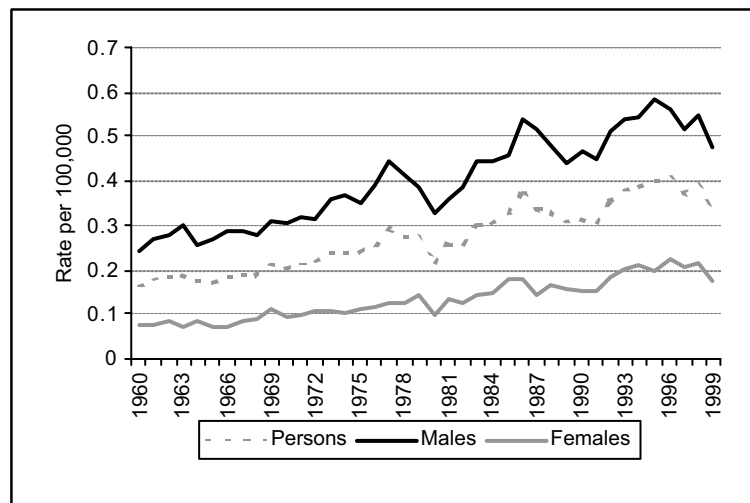


## SUICIDE RATES IN CHILDHOOD (UNDER 15 YEARS OF AGE)

Childhood is a period of life that has been largely unconsidered in suicide research, owing to the extremely low incidence of suicide. Indeed, the occurrence of suicide in young people under the age of 15 is rare, with a global annual suicide rate of only 0.4 per 100,000 persons. However, the rate of suicide among the youngest age group has more than doubled since 1960 (Figure 4). A similar trend can be observed among both males and females.

Figure 4. Suicide rates in childhood, selected countries, 1960-1999.



Since the 1960s, suicide rates among children have increased markedly in Old World, New World, and Scandinavian countries (Table 5). Increasing rates of suicide among children have also occurred, albeit to a much lesser extent, in most countries in all other regions. Some researchers have suggested that an individual's vulnerability to suicide remains latent until puberty (Verberne, 2001). An increase in suicide following puberty is evident in the increasing rates of suicide from the age of 15 years. Hence, increasing rates of suicide among people under 15 years may be associated with earlier onset of puberty, as observed by paediatric researchers (Herman-Giddens et al., 1997; 2001).

Table 5. Suicide rates (per 100,000) for persons aged less than 15 years, selected countries, 1960-1999.

	60-69	70-79	80-89	90-99	% change (60-69/90-99)
<b>Old World (Anglo)</b>					
England-Wales	0.05	0.05	0.04	0.04	-20%
Northern Ireland	0.12	0.02	0.20	0.18	+50%
Scotland	0.05	0.13	0.13	0.26	+420%
Ireland	0.01	0.03	0.11	0.40	+3900%
<b>New World (Anglo)</b>					
Canada	0.20	0.39	0.48	0.68	+240%
Australia	0.12	0.18	0.24	0.23	+92%
United States	0.18	0.29	0.42	0.53	+194%
New Zealand	0.11	0.21	0.52	0.82	+646%
<b>Scandinavia</b>					
Finland	0.22	0.46	0.40	0.39	+177%
Norway	0.10	0.16	0.56	0.67	+570%
Denmark	0.11	0.24	0.30	0.26	+136%
Sweden	0.16	0.26	0.15	0.22	+38%
<b>Eastern Europe</b>					
Latvia	-	-	0.94	0.87	-
Hungary	0.77	0.77	0.80	0.51	-34%
Bulgaria	0.32	0.52	0.85	0.88	+175%
Lithuania	-	-	0.63	0.76	-
Russian Federation	-	-	0.56	1.32	-
<b>Southern Europe</b>					
Greece	0.10	0.10	0.15	0.10	-
Italy	0.14	0.16	0.14	0.20	+43%
Portugal	0.17	0.37	0.45	0.18	+6%
Spain	0.10	0.11	0.20	0.20	+100%
<b>Western Europe</b>					
Austria	0.33	0.63	0.68	0.42	+27%
Belgium	0.12	0.17	0.44	0.36	+200%
France	0.15	0.27	0.31	0.20	+33%
Netherlands	0.11	0.19	0.21	0.23	+109%
Germany	0.41	0.63	0.60	0.33	-20%
Switzerland	0.35	0.48	0.52	0.30	+14%
<b>Latin America</b>					
Brazil					-
<b>Asia</b>					
Japan	0.25	0.31	0.31	0.32	+28%
Hong Kong	0.13	0.16	0.20	0.51	+292%
South Korea	-	-	0.27	0.54	-
Singapore	0.18	0.31	0.34	0.47	+161%