

Suicide Statistics in AI/AN Communities on the Rise: Recent Updates from the CDC

Category: Covid-19, Research

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During November 2021, the CDC released a report on "[Provisional Numbers and Rates of Suicide by Month and Demographic Characteristics: United States, 2020](#)", which covers initial pandemic-era data on suicide rates nationwide.

One of the most important findings for the AI/AN community that the study found is that, "[for males, age-adjusted suicide rates were higher in 2020 than in 2019 for non-Hispanic Black, Non-Hispanic AI/AN, and Hispanic males and lower for non-Hispanic White and non-Hispanic Asian males.](#)"

Suicide is a complex multifaceted public health issue, which affects the AI/AN community at disproportionate rates. Although suicide rates decreased for many non-Hispanic White groups within the country, they increased for many other ethnic minority groups including non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaskan Native people. Due to a lack of overall research on issues pertaining to the AI/AN community and the complex issues related to suicide, studies like this are necessary to highlight the impact of mental and behavioral healthcare on AI/AN communities (and the supports that are needed). Without data, organizations and the nation are unable to provide accurate support and solutions.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused many public health issues to be amplified, such as ongoing issues with mental health, substance abuse, financial difficulties, as well as many other factors. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the possible risk factors associated with suicidal behavior may have increased, which increases the concern that deaths by suicide in 2020 might have increased as well. This report details the numbers of deaths by suicide by the demographics of sex and race and Hispanic origin, by month for the year 2020. These statistics are then compared with final 2019 rates. Rates are compared year-to-year to monitor changes within key demographics by year.

These provisional estimates are based on 99% of all 2020 death records received and processed by the National Center for Health Statistics, but this likely is still an undercount of AI/AN deaths. [Since 1979, over 45% of people who self-identified as AI/AN on a national survey had their race misclassified after death \(usually as White\).](#)

Citations:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). *Vital Statistics Rapid Release* - [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).
CDC.gov. Retrieved January 20, 2022, from
<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/vsrr/VSRR016.pdf>