

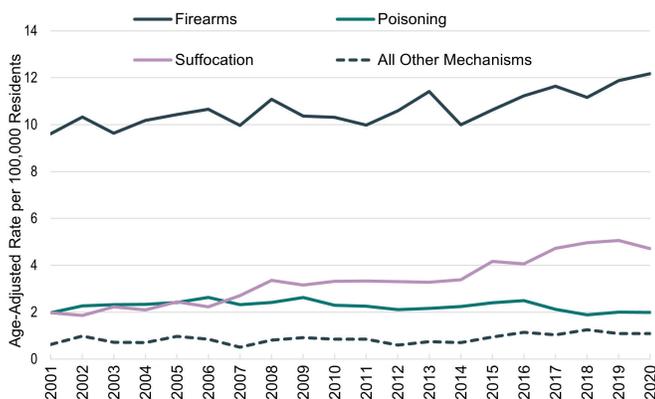
UNDERSTANDING SUICIDE

A suicide is a death caused by injuring oneself with the intent to die. Suicide is a growing public health problem, affecting people of all ages, genders, races, and ethnicities. There is no single cause of suicide, as several factors at the individual, relationship, community, and societal levels may increase the risk for suicide and protect against it. Suicide contributes to premature death, morbidity, lost productivity, and healthcare costs. Suicide is preventable.

Impact and Magnitude of Suicide

Over the past twenty years, the age-adjusted rate of suicide deaths has increased in Tennessee. Firearms are the leading mechanism of suicide in Tennessee, followed by suffocation, and poisoning (Figure 1). Rates of suicide by firearms and suffocation have increased in recent years, while rates of suicide by poisoning and all other mechanisms have remained relatively level.

FIGURE 1: Mechanisms of Suicide, 2001-2020

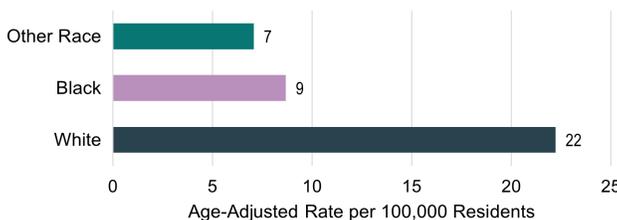


Data Source: Tennessee Department of Health, Office of Vital Statistics, Death Statistical File, 2001-2020

Suicide by Population Characteristics

Figure 2 shows that suicide disproportionately affects White Tennesseans.

FIGURE 2: Age-Adjusted Rates of Suicide by Race, 2016-2020



Data Source: Tennessee Department of Health, Office of Vital Statistics, Death Statistical File, 2016-2020

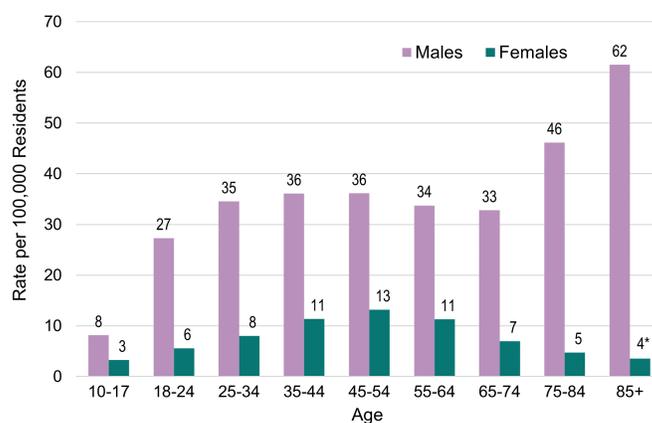
Suicide data is available and included only for those 10 years of age and above.

Produced by: Tennessee Department of Health, Office of Population Health Surveillance, Injury Surveillance Program, 2023

Suicide by Age and Sex

From 2016-2020, male Tennesseans died by suicide at a higher rate than females in every age group (Figure 3). Males 85 years or older died by suicide at the highest rate.

FIGURE 3: Rates of Suicide by Age and Sex, 2016-2020



*Rate may be unstable because it is based on 20 or fewer deaths.

Data Source: Tennessee Department of Health, Office of Vital Statistics, Death Statistical File, 2016-2020

Suicide by Geography

In 2020, the five health regions listed in Figure 4 had the highest age-adjusted suicide rates per 100,000 residents of the thirteen Tennessee regions and metro areas.

FIGURE 4: Age-Adjusted Rates of Suicide by Geography, 2020

Health Region	Rate per 100k Residents
1. Northeast Tennessee	28.5
2. South Central Tennessee	27.6
3. Sullivan County Metro	25.8
4. East Tennessee	24.5
5. Southeast Tennessee	23.7

Data Source: Tennessee Department of Health, Office of Vital Statistics, Death Statistical File, 2020

Special Emphasis Report: Suicide

Suicide Prevention Strategies

Suicide is preventable, and everyone can play a role. Suicide prevention requires a comprehensive approach that occurs at all levels of society. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has developed a set of strategies to help states, communities, and individuals reduce risk and increase resilience (see figure at right).

For planning and prevention resources visit [CDC’s Suicide Prevention website](#).

Means: Reducing a suicidal person’s access to highly lethal means is an important part of suicide prevention. Learn more about means reduction at [Harvard’s Means Matters](#) or at [AFSP’s Project 2025](#).

Circumstances: Suicide is complex, and many factors contribute to thoughts of suicide. Learn more from CDC’s [Vital Signs](#).

Support: If you think someone you know is considering suicide, talk to them and connect them to the support they need. Learn [5 Steps](#) you can take to be a supportive and empathetic listener for them.

Lived Experience: If you are thinking of suicide or made a suicide attempt, please know that help is available. Along with supportive family and friends, people who have experienced thoughts of suicide and suicide attempt survivors have created strong peer communities. Learn more at [Now Matters Now](#).

Postvention: It is important to support the individuals, families, and communities affected by suicide loss, to reduce the cycle of trauma and increased risk. Learn more at the [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#).



Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
Call 988

Crisis Text Line
Text 741741

Veterans’ Crisis Line
Call 988 then press 1
or text 838255

Tennessee Statewide Crisis Line
Call 1-855-CRISIS-1 (1-855-274-7471)

Suicide Prevention Activities

PREVENTION	The programs and services TDH provides, supports, and promotes are listed in this statewide Resource Directory .
SURVEILLANCE	TDH uses ESSENCE to monitor trends and identify and alert regions seeing increases in suicide-related ER visits.
PARTNERSHIPS	TDH partners include the TN Suicide Prevention Network, Centerstone, and Centerstone Research Institute. TDH leads a stakeholder task force team to improve suicide prevention programs and services across the state.
ACCOMPLISHMENTS/SUCCESSES	See the Statewide Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Resource Directory , 2021 Suicide Prevention Annual Report , 2020 Suicide Death Infographic , and more data infographics . Sign up for Prevent Suicide TN’s monthly newsletter .

For more information, visit www.preventsuicidetn.com and www.tn.gov/health/health-program-areas/statistics/health-data/injury-surveillance-program.html.