

Suicide and Hispanics

- Between 2003 and 2007 there were 36 reported suicides among Hispanics in Tennessee, at a rate of 3.9 per 100,000. This is lower than the national Hispanic rate of 5.2 per 100,000, which itself is less than half of the overall U.S rate of 11.1 per 100,000.
- During this period, suicide was the ninth-leading cause of death among Hispanics in the state (as compared to the twelfth-leading cause nationally) and the third-leading cause of death within the 10-24 age group (same as the national ranking).
- Firearms were the most common means of death employed by Hispanic suicide victims in Tennessee, used in 66.7% of the deaths. Nationally, firearms are a factor in only 38.9% of Hispanic suicide deaths.
- The highest rate occurs among males over the age of 85, at 20.8 per 100,000.
- Hispanic suicide victims in the United States are five times more likely to be male than female.
- Numerous studies suggest that Hispanic children and adolescents experience more mental health problems than non-Hispanic Caucasian youth. This finding is supported by the 2009 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, which suggests young Hispanics are at greater suicide risk than their non-Hispanic counterparts. They are 11% more likely to have seriously considered attempting a suicide attempt within a 12-month period, 12% more likely to have made a suicide plan, and 29% more likely to have made a suicide attempt. Statistics from the Tennessee Department of Education's 2009 Tennessee Youth Risk Behavior Survey were generally consistent with these figures.
- A 2001 Surgeon General's report observed that few than 1 in 5 individuals of Hispanic origin informs a general health care provider about their mental health problems. Less than 1 in 11 contacts a mental health professional.
- Population studies have found that American-born Hispanics have higher rates of mental illness than immigrants of Hispanic origin. However, recent immigrants may be at increased risk for depression and suicidal ideation due to cultural adaptation stresses.
- Certain aspects of Hispanic cultures may serve as protective factors against suicide and suicide attempts. These include social support provided by an extended family unit, religious prohibitions against suicide, and a fatalistic life orientation that may condition people to accept and adapt to adverse events. However, these factors may also dissuade troubled individuals and their loved ones from seeking needed interventions and compromise community mental health outreach efforts.

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