11.7	11.9
Norway	6.6	5.5	5.9	7.2	7.3	7.6	7.7	9.1	8.4	8.3	9.4	10.2	8.9
Poland	5.4	5.6	5.4	4.8	5.2	5.2	5.4	5.2	N/A	N/A	N/A	5.6	6.4
Portugal	4.8	5.5	5.8	5.5	5.0	5.9	6.4	6.3	5.0	5.9	6.2	6.6	7.5
Spain	3.1	3.1	3.0	2.7	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.8	2.9	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sweden	14.1	15.1	14.4	13.8	14.1	14.0	14.7	16.0	13.9	13.0	13.7	13.2	14.3
Switzerland	14.4	13.6	15.9	16.4	15.9	17.9	17.8	19.1	18.6	17.6	17.7	16.9	16.8
UK - England and Wales	8.0	8.0	8.2	7.6	7.5	7.9	7.9	8.1	8.3	8.1	7.2	7.0	7.0
UK - Northern Ireland	2.9	6.8	4.1	3.6	4.6	5.6	5.6	3.8	4.6	N/A	6.0	8.9	6.1
UK - Scotland	8.9	8.8	8.5	9.6	8.7	8.4	7.8	9.5	9.2	8.2	9.1	7.5	7.3

N/A - Not Available

Source: WHO data bank

Table 3. Changes in the crude suicide rate per 100,000 aged 15 plus years in 24 European countries, by gender (mean 1972-73 to mean 1983-84\*)

COUNTRY	MALES			FEMALES		
	Mean 1972-3	Mean 1983-4*	Change (%)	Mean 1972-3	Mean 1983-4*	Change (%)
Austria	43.7	50.1	+ 14.6	18.1	18.2	+ 0.6
Belgium	27.8	39.2	+ 41.0	12.6	19.0	+ 50.8
Bulgaria	20.6	28.0	+ 35.9	8.9	10.6	+ 19.1
Czechoslovakia	45.6	38.7	- 15.1	16.0	12.2	- 23.8
Denmark	38.8	45.7	+ 17.8	23.5	25.3	+ 7.7
Finland	50.5	49.3	- 2.4	13.0	12.6	- 3.1
France	30.3	39.8	+ 31.4	11.6	15.0	+ 29.3
F.R.G.	35.2	34.5	- 2.0	18.2	16.1	- 11.5
Greece	5.4	6.7	+ 24.1	2.3	2.6	+ 13.0
Hungary	67.4	86.9	+ 28.9	26.5	32.7	+ 23.4
Iceland	23.4	38.9	+ 66.2	8.4	8.0	- 4.8
Ireland	6.8	13.9	+104.4	2.6	5.3	+103.8
Italy	10.9	12.9	+ 18.3	4.6	5.5	+ 19.6
Luxembourg	25.2	36.7	+ 45.6	11.0	14.1	+ 28.2
Netherlands	13.5	18.7	+ 38.5	9.4	11.8	+ 25.5
Norway	17.3	27.2	+ 57.2	6.1	9.6	+ 57.4
Poland	26.7	29.9	+ 12.0	5.5	6.0	+ 9.1
Portugal	19.0	19.5	+ 2.6	5.2	7.1	+ 36.5
Spain	8.9	8.9	-	3.1	2.9	- 6.5
Sweden	37.4	33.8	- 9.6	14.6	13.8	- 5.5
Switzerland	36.6	44.6	+ 21.9	14.0	16.9	+ 20.7
United Kingdom						
- England and Wales	12.4	14.7	+ 18.5	8.0	7.0	- 12.5
- N. Ireland	5.9	14.0	+137.3	4.9	7.5	+ 53.1
- Scotland	13.5	18.0	+ 33.3	8.9	7.4	- 16.9

\* Except for the following countries (latest years in parentheses): Finland (1982-3), France (1982-3), Greece (1982-3), Ireland (1981-2), Italy (1980-1), Spain (1979-80).

