



## Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network

*"Saving Lives in Tennessee"*

# 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 2012, 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 eighth-leading cause of death for Hispanics of all ages between the years 2008-12 but the third-leading cause for person aged 15-34.
- At 5.4 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 12.9.
- Between 2008 and 2012, there were an average of 13 suicide deaths among Hispanics in Tennessee, at a rate of 4.4 per 100,000 (compared to the white rate of 15.1).
- Firearms are the leading method of suicide death among Hispanics, accounting for 56.6% of the national total for 2010 and 66.7% of all suicide deaths among Hispanics in Tennessee over the last five years.
- Suicide rates among Hispanic Americans can differ by ethnicity. Puerto Rican adults have the highest rates of suicide attempts. During the 10 years between 1992 and 2001, the lifetime prevalence of suicide attempts increased significantly among 18-to 24-year-old Puerto Rican women and Cuban men, and among 45-to 64-year-old Puerto Rican men.
- Differences have also 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.
- The 2013 Tennessee Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that Hispanic high school students are about twice as likely as their non-Hispanic classmates to suffer from periods of depression, make a suicide attempt, and act on it. They are 3.5 times more likely to make a suicide attempt that requires medical treatment.
- 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 greater involvement in Hispanic culture is positively associated with self-esteem among Latino/Latina 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.
- According to the National Violent Death Reporting System's reports for 2003–2009, about 28% of Hispanic suicide decedents were legally intoxicated at the time of death. Of the four racial/ethnic minority groups studied, Hispanics had the second highest rate of alcohol use during an attempt.
- 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*.

295 Plus Park Blvd, Suite 201  
Nashville, TN 37217

Phone: (615) 297-1077  
Fax: (615) 269-5413

tspn@tspn.org  
www.tspn.org