

# Suicide and Suicide Prevention Among Older Americans

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Source: CDC vital statistics

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## Key Issues in Suicide Prevention Among Older Adults

- Older adult males are at elevated risk for suicide in the United States.
- Suicide prevention among older Americans has been a relatively neglected area , except for older Veterans.
- There is a need for expanded research, programs, and focus on suicide prevention among older Americans.
- However, there is currently unprecedented attention to mental health, suicide prevention and crisis care in both the Administration and in Congress.

Source: CDC vital statistics

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## Suicide and Suicidal Behavior, United States, 2020

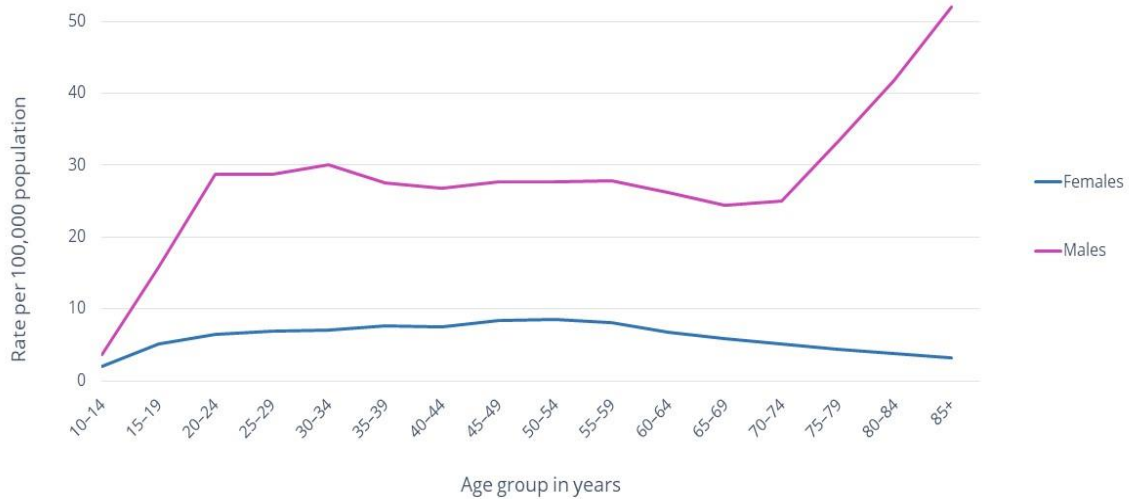


<https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/fatal.html>

<https://www.samhsa.gov/data/>

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/data/abes/tables/index.htm>

## Suicide Rates (Crude) by Age Group and Sex – United States, 2020



Source: CDC Vital Statistics

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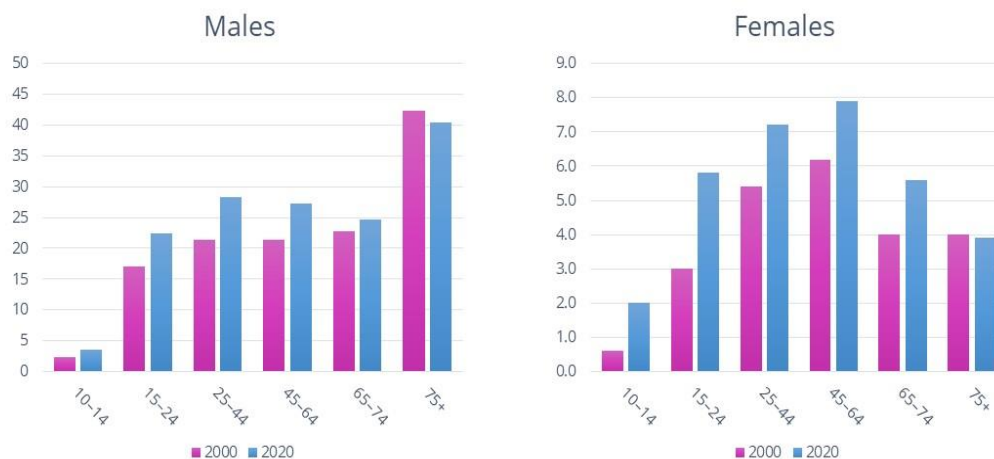
## Leading Causes of Death by Age Group – United States, 2020

