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SEX, ETHNIC AND ALCOHOL ABUSE DIFFERENCES IN SOUTH TYROLEAN SUICIDES: TWO PSYCHOLOGICAL AUTOPSY STUDIES

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Objective: The aims of the two pieces of work are to study whether any differences exist in the rates and characteristics of suicide by ethnicity, sex and alcohol abuse in South Tyrol, Italy.

Methods: Psychological autopsy interviews were conducted for suicides who died between March 1997 and July 2006.

Results: 332 individuals belonging to the three major South Tyrolean ethnic groups (Germans, Italians and Ladins, who speak a Rhaeto-Romance language) died by suicide.

Germans were 1.37 times more at risk to commit suicide than Italians (95% CI 1.04/1.80; $z=2.26$, $p<.05$). 69% of the suicides had attended school for less than 8 years, and Germans (OR 4.62; 95% CI:2.52/8.47; $p<.001$) were more likely to have lower education than Italians. A further comparison of 267 male victims with and without alcohol abuse in their history evidenced that alcohol abusers were 3.5 times more likely to have low educational attainment, 4.22 times more likely to have been unemployed or have employment instability and 2.29 times more likely to have job security than male suicides without alcohol use disorders.

Conclusions: The study indicates that suicide, an alarming health problem in South Tyrol, may require different preventive interventions for men and women, for those of different ethnicities and for people with and without alcohol use disorder.