
COLORADO VIOLENT DEATH REPORTING SYSTEM

Highlights from 2004-2006

The Colorado Violent Death Reporting System

In 2003, Colorado became one of 17 states to receive funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to participate in the National Violent Death Reporting System.¹ This data system collects detailed information on the individuals and circumstances involved in suicides, homicides, deaths of undetermined intent and unintentional firearm-related deaths. Data are collected from a variety of sources including death certificates, coroner reports, law enforcement investigations, the Supplemental Homicide Report, Child Fatality Review, the state crime lab, and newspaper articles. The abstracted data are entered into a standardized electronic database prepared by the CDC and on a daily basis, a de-identified limited subset of the data is submitted to the national database. Data at the state level are available for analysis and local use.

Violent deaths in Colorado

Colorado data are available for 2004-2006. Analysis of the data in the Colorado Violent Death Reporting System shows that the majority of violent deaths in Colorado are suicides. In the three years from 2004 through 2006, 2,352 suicides, 593 homicides, 23 unintentional firearm-related deaths and 47 deaths due to legal intervention were reported.² More than half of these deaths (52 percent) resulted from the use of a firearm.

The next pages highlight some of the information gained from the Colorado Violent Death Reporting System.



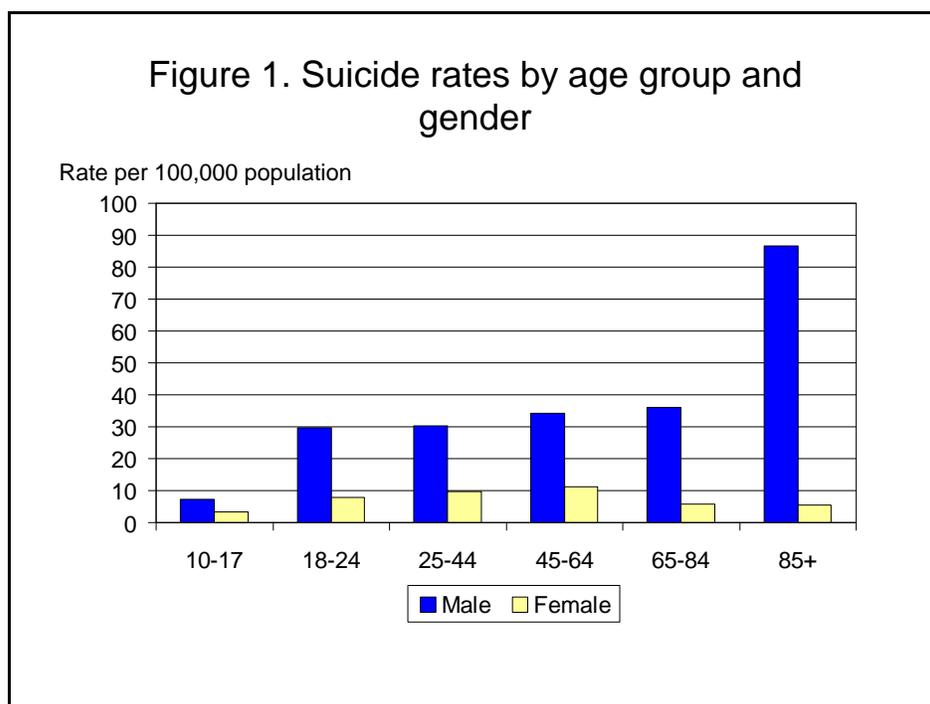
1. See <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/profiles/nvdrs/default.htm>

2. Deaths due to legal intervention include those resulting during the course of legal law enforcement actions.

Suicide Highlights

Suicide is the leading cause of injury death in Colorado. More individuals die by suicide than die in motor vehicle crashes. Colorado's suicide rate is the eighth highest in the nation. Colorado's age-adjusted suicide rate (17.1 per 100,000 population) is more than 1.5 times the U.S. rate (11.1 per 100,000).

Overall, suicide is the sixth leading cause of death in Colorado; however, for certain age groups, suicide is an even more alarming issue. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for Coloradans ages 10-34 and the leading cause of injury death for Coloradans ages 35-74.



Suicide rates vary significantly by sex, age, and race/ethnicity. The age-adjusted suicide rate for males (25.9 per 100,000) is almost four times higher than for females (6.6 per 100,000). The suicide rate for white, non-Hispanics is significantly higher than for other race/ethnic groups. The rate for whites is twice that for Blacks, American Indians, or Asians. White males account for nearly 70 percent of all suicide deaths in Colorado.

Gender differences are seen in the methods used in suicide. For women, 42 percent of suicides result from poisoning, 31 percent from firearms, 21 percent from hanging/suffocation and six percent from other means. For men, 56 percent result from firearms, 24 percent from hanging/suffocation, 16 percent from poisoning and four percent from other means.

