

My Drift



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**Suicide 2020
Dec 31, 2021 (Updated)
(379-2021-28)**



This article updates the “Suicide” article I wrote back on Jun 26, 2013. Some recent events have me thinking about why people commit suicide. How bad does things need to get before you decide to kill yourself? Have you ever thought about committing suicide? Did you know that most people do think about doing it at some point in their lives? A lot of these people actually do it. Let’s look at the statistics.

Suicide is now the 11th leading cause of death in the United States (2020 Official Data)

1. Heart Disease.....	696,962
2. Cancer.....	602,350
3. COVID-19*.....	375,000
4. Accidents.....	200,955
5. Stroke.....	160,264
6. Respiratory Diseases.....	152,657
7. Alzheimer's Disease.....	134,242
8. Diabetes.....	102,188
9. Influenza and Pneumonia.....	53,544
10. Kidney Disease.....	52,547
11. Suicide.....	45,855
12. Blood Poisoning (Sepsis).....	40,539

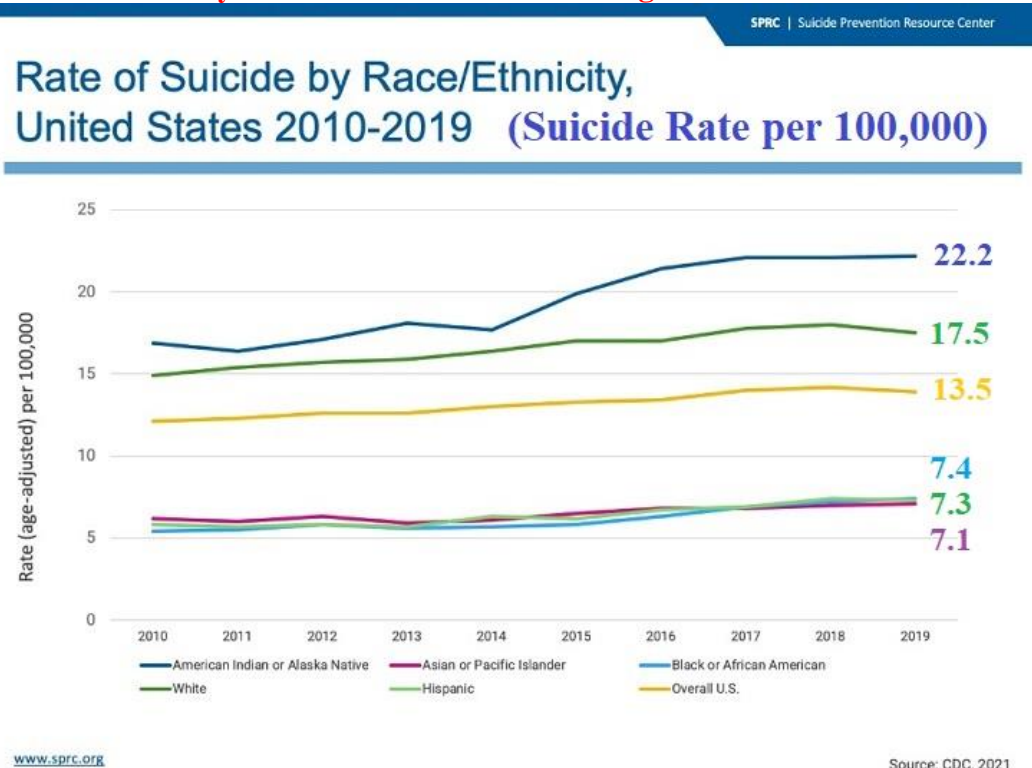
**Suicide was the 10th leading cause of death for the past decade or so, but now -
*COVID-19 is the third leading cause of death in the United States in 2020 and 2021
(At this writing, about 820,000 Americans have died from COVID-19)**

Some US Population and 2020 Suicide Statistics

The current US Population is approximately 330,000,000 people

The total number of suicides in the US was 45,855 – 36,508 was male and 9,347 was female

Let's break that down by race – Reference the following chart:



Quick Summary of the above Chart

The suicide rate for American Indians and Alaska Natives is sky high at 22.2 suicides per 100,000 population. Next highest is the white race with a rate of 17.5. The US average suicide rate is 13.5. The lowest suicide rates are 7.4 for Blacks, 7.3 for Hispanics, and 7.1 for Asians.

