Inequalities and Suicide Ideation during Recession Times
Anne-Sofie Hiswa˚ls
A-S Hiswa˚ls1,2, G Ghilagaber3, K Wijk4, P Öberg5, J Soares1, G Macassa1,2
1Department of Health Science, Mid-Sweden University, Sundsvall, Sweden
2Department of Occupational and Public Health Science, University of Gävle, Gävle, Sweden
3Department of Statistics, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden
4Community Medicine, Gävleborg County Council, Gävle, Sweden
5Department of Social Work and Psychology, University of Gävle, Gävle, Sweden
Contact: ahl@hig.se

Background
Suicide behaviour is a serious public health problem as it imposes economic and human costs to individuals, families and communities. Available evidence from some European countries indicates a significant rise in suicides related to economic recession. However, the debate continues regarding the role of unemployment in the reported suicide rates. In Sweden, very few studies have investigated the relationship between suicide behaviours and employment status in the context of the recent economic crisis although unemployment increased nationally and across different counties.

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between employment status and suicide ideation in Gävleborg, Sweden.

Methods
The study used data from a cross-sectional survey, Health in Equal terms, carried out in Gävleborg County in Sweden, 2010. A total of 4245 individuals, aged 16–65 years were included in the analysis. The relationship between employment status and suicide ideation was assessed using descriptive and logistic regression analyses.

Results
People who were not working had odds of suicide ideation of 4.21 (95% CI 3.14–5.64) as compared to those employed. Controlling for other covariates reduced the risk to 1.73 (95% CI 1.16–2.57) but remained statistically significant. In addition variables like anxiety, self-reported stress and young age were also associated with suicide ideation. However among the covariates, people who reported anxiety had the highest odds of suicide ideation.

Conclusions
This study found a statistically significant association between being out of work and suicide ideation. The association was largely explained by self-reported stress, anxiety, socio-economic and demographic variables. Policy-makers within the County need to pay attention to the health status of those out of work, especially during times of combined economic and labour market fluctuations.

Key messages
- Suicide ideation was more common among people out of labor force in Gävleborg County, Sweden.
- Further studies are needed to investigate suicide ideation among unemployed persons during times of economic and labor market insecurity.