

Findings from the *CDC Health Disparities and Inequalities Report – United States, 2011*

In recent decades, the United States has made substantial progress in improving our residents' health and reducing disparities, but ongoing economic, racial/ethnic, and other social disparities in health still exist.

Now, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued the *CDC Health Disparities and Inequalities Report – United States, 2011*, which is the first in a series of regular reports that focus on selected topics that are important to CDC's efforts to eliminate disparities.

Released as an *MMWR Supplement*, the report contains 22 topical essays that address disparities in health-care access, exposure to environmental hazards, mortality, morbidity, behavioral risk factors, and social determinants of selected health problems at the national level. The report provides an analysis of the recent trends and ongoing variations in health disparities and inequalities in selected social and health indicators. The data highlight the considerable and persistent gaps between the healthiest people and the least healthy. By documenting these gaps, CDC hopes to spur further action and attention to these issues at the federal, state and local levels.

Key Findings in Suicide Disparities

- In 2007, a total of 34,598 suicides occurred in the United States — 83.5% of the suicides were among non-Hispanic whites, 7.1% among Hispanics, 5.5% among non-Hispanic blacks, 2.5% among Asian/Pacific Islanders, and 1.1% among American Indians/Alaska Natives.
- Suicide rates by race/ethnicity and age group demonstrated different patterns. Though the greatest percentage of suicides occurred among non-Hispanic whites, the highest race/ethnicity and age-specific rates were among American Indian/Alaska Native adolescents and young adults.
- In each of the racial/ethnic groups, suicide rates were higher for males than for females.

What Can Be Done

Comprehensive strategies that include a component on developing life skills have been demonstrated to be effective in reducing suicidal behavior among American Indians and other youth and might be useful in reducing suicides among other groups if applied more widely. Community- and societal-level strategies that address such social conditions as poverty, inadequate social support, and lack of access to jobs also might have significant population-level impacts but need further testing and application in specific cultural settings.

CDC will accelerate its efforts to eliminate health disparities with a focus on surveillance, analysis, and reporting of disparities and the identification and application of evidence-based strategies to achieve health equity.

CDC and its partners can use the findings in this periodic report to raise awareness and understanding of groups that experience the greatest health disparities. The findings also can help motivate increased efforts to intervene at the state, tribal, and local levels to address health disparities and inequalities.



Recommended Actions to Reduce Health Disparities

1. Increase community awareness of disparities as persistent problems that represent some of the most pressing health challenges in the U.S.
2. Set priorities among disparities to be addressed at the federal, state, tribal, and local levels
3. Articulate valid reasons to expend resources to reduce and ultimately eliminate priority disparities
4. Implement the dual strategy of universal and targeted intervention strategies based on lessons learned from successes in reducing certain disparities (e.g., the virtual elimination of disparities in certain vaccination rates among children)
5. Aim to achieve a faster rate of improvement among vulnerable groups by allocating resources in proportion to need and a commitment to closing gaps in health, longevity, and quality of life



For More Information

The *CDC Health Disparities and Inequalities Report – United States, 2011* is available online at www.cdc.gov/mmwr. For more information about this topic, please visit www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/suicide.