VETERAN SUICIDE 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.

• Veteran status was available for 99.0% of the 10,716 violent deaths that occurred among NC residents ages 18 and older from 2016-2020.

• 1,588 (14.8%) of these deaths occurred among NC veterans. Most veteran violent deaths were suicides (80.9%).

• The average suicide rate from 2016-2020 was 2.5 times higher among veterans than non-veterans (38.7 and 15.3 per 100,000 respectively). Veteran suicide rates were consistently higher than non-veterans across all age groups.

• The suicide rate was highest for veterans ages 18 to 34 with a rate of 87.5 per 100,000, and was 6.1 times higher than the rate for non-veterans among the same age group.

- Of veteran suicides, 94.1% were male. The rate among male veterans was 1.8 times that of female veterans (40.6 and 22.5 per 100,000 respectively).

- Most veteran suicide victims were non-Hispanic (NH) white (85.7%), while 8.9% were NH Black and 5.4% were of another race/ethnicity.

- Most suicides involved a firearm for both veterans (75.6%) and non-veterans (54.8%), however there was a much larger proportion of firearms used in veteran suicides.

- The second leading cause of suicide among North Carolina veterans was hanging (13.9%) followed by poisoning (7.7%).

- Roughly 2% of veteran suicides involved a method other than a firearm, hanging, or poisoning.

* Other includes fall, drowning, fire/burns, motor and other transport vehicle, and other methods of death.
Veteran Suicide Circumstances* by Age Group: NC-VDRS, 2016-2020

- Circumstances surrounding suicides differed slightly by veteran status. More veterans had a physical health problem (38.4%) than non-veterans (25.4%).
- A smaller proportion of veterans had a history of suicide attempt(s) (11.1%), and fewer had a substance use problem other than alcohol (10.3%) compared to non-veterans (18.7%, and 21.4% respectively).
- Among veteran suicides, many circumstances differed by age group.

- More veterans ages 18 to 34 had an intimate partner problem (49.6%) than older veterans (21.1%), and were more likely to have had a job-related problem (20.5%) than older veterans (5.8%).
- Veterans ages 18 to 34 were less likely to have left a suicide note (27.1%) than older veterans (32.5%).
- Veterans ages 35 and older were much more likely to have had a physical health problem (46.6%) than veterans ages 18 to 34 (5.7%).

* Among those with reported circumstance information. 95.0% of veteran cases had circumstance information. Thirty-five veterans ages 18-34 and 29 veterans ages 35 and older were missing circumstance information.

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/
- NC Military and Veteran Affairs
  https://www.milvets.nc.gov/nc4vets
- NC Injury and Veteran Affairs
  https://www.injuryfreenc.ncdhhs.gov

**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

---

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 National Violent Death Reporting System is supported by Cooperative Agreement 5NU17/CE002613-05-00 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

NC Division of Public Health / www.publichealth.nc.gov / Injury Epidemiology & Surveillance Unit/ 919-707-5425
NC Violent Death Reporting System / 919-707-5432
State of North Carolina / Department of Health and Human Services / www.ncdhhs.gov
NC DHHS is an equal opportunity employer and provider.
2020 FINAL DATA 6/20/2022
Please see the NC-VDRS 2020 Annual Report for additional data and technical information: https://www.injuryfreenc.ncdhhs.gov/DataSurveillance/ViolentDeathData.htm