



AFRICAN AMERICAN SUICIDE FACT SHEET BASED ON 2014 DATA (2016)

Overview

- In 2014, 2,421 African Americans died by suicide in the US. Of these, 1,946 were male (80.38%). The overall suicide rate per 100,000 was 5.46.ⁱ
- In 2014, there were 475 African American female suicides in the US. The suicide rate of African American females was the lowest among men and women of all ethnicities.ⁱ
- In 2015, researchers released data showing that there were more suicides among African American children ages 5 to 11 than among Caucasian children. This was the first national study to show observe higher suicide rates for African Americans than for Caucasians in any age group.ⁱⁱ
- While the majority of studies show that African American men are more likely to die by suicide while African American women are more likely to attempt suicide, recent research has observed that Caribbean black men in the US have the highest attempt rate for the African American community.ⁱⁱⁱ
- The suicide rate for African Americans ages 10-19 was 3.11 per 100,000.ⁱ
- For African American youth (ages 10-19), the rate of male suicides (4.60 per 100,000) was 2.9 times higher than that of females (1.57 per 100,000).ⁱ
- Males accounted for 81.5% of suicides completed by elderly African Americans (ages 65+). This percentage is mirrored by the suicides completed by elderly Caucasian men.ⁱ
- Firearms were the predominant method of suicide among African Americans regardless of sex or age, accounting for 47.42% of all suicides. Suffocation was the second most prevalent method (29.9%).ⁱ

Resources and Other Information

American Psychiatric Association, **Mental Health in the African American Community** <https://www.cpp.edu/~healthcounseling/Documents/africanamer-final-1-15-09.pdf>

American Psychological Association, “African Americans have limited access to mental and behavioral health care”

<http://www.apa.org/about/gr/issues/minority/access.aspx>

Black Mental Health Alliance <http://blackmentalhealth.com/>

Black Psychiatrists of America, Inc. <http://www.bpaincpsych.org/index.php>

Mental Health America, African American Communities and Mental Health <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/african-american-mental-health>

National Alliance on Mental Illness, African American Mental Health Information Page <https://www.nami.org/Find-Support/Diverse-Communities/African-Americans>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; Mental Health: Culture, Race, and Ethnicity, Chapter 3: Mental Health Care for African Americans <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK44251/>

RISK FACTORS

Examples of factors that may put African Americans at risk for suicide include:^{iii, iv}

- Psychological distress
- Substance abuse
- Access to lethal means (such as firearms)
- Social isolation
- Homelessness
- Exposure to violence
- Family dysfunction
- Maladaptive coping skills
- Exposure to racial inequality
- History of suicide attempts

African Americans have been found to utilize mental health services irregularly, due in part to limited access to services as a result of^{iii, v}:

- Lack of proximity to services
- Lack of insurance coverage
- Mental health stigma
- Distrust of doctors and the medical establishment

Opportunities for Prevention

Research has identified several elements of African-American culture as **protective factors** against suicide, including^{iv}:

- Strong religious-belief system
- Networks of kinship
- Ethnic pride
- Familial support

ⁱ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2015). *Fatal injury reports, national and regional, 1999-2014*. Retrieved from http://webappa.cdc.gov/sasweb/ncipc/mortrate10_us.html

ⁱⁱ Bridge, J.A., Artsi, L., Horowitz, L.M., Greenhouse, J.B., Fontanella, C.A., Sheftall, A.H., Kelleher, K.J., & Campo, J.V. (2015). Suicide trends among elementary school-aged children in the United States from 1993-2011. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 169(7), 673-677.

ⁱⁱⁱ Joe, S., Baser, R.E., Breedon, G., Neighbors, H.W., & Jackson, J.S. (2006). Prevalence of and risk factors for lifetime suicide attempts among blacks in the United States. *JAMA*, 296(17), 2112-2123.

^{iv} Utsey, S.O., Hook, J.N., & Stanard, P. (2007). A re-examination of cultural factors that mitigate risk and promote resilience in relation to African American suicide: a review of the literature and recommendations for future research. *Death Studies*, 31(5), 399-416.

^v Willis, L.A., Coombs, D.W., Drentea, P., & Cockerham, W.C. (2003). Uncovering the mystery: factors of African American suicide. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 33(4), 412.

If you or someone you know is suicidal, please contact a mental health professional or call 1-800-273-TALK (8255).