Rank	10-14 Years	15-24 Years	25-34 Years	35-44 Years	45-54 Years	55-64 Years
1	Unintentional Injury	Unintentional Injury	Unintentional Injury	Unintentional Injury	Cancer	Cancer
2	<b>Suicide</b>	Homicide	<b>Suicide</b>	Heart Disease	Heart Disease	Heart Disease
3	Cancer	<b>Suicide</b>	Homicide	Cancer	Unintentional Injury	COVID-19
4	Homicide	Cancer	Heart Disease	<b>Suicide</b>	COVID-19	Unintentional Injury
5	Congenital Malformations	Heart Disease	Cancer	COVID-19	Liver Disease	Chronic Lung Disease
6	Heart Disease	COVID-19	COVID-19	Liver Disease	Diabetes	Diabetes
7	Chronic Lung Disease	Congenital Malformations	Liver Disease	Homicide	<b>Suicide</b>	Liver Disease
8	Diabetes, Influenza & Pneumonia	Diabetes	Diabetes	Diabetes	Cerebrovascular Disease	Cerebrovascular Disease
9	Diabetes, Influenza & Pneumonia	Chronic Lung Disease	Cerebrovascular Disease	Cerebrovascular Disease	Chronic Lung Disease	<b>Suicide</b>

Source: CDC Vital Statistics

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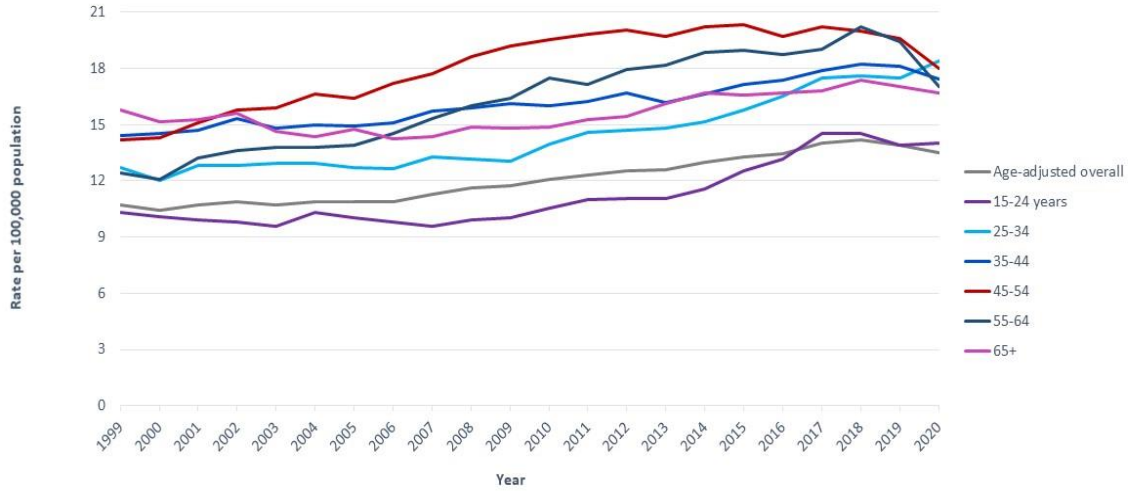
## Suicide Rates (Crude) by Age Group and Sex – United States, 2000 and 2020



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, Underlying Cause of Death 1999-2020 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released in 2021.

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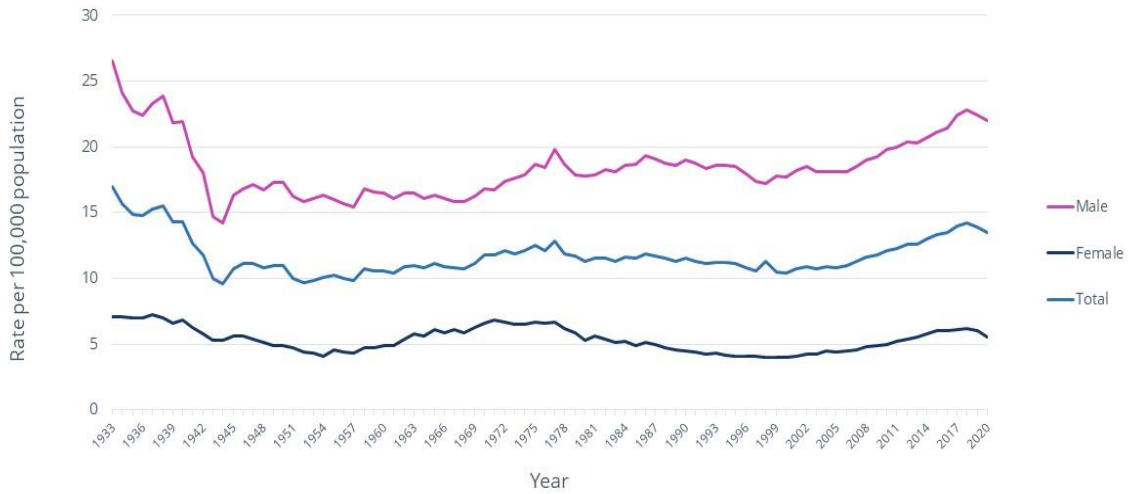
## Suicide Crude Rates Among All Persons by Selected Age Groups – United States, 1999-2020



