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VA annual report shows decrease in Veteran suicides

WASHINGTON — New data included in the Department of Veterans Affairs [2021 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report](#) notably shows a decrease from 2018 to 2019 in the total number of Veteran suicide deaths, and a decrease in the rate of Veteran suicides per 100,000.

This drop is noteworthy when compared to the generally rising rates observed in earlier years.

This latest report provides the most comprehensive data to date regarding suicide among U.S. Veterans from 2001-2019.

Key findings include:

- In 2019, there were 6,261 Veteran suicide deaths, 399 fewer than in 2018.
- In 2019, the Veteran suicide rate was 31.6 per 100,000, substantially higher than the rate among non-Veteran U.S. adults (16.8 per 100,000).
- Adjusting for age- and sex-differences, the suicide rate among Veterans in 2019 was 52.3% higher than for non-Veteran U.S. adults. The suicide rate difference between Veterans and the non-Veteran U.S. population was highest in 2017 at 66.3%.
- From 2018 to 2019, there was a 7.2% overall decrease in the age- and sex-adjusted Veteran suicide mortality rate in 2019, while among non-Veteran U.S. adults, the adjusted suicide mortality rate fell by 1.8%.
- The age-adjusted suicide rate for male Veterans decreased 3.8% in 2019 from 2018 while the age-adjusted suicide rate for female Veterans decreased 14.9% in 2019 from 2018.
- Firearms were more often involved in Veteran suicides in 2019 than in 2018 (among Veteran men who died from suicide: 69.6% in 2018, 70.2% in 2019; among Veteran women who died from suicide: 41.1% in 2018, 49.8% in 2019).

“Suicide prevention remains a top priority for VA, with the most significant amount of resources ever appropriated and apportioned to VA suicide prevention,” said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. “Suicide is preventable, and everyone has a role to play in saving lives. VA continues to implement its 10-year strategy — as outlined in the 2018 [National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide](#) — to end Veteran suicide through a [public health approach](#) combining both community-based and clinically-based strategies across prevention, intervention and postvention areas of focus.”

To date, VA has not observed increases in VHA documented suicide-related indicators during the COVID-19 pandemic. VA will examine suicide mortality when national death certificate data becomes available.

For additional Veteran suicide mortality data, see the report’s [accompanying state data sheets](#).

VA continues to implement its 10-year vision specifically through the department’s strategic plan focused on efforts such as the Suicide Prevention 2.0 initiative; Suicide Prevention Now initiative; the President’s Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide (PREVENTS); 988 and Veterans Crisis Line expansion.

If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, contact the Veterans Crisis Line to receive free, confidential support and crisis intervention available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Call 800-273-8255 and Press 1, text 838255 or chat online at [VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](https://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat).

Reporters covering this issue can download [VA’s Safe Messaging Best Practices](#) fact sheet or visit www.ReportingOnSuicide.org for important guidance on how to communicate about suicide.

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