Race	Percent of Population	Population	Suicide Rate	Number of Suicides
White	60.1	198,030,000	17.5	34,655
Hispanic	18.5	60,958,000	7.3	4,450
Black	12.2	40,200,000	7.4	2,975
Asian	5.6	18,452,000	7.1	1,310
Other	3.6	11,860,000	---	2,465

Now, let's break the suicides down by age

In 2020, the highest suicide rate was among adults ages 80 years or older (20.12 per 100,000), the next highest suicide rates were adults ages 45 to 54 years (19.60 per 100,000) and 55 to 64 years (19.41 per 100,000). Younger groups have had consistently lower suicide rates than middle-aged and older adults. In 2020, adolescents and young adults aged 15 to 24 had a suicide rate of 13.95.

What can we learn from the above statistics? Well, most likely you are going to die from some sort of disease - only accidents, suicides, and homicides are not some form of disease. Chances are you will die from a heart attack or cancer – the two biggest causes of death (by far) in the US and the World. Since 2020 and the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic, many people are getting the virus and many of these people are dying.

A lot more men die from suicide than women, but the interesting thing is women attempt more suicides than men. Suicide statistics reveal that women are roughly three times more likely to attempt suicide, though men are four times more likely to die by suicide. Compared to men, women show higher rates of suicidal thinking, non-fatal suicidal behavior, and suicide attempts. White males represent a high rate per 100,000 people (20.5) that commit suicide. Yes, men are better at killing themselves because they will usually use a gun whereas a woman will usually take poison or pills.

And lastly, older people like me have a high rate of suicide. More on why that is later in this article.

A few more suicide statistics

- On average, there are 130 suicides per day in the US.
- Month with the most suicides is April. (I thought it would be December or January)
- White males accounted for 69% of suicide deaths in 2020.
- Firearms accounted for about 50% of all suicide deaths.
- Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for ages 10-34.
- Suicide is the 4th leading cause of death for ages 35-44.
- 36.6% of people who died by suicide were 55 or older.
- 12 million Americans have serious thoughts of suicide.
- 1.4 million Americans attempted suicide in 2020.
- 54% of Americans have been affected by suicide in some way.
- 90% of those who died by suicide had a diagnosable mental health condition at the time of their death.
- In 2020, the suicide rate was 1.5x higher for Veterans than for non-Veteran adults over the age of 18.



A Staggering Number of Veterans are Dying by Suicide

Here are the ten top methods used to commit suicide:



10. Drowning

How it's done: Walk into a large body of water (like the Pacific Ocean) and see how far you can swim.

Results from failure: Oxygen deprivation that can cause severe and permanent brain damage.



9. Electric Shock

How it's done: Jam a metal fork into a wall outlet or if that doesn't work, take a plugged-in electrical appliance into the bathtub with you.

Results from failure: Deep burns and severe neurological damage.



8. Cutting

How it's done: Use a razor or a sharp knife to slit your wrists or throat.

Results from failure: Extreme loss of blood causing the heart to dramatically slow down eventually depriving the brain of oxygen. Also, most often, it will result in deep scars and tissue damage. It can also result in a big mess that somebody else must clean up.



7. Jumping

How it's done: Find a tall building, cliff, or bridge to leap off of like you are Superman.

Results from failure: Shattered bones and internal organ damage from impacting with whatever is below.



6. Suffocation

How it's done: Pull a plastic bag over your head and wait until you can't breathe anymore.

Results from failure: Long-lasting or permanent brain damage.



5. Carbon Monoxide Inhalation

How it's done: Lock yourself in your car in a closed garage with the engine running.

Results from failure: Blurred vision or blindness, chest pain or cardiac arrest, shortness of breath or respiratory failure, blood poisoning, seizures, and/or going into a coma.



4. Poisoning

How it's done: Take cyanide with a glass of water or drink a quart of anti-freeze or Drano.

Results from failure: Vomiting and internal organ damage.



3. Hanging

How it's done: Get a rope and tie one end around your neck and wrap the other end securely around something high like a rafter while standing on a chair – then kick the chair out of the way.

Results from failure: Brain damage from lack of oxygen and permanent rope burns.



2. Drug / Alcohol Overdose

How it's done: Get yourself a bottle of sleeping pills and take them all while drinking a bottle of whiskey.

Results from failure: Severe to permanent organ failure and a bad hangover.



1. Gun Shot

How it's done: Obtain a gun and shoot yourself in the head.

Results from failure: Severe blood loss and brain damage.

(Sorry, I know suicide is no laughing matter, but I decided to inject a little humor anyway)

There are sure a lot of ways to kill yourself and they can all be effective. However, the gun is the most effective – 99% of suicides using a gun result in death. But if you fail, you will probably be really screwed up for life or until your next suicide attempt. Think about it – how many people do you know that have committed suicide? Which method did they use? Why are all these people killing themselves or trying to do it?