Source: CDC Vital Statistics

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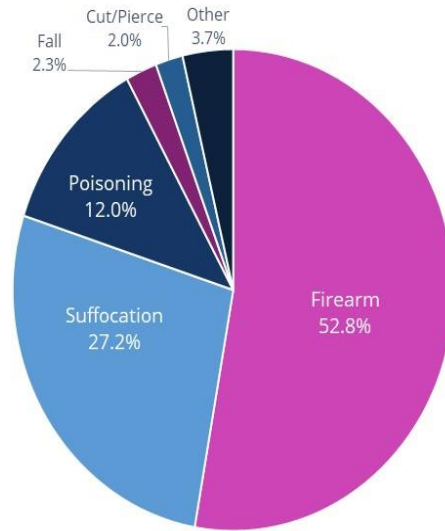
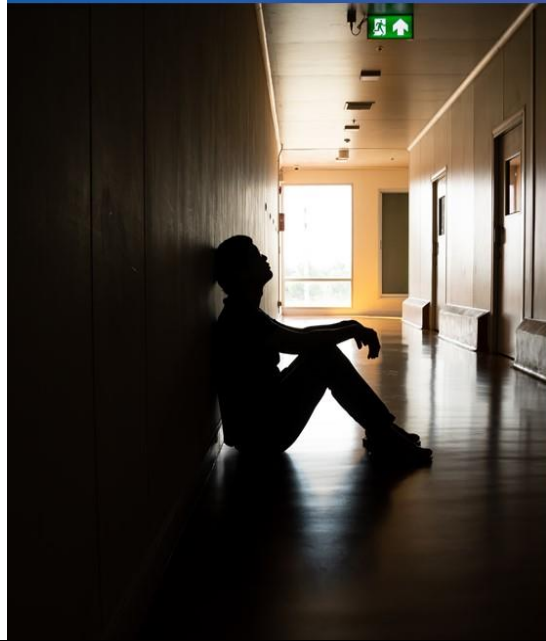
## Age-Adjusted Suicide Rates Among All Persons by Sex – United States, 1933-2020



Source: CDC Vital Statistics

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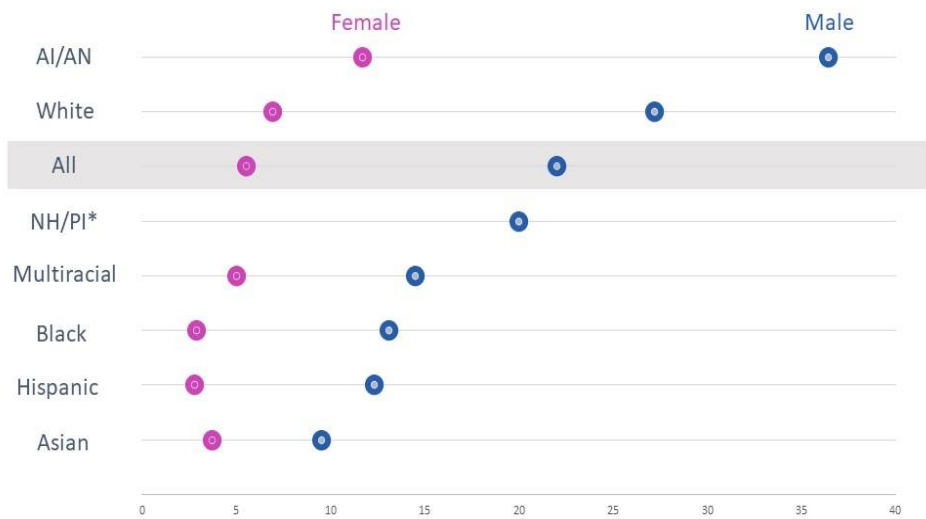
## Suicide by Method – United States, 2020



