

## EDITORIAL

## No letup in suicide rate

The National Police Agency announced last month that 32,845 people took their own lives in 2009, a rise of 596 from the previous year. This marks the 12th consecutive year in which the number of suicides has topped 30,000 — a sad persistent trend in Japan.

The police determined the likely causes of 24,434 suicides, or 74 percent of all cases, by such means as notes left by victims or information from people close to victims. Unemployment led 1,071 people to kill themselves, an increase of 65.3 percent; other life-related hardships led to 1,731 suicides, a rise of 34.3 percent.

The number of suicides jumped in October 2008 following the onset of the global financial crisis and has remained high since. Each month, from January to August 2009, saw more suicides than for the same month a year earlier.

The most frequent cause of suicide was depression, blamed for 6,949 deaths, a rise of 7.9 percent from 2008. This has been the No. 1 cause for three consecutive years. Since, the NPA says, a combination of factors often leads to suicide, it is likely that financial worries or difficult relationships and other problems at the workplace are responsible for many cases of depression.

Middle-aged people are the most susceptible to suicide. The number of suicides per 100,000 people was highest for people in their 50s (38.5 deaths), followed by those in their 60s (33.5) and those in their 40s (32.1). Ominously, the suicide rate for those in their 20s was 24.1 deaths, and it was 26.2 deaths for those in their 30s — both are a record high since 1978.

Apparently behind the suicides of young people is economic stagnation and a pervasive feeling of gloom about Japanese society. In addition to striving to identify and help those who may be suicidal, the government should put into place the

economic, social and education policies that can help give young people hope and meaning to their lives.

The Japan Times: Thursday, June 10, 2010  
(C) All rights reserved

[Go back to The Japan Times Online](#)

[Close window](#)