Source: WHO data bank

Table 4. Ratio of male:female suicide rate (per 100,000 population aged 15 plus years) in 24 European countries, 1972-73 and 1983-84\*

COUNTRY	M:F Ratio	
	<u>1972-73</u>	<u>1983-84*</u>
Austria	2.4	2.8
Belgium	2.2	2.1
Bulgaria	2.3	2.6
Czechoslovakia	2.9	3.2
Denmark	1.7	1.8
Finland	3.9	3.9
France	2.6	2.7
F.R.G.	1.9	2.1
Greece	2.3	2.6
Hungary	2.5	2.7
Iceland	2.8	4.9
Ireland	2.6	2.6
Italy	2.4	2.3
Luxembourg	2.3	2.6
Netherlands	1.4	1.6
Norway	2.8	2.8
Poland	4.9	5.0
Portugal	3.7	2.7
Spain	2.9	3.1
Sweden	2.6	2.4
Switzerland	2.6	2.6
United Kingdom		
- England and		
Wales	1.6	2.1
- N. Ireland	1.2	1.9
- Scotland	1.5	2.4

\* Except for the following countries (latest years in parentheses): Finland (1982-3), France (1982-3), Greece (1982-3), Ireland (1981-2), Italy (1980-1), Spain (1979-80).

Source: WHO data bank

Table 5. Age-specific suicide rate per 100,000 males in 24 European countries, mean 1983-84\*

COUNTRY	AGE GROUPS						
	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
Austria	30.2	37.3	52.6	60.3	52.5	71.4	105.6
Belgium	16.0	36.9	37.1	39.8	44.6	60.8	94.6
Bulgaria	10.2	19.8	22.7	26.0	34.9	53.6	108.0
Czechoslovakia	14.8	31.1	38.3	48.1	43.4	62.6	100.1
Denmark	15.7	36.5	52.0	58.7	63.7	53.0	75.4
Finland	32.5	54.6	51.0	60.3	50.5	51.2	50.9
France	15.8	32.0	36.5	42.6	46.3	62.1	111.1
F.R.G.	19.4	28.3	33.7	40.1	38.1	48.9	73.5
Greece	4.1	6.0	5.5	5.4	9.9	9.9	13.6
Hungary	26.8	60.5	96.3	115.0	102.8	123.8	190.6
Iceland	(37.9)	(20.1)	(35.9)	(46.2)	(41.9)	(94.6)	(34.9)
Ireland	9.7	15.3	16.5	15.3	17.4	(13.8)	(10.5)
Italy	5.2	8.3	9.0	14.0	16.8	25.7	36.9
Luxembourg	(19.4)	(37.0)	(38.7)	(37.3)	(41.2)	(45.1)	(73.8)
Netherlands	7.3	17.9	17.9	20.6	25.2	27.9	45.7
Norway	23.4	23.8	21.5	33.2	38.4	29.3	25.1
Poland	18.5	34.0	34.2	36.0	30.0	27.3	26.8
Portugal	10.3	14.0	16.6	20.7	29.5	32.7	42.5
Spain	4.2	5.3	6.5	9.8	12.3	17.0	30.5
Sweden	16.3	34.0	34.4	43.4	32.8	39.7	50.7
Switzerland	33.7	39.5	40.2	48.8	51.4	59.6	64.8
United Kingdom							
- England and Wales	7.1	14.0	16.3	17.8	17.5	17.3	22.5
- N. Ireland	(9.2)	(12.4)	(15.2)	(12.9)	(16.4)	(18.0)	(18.8)
- Scotland	9.7	17.7	20.2	24.5	21.3	20.3	(18.1)

Note Rate in parentheses based on mean of <20 suicides per annum

\* Except for the following countries (latest years in parentheses): Finland (1982-3), France (1982-3), Greece (1982-3), Ireland (1981-2), Italy (1980-1), Spain (1979-80).