Source: CDC Vital Statistics

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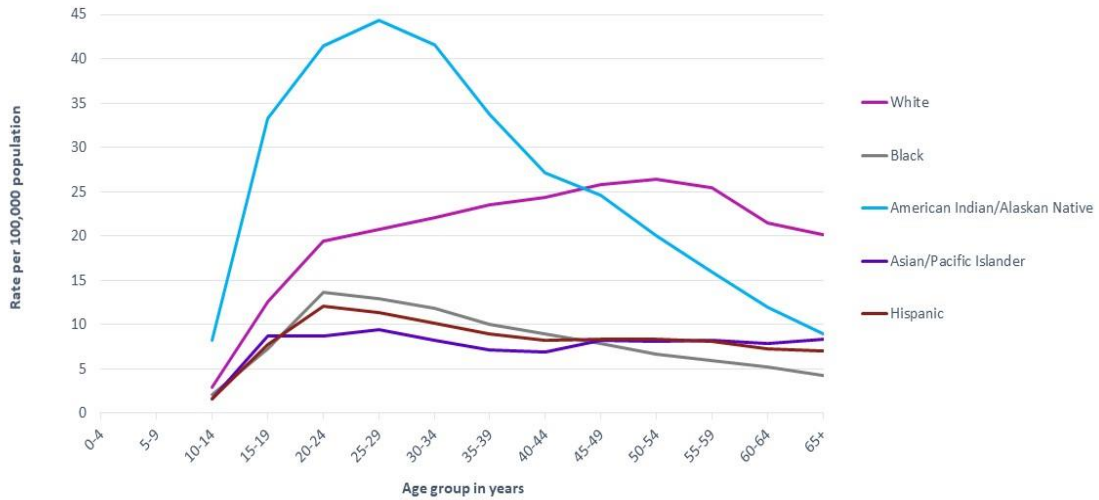
## Age-Adjusted Suicide Rates in 2020 Were Highest Among Non-Hispanic AI/AN Males and Non-Hispanic White Males



AI/AN= American Indian/Alaskan Native  
 NH/PI= Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander  
 \*Age-adjusted rates were suppressed for Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander females because of unstable rates due to small numbers of deaths (<20)

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Changes in Suicide Rates – United States, 2019 and 2020, MMWR

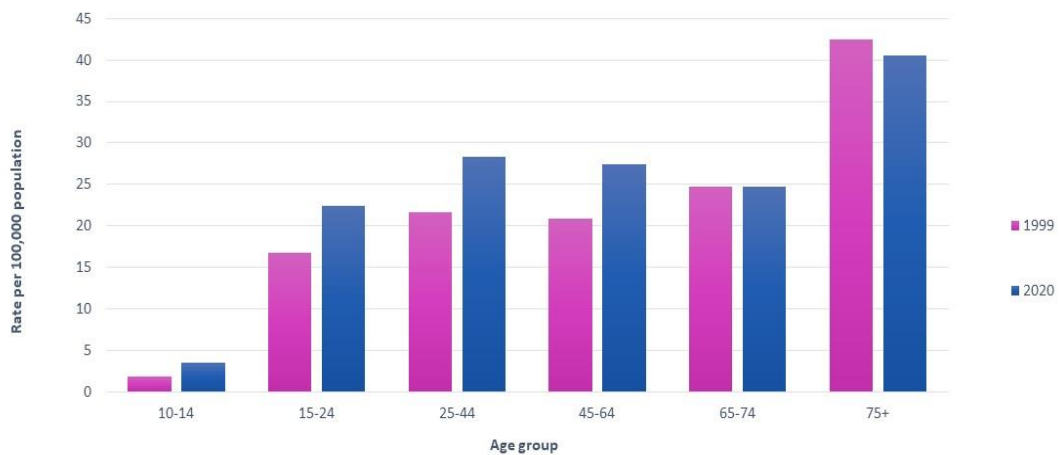
## Suicide Crude Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Age Group – United States, 2015-2020



Source: CDC Vital Statistics

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## Suicide Rates (Crude) Among Males by Age Group – United States, 1999 and 2020

