

## **Statistics of child suicide / by Arthur MacDonald.**

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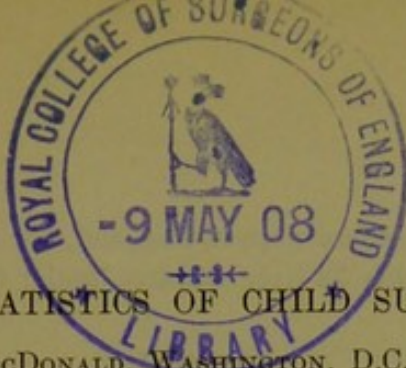
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## STATISTICS OF CHILD SUICIDE.

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The older writers scarcely mention child suicide. It was not until the nineteenth century that the matter was brought to the attention of the public.

## FRANCE.

In the following table of official statistics\* it will be seen that from 1839 to 1898 juvenile suicide increased in France.

The number of suicides given by the Minister of Justice is less than the reality, for parents are disposed to attribute the cause of death to some accident. Many attempts at suicide are not given truthfully to the police, parents and school-teachers alike being interested to conceal the facts. Even the police may abstain from reporting the truth in the cases where there is no suspicion of crime.

TABLE I.

Years.	All Suicides.	Children under 16.			Children from 16 to 21.		
		Total.	Boys.	Girls.	Total.	Boys.	Girls.
1839 . . . .	2,752	20	16	4	132	80	52
1849 . . . .	3,583	20	13	7	122	76	46
1859 . . . .	3,899	16	16	—	139	94	45
1869 . . . .	5,114	37	—	—	168	—	—
1879 . . . .	6,496	61	38	23	266	187	79
1889 . . . .	8,180	56	—	—	392	242	150
1898 . . . .	9,438	85	—	—	477	273	204

## ENGLAND.

From Table II, giving English official statistics,† it will be seen that there has been a relative increase of suicide for both adults and children from 1861 to 1890.

\* Statistique du Ministre de la Justice, France.

† Supplement to Fifty-fifth Annual Report of the Registrar-General.

From 1854 to 1856 there were in England, according to Griesinger,\* 5,415 suicides, of which 33 were children under ten years of age.

TABLE II.

Per Million Inhabitants (England).									
10-year Period.	All Ages.			Ages 0-10.			Ages 0-15.		
	Male.	Female.	All.	Boys.	Girls.	All.	Boys.	Girls.	All.
1861-70 . .	99	34	65	4	3	4	27	30	29
1871-80 . .	107	35	70	4	3	3	24	26	35
1881-90 . .	118	37	77	4	3	3	29	33	31

## PRUSSIA.

In Prussia † from 1788 to 1797 there was only one case of child suicide reported; from 1798 to 1807 there were three cases; and from 1812 to 1821, thirty-one cases. These figures, taken in connection with the fact that from 1900 to 1903 1,700 children committed suicide, show an enormous increase.

In Berlin ‡ from 1818 to 1824 there were 30 suicides under twenty years of age, 17 under fifteen, and 1 under ten years of age.

TABLE III.

Berlin.	Age 0-10.	Age 0-15.	Age 0-20.
1818 . . . . .	1	2	4
1819 . . . . .	—	2	8
1820 . . . . .	—	4	4
1821 . . . . .	—	1	2
1822 . . . . .	—	1	3
1823 . . . . .	—	4	3
1824 . . . . .	—	3	6
Total . . . . .	1	17	30

\* Die Pathologie und Therapie der psychischen Krankheiten, 1867.

† Casper, J. L., Beitrage zur medizinischen Statistik, etc.

‡ Baer, A., Der Selbstmord, 1901.



TABLE IV.

