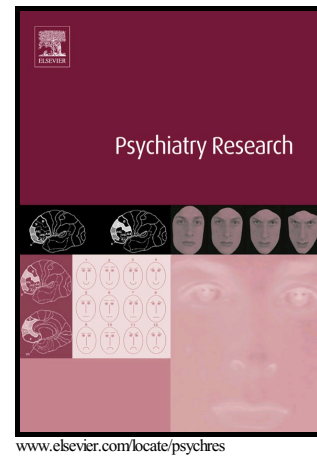


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A review of epidemiologic studies on suicide before, during, and after the Holocaust

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Key words: Holocaust, suicide, risk factors

Abstract

The available literature on the risk of suicides related to the Holocaust (1939-1945) and its aftermath differs in its time periods, in the countries investigated, and in the robustness of its sources. Reliable information seems to indicate that the risk of suicide for Jews in Nazi Germany and Austria during the pre-war period (1933-1939) was elevated, while information on suicide during the internment in the concentration camps is fraught with problems. The latter derives from the Nazis' decision to hide the statistics on the inmates' causes of death, and from the prevailing life conditions that impeded separation between self-inflicted death and murder. Reliable studies conducted in Israel among refugees who entered pre-state Israel, 1939-1945, and post-World War II survivors reaching Israel (1948 on), show a mixed picture: suicide rates among the former were higher than comparison groups, while the latter group shows evidence of resilience.

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