Table 6. Age-specific suicide rate per 100,000 females in 24 European countries, mean 1983-84\*

COUNTRY	AGE GROUPS						
	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
Austria	8.2	9.5	15.0	22.2	21.7	28.2	35.0
Belgium	4.1	12.8	18.5	26.5	27.7	27.9	25.7
Bulgaria	4.6	4.2	5.4	8.3	13.8	24.0	37.3
Czechoslovakia	4.1	7.2	7.6	12.8	16.1	21.9	34.9
Denmark	(4.7)	14.4	26.4	36.7	39.5	37.6	32.5
Finland	6.1	11.9	14.1	16.2	16.2	14.9	(9.6)
France	5.1	10.1	12.7	16.1	19.5	25.0	28.8
F.R.G.	5.8	9.7	14.1	17.3	21.1	25.6	27.8
Greece	(2.3)	(1.9)	(1.2)	3.1	(3.0)	(3.8)	(4.7)
Hungary	8.4	16.6	29.9	33.6	39.4	54.1	81.0
Iceland	(0)	(5.4)	(22.5)	(13.9)	(10.3)	(7.0)	(0)
Ireland	(1.9)	(3.8)	(7.9)	(8.4)	(9.5)	(5.6)	(2.6)
Italy	2.1	3.2	4.3	6.0	8.0	9.9	9.0
Luxembourg	(7.1)	(13.8)	(12.4)	(23.6)	(14.0)	(15.0)	(15.5)
Netherlands	3.5	9.8	10.6	15.6	17.3	20.2	16.4
Norway	(4.3)	(6.2)	10.3	15.1	16.1	11.2	(6.7)
Poland	4.2	5.6	5.8	7.4	7.0	7.2	6.3
Portugal	5.6	4.7	5.8	8.3	6.3	13.3	9.6
Spain	1.2	1.2	2.2	3.4	4.3	5.0	6.2
Sweden	6.2	13.5	14.9	19.6	15.5	16.5	11.8
Switzerland	7.9	12.6	16.6	20.8	22.2	23.7	21.4
United Kingdom							
- England and Wales	1.9	3.6	6.4	9.5	10.7	11.1	10.0
- N. Ireland	(3.0)	(6.7)	(8.0)	(7.5)	(16.3)	(7.5)	(6.4)
- Scotland	(1.9)	(5.5)	8.5	9.3	11.5	11.1	(7.2)

Note Rate in parentheses based on mean of <20 suicides per annum

\* Except for the following countries (latest years in parentheses): Finland (1982-3), France (1982-3), Greece (1982-3), Ireland (1981-2), Italy (1980-1), Spain (1979-80).

Table 7. Changes in age-specific suicide rate per 100,000 males in 24 European countries, mean 1972-73 to mean 1983-84\*

