

Juvenile suicide rate in Japan hit record high in 2019

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The most common suspected reasons for suicides among people under 20 were problems at school, a government report says. | GETTY IMAGES

The number of people who died by suicide per population of 100,000 came to 3.1 for those under 20 in Japan in 2019, rising 0.3 percentage point from the previous year to hit a record high, a government white paper showed on Tuesday.

The suicide rate for all age groups, meanwhile, decreased for the 10th consecutive year to stand at 16.0, the lowest level on record dating back to 1978, according to the white paper approved at a Cabinet meeting on the day.

The total number of people who took their own lives in the country in 2019 dropped 671, or 3.2%, to a record low of 20,169, also down for the 10th straight year.

Still, the overall suicide rate stayed relatively high in Japan, compared with other advanced economies.

The annual report for 2019 does not reflect the effects of the coronavirus outbreak on suicide rates.

But as a survey by the health ministry has shown that the number of suicide cases increased year on year in three months from July this year, the ministry emphasized the need to analyze carefully the economic impact of the virus on suicide rates for this year.

In 2019, the number of suicides among people under 20 rose 60, or 10.0%, to 659, the highest level since 2000, while the number dropped 1.6 to 6.8 percent for older age groups.

In 618 of the 659 cases among people under 20, suspected reasons for suicide were problems at school in 202 cases, health issues in 138 cases and family troubles in 116 cases.

The number of people who took their own lives who were aged 40 to 64 was down for the 10th year in a row. In the age category, the most common suspected reason for suicide was health problems. Financial and living-related problems, including suffering from multiple debts, were also common for men, and family problems, including problems in marital relationships, for women.

Health problems were also the most common reason for suicide by older people.

The report also analyzed suicides among middle aged and older people between 2009 and 2019. In all of three age groups analyzed — 40 to 64,

65 to 74 and 75 or older — health problems were the most common suspected reasons, accounting for about 50% of cases.

But for the second most common reasons, financial and living-related problems were cited by the age groups of 40 to 64 and 65 to 74, while family problems were cited by the age group of 75 or older, the report said.

If you or someone you know is in crisis and needs help, resources are available. In case of an emergency, please call 119 in Japan for immediate assistance. The TELL Lifeline is available for those who need free and anonymous counseling at 03-5774-0992. You can also visit telljp.com. For those in other countries, visit www.suicide.org/international-suicide-hotlines.html for a detailed list of resources and assistance.

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