SUICIDE AMONG OLDER ADULTS IN NORTH CAROLINA, 2016 - 2020

The North Carolina Violent Death Reporting System (NC-VDRS) is a CDC-funded statewide surveillance system that collects detailed information on violent deaths that occur in North Carolina including: homicide, suicide, unintentional firearm deaths, legal intervention, and deaths of undetermined intent. NC-VDRS triangulates information from death certificates, medical examiner reports, and law enforcement reports to understand and aid in the prevention of violent deaths. For more information, please visit https://www.injuryfreenc.ncdhhs.gov/About/ncVDRS.htm.

• From 2016 to 2020, 1,870 North Carolina residents ages 65 and older died as a result of violence. Of these violent deaths, 1,370 were suicide (73.3%).

• The suicide rate among older adults was 16.2 suicides per 100,000 population.

• Eighty-one percent (81.3%) of suicides among older adults were among males.

• The suicide rate peaked among males 85 and older, and the suicide rate was consistently higher for males compared to females for all age groups.

• Among females, the suicide rate peaked among those ages 65-74.

• Ninety-three (93.1%) percent of older adult suicide victims were identified as non-Hispanic (NH) white, 4.5 percent were NH Black, and the remaining 2.4 percent were identified as NH Asian, NH American Indian, or Hispanic.

• Overall, the most common method of suicide among older adults was firearms (76.6%), followed by poisoning (11.5%) and hanging/strangulation/suffocation (7.4%).

• Five percent (4.5%) of suicides involved a method other than firearms, poisoning, or hanging/strangulation/suffocation.

If you or someone you know needs support now, call or text 988 or chat 988lifeline.org

Elder Suicide Method of Death: NC-VDRS, 2016 - 2020

- Firearm: 77%
- Poisoning: 12%
- Hanging: 7%
- Other*: 4%

*Other methods include: sharp instrument, fire/burns, motor vehicle and other.
**Older Adult Suicide Circumstances*: NC-VDRS, 2016 - 2020**

- Over one-third (36.8%) of older adult male suicide victims with circumstance information were characterized as having a current depressed mood at the time of death compared to 38.4% of females.

- Sixty-three percent (62.9%) of older adult female and 43.7% of older male suicide victims had a current mental health problem when they died by suicide.

- Twenty-three percent (23.3%) of older adult females had a history of prior suicide attempts, whereas only 8.3% of older adult males had a history of prior suicide attempts.

- Sixty-two percent (62.2%) of males and 48.6% of females had a physical health problem.

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**Percent of Suicides**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Circumstance</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Depressed Mood</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Mental Health Problem</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Treatment for Mental Health</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Health Problem</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left a Suicide Note</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disclosed Suicide Intent</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Suicide Attempt(s)</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.*

*Circumstances are known for 97% of males (n=1079) and 96% of females (n=245).

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**More information on suicide prevention efforts can be found at:**

**State Resource Partners**

- **NC Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services**
  https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/mhddssas

- **North Carolina Office of the Chief Medical Examiner**
  https://www.ocme.dhhs.nc.gov/

- **North Carolina Mental Health, Substance Use, and Aging Coalition**
  https://www.med.unc.edu/aging/cgec/mental-health/

- **NC Division of Aging and Adult Services**
  https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/daas

**National Resources**

- **The Suicide Prevention Resource Center**
  http://www.sprc.org/

- **The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention**
  https://afsp.org/

- **The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**
  call or text 988 or chat 988lifeline.org

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