



Suicide and Hispanics

NOTE: As stipulated by the Office of Management and Budget, the terms "Hispanic" or "Latino" denote a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.

- In 2015, suicide was the eleventh-leading cause of death for Hispanics of all ages and the third-leading cause of death for the 10-24 age group. In Tennessee it was the seventh-leading cause of death for Hispanics of all ages between the years 2011-15 but the third-leading cause for person aged 15-24.
- At 5.84 deaths per 100,000 population, the suicide rate for Hispanics of all ages was slightly less than half of the overall U.S. rate of 13.75.
- Between 2011 and 2015, there were an average of 13 suicide deaths among Hispanics in Tennessee, at a rate of 4.18 per 100,000 (compared to the white non-Hispanic rate of 18.71).
- In recent years there has been a shift in the most common method of suicide among Hispanics, locally and nationally. In 2010, firearms were the leading method of suicide death among Hispanics, accounting for 56.6% of the national total and 66.7% of all suicide deaths among Hispanics in Tennessee over the previous five years. In 2015, hanging/suffocation was the most common means of death, accounting for 44% of the deaths compared to 35% for firearms. In Tennessee, the numbers of suffocation and firearm suicides between 2011 and 2015 were about equal (40% firearm and 39% suffocation).
- Differences have been noted between Hispanic immigrants and those born in the United States. Native-born Hispanics have higher rates of suicidal ideation and suicide attempts than immigrants. Immigrants who came to the United States as children have higher rates than those who came as adolescents and adults. Hispanic adolescents with U.S. born parents have higher rates of suicide attempts than U.S. born Hispanic adolescents with immigrant parents.
- Research has scored Hispanics high on measures of familism— strong feelings of commitment, loyalty, and obligation to family members that extends beyond the nuclear family. The interdependent nature of family includes making family needs a priority over individual needs and being able to turn to family for support. Youth reporting strong, supportive relationships with their parents are less likely to attempt suicide.
- In addition, ethnic identity and greater involvement in Hispanic culture is positively associated with self-esteem among Latinx adolescents, and has been shown to moderate the relationship between perceived discrimination and depression.
- Individuals identifying themselves as Hispanic report higher scores on measures of moral objections to suicide and on measures of religiosity compared to people who are not Hispanic. They are also more likely than other racial/ethnic groups to belong to religious denominations that have strong beliefs prohibiting suicidal thoughts and behaviors. However, these communities often regard depression as a constitutional weakness and condemn suicide as a sin, adding an unneeded burden to people and families dealing with these issues.
- Compared to non-Hispanic Whites, Hispanics underutilize mental health services, are less likely to receive care that follows recommended guidelines, and are more likely to rely on informal supports (e.g., family) and primary care providers than on mental health specialists for mental health services. They Hispanics are also less likely than other racial/ethnic groups to call a suicide crisis line during a suicidal crisis.
- An analysis of suicide notes found that feelings of alienation among Hispanics were double that of non-Hispanic whites. Alienation causes a loss of well-being when the individual feels emotionally disconnected from his or her family of origin or society.
- Differences between the level of acculturation in parents and their children can create conflict and stress in the relationship, especially with Hispanic adolescent girls, given the high value placed on the family. This conflict and stress appears to play a pivotal role in Hispanic girls' suicide attempts.
- In a four-year analysis of a nationally representative sample, Hispanic adolescents and young adults had the highest rates of hopelessness and fatalism among all racial/ethnic groups.
- Perceived racial discrimination has been associated with suicide attempts among Hispanic college students.

Sources: Suicide Prevention Resource Center, Tennessee Department of Health, US Department of Health and Human Services, *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, Aggression and Violent Behavior.*



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