Information on the circumstances associated with the suicide was obtained from coroners and/or law enforcement for 93 percent of the deaths. Of the suicides with circumstances known:

- 65 percent of the individuals were recognized by others as having a recent depressed mood
- 40 percent left a suicide note; 37 percent disclosed their intent to die by suicide
- 39 percent had recent difficulties with an intimate partner, such as a divorce, separation, or breakup with a girlfriend or boyfriend
- 35 percent had a documented mental health diagnosis, such as major depression, bipolar illness or schizophrenia
- 34 percent had a physical health problem that contributed to the suicide decision
- 24 percent had a history of suicide attempts
- 24 percent had financial problems, such as high credit card debt, gambling debts, bankruptcy, or foreclosure of a home or business
- 17 percent had criminal legal problems, such as a recent or impending arrest, police pursuit, an impending court date, or imprisonment

Suicide Prevention

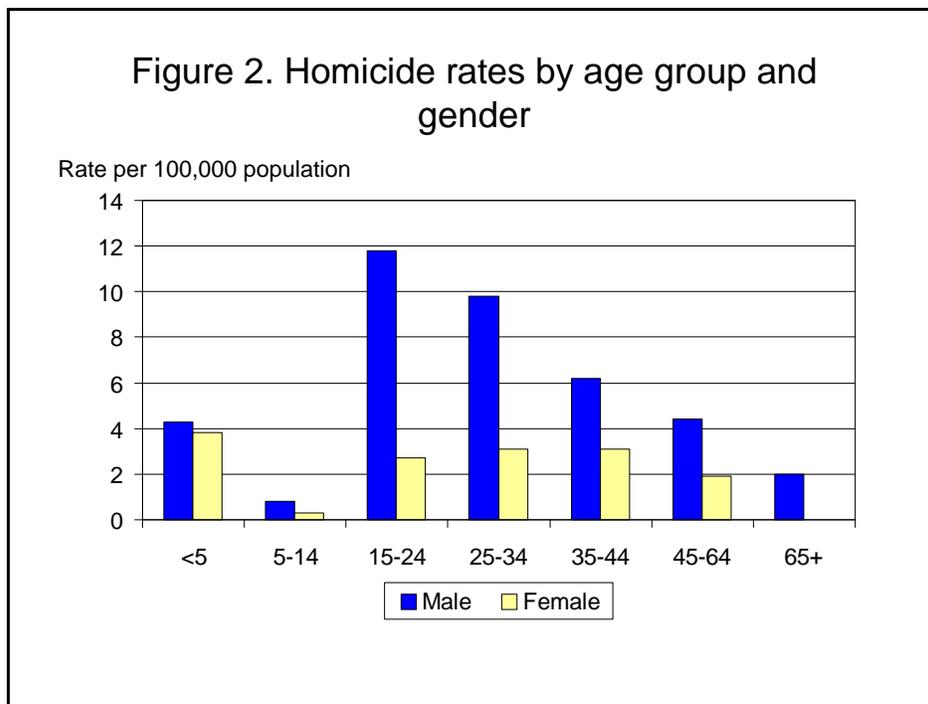
Information on suicide prevention efforts can be found at:

- The Office of Suicide Prevention, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, <http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/pp/suicide/index.html>
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, <http://www.afsp.org/>
- American Association of Suicidology, <http://www.suicidology.org/>
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center, <http://www.sprc.org/>
- National Strategy for Suicide Prevention, <http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/suicideprevention/>
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>
- The Yellow Ribbon Teen Suicide Prevention Program, <http://www.yellowribbon.org/>
- The Carson J. Spencer Foundation, <http://www.carsonjspencer.org/>

Homicide Highlights

Although the age-adjusted homicide rate in Colorado is lower than the national rate, homicide is one of the five leading causes of death for Coloradans from birth through age 34. Males are more likely than females to die by homicide. More than 70 percent of homicides in Colorado involve males. The age-adjusted homicide rate for males (5.6 per 100,000) is 2.5 times higher than for females (2.2 per 100,000).

Males ages 15-24 have the highest homicide rate (11.8 per 100,000), while children ages 5-14 have the lowest rate (0.6 per 100,000). Of concern is the rate of homicide for children under age 5 (deaths due to child abuse). In 2004 through 2006, 51 children under age 5 in Colorado died as a result of child abuse.



Homicide rates vary by race/ethnicity. The homicide rate for Blacks in Colorado is more than six times higher than the rate for white, non-Hispanics and twice the rate for Hispanics.

More than half (57 percent) of homicides involve the use of firearms, while 17 percent result from use of a sharp instrument, 15 percent from use of a blunt instrument or beating/kicking with hands/feet and 12 percent involved the use of some other type of weapon.

Information on the circumstances associated with the homicide was obtained from coroners and/or law enforcement for 80 percent of the deaths. Of the homicides with circumstances known:

- 12 percent resulted from an argument over money or property
- 22 percent involved intimate partner violence
- 40 percent involved some other type of argument or interpersonal conflict
- 21 percent occurred during the commission of another serious crime, such as robbery, burglary, or motor vehicle theft
- 17 percent were drug-related
- 17 percent were gang-related

Deaths due to Firearms

Of the 3,015 violent deaths occurring in Colorado in 2004-2006, 1,580 (52 percent) involved the use of a firearm. The percent of deaths resulting from firearms varied with the age of the victim. Nearly 80 percent of the homicides among individuals ages 15-24 involved the use of a firearm. The percent of homicides involving firearms decreased with the age of the victim. In contrast, the highest level of firearm use in suicides was seen among individuals ages 65 and older (72 percent).

In terms of the types of firearms used, 70 percent of the firearm-related homicides and suicides involved the use of a handgun, 11 percent involved a shotgun, nine percent involved a rifle, and the firearm type was unknown for 10 percent.

For more information

For more information about the Colorado Violent Death Reporting System, contact the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment at (303) 692-3005 or e-mail injury.epi@state.co.us. Additional information is also available on our website at <http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/pp/injepi/cvdrs/index.html>.

This publication was supported by Cooperative Agreement Number U17/CCU823101 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The analyses presented are based on the data collected as of 11/02/07.