

# Preventing Suicide in the United States



## HOW CDC'S RESEARCH ON ENHANCING CONNECTEDNESS HELPS PROTECT LIVES

**Suicide is a public health problem that takes a life in the United States about every 12 minutes. Suicide rates have increased by nearly 30% from 1999 to 2016, and effective prevention programs and policies are needed to stop this upward trend. CDC's Division of Violence prevention is leading advances in suicide prevention by identifying ways to enhance connectedness, or the degree to which people are socially close. Connectedness can act as a protective factor buffering against the risk for suicide.**

### UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF SUICIDE

- Accounts for nearly 45,000 deaths in the United States in 2016.
- Rates went up more than 30% in half the states since 1999.
- Including self-harm injuries cost the nation approximately \$70 billion per year in direct medical and work loss costs.
- Is a problem across the lifespan, but especially for young people and middle-aged adults:
  - Suicide ranks as the second leading cause of death for youth ages 10 to 24.
  - Middle-aged adults 35–64 account for the largest proportion of suicides (52%), with rates among middle-aged men nearly three times higher than rates for women.

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[CDC's Preventing Suicide Technical Package](#) highlights promoting connectedness and several other strategies that are based on the best available evidence.

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**Centers for Disease  
Control and Prevention**  
National Center for Injury  
Prevention and Control

## CDC'S ROLE IN SUICIDE PREVENTION

- **Tracking and monitoring data** to observe trends and inform policies and programs.
- **Identifying risk and protective factors** associated with suicide and developing evidence-based suicide prevention strategies.
- **Evaluating programs, policies, and practices** to determine if they effectively prevent risk for suicide.

## IDENTIFYING EFFECTIVE PREVENTION STRATEGIES

- CDC's research is increasing understanding of what works to prevent suicide. One key suicide prevention strategy identified by CDC is strengthening connectedness within, between, and among individuals, families, and communities. Previous studies established a link between connectedness and decreased suicide risk, by increasing one's ability to cope with life challenges, discouraging harmful behaviors, and increasing access to helping resources.

## CDC'S CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO SUICIDE PREVENTION THROUGH ENHANCING SOCIAL CONNECTION

Although a lot is known about the relationship between social connections and suicide risk, critical gaps still remain. CDC is addressing those gaps by funding innovative research to understand how social connections reduce suicide risk for various age groups and to identify policies and programs that increase connectedness and hold promise for effectively preventing suicide across the lifespan.

- CDC-funded research examined the impact that a sense of connection to family and community can have on **preventing suicide risk among young people**. One study found that youth who felt a greater sense of connectedness to their parents were less likely to have suicidal thoughts or exhibit suicidal behaviors and were more likely to have higher self-esteem.
- CDC is also studying how new and inventive prevention programs may **reduce suicide among middle-aged men**. One study is looking at the effects of a primary care based interactive multimedia computer program on men's motivation to disclose and discuss suicide risk with their doctors. Formative research suggested that the intervention would help men be more likely to disclose suicidal thoughts and behaviors, resulting in improved potential to receive care. Another study is evaluating the effectiveness of a comprehensive online screening and referral intervention, including male-oriented messaging and resources, on men's help seeking, suicidal ideation and other suicide risk factors.
- CDC-funded research evaluated the effects that increasing connections between older adults and their community can have on suicide risk. A recent study examined the impact of *The Senior Connection*, a program linking disconnected seniors with peer companions, on attitudes and risk factors linked to suicide. Participants in *The Senior Connection* were less likely to feel like a burden to others and have fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety 12 months post intervention.

Continued research in this area can help CDC advance the understanding of what works to prevent suicide among people of all ages—particularly those at elevated risk—and protect the livelihood of our nation.

Learn more about how CDC's future research can identify solutions to emerging violence issues: <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/researchpriorities/>