ELDER SUICIDE IN NORTH CAROLINA, 2013 - 2017

The North Carolina Violent Death Reporting System (NC-VDRS) is a CDC-funded statewide surveillance system that collects detailed information on deaths that occur in North Carolina resulting from violence: homicide, suicide, unintentional firearm deaths, legal intervention and deaths for which intent could not be determined. NC-VDRS is a multi-source system that gathers information from death certificates, medical examiner reports and law enforcement reports. The goal of this system is to aid researchers, legislators, and community interest groups in the development of public health prevention strategies to reduce violent deaths. NC-VDRS began collecting data in January 2004. This document summarizes deaths among North Carolina residents ages 65 and older completing suicide for the years 2013 - 2017.

From 2013 to 2017, 1,552 North Carolina residents ages 65 and older died as a result of violence. Of these violent deaths, 1,261 were suicide (81.3%).

The elder suicide rate was 16.6 suicides per 100,000.

81.7% of elder suicides were among males.

The suicide rate peaked among males 85 and older, and the suicide rate was consistently higher for males compared to females for all age groups.

Among females, the suicide rate peaked among those ages 65-74.

93.9% of elder suicide victims were identified as non-Hispanic (NH) white. The remaining 6.1% were identified as NH black, NH Asian, NH American Indian, or Hispanic.

Overall, the most common method of suicide among elder suicide victims was firearms (78.4%), followed by poisoning (11.1%) and hanging/strangulation/suffocation (7.3%).

3.2% of suicides were completed using a method other than firearms, poisoning or hanging.

Elder Specific Suicide Rates* by Age Groups:

- 93.9% of elder suicide victims were identified as non-Hispanic (NH) white. The remaining 6.1% were identified as NH black, NH Asian, NH American Indian, or Hispanic.

- 3.2% of suicides were completed using a method other than firearms, poisoning or hanging.

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Elder Suicide Circumstances*: NC-VDRS, 2013 - 2017

*NC. Division of Public Health - N.C. Violent Death Reporting System *

- Over one-third (34.4%) of elder male suicide victims with circumstance information were characterized as having a current depressed mood at the time of death compared to 32.1% of females.

- 64.8% of elder female and 42.8% of elder male suicide victims had a current mental health problem when they completed suicide.

- 20.4% of elder females had a history of prior suicide attempts, whereas only 6.2% of elder males had a history of prior suicide attempts.

- 56.6% of males and 36.7% of females had a physical health problem.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Circumstance</th>
<th>Percent of Suicides</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Depressed Mood</td>
<td>Male: 34% Female: 32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Mental Health Problem</td>
<td>Male: 43% Female: 65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently Treated for Mental Health</td>
<td>Male: 37% Female: 56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Health Problem</td>
<td>Male: 37% Female: 57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left a Suicide Note</td>
<td>Male: 29% Female: 43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disclosed Suicide Intent</td>
<td>Male: 28% Female: 21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Suicide Attempt(s)</td>
<td>Male: 6% Female: 20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Circumstances are known for 95% males (n=976) and 95% females (n=221).

More information on suicide prevention efforts can be found at:

**State Resource Partners**
- N.C. 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/
- The Triangle Coalition for Suicide Prevention
  https://trianglesuicideprevention.org/
- North Carolina Mental Health, Substance Use, and Aging Coalition
  https://www.med.unc.edu/aging/cgec/mental-health/

**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
  (for suicide crisis calls) 1-800-273-8255
- N.C. Division of Aging and Adult Services
  https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/daas

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Please see the NC-VDRS 2017 Annual Report for additional data and technical information.