Year.	All Suicides. in Prussia.			Age, 0-10 Years.			Age, 10-15 Years.			Age, 15-20 Years.			Age, 20-25 Years.			Number of Suicides to One under 15 Years.			Number (thousands) of In- habitants to One Suicide under 15 Years.		
	Male.	Female.	Total.	Boys.	Girls.	All.	Boys.	Girls.	All.	Boys.	Girls.	All.	Boys.	Girls.	All.	Men.	Women.	All.	Male.	Female.	All.
1869 . . . . .	2,570	616	3,186	2	1	3	23	5	28	25	6	31	142	61	203	103	103	103	479.8	2,044.2	782.6
1870 . . . . .	2,334	629	2,963	3	-	3	25	5	30	28	5	33	126	59	185	83	126	90	431.8	2,478.9	742.0
1871 . . . . .	2,183	540	2,723	1	1	2	24	7	31	25	8	33	125	55	180	83	68	83	485.8	1,560.8	746.4
1872 . . . . .	2,363	587	2,950	4	-	4	38	3	41	42	3	45	130	57	187	56	196	66	290.4	4,184.1	550.0
1873 . . . . .	2,216	610	2,826	1	1	2	37	10	47	38	11	49	118	62	180	58	55	57	323.6	1,150.0	509.2
1874 . . . . .	2,527	548	3,075	4	-	4	19	6	25	23	6	29	144	54	198	110	91	106	540.6	2,131.2	869.6
1875 . . . . .	2,683	595	3,278	-	2	2	26	7	33	26	9	35	156	59	215	103	66	94	484.5	1,439.3	730.0
1876 . . . . .	3,189	728	3,917	3	1	4	39	6	45	42	7	49	168	54	222	76	104	80	304.0	1,876.4	528.6
1877 . . . . .	3,559	771	4,330	2	2	4	33	9	42	35	11	46	200	88	288	102	70	94	370.3	1,213.7	571.9
1878 . . . . .	3,827	862	4,689	3	1	4	37	14	51	40	15	55	212	87	299	96	58	85	328.0	901.0	484.3
1879 . . . . .	3,729	818	4,547	3	-	3	34	8	42	37	8	45	182	72	254	101	102	101	358.7	1,710.3	599.0
1880 . . . . .	3,878	891	4,769	4	-	4	49	18	67	53	18	71	193	95	288	73	50	67	252.5	767.8	383.2
1881 . . . . .	4,044	914	4,958	4	1	5	53	9	62	57	10	67	207	97	304	71	91	74	236.2	1,392.2	408.7
1882 . . . . .	4,112	960	5,072	5	1	6	48	11	59	53	12	65	258	104	362	78	80	78	255.5	1,668.4	424.0
1883 . . . . .	4,933	1,238	6,171	-	-	-	53	23	76	53	23	76	271	139	410	93	54	81	257.1	614.0	365.1
1884 . . . . .	4,691	1,209	5,900	2	2	4	44	19	63	46	21	67	233	128	361	102	58	88	298.2	677.8	417.2
1885 . . . . .	4,811	1,217	6,028	2	1	3	35	10	45	37	11	48	245	112	357	130	111	126	374.1	1,306.1	587.7
1886 . . . . .	5,047	1,165	6,212	2	-	2	40	11	51	42	11	53	212	114	326	120	106	117	332.7	1,319.1	537.4
1887 . . . . .	4,703	1,195	5,898	2	-	2	37	14	51	39	14	53	220	129	349	121	85	111	362.1	1,047.6	543.2
1888 . . . . .	4,255	1,138	5,393	3	1	4	55	16	71	58	17	75	235	125	360	73	67	72	246.5	873.0	388.5
1889 . . . . .	4,430	1,185	5,615	1	1	2	49	8	57	50	9	59	278	104	382	89	132	95	289.5	1,668.9	499.8
1890 . . . . .	4,682	1,283	5,965	2	1	3	59	13	72	61	14	75	237	146	383	77	92	79	240.0	1,084.8	397.7
1891 . . . . .	4,931	1,269	6,200	1	1	2	64	15	79	65	16	81	276	135	411	76	79	77	227.8	959.9	372.4
1892 . . . . .	5,003	1,251	6,254	1	1	2	57	17	74	58	18	76	337	143	480	86	69	82	258.1	862.7	401.3
1893 . . . . .	5,135	1,274	6,409	4	1	5	49	14	63	53	15	68	295	160	455	97	85	94	285.6	1,046.3	453.4
1894 . . . . .	5,287	1,343	6,630	1	1	1	55	11	66	56	11	67	330	157	487	94	122	99	273.8	1,444.6	466.0
1895 . . . . .	4,896	1,278	6,174	4	-	4	46	9	55	50	9	59	265	142	407	98	192	125	311.1	1,790.5	536.7
1896 . . . . .	5,073	1,424	6,497	2	-	2	48	15	63	50	15	65	283	161	444	101	95	100	315.8	1,090.3	494.5
1897 . . . . .	5,117	1,379	6,496	4	-	4	44	15	59	48	15	63	293	144	437	107	92	103	334.1	1,106.9	518.1
1898 . . . . .	5,058	1,303	6,361	3	-	3	53	14	67	56	14	70	283	145	428	90	93	91	290.9	1,204.6	473.8
Totals . . . . .	121,266	30,220	151,486	73	20	93	1,273	342	1,615	1,346	362	1,708	6,654	3,188	9,842	2,747	2,792	2,718	9,839.2	42,114.8	15,782.2
Averages . . . . .	4042.2	1007.3	5049.5	2.4	0.7	3.1	42.4	11.4	53.8	44.9	12.1	56.9	221.8	106.3	328.1	91.2	93.1	90.6	328.0	1,403.8	526.1





Table IV is derived from official sources,\* and covers the period in Prussia from 1869 to 1898, and gives (1) the number of suicides for all ages, (2) the number up to ten years of age, (3) the number from ten to fifteen years of age, (4) all up to fifteen years of age, (5) the number from fifteen to twenty years of age, (6) the number of suicides to one under fifteen years of age, and (7) the number of inhabitants per suicide under fifteen years of age. This table, which covers a somewhat long period, shows a general increase of suicide for all ages, except for children under ten years.

