The North Carolina Violent Death Reporting System (NC-VDRS) is a CDC-funded statewide surveillance system that collects detailed information on deaths that occur in North Carolina resulting from violence: homicide, suicide, unintentional firearm deaths, legal intervention, and deaths for which intent could not be determined. NC-VDRS is a multi-source system that gathers information from death certificates, medical examiner reports, and law enforcement reports. The goal of this system is to aid researchers, legislators, and community interest groups in the development of public health prevention strategies to reduce violent deaths. NC-VDRS began collecting data in January 2004. This document summarizes all deaths from violence among non-Hispanic (NH) African American residents for the years 2009-2018.

For the year 2018, there were 2,270,022 NH African Americans living in North Carolina, accounting for 22.1% of the state’s population.

NH African Americans had the third highest rate of violent death by race in North Carolina for the years 2009-2018 (21.0 per 100,000 population).


There were 3,251 homicides (71.0%), 1,089 suicides (23.8%), 47 unintentional firearm deaths (1.0%), 88 deaths due to legal interventions (1.9%), and 103 deaths of undetermined intent (2.3%).

NH African Americans accounted for 56.0% of all homicides and 8.3% of all suicides, across all racial groups in North Carolina from 2009 to 2018.

In contrast, NH whites accounted for 86.7% of all suicides and 32.8% of all homicides, across all racial groups in North Carolina from 2009 to 2018.
The North Carolina Violent Death Reporting System is supported by Cooperative Agreement 5NU17/CE002613-05-00 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The majority of homicides (78.4%) and suicides (54.1%) among NH African Americans were committed using firearms.

The second most common method of homicide was sharp instruments (9.7%).

The second most common method of suicide was hanging (22.7%).

Of all homicides among NH African Americans with known circumstance information, a little less than half (46.1%) involved an argument or conflict.

Another serious crime (e.g., robbery, burglary) precipitated 93.9% of homicides among NH African Americans.

Of these homicides, 14.0% involved intimate partner violence.

Method of Death: NC-VDRS Among NH African Americans, 2009-2018

- Firearm: 78%
- Sharp Instrument: 10%
- Blunt Instrument: 3%
- Poisoning: <1%
- Hanging: 23%
- Other method*: 21%

*Other includes fire/burns, motor vehicle, violent shaking, intentional neglect, drowning, falls and other methods.

The second most common method of suicide was hanging (22.7%).

Suicide Circumstances* Among NH African Americans, 2009-2018

- Current mental health problem: 38%
- Current depressed mood: 28%
- Current mental health treatment: 29%
- Treated mental health: 38%
- Intimate partner problem: 33%
- Recent Crisis: 47%
- Disclosed suicide intent: 23%
- Other substance abuse: 13%
- Left a suicide note: 22%
- Alcohol problem: 9%

* Ninety-three percent (92.9%) of suicide cases had circumstance information.

Among NH African American suicide victims with known circumstance information, 46.5% experienced a recent crisis.

Thirty-eight percent (37.8%) of NH African American suicide victims were described as having a current mental health problem, and 27.7% were receiving treatment for a mental health problem at the time of suicide.

Almost a third (32.7%) had experienced a recent problem with an intimate partner.

Twenty-three percent (23.1%) of NH African American suicide victims disclosed their intent to complete suicide, and 22.0% left a note.

Homicide Circumstances* Among NH African Americans, 2009-2018

- Argument/conflict: 46%
- Precipitated by another crime: 94%
- Drug involvement: 19%
- Intimate partner violence: 14%

* Ninety-one percent (90.7%) of homicide cases had circumstance information.

Another serious crime (e.g., robbery, burglary) precipitated 93.9% of homicides among NH African Americans.

Of these homicides, 14.0% involved intimate partner violence.

Among NH African American suicide victims with known circumstance information, 46.5% experienced a recent crisis.

Thirty-eight percent (37.8%) of NH African American suicide victims were described as having a current mental health problem, and 27.7% were receiving treatment for a mental health problem at the time of suicide.

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