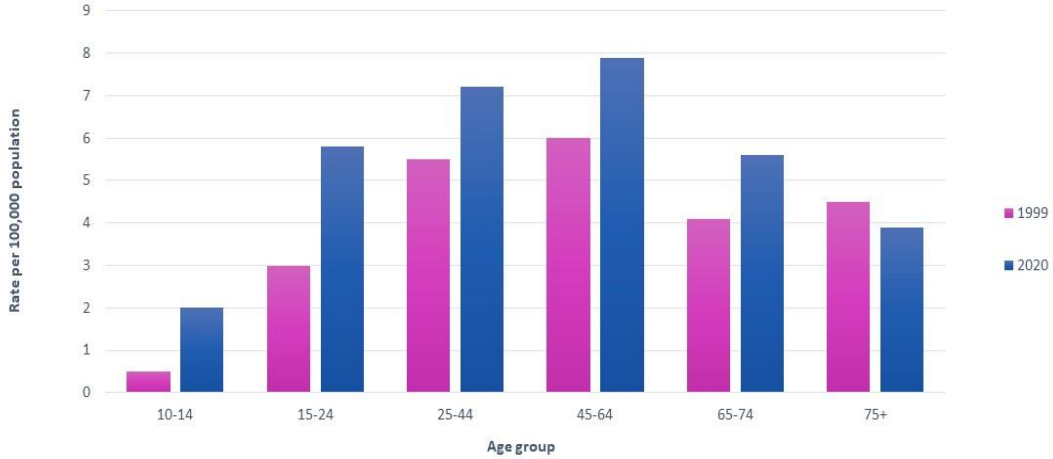


Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Underlying Cause of Death 1999-2020 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released in 2021.

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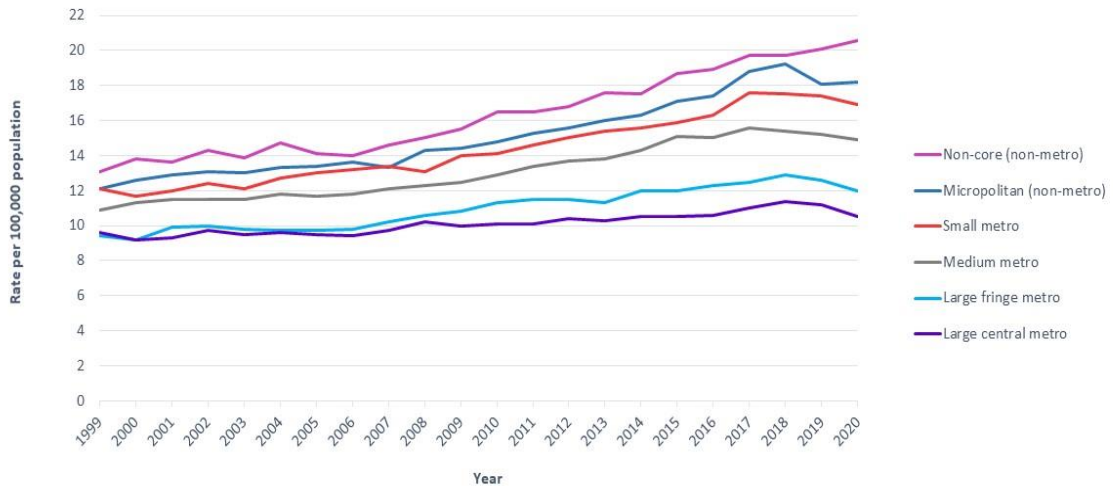
## Suicide Rates (Crude) Among Females by Age Group – United States, 1999 and 2020



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Underlying Cause of Death 1999-2020 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released in 2021.

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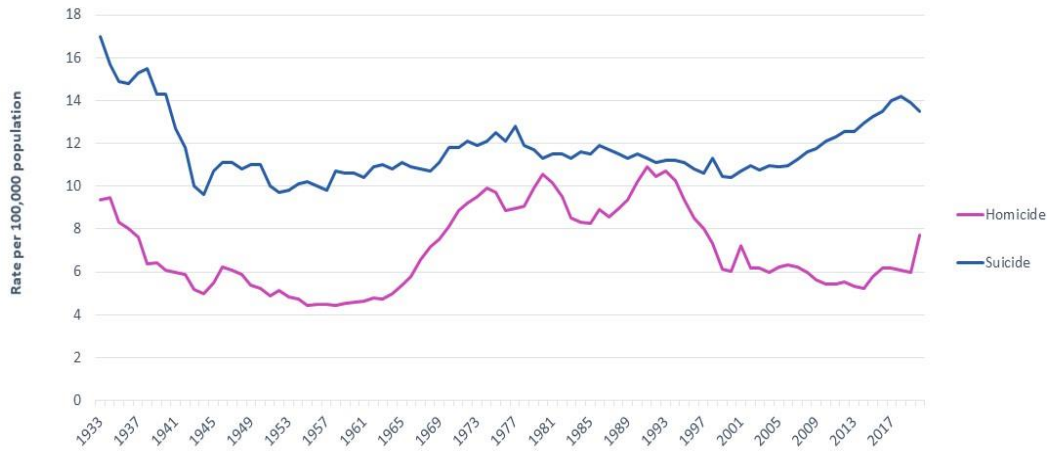
## Age-adjusted suicide rates by level of county urbanization among persons aged ≥10 years – United States, 1999-2020



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Underlying Cause of Death 1999-2020 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released in 2021.