COUNTRY	AGE GROUPS						
	15-24 (%)	25-34 (%)	35-44 (%)	45-54 (%)	55-64 (%)	65-74 (%)	75+ (%)
Austria	+52.5	+27.3	+27.1	+17.1	-20.6	+11.7	+21.9
Belgium	+53.8	+26.9	+91.2	+49.6	+12.3	+ 0.1	+ 8.4
Bulgaria	+ 8.5	+81.7	+61.0	+43.6	+34.7	+ 9.4	+ 9.2
Czechoslovakia	-48.1	-10.1	-20.7	- 8.6	-15.7	- 5.2	- 2.7
Denmark	+25.6	+50.2	+16.1	+ 8.3	+ 9.3	+ 4.1	+23.8
Finland	+ 1.6	+20.3	- 6.6	- 5.2	-26.0	-15.0	-23.6
France	+105.2	+164.5	+107.4	+71.1	+51.8	+75.4	+176.4
F.R.G.	- 6.3	+ 7.2	- 2.3	- 2.4	-17.0	- 2.2	+15.4
Greece	(+64.0)	+62.2	(+83.3)	+ 3.8	+17.9	- 9.2	- 8.1
Hungary	+ 4.7	+25.5	+40.8	+33.7	+12.7	+20.8	+16.1
Iceland	(+161.4)	(+36.7)	(-17.8)	(+139.4)	(- 6.1)	(+240.3)	(-)
Ireland	(+203.1)	(+131.8)	(+166.1)	(+91.3)	(+64.2)	(+46.8)	(+38.2)
Italy	+33.3	+40.7	+15.4	+28.4	- 1.2	+ 3.6	+ 5.1
Luxembourg	(+921.1)	(+141.8)	(+43.3)	(+51.6)	(+32.9)	(-26.2)	(+1.0)
Netherlands	+17.7	+126.6	+46.7	+29.6	+16.7	+17.2	+23.8
Norway	+136.4	+84.5	+32.7	+32.3	+64.8	+42.9	(+42.6)
Poland	- 1.6	+30.8	+11.8	+ 9.4	-10.2	0	- 3.6
Portugal	+134.1	+75.0	+13.7	- 9.2	- 7.5	-23.2	-41.1
Spain	+82.6	+29.3	- 4.4	- 6.7	-15.2	-25.1	+ 7.8
Sweden	-10.4	+ 8.6	-18.5	- 7.3	-29.6	- 5.5	+ 4.3
Switzerland	+48.5	+52.5	+16.9	+22.9	+ 1.2	+ 7.8	-10.2
United Kingdom							
- England and Wales	+18.3	+44.3	+33.6	+29.0	+10.1	- 8.9	+ 9.2
- N. Ireland	(+162.9)	(+287.5)	(+108.2)	(+121.0)	(+27.1)	(+462.5)	(+683.3)
- Scotland	+20.0	+68.6	+44.3	+57.1	+17.7	+10.9	(+16.0)

Note Rate in parentheses based on mean of <20 suicides per annum in one or both time periods.

\* Except for the following countries (latest years in parentheses): Finland (1982-3), France (1982-3), Greece (1982-3), Ireland (1981-2), Italy (1980-1), Spain (1979-80).

