

## RATES OF HOMICIDE AND SUICIDE ON MAJOR NATIONAL HOLIDAYS<sup>1</sup>

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*Summary.*—Rates of U.S. homicides and suicides during 1972–1979 were higher on 7 major national holidays except one for homicides and were lower for suicides, except New Year’s Day as Lester noted for 1972–1979.

Lester (1) reported temporal variation in homicide as well as suicide in the United States of America in the 1970s. Rates of homicide (per 100,000 population) were significantly higher and rates of suicide significantly lower on national holidays compared to similar days of the week in the same month. Later, Lester (2), using data for the period 1972–1979, reported that rates of homicide were generally higher on all of the major national holidays than average days of the year except Memorial Day, while rates of suicide were generally higher on all national holidays except New Year’s Day. To check reliability of Lester’s findings (2) for the period 1972–1979, i.e., eight data points for each holiday, the present note provides rates based on data given by the National Center for Health Statistics for the period 1972–1993. Thus, 22 data points were obtained for each holiday.

On an average day of the year, the rates of homicide and suicide were 27.9 and 33.7 (per 100 million per day), respectively. Likewise, on an aver-

TABLE 1  
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Holiday	Suicide			Homicide		
	Rate*	M*	SD	Rate*	M*	SD
New Year’s Day	39.9	92.3	11.3	46.1	106.8	17.9
Memorial Day	32.0	74.0	9.4	23.3	53.9	9.9
Independence Day	31.6	73.3	10.9	35.6	82.6	16.7
Labor Day	32.2	75.0	12.2	30.8	71.2	10.6
Thanksgiving	25.7	59.7	8.0	28.6	65.9	7.5
Christmas Day	29.2	67.5	9.7	31.7	73.2	12.3
New Year’s Eve	30.1	69.7	9.2	30.6	70.7	13.0
M Holiday	31.5	73.0	39.9	32.4	74.9	7.5
M Day	33.7	79.9	5.6	27.9	66.0	9.5

\*Mean numbers of suicides and homicides per day (per 100,000) and *SD*.

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age holiday, i.e., 7 holidays, of the year, the rates of homicide and suicide were both .6 (per 100 million per day). The rates of homicide and suicide for national holidays are shown in Table 1. It can be seen that the homicide rates were generally higher on all of the major national holidays except Memorial Day. Similarly, the suicide rates were generally lower except on all of the major national holidays except New Year's Day. Both findings support the 1987 conclusions of Lester.

#### REFERENCES

1. LESTER, D. (1979) Temporal variation in suicide and homicide. *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 109, 517-520.
2. LESTER, D. (1987) Suicide and homicide rates on national holidays. *Psychological Reports*, 60, 414.

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