"How is Suicide Different in Japan?"

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Summary

In this study, we analyze suicide rates among OECD countries with a particular effort made to gain insight into how suicide in Japan is different from suicides in other OECD countries. Several findings emerged from our empirical analyses. First, the impacts of socioeconomic variables vary across different age-gender groups. Second, in general, better economic conditions such as high level of income and higher economic growth reduce suicide rate while income inequality increases suicide rate. Third, suicide rate is more sensitive to the economic factors captured by real GDP per capita, growth rate of real GDP per capita, and Gini inequality index than to the social factors represented by divorce rate, birth rate, female labor participation rate, and alcohol consumption. Fourth, female and elderly generation suicides are more difficult to be accounted for. Fifth, in accordance to the general belief, the suicide problem in Japan is very different from those of the other OECD countries. The impact of socioeconomic variables is greater in Japan than in other OECD countries.

Biography

Yasuyuki SAWADA (Ph.D., Stanford University) is an associate professor in Faculty of Economics, University of Tokyo and a faculty fellow of the Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry (RIETI). He is a specialist in development economics and applied micro-econometrics. His research interests include empirical investigations of household and firm behavior and microfinance and other financial programs under a wide variety of risks and uncertainties using micro-data from different countries such as Pakistan, Mongolia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, El Salvador, or Japan. Recently, he has been analyzing households’ risk-coping behavior after a disaster such as the Kobe & Chuetsu earthquakes, the Asian Tsunami disaster, and Avian Influenza in Vietnam.