Table 8. Changes in age-specific suicide rate per 100,000 females in 24 European countries, mean 1972-73 to mean 1983-84\*

COUNTRY	AGE GROUPS						
	15-24 (%)	25-34 (%)	35-44 (%)	45-54 (%)	55-64 (%)	65-74 (%)	75+ (%)
Austria	+34.4	+ 3.3	+15.4	- 3.5	-13.2	+ 8.0	+ 6.1
Belgium	+ 5.1	+77.8	+112.6	+94.9	+45.0	+18.7	+27.2
Bulgaria	+17.9	+20.0	+38.5	+ 6.4	-14.3	+20.0	+18.4
Czechoslovakia	-48.8	-20.9	-37.7	-21.5	-19.9	-20.7	-20.1
Denmark	(-24.2)	+110.8	+15.3	+ 3.1	- 0.3	+ 9.9	+67.5
Finland	-27.4	+ 8.2	+ 1.4	+ 2.5	-15.2	+ 6.4	(+ 3.2)
France	+15.9	+50.7	+49.4	+22.0	+14.7	+23.2	+41.9
F.R.G.	-13.4	-10.2	- 2.1	-23.8	-20.7	- 1.9	+ 1.1
Greece	(+53.3)	(+72.7)	(-29.4)	(+55.0)	(-11.8)	(- 7.3)	(+ 2.2)
Hungary	+18.3	+21.2	+51.0	+ 6.7	+11.3	+ 7.3	+20.7
Iceland	(-)	(-64.7)	(+150.0)	(+183.7)	(-44.3)	(-)	(-)
Ireland	(+58.3)	(+81.0)	(+192.6)	(+55.6)	(+239.3)	(+107.4)	(+85.7)
Italy	+ 5.0	+14.3	+22.9	+20.0	+ 8.1	+23.8	+25.0
Luxembourg	(+82.1)	(+115.6)	(+195.2)	(+80.2)	(-38.6)	(-25.4)	(+37.2)
Netherlands	+12.9	+55.6	+17.8	+19.1	+12.3	+37.4	+28.1
Norway	(+13.2)	(+21.6)	(+77.6)	62.4	(+94.0)	(+75.0)	(+91.4)
Poland	+ 7.7	+24.4	+ 1.8	+ 1.4	0	+ 7.5	+16.7
Portugal	(+124.0)	(+30.6)	+65.7	+43.1	-18.2	+46.2	(-13.5)
Spain	+50.0	-14.3	0	-17.1	-15.7	-18.0	+ 6.1
Sweden	-27.1	+19.5	- 5.1	- 1.0	-22.5	- 7.1	+ 6.3
Switzerland	+27.4	+17.8	+37.2	+ 6.7	+11.0	+42.8	- 4.9
United Kingdom							
- England and Wales	-63.3	-25.0	-12.3	- 9.5	- 5.3	- 2.6	+ 5.7
- N. Ireland	(+130.8)	(+148.1)	(+21.2)	(+63.0)	(+79.1)	(-21.9)	(+357.1)
- Scotland	(- 5.0)	(+20.3)	+ 2.4	-15.5	-27.7	+ 5.7	(-28.7)

