



Recognize

Facts about suicide

Did you know suicide is the tenth leading cause of death in the United States?¹ While most people feel uneasy with the topic of suicide, it may be because they don't know much about it. We've put together some facts to help you learn more.

Suicide and self-harm

Suicide, suicidal thinking, suicide attempts and self-harm aren't the same. It's important to understand the differences.

Suicide is the taking of one's own life. Some might say it's the greatest act of despair. For many, suicide is a permanent "fix" to problems that are often temporary.

Suicidal thinking often comes before suicide. Suicidal thinking goes beyond wishing for death. It often includes trying to make a plan, getting the means (like guns or pills) or wrapping up loose ends.

A suicide attempt is when a person takes steps to end his or her own life but is unable to do so. Sometimes the person is interrupted or rescued. Some suicide attempts result in an injury instead of death.

Self-harm may include things like cutting, burning or picking at one's body. People who self-harm often have no intention of killing themselves. They self-harm to cope with emotional pain. You might ask, "How can hurting yourself make you feel better?" But self-harming behaviors can release endorphins ("feel good chemicals"). And these distract from painful emotions.

¹[Suicide](#). National Institute of Mental Health. Accessed February 2018.

²[Suicide Facts](#). Suicide Awareness Voices of Education. Accessed February 2018.

Demographics

Suicide rates are impacted by things like gender, age and race. You may be surprised by some of these facts.

- **Gender.**² Women attempt suicide three times as often as men. But men die from suicide almost four times more often than women. This is because men tend to use more lethal methods. For instance, gun deaths account for 51 percent of male suicides.
- **Age.**¹ For men, those who are 75 and older have the highest rates of suicide. For women, those between 45 to 64 have the highest rates. Suicide is the third leading cause of death for those between the ages of 10 and 14. And it's the second leading cause of death for people between the ages of 15 and 34.
- **Race.**¹ American Indians and Alaskan Natives have the highest suicide rates. They are followed by white/non-Hispanics.
- **Sexual orientation and gender identity.**² Lesbian, gay and bisexual youth are three times more likely to attempt suicide at some point in their lives. And those who come from unsupportive families are more than eight times as likely to attempt suicide. These rates more than double each time they're physically or verbally harassed. 41 percent of transgender adults attempt suicide. This number goes up to 61 percent when they're victims of physical assault.

Risk factors

Anyone can be at risk for suicidal thinking or behavior. And there is no one thing that leads to suicide. Rather, a complex mix of issues may put a person at risk.

People who think about suicide often have very strong feelings of despair and isolation. These emotions can cloud their judgment. Suicidal thinking is often linked to illnesses like depression or substance use disorder. But the greatest risk factor is a past history of suicide attempts.³

There are other things that can put a person at risk for suicide. Watch for:

- Access to guns or pills
- Drug and alcohol use
- Prior suicide attempts
- Feeling alone
- Feeling angry
- Feeling like a burden
- Tolerance for violence/pain
- Chronic illness
- Money problems
- Family history of suicide

Warning signs

Many people who attempt suicide give warning signs. Take these signs seriously. You could save a life. Here are some common signs someone may be thinking about suicide:

- Talking about wanting to die
- Looking for a way to kill oneself — like searching online or getting a gun
- Talking about feeling hopeless
- Pulling away from family or friends
- Giving away prized possessions
- Putting affairs in order — like updating a will
- Taking risks
- Saying goodbye like it's the last time

If someone has a suicide plan and access to lethal methods, he or she is in clear danger. You should respond right away and may need to call 911 for help.

Prevention

Know that it's never too late to help someone who is thinking about suicide. Kevin Hines was 19 years old when he jumped off the Golden Gate Bridge. And he reports he changed his mind about dying as soon as he began to fall. He survived that jump and now works to prevent other deaths by suicide.⁴

You can help too. By simply learning more about mental health issues and suicide, you can make a difference. Take steps to decrease stigma by changing how you talk about mental health and suicide. If you suspect someone is in emotional pain, offer support. Connect the person to mental health treatment, as it can make a difference. Treatment can be found through hospitals, insurance carriers, employee assistance programs or suicide hotlines.

If a person is suicidal, it's important to get help right away. A suicidal person shouldn't be left alone. And he or she shouldn't have access to firearms, drugs or other lethal methods. Try to get him or her to a hospital emergency room where a mental health expert can do an assessment. If the person is acting in an unsafe way, threatens to die soon or has lethal means, you should call 911.

If you want to learn more about suicide, stigma, mental health issues and what you can do to help, consider signing up for a mental health first aid course by going to the [Mental Health First Aid website](#). Through education, you can help make a difference.

By understanding suicide, you can take steps to help others.

³Brody, Jane. [After a Suicide Attempt, The Risk of Another Try](#). New York Times. Accessed February 2018.

⁴[Kevin Hines Bio](#). Kevin Hines Story. Accessed February 2018.

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