The increase is relatively greater in the girls than boys, especially at ages ten to fifteen. This increase may be due to a general tendency toward the independence of women, as indicated by young girls going out more into the world of employment. Thus they encounter in tender years special difficulties and hardships which overburden their nervous systems and produce a feeling of despair.

#### CAUSES OF CHILD SUICIDE SPECIAL.

The general increase of all suicides does not correspond to that of child suicide in the same period. There seems to be no parallelism (see Table IV). This fact suggests that in the suicide of children the causes are not the same as in the case of adults.

General social conditions do not seem to influence the child, but his immediate surroundings have much effect upon his thought and feeling. If the family and school life go on without reference to the child's individuality and capability or in direct opposition to them, they may awaken in him a disposition to suicide.

#### BOYS AND GIRLS COMPARED.

In the thirty-year period (1869-98) the yearly average (see Table IV) is 5,049.5. For the men it was 4,042.2, and for the women, 1,007.3; that is, about 80 per cent. men and 20 per cent. women. Almost the same relation exists between the sexes and the whole population in the different age periods.

TABLE V.

For every 100 suicides in whole population, 80.07 are men, 19.22 women.									
"	"	"	"	"	children	0-10 years	78.49	are boys	21.51 girls.
"	"	"	"	"	"	10-15	"	79.00	" " 21.00 "
"	"	"	"	"	"	0-15	"	78.91	" " 21.09 "
"	"	"	"	"	youth	15-20	"	67.68	" " 32.32 "

\* Baer, A., *Der Selbstmord*, 1901.

But it will be noticed that this relation is changed in the case of youth from fifteen to twenty years of age, where the per cent. of boys is 67.68, and that of girls 32.32. This is at the age of puberty, when the life of youth is somewhat changed, affecting the girl apparently more than the boy.

As just indicated, Baer makes four-fifths of child-suicides boys, and one-fifth girls. Durand Fardel\* records 17 boys to 7 girls. In Leipzig from 1882 to 1888 it was 1 girl to 9 boys. Guttstadt's statistics give 240 boys and 49 girls. Morselli gives the following table:—

TABLE VI.

Sweden, 1847-55, for every one million suicides,	3.5 boys and 0.9 girls.
Denmark, 1865-71, " " " " "	28.0 " " 3.0 "
Prussia, 1869-72, " " " " "	10.8 " " 2.0 "
Prussia, 1873-75, " " " " "	10.5 " " 3.2 "
Saxony, 1847-58, " " " " "	9.6 " " 2.4 "
Belgium, 1840-49, " " " " "	1.5 " " 0.0 "
France, 1835-44, " " " " "	2.2 " " 1.2 "
France, 1851-60, " " " " "	3.6 " " 1.6 "
Austria, 1852-54, " " " " "	3.7 " " 0.34 "
Italy, 1872-76, " " " " "	3.2 " " 1.0 "
England, 1861-70, " " " " "	4.0 " " 3.0 "

All these children were under seventeen, except in England, where the ages were from ten to fifteen.

In Deutsch's † 200 cases there were 147 boys and 53 girls.

Thus suicide is more frequent among boys than girls. The struggle for existence is more acute for boys. The excessive ambition of parents affects the boys more than the girls.

#### AGES OF MOST SUICIDES FROM ELEVEN TO FIFTEEN.

Between the years of eleven and fifteen most of the suicides of children take place. Before eleven years suicide is exceptional. Here the child plays murder or suicide, just as it plays "Indian."

In the beginning of the school year suicide is exceptional. The child starts out with hope. At the end of the school year, vanity and fear of punishment may have produced their results.

\* Annales Med. Psych. 1, 1856.

† Archiv für Kinderheilkunde, 1903-04, Bd. 38, Seite 45.



## CAUSES OF SUICIDE.

Deutsch found the causes of suicide in his 200 cases as follows:—

TABLE VII.

Fear of punishment . . . . .	58	Punishment . . . . .	25
Bite of conscience . . . . .	28	Love . . . . .	11
Bad treatment . . . . .	18	Homesickness . . . . .	1
Sickness . . . . .	12	Discontented with calling . . . . .	5
Reading . . . . .	2	Unknown causes . . . . .	25
Sorrow . . . . .	5		

## METHOD OF SUICIDE.

Combining Sigert's cases with those of Deutsch, the methods of suicide are as follows:—

TABLE VIII.

Drowning . . . . .	70 cases	Hanging . . . . .	45 cases
Shooting . . . . .	45 "	Poison . . . . .	17 "
Sharp instruments . . . . .	3 "	Being run over . . . . .	11 "
Jumping from window . . . . .	47 "	Unknown ways . . . . .	14 "
Burning . . . . .	1 case		