In general, people try to kill themselves for the following reasons:

1. They're depressed. This is without question the most common reason people commit suicide. Severe depression is always accompanied by a pervasive sense of suffering as well as the belief that escape from it is hopeless. The pain of existence often becomes too much for severely depressed people to bear. The state of depression warps their thinking, allowing ideas like “Everyone would be better off without me” to make rational sense.

2. They're psychotic (crazy). Those inner voices often command self-destruction for unintelligible reasons. Psychosis is much harder to mask than depression — and arguably even more tragic. The worldwide incidence of schizophrenia is 1% and often strikes otherwise healthy, high-performing individuals, whose lives, though manageable with medication, never fulfill their original promise.

3. They're bipolar and/or have PTSD and/or some other mental disorder. Suicides are a big problem in the military right now. Suicides among active-duty military personnel average about one per day. The highest rate since the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq began over a decade ago. Veterans now account for 20 percent of all suicides in the US, with the youngest (24 and under) taking their lives at four times the rate of other veteran age groups. A majority of those committing suicide are returning veterans from the overseas war zones.

4. They're impulsive. Often related to drugs and alcohol, some people impulsively attempt to end their own lives. Once sobered and calmed, these people usually feel emphatically ashamed. The remorse is usually genuine, and whether or not they'll ever attempt suicide again is unpredictable. They may try it again the very next time they become drunk or high, or never again in their lifetime.

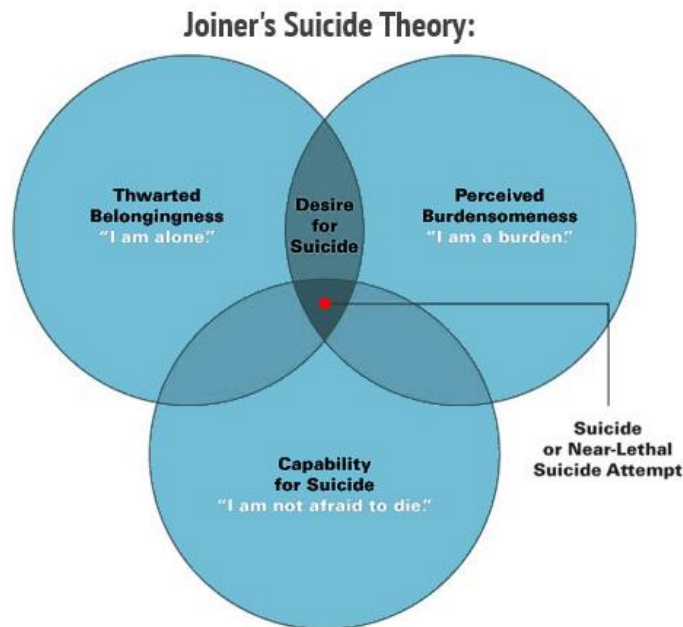
5. They're crying out for help, and don't know how else to get it. These people don't usually want to die but do want to alert those around them that something is seriously wrong. They often don't believe they will die, frequently choosing methods they don't think can kill them in order to strike out at someone who's hurt them—but are sometimes tragically misinformed.

6. They have a philosophical desire to die. The decision to commit suicide for some is based on a reasoned decision often motivated by the presence of a painful terminal illness from which little to no hope of reprieve exists. These people aren't depressed, psychotic, or crying out for help. They're trying to take control of their destiny and alleviate their own suffering, which usually can only be done in death. They often look at their choice to commit suicide as a way to shorten the time dying that will happen regardless.

In my personal view, these people should be allowed to die at their own hands. I also believe in assisted suicide and death with dignity. More on this later.

7. They've made a mistake. For example, there is a recent, tragic phenomenon in which typically young people flirt with oxygen deprivation for the high it brings and simply go too far.

8. They've made some bad business decisions and are deep in debt. They've stole money or secrets from their company and know they are about to be caught. Some of these people are too proud to "face the music" and take responsibility for their actions. Instead, they commit suicide.



Usually there are a combination of factors which leads a person to commit suicide. Here is a popular theory (The Interpersonal-Psychological Theory of Suicidal Behavior) written by Thomas Joiner who went to college at Princeton and received his PhD in Clinical Psychology from the University of Texas at Austin. The above chart summarizes his theory on who will commit suicide.

Joiner's suicide theory basically says that if you are alone, don't think you have a purpose in life anymore, you think you are a burden to your family, and you are not afraid to die, you will commit suicide. I think this theory is true especially for older people. However, I think there are additional factors involved like having an incurable disease, being disabled, and/or living with severe pain.

