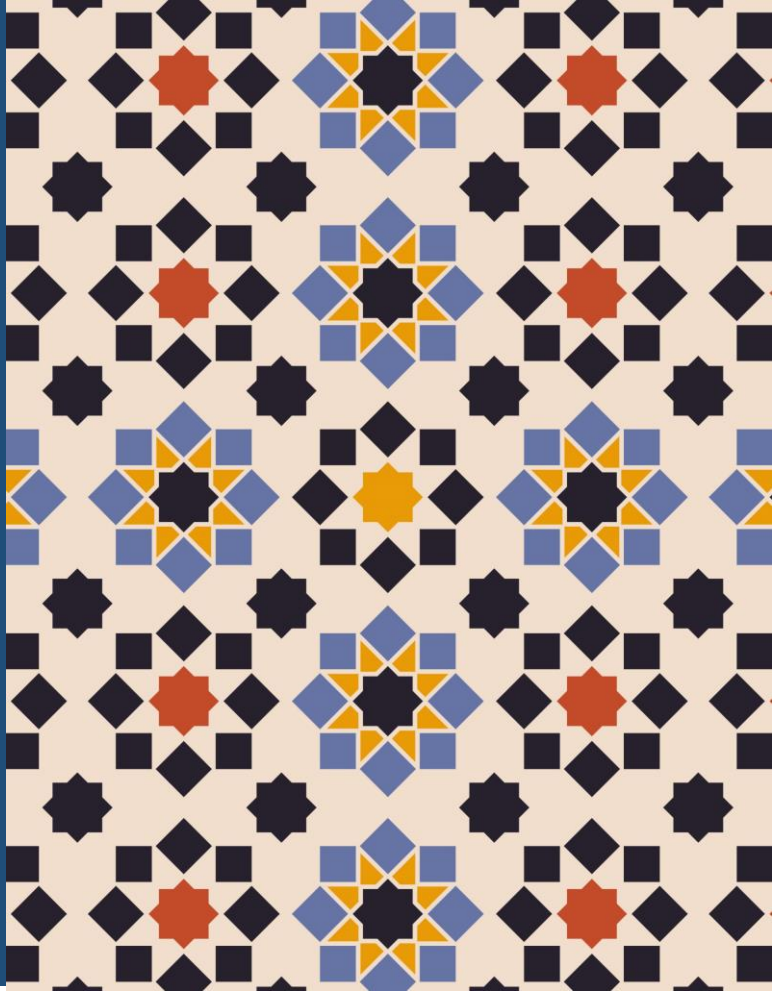


# Suicide, suicide attempts and self-harm in Moroccan Prisons

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The suicide rate in Moroccan prisons is lower than in high-income country prisons. By contrast, self-harm is a major morbidity factor in Moroccan prisons. The suicide rate is higher among men, but suicide *attempts* and self-harm are higher among women.



## BACKGROUND

High rates of suicide and self-harm are reported in prisons in Western countries, while fewer studies exist from a **non-Western context**. This study aimed to identify rates of suicide, non-fatal suicide attempts and self-harm in Moroccan prisons and to better understand the context, methods, tools, predictors and profile of persons engaged in the acts. At the time, there were **83,102 people** in Moroccan prisons.

## METHODS

This was a **mixed-methods** study conducted prior to an intervention.

The study consisted of:

- ✓ A systematic literature review
- ✓ An analysis of suicide case files over 4 years (2015-2018)
- ✓ A quantitative survey in 74 prisons on suicide attempts in 2017
- ✓ A quantitative survey in 21 prisons on self-harm over 3 months (Oct-Dec 2017)
- ✓ Interviews with 13 staff members
- ✓ Four focus group discussions with 30 staff members

We calculated suicide, suicide attempt and self-harm **rates** and presented **descriptive** data on the incidents.

We used **regression** models to explore the association between the number of incidents per individual and selected predictors, adjusting for clustering by institution.

## RESULTS

### Suicide

- Over a 4-year period, 29 detained persons in Morocco died by **suicide** (average annual suicide rate 8.7 per 100,000). Much lower than reported from high-income & Western contexts.
- Most were men under the age of 30. **Rates were higher among men** than women (33/100,000 vs 0.1/100,000)
- Hanging accounted for all but one case.

### Suicide attempts

- In 1 year, 230 suicide attempts were reported.
- **Prevalence of suicide attempts is higher among women** than men (0.46% vs 0.27%)

### Self-harm

- Over a 3-months period, 110 self-harm cases were reported.
- Cutting was the most common method.
- Persons with **life sentences** had almost twice the **repeated** self-harm rate than those on other sentences (see table).
- Persons with **repeat incarcerations** had 1.3 times the repeated self-harm rate than those in prison for the first time (see table).

## RESULTS CONTINUED

Poisson Regression (Cluster adjusted)				
Outcome = Number of self-harm acts per person				
	Univariable		Multivariable	
	IRR	CI	IRR	CI
<b>Sex</b>				
Male	-	-	-	-
Female	0.31	(0.06, 1.62)	0.35	(0.09, 1.27)
<b>Recidivism</b>				
First time	-	-	-	-
Repeat	1.44	(1.04, 1.98)*	1.33	(1.01, 1.76)**
<b>Sentence</b>				
Sentenced	-	-	-	-
Pre-trial	1.11	(0.59, 2.05)	0.99	(0.62, 1.61)
Life	1.58	(1.27, 1.97)*	2.06	(1.19, 3.56)**

\*p < 0.05; Adjusted for sex, recidivism, sentence & self-harm tool

## OTHER RESULTS

- The systematic literature review yielded **0 articles** about suicide or self-harm in Moroccan prisons and only 18 in the general community.
- Qualitative data demonstrated the **'normalization' of self-harm** by staff, and perception that it was a way to attract attention and "obtain privileges".

## CONCLUSIONS

This study provided a solid basis for:

- **Designing an intervention** including the development of a national prison **policy** and guidelines on suicide and self-harm & country-wide **training** program for prison staff.
- The qualitative results helped create an understanding of **staff attitude** & adaptation of the training content.
- Improving the **surveillance system** allowing for trend analysis and better-informed policymaking.
- This is the first published data on suicide and self-harm in Moroccan prisons giving insights into suicide and self-harm in a non-Western prison context.

## ADDITIONAL KEY INFORMATION

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