



American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

Facts about Suicide

- Over 30,000 people in the United States die by suicide every year.
- In 2004 (latest available date), there were 32,439 reported suicide deaths.
- Suicide is fourth leading cause of death for adults between the ages of 18 and 65 years in the U.S., with approximately 26,500 suicides.
- Currently, suicide is the 11th leading cause of death in the United States.
- A person dies by suicide about every 16 minutes in the United States. An attempt is estimated to be made once every minute.
- Ninety percent of all people who die by suicide have a diagnosable psychiatric disorder at the time of their death.
- There are four male suicides for every female suicide, but twice as many females as males attempt suicide.
- Every day, approximately 80 Americans take their own life, and 1,500 more attempt to do so.

Youth

- Suicide is the fifth leading cause of death among those 5–14 years old.
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death among those 15–24 years old.
- Between the mid-1950s and the late 1970s, the suicide rate among U.S. males aged 15–24 more than tripled (from 6.3 per 100,000 in 1955 to 21.3 in 1977). Among females aged 15–24, the rate more than doubled during this period (from 2.0 to 5.2). The youth suicide rate generally leveled off during the 1980s and early 1990s, and since the mid-1990s has been steadily decreasing.
- Among young people aged 10–14 years, the rate has doubled in the last two decades.
- Between 1980–1996, the suicide rate for African-American males aged 15–19 has also doubled.
- Risk factors for suicide among the young include suicidal thoughts, psychiatric disorders (such as depression, impulsive aggressive behavior, bipolar disorder, certain anxiety disorders), drug and/or alcohol abuse and previous suicide attempts, with the risk increased if there is situational stress and access to firearms.

Older People

- The suicide rates for men rise with age, most significantly after age 65.

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- The rate of suicide in men 65+ is seven times that of females who are 65+.
- The suicide rates for women peak between the ages of 40–54 years old.
- About 60 percent of elderly patients who take their own lives see their primary care physician within a few months of their death.
- Six to 9 percent of older Americans who are in a primary care setting suffer from major depression.
- More than 30 percent of patients suffering from major depression report suicidal ideation.
- Risk factors for suicide among the elderly include: a previous attempt, the presence of a mental illness, the presence of a physical illness, social isolation (some studies have shown this is especially so in older males who are recently widowed) and access to means, such as the availability of firearms in the home.

Depression

- Over 60 percent of all people who die by suicide suffer from major depression. If one includes alcoholics who are depressed, this figure rises to over 75 percent.
- Depression affects nearly 10 percent of Americans ages 18 and over in a given year, or more than 19 million people.
- More Americans suffer from depression than coronary heart disease (7 million), cancer (6 million) and AIDS (200,000) combined.
- About 15 percent of the population will suffer from clinical depression at some time during their lifetime. Thirty percent of all clinically depressed patients attempt suicide; half of them ultimately die by suicide.
- Depression is among the most treatable of psychiatric illnesses. Between 80 percent and 90 percent of people with depression respond positively to treatment, and almost all patients gain some relief from their symptoms. But first, depression has to be recognized.

Alcohol and Suicide

- Ninety-six percent of alcoholics who die by suicide continue their substance abuse up to the end of their lives.
- Alcoholism is a factor in about 30 percent of all completed suicides.
- Approximately 7 percent of those with alcohol dependence will die by suicide.

Firearms and Suicide

- Although most gun owners reportedly keep a firearm in their home for “protection” or “self defense,” 83 percent of gun-related deaths in these homes are the result of a suicide, often by someone other than the gun owner.
- Firearms are used in more suicides than homicides.
- Death by firearms is the fastest growing method of suicide.

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- Firearms account for 60 percent of all suicides.

Medical Illness and Suicide

- Patients who desire an early death during a serious or terminal illness are usually suffering from a treatable depressive condition.
- People with AIDS have a suicide risk up to 20 times that of the general population.

Studies indicate that the best way to prevent suicide is through the early recognition and treatment of depression and other psychiatric illnesses.

Figures from the National Center for Health Statistics for the year 2004.

— For more information visit www.afsp.org or call 1-888-333-AFSP —

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) is the only national not-for-profit organization exclusively dedicated to understanding and preventing suicide through research and education, and to reaching out to people with mood disorders and those affected by suicide.