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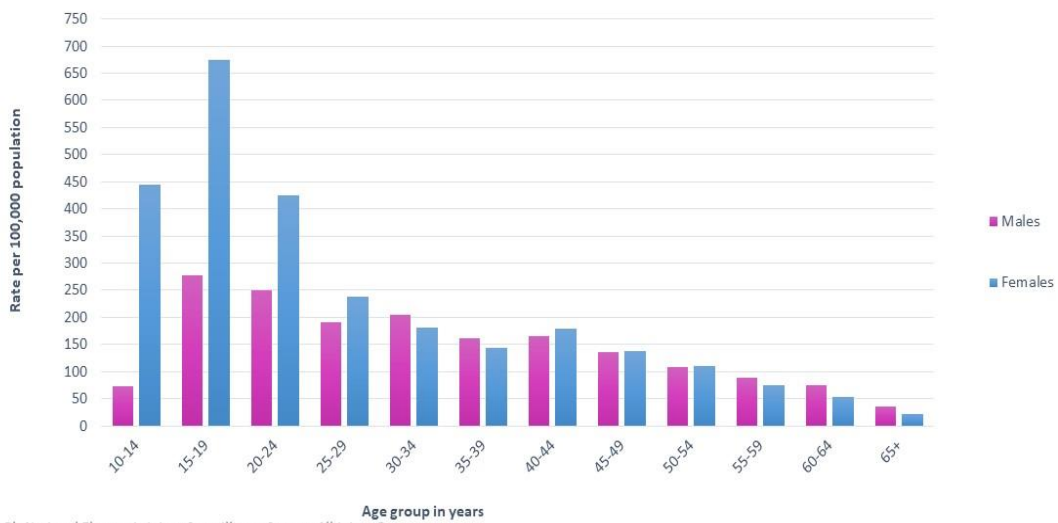
## Age-Adjusted Suicide and Homicide Rates Among All Persons – United States, 1933-2020



Source: CDC Vital Statistics

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## Self-inflicted injury among all persons by age and sex– United States, 2020



Source: CDC's National Electronic Injury Surveillance System-All Injury Program

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# Many factors contribute to suicide risk

Social Ecological Model

## Risk Factors



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# Many factors protect against suicide risk

Social Ecological Model

## Protective Factors



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## Suicide and Dementia

There is emerging research about suicide risk, and dementia diagnosis

- Increased risk in younger people diagnosed with dementia.
- Risk may be highest in the first year after a dementia diagnosis, particularly during the first three months; including in older adults diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment.
- Elevated in people with psychiatric comorbidities.
- Highlights the need for depression/suicide screening and follow-up, behavioral health services, advance care planning, and lethal means safety

Source: CDC vital statistics

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## Studies on Suicide and Dementia

- Althman D, Card T, Lewis S, Tyrrell E, Fogarty AW, Marshall CR. Risk of Suicide After Dementia Diagnosis. *JAMA Neurol.* 2022;79(11):1148–1154. doi:10.1001/jamaneurol.2022.3094
- Erlangsen A, Stenager E, Conwell Y, et al. Association Between Neurological Disorders and Death by Suicide in Denmark. *JAMA.* 2020;323(5):444–454. doi:10.1001/jama.2019.21834
- Cohen, D., & Molinari, V. (2010). The untold story: When caregivers kill. In G. Maletta & M. Agronin (Eds.), *Principles and Practice of Geriatric Psychiatry*. Lippincott: Philadelphia. 182.
- Cohen, D. & Kallimanis-King, B. (2010). A geriatric mobile crisis response team: a resilience promoting program for older adults living in the community. In B. Resnick, L. Gwyther, & K. Roberto (Eds.), *Resilience in Aging: Concepts, Research, and Practice*. Springer: New York.
- Gunak M, Barnes, D, Yaffe, K, et al. (2021). Risk of Suicide Attempt in Patients with Recent Diagnosis of Mild Cognitive Impairment or Dementia, *JAMA Psychiatry*, 78(6), 659-666.
- Schmutte, T, Olfson, M, Donovan T, et al, (2022). Suicide Risk in First Year After Dementia Diagnosis in Older Adults, *Alzheimer's and Dementia*, Volume 18 (2), 262-271.