Note Rate in parentheses based on mean of <20 suicides per annum in one or both time periods.

\* Except for the following countries (latest years in parentheses): Finland (1982-3), France (1982-3), Greece (1982-3), Ireland (1981-2), Italy (1980-1), Spain (1979-80).

Table 9. Summary of changes in age-specific suicide rates, 1972-73 to 1983-84

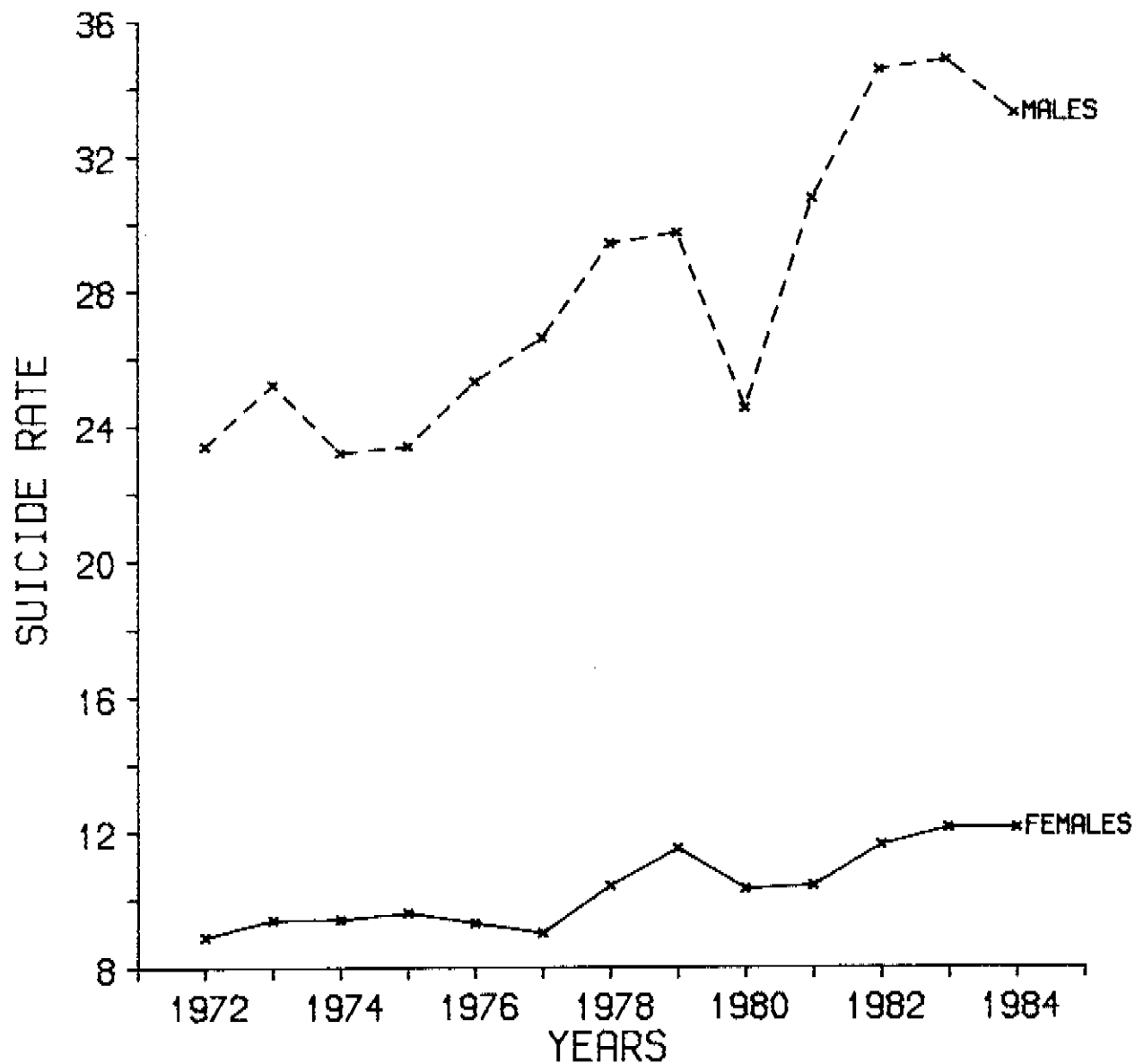
Age Group	Median Change (%)	Range of Change (%)	Overall change over period			Significance +
			Increase (N countries)	Decrease (N countries)	Same (N countries)	
<u>Males*</u>						
15-24 years	+22.8	-48.1 to +134.1	16	4	0	p = .012
25-34 years	+42.5	-10.1 to +164.5	19	1	0	p = < .001
35-44 years	+22.0	-20.7 to +107.4	15	5	0	p = .042
45-54 years	+25.7	-9.2 to +71.1	14	6	0	NS
55-64 years	+5.3	-29.6 to +64.8	11	9	0	NS
65-74 years	+3.9	-25.1 to +75.4	11	8	1	NS
75+ years	+9.2	-41.1 to +176.4	14	6	0	NS
<u>Females**</u>						
15-24 years	+6.4	-63.3 to +124.0	11	7	0	NS
25-34 years	+18.7	-25.0 to +77.8	14	4	0	p = .03
35-44 years	+15.4	-37.7 to +112.6	13	4	1	p = .05
45-54 years	+2.3	-23.8 to +94.9	11	7	0	NS
55-64 years	-9.3	-27.7 to +45.0	6	11	1	NS
65-74 years	+7.8	-20.7 to +46.2	14	4	0	p = .03
75+ years	+6.2	-28.7 to +67.5	12	6	0	NS

+ Sign test, 2-tailed

\* Based on 20 countries (Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg and Northern Ireland excluded)

\*\* Based on 18 countries (Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Norway and Northern Ireland excluded)