Why is it when our pet dog reaches end of life and is suffering with some terminal disease, we as owners can take our dog to the vet and have him or she put to sleep but when we humans are dying, we must be kept alive by every means possible so that we can suffer needlessly for months (and sometimes years) against our will until we finally die in a weakened vegetable state? I think this is just plain stupid and I plan to do everything in my power to prevent this from happening to me. Yes, I believe in assisted suicide and death with dignity. If you have time, please read my article titled "Assisted Suicide" dated October 27, 2010. It is on my website.

How to recognize if person is suicidal?

1. Knowing if there is a pre-existing problem of depression, or another depressive disorder like PTSD, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, paranoia, borderline personality disorder, etc. The leading cause of suicide is untreated depression.

2. Identify the reason, if possible. This is a situation or event that has caused the person to feel very depressed or as if they have no way out. It could be a recent loss of a loved one by death or divorce, loss of job or business, serious illness, money, or credit problems.

3. Look for sudden and often drastic changes in the behavior. This could be a change in appearance, a change in attitude, dramatic mood swings, acting recklessly or showing a loss of interest.

4. They maybe forcing themselves into isolation by quitting any groups they were a part of and leaving their circle of friends.

5. They seem to be "tying up loose ends". Doing things such as... Giving away prized possessions and writing a will.

6. Saying goodbye. A person that is considering suicide may suddenly make a point of saying goodbye to people when they walk out of rooms or drive away, even people they haven't talked to in ages.

7. Listen for verbal suggestions that they are feeling suicidal. With expressions like "I can't go on" or "I have nothing to live for" or "I'm just so tired of life", etc.

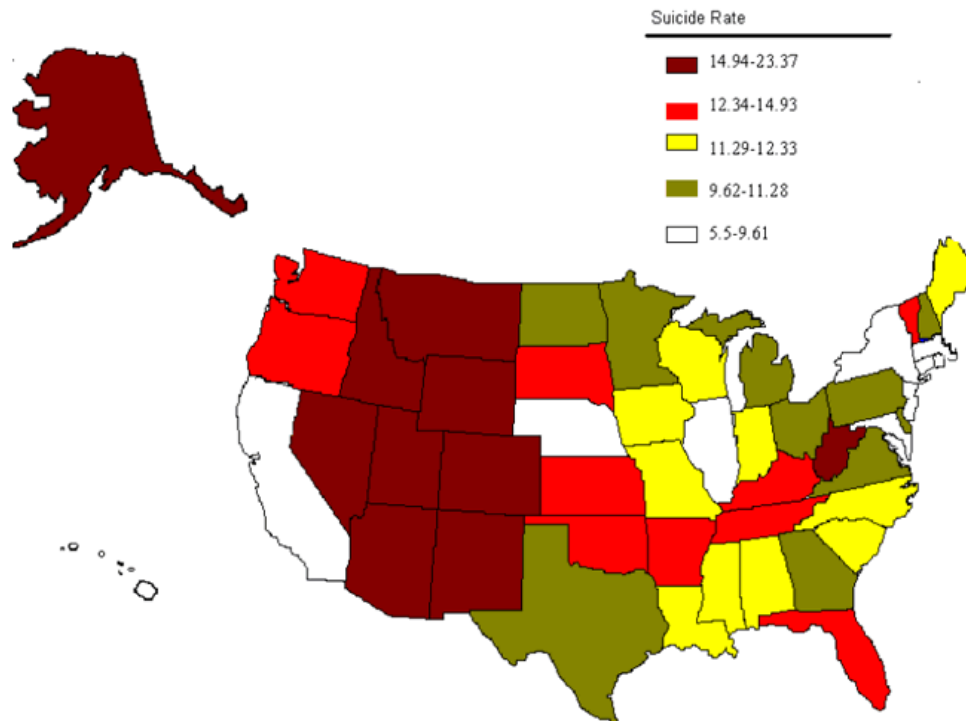
8. Look for a sudden, specific interest in death or suicide. The individual may start reading, writing, or talking about the subject.

Hey, I'm not thinking about committing suicide!! I'm still healthy and for the most part happy. I just like to learn more about things that I'm interested in and write about them. Besides this, I wanted to see how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the suicide rates. Do you think there are more suicides in 2020 and 2021? I thought there would be but the number of suicides in the US actually went down by 3%.

What to do if you think somebody you know is suicidal?