## Resources for Suicide Prevention Among Older Americans

- SAMHSA Zero Suicide and National Strategy for Suicide Prevention grants
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center, [www.sprc.org](http://www.sprc.org)
- SAMHSA Older Adult Toolkits
- 988 and Crisis Services
- The 1-800-MEDICARE help line supports a “handoff” to 988 in crisis situations

## Joint Commission Sentinel Event Alert 56: *Detecting and Treating Suicide Ideation in All Settings*

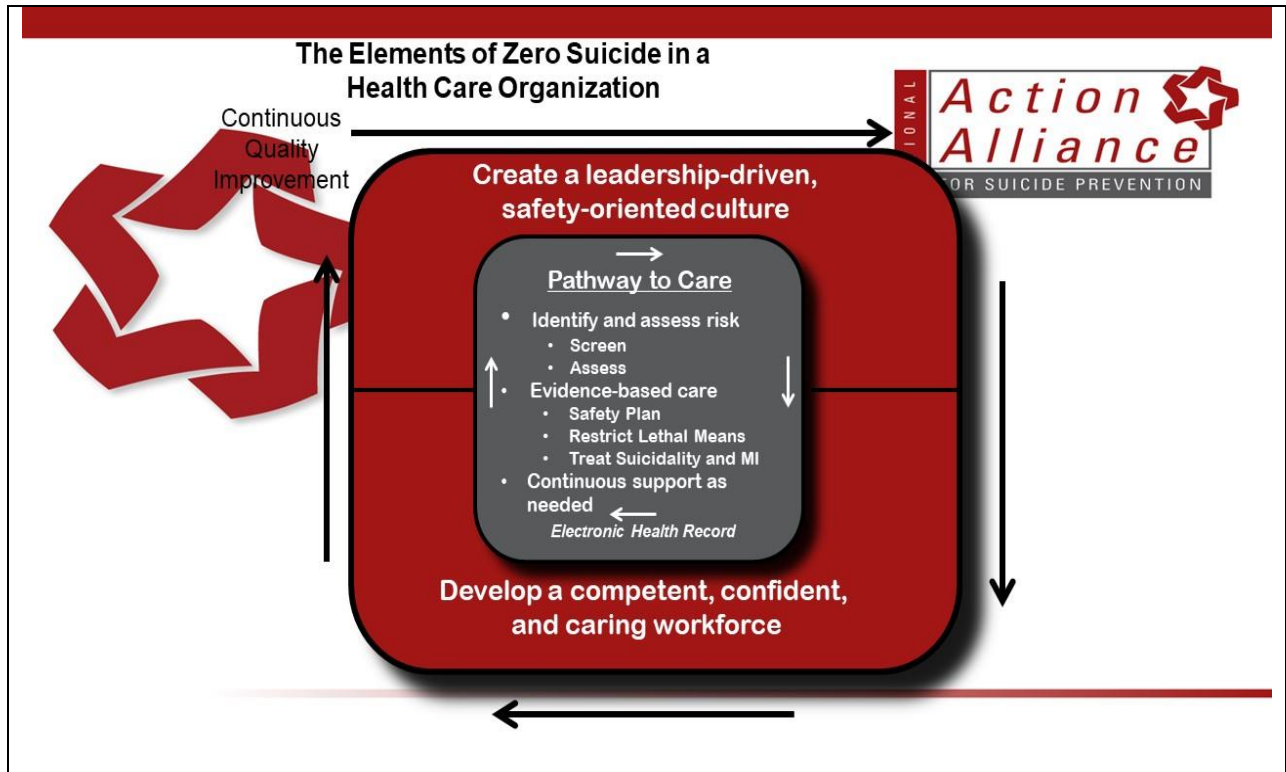
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*“The suggested actions in this alert cover suicide ideation detection, as well as the screening, risk assessment, safety, treatment, discharge, and follow-up care of at-risk individuals. Also included are suggested actions for educating all staff about suicide risk, keeping health care environments safe for individuals at risk for suicide, and documenting their care.”*

**ZERO**Suicide  
IN HEALTH AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE

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## Senior Suicide Prevention Toolkits