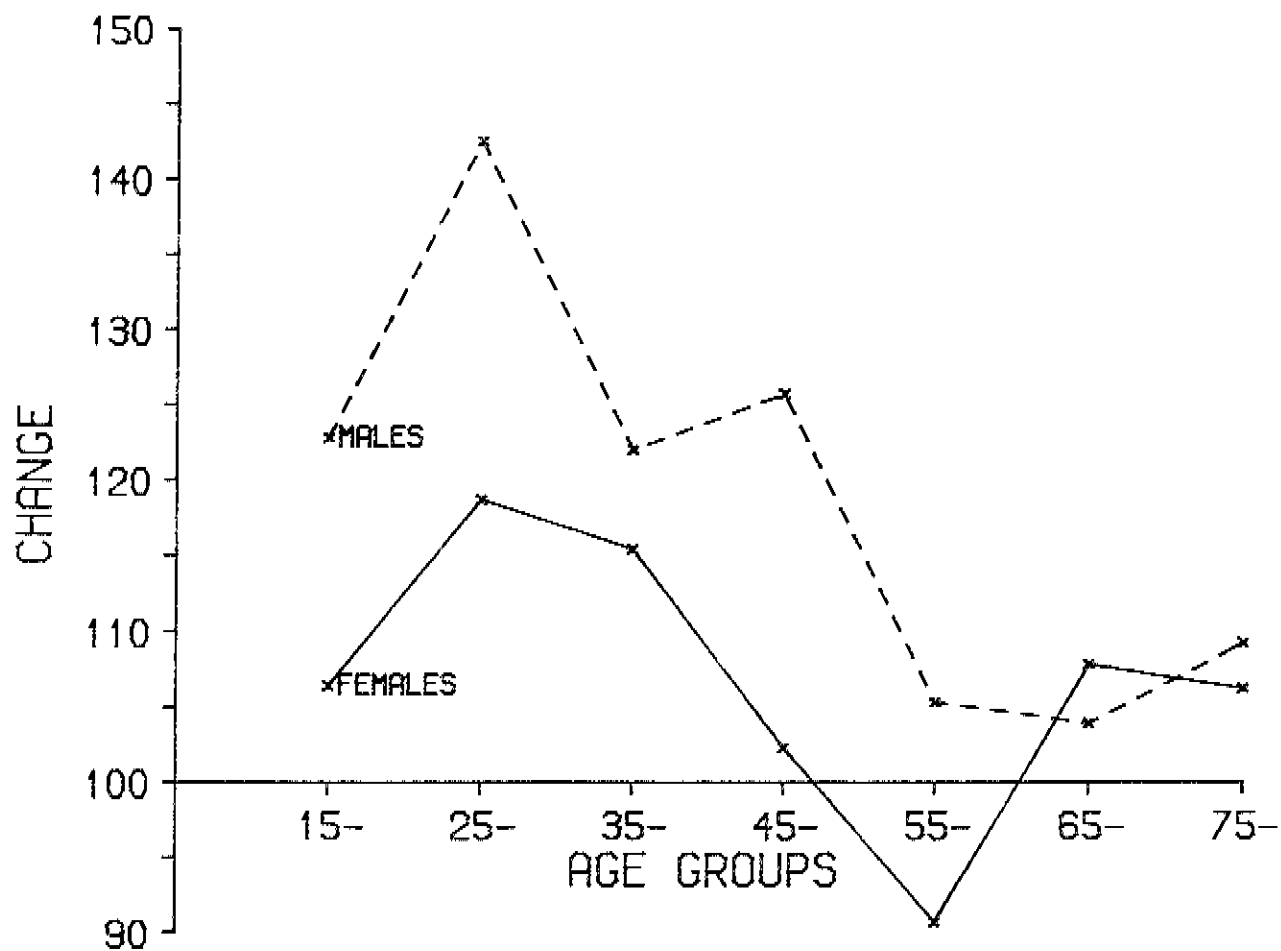
FIGURE 1: MEDIAN SUICIDE RATE PER 100,000  
POPULATION AGED 15 PLUS YEARS,  
1972-1984



Note

The median rate is based on 24 countries in 1972-1974, 1978 and 1979; on 23 countries in 1975-1977; on 21 countries in 1981-1983; and on 18 countries in 1984. Countries are excluded where data not available (see Tables 1 and 2).

FIGURE 2: MEDIAN CHANGE IN AGE-SPECIFIC SUICIDE RATES, 1972/3-1983/4



Note

Males : the median rate is based on 20 countries (excluding Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg and Northern Ireland)

Females : the median rate is based on 18 countries (excluding Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Norway and Northern Ireland)

Countries are excluded where rates are based on mean of <20 suicides per annum in the majority of age groups during either time period.