Know that not everyone shows any of those above signs. Around 25% of suicide victims show no signs at all. Most of us are too busy living our own lives to be noticing suicide signs in other people. But, just in case you have determined that a person you know is most likely suicidal - take action. Talk to them, support them, and refer them to a suicide hotline or therapist for further help. You can prevent a suicide and save a life. But, if that person does succeed in committing suicide, never ever blame yourself. If a person really wants to die, they will find a way.

Okay, let's get back to more statistics.



States with the highest suicide rates (Suicides per 100,000 people)
Remember the US average rate is 13.5

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 10. Idaho (15.2) | 5. Nevada (18.3) |
| 9. Utah (15.4) | 4. Montana (19.4) |
| 8. West Virginia (15.9) | 3. Wyoming (19.7) |
| 7. Arizona (16.1) | 2. New Mexico (20.4) |
| 6. Colorado (16.4) | 1. Alaska (22.1) |

Does where you live in the US increase your chances of committing suicide?

Yes. For some reason, Alaska, West Virginia, and the Mountain West states have a higher suicide rate. (See map above) I can see why Alaska has the highest suicide rate in the nation. I was TDY in Fairbanks in December 2010 and it was 44 degrees below zero and snowing. Did you know that during the winter they only have about four hours of daylight every day? Living in these “cold” “dark” conditions winter after winter must get to a lot of people. I can only think of one other reason for the high suicide rate in these other states - living in the wide-open spaces with not a lot of things to do must make some people want to kill themselves.

Hawaii always ranks as one of the states with the fewest suicides. The latest data shows Hawaii in 43rd place with 8.8 suicides per 100,000 people. The state with the fewest suicides was New York with 5.6 suicides per 100,000 people. The city with the most suicides is Las Vegas with a rate of 34.5 per 100,000 people. Where else? I guess losing all your money can cause you to do bad things.

So, is the United States the suicide capital of the World? No. Greenland takes that honor by a wide margin with 108.1 suicides per 100,000 people. The US is way down the list at 34th with an average of 13.5 suicides per 100,000. Here are the top ten countries with the highest suicide rates:

Country

10. Japan (21.6)

9. Hungary (21.6)

8. Slovenia (21.8)

7. China (22.2)

6. Belarus (22.9)

5. Kazakhstan (25.6)

4. Guyana (26.4)

3. Lithuania (31.6)

2. South Korea (31.7)

1. Greenland (108.1)



Nuuk, Greenland Cemetery

Greenland is part the Kingdom of Denmark and is the world's largest island. It is also the least densely populated country on the planet. Nuuk is the capital and biggest city in Greenland with only 15,500 people – the whole country only has about 56,000 people. The sad thing about all these suicides is the fact that the majority of Greenlanders who kill themselves are teenagers or young adults. Every person in Greenland knows someone who has committed suicide. It is the leading cause of death for young people. Why? That is a mystery since the suicide rate was very low until the 1970s. But since then, the depression of going through long cold winters has taken a toll.

The suicide rate is also high in South Korea, China, and Japan. I guess this kind of disproves my “wide-open spaces” theory. Suicide is the most common cause of death for those under 40 in South Korea. The two most common methods of suicide there are poisoning and hanging. The primary causes for suicides in South Korea are psychological despair 28.8%, physical pain 22.6%, economic difficulties 15.9%, and family problems 11.4%. In South Korea, many of the elderly are sacrificing themselves by committing suicide to lessen the burden on their children.

I have a few more theories on why suicide rates have been steadily going up for the past 30 years (except for 2020 and 2021):

Theory #1 – We live in dangerous times – especially for young people. There have been six (6) major wars in my lifetime (World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, Gulf War, Iraq, and Afghanistan Wars). The AIDS virus has killed millions of people world-wide. Islamic Muslim terrorist attacks like 9-11 and the Boston Marathon can happen anywhere and anytime. Plus, now we got the COVID-19 Pandemic to worry about.

Theory #2 – Too many people are spending way too much time on social media networks like Facebook, playing violent video games, texting, twitting, and walking around like zombies staring at their smart phones. This can't be good for your mental and physical health. Can it?

Theory #3 – There seems to be an epidemic of people not willing to take responsibility for their own actions. A lot of people think they can do no wrong and will blame others whenever anything bad happens. When they are proven wrong, they just can't accept failure and go kill themselves.

Theory #4 – People are living longer, and many elderly people don't want to continue living with a terminal disease or in severe pain.

Theory #5 – The suicide rate started going up about the same time as when they started taking "God", "Jesus", and "Praying" out of the schools and everywhere else for that matter – even the Christmas Holiday. Most people need to have faith and a Higher Being to believe in.

I don't know how to end this article except to say, "Life is a beautiful thing – be happy, have fun, live life to its fullness, and enjoy it for as long as you can".



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