

Celebrity deaths increase suicide in Korea

16th January, 2013



Korea's Ministry of Health and Welfare has told reporters that 15,000 people a year kill themselves in South Korea. This means the country

has the highest suicide rate of any developed country in the world. Another 100,000 people end up in hospital after trying to commit suicide. Every day, about 43 Koreans take their own life. The ministry said that the biggest reason is stress at school or work. Other reasons include loneliness, and the sadness when another family member commits suicide. A church official said the high rate is a danger to Korean society because the country's birth rate is so low. He said: "If the high suicide trend continues, the whole society could find itself on the edge of a cliff."

This growing problem is made worse because of copycat behaviour when a celebrity commits suicide in Korea. Research shows that the suicide rates jumps around 30 per cent in the two months after a celebrity suicide. News reports of a star's suicide can result in 600 Koreans ending their own life. Many people say television is to blame because it spends too much time reporting on news of suicides and this gives people the idea they too can end their life. The Korea Times newspaper said the government should do more to help people. It said: "To lower the suicide rate, Korea should become a more compassionate and caring society even at the expense of a slower-growing economy."

Sources: Chosun.com / Asianews.it

Writing

A high suicide rate in a country means the government is doing something wrong. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

health and welfare / suicide rate / developed nation / hospital / biggest reason / trend / copycat behavior / celebrity / television is to blame / newspaper / compassionate

True / False

- a) Around 15,000 Koreans kill themselves every year. T / F
- b) S. Korea has the second highest suicide rate of all developed nations. T / F
- c) About 100,000 failed suicides end up in hospital. T / F
- d) A church official said many Koreans will jump off a cliff. T / F
- e) A Korean celebrity suicide leads to a 30% rise in the suicide rate. T / F
- f) A Korean celebrity suicide leads to around 600 other deaths. T / F
- g) Very few people blame television for the suicide rate. T / F
- h) The Korea Times said the government should do nothing. T / F

Synonym Match

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. reporters | a. finish |
| 2. nation | b. actions |
| 3. end up | c. carries on |
| 4. loneliness | d. country |
| 5. continues | e. at fault |
| 6. behaviour | f. reduce |
| 7. jumps | g. increases |
| 8. to blame | h. journalists |
| 9. lower | i. sympathetic |
| 10. compassionate | j. lack of friends |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think of the numbers of suicides in this article?
- b) What can society do to stop people taking their own lives?
- c) Is suicide a taboo subject in your culture?
- d) What do you think doctors say to people who attempted suicide?
- e) Is committing suicide being selfish?
- f) What do you think of websites that tell people how to end their life?
- g) What do you think of assisted suicide?
- h) Why might Korea "find itself on the edge of a cliff"?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. 15,000 people a year kill | a. up in hospital |
| 2. the highest suicide rate | b. is to blame |
| 3. 100,000 people end | c. rate is so low |
| 4. the biggest reason | d. of any developed nation |
| 5. the country's birth | e. behaviour |
| 6. copycat | f. too can end their life |
| 7. the suicide rates jumps | g. themselves in S. Korea |
| 8. Many people say television | h. and caring society |
| 9. this gives people the idea they | i. is stress |
| 10. a more compassionate | j. around 30 per cent |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think of celebrity copycat suicides?
- Why do you think copycat suicide happens?
- Someone said was is a fundamental human right. What do you think?
- How much is TV to blame for suicide?
- Should there be a limit on the time a TV station can spend on reporting a suicide?
- If you commit suicide, do you go to heaven or hell?
- What should the government do to prevent suicide?
- How caring and compassionate is your country?

Spelling

- 15,000 people a year kill mstsehvlee
- of any dplvedoe nation
- Other reasons lnuecid loneliness
- sctmiom suicide
- the high suicide rnted
- the whole seicyto
- coatpyc behaviour
- after a terclbeyi suicide
- gnendi their own life
- television is to elabm
- more compassionate and gancir
- a slower-growing ymoeonc

Answers – Synonym Match

1. h	2. d	3. a	4. j	5. c
6. b	7. g	8. e	9. f	10. i

Line-By-Line

With a partner, read the first line of the article. Talk about it. Repeat for the rest of the article.

Korea's Ministry of Health and Welfare has told reporters that 15,000 people a year kill themselves in South Korea. This means the country has the highest suicide rate of any developed nation in the world. Another 100,000 people end up in hospital after trying to commit suicide. Every day, about 43 Koreans take their own life. The Ministry said that the biggest reason is stress at school or work. Other reasons include loneliness, and the sadness when another family member commits suicide. A church official said the high rate is a danger to Korean society because the country's birth rate is so low. He said: "If the high suicide trend continues, the whole society could find itself on the edge of a cliff." This growing problem is made worse because of copycat behaviour when a celebrity commits suicide in Korea. Research shows that the suicide rate jumps around 30 per cent in the two months after a celebrity suicide. News reports of a star's suicide can result in 600 Koreans ending their own life. Many people say television is to blame because it spends too much time reporting on news of suicides and this gives people the idea they too can end their life. The Korea Times newspaper said the government should do more to help people. It said: "To lower the suicide rate, Korea should become a more compassionate and caring society even at the expense of a slower-growing economy."

Speaking - Stress

Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the best at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| • exams | • friends |
| • English level | • transport |
| • money | • your town / city |
| • family | • life |

Answers – True False

a	T	b	F	c	T	d	F	e	T	f	T	g	F	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.