**Promoting Mental Health and Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for Senior Living Communities**

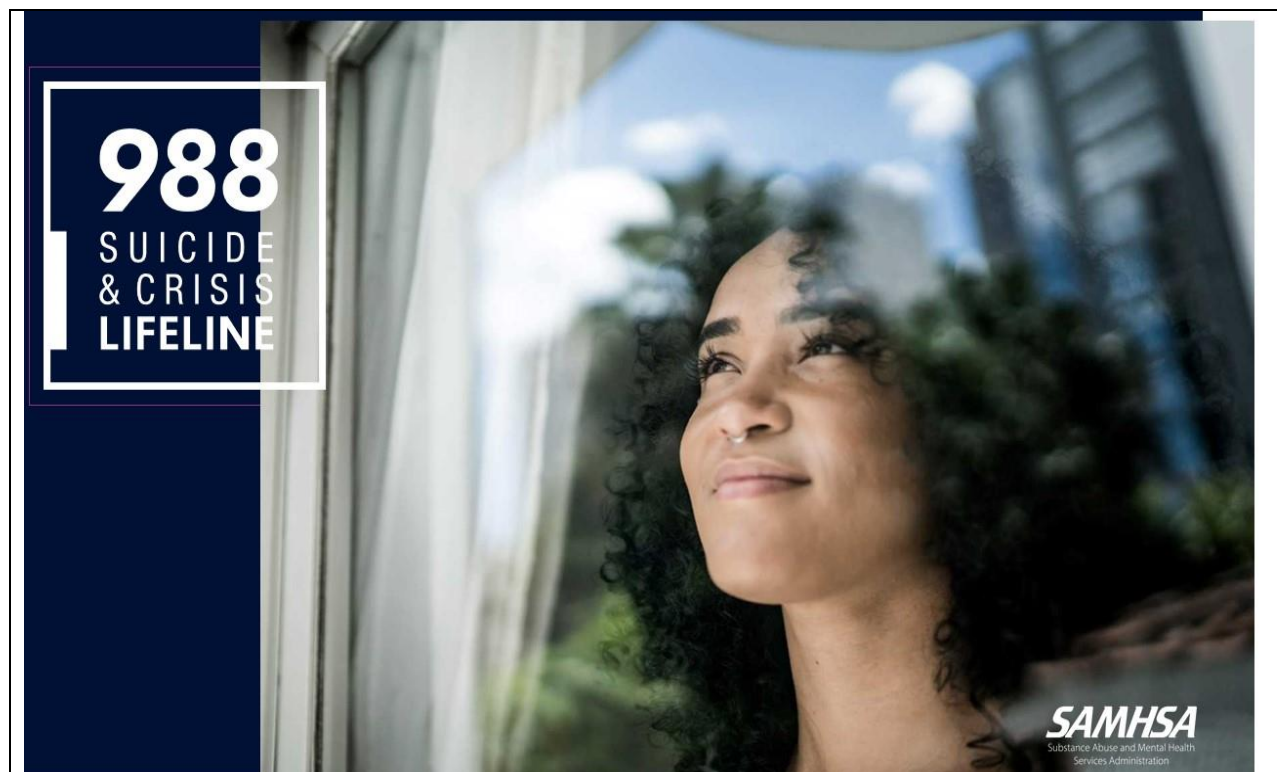
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration  
www.samhsa.gov

**PROMOTING EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND PREVENTING SUICIDE**  
A Toolkit for Senior Centers

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration  
www.samhsa.gov 2015

**SAMHSA**  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration





**988**  
**SUICIDE**  
**& CRISIS**  
**LIFELINE**

**SAMHSA**  
 Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
 Services Administration

## 988 Materials

## 988

### Current Print Materials:

- Wallet Cards (English/Spanish)
- Magnets (English/Spanish)
- Posters (English/Spanish)
- Stickers (English/Spanish)
- Safety Plans (English only)

### Coming Soon

- Suicide Warning Signs Notecards
  - Youth and Adults Separate
- Yard Signs
- Reasons to Call 988 (social media)

**Printable Materials**

These 988 printable materials have been created for use by governments, states, territories, tribes, crisis centers, and partners to educate and outreach about 988. SAMHSA provides organizations an ability to order limited supplies from the SAMHSA store. If you need larger orders than we are able to send to you, you can use the printer-ready files to make your own. For those of you who need just a few copies of an item, you can print those using the simple PDF download.

SAMHSA expects print materials to be available for ordering in late July. We will regularly update the SAMHSA Store links when products arrive.

**Wallet Cards**

The following business-sized wallet cards help publicize the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

Wallet Card with Image (2 sided, 3.5 in x 2 in)    Wallet Card with Image (2 sided, 3.5 in x 2 in)

- [Downloadable in English \(PDF | 254 KB\)](#)
- [Downloadable in Spanish \(PDF | 297 KB\)](#)
- [Printer-ready file in English \(PDF | 723 KB\)](#)
- [Printer-ready file in Spanish \(PDF | 1.1 MB\)](#)
- [Order from the SAMHSA Store](#)
- [Order from the SAMHSA Store](#)

URL:  
<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/988/partner-toolkit>

1. Go to accordion labeled Printable Material
2. Click on "Order from the SAMHSA Store"
3. Store is no longer allowing you to ask for orders above the minimums as in the past.

**SAMHSA**  
 Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
 Services Administration

**Someone to talk to. Someone to respond. A safe place for help.**



### **988 Lifeline:**

An important step towards achieving part of that vision – someone to talk to.

### **Crisis Care System:**

A robust system that provides the crisis care needed anywhere in the country