

Suicide in the United States

Suicide continues to be an urgent public health threat in the United States, with about 49,300 deaths in 2023, reflecting an age-adjusted rate of 14.2 per 100,000 (CDC, 2024). The sex disparity is substantial, as men account for nearly 75% of suicide deaths, and their suicide rate is roughly three to four times higher than that of women. Older men represent the highest-risk demographic, with men aged 75 and older reaching rates above 40 per 100,000 (Garnett et al., 2024). The gender gap is not driven by higher levels of men wanting to commit suicide, but because of the fact that firearms account for more than half of U.S. suicides, and men disproportionately use firearms, resulting in far higher fatality rates per attempt (Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions, 2023).

However, women, especially adolescent girls, show much higher rates of suicidal ideation and non-fatal attempts. According to the CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Survey, nearly 30% of high-school girls reported seriously considering suicide in 2021, compared with 14% of boys (CDC, 2023). This divide highlights the importance of researching both sex-specific behavioral patterns. While young adults exhibit increasing psychological distress, female youth experience the steepest rises in depressive symptoms, social-media-linked stressors, and crisis-period ideation (Jones et al., 2023).

Treatment access also differs by sex. Among U.S. adults with serious mental illness, 66.7% received treatment in 2022, but women were far more likely to receive care than men (National Institute of Mental Health, 2023). Research consistently shows that men underutilize mental-health services due to stigma and masculine social norms, which increases the likelihood that suicidal ideation progresses to a lethal attempt.

Cross-nationally comparing Japan showed parallel but culturally distinct gendered patterns. Japan reported approximately 21,800 suicide deaths in 2023, with men taking up about 70% of cases (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2024). While male predominance is like the U.S., the reasons are different. Occupational pressures, economic insecurity, and culturally reinforced male provider expectations are major contributors in Japan. Unlike the United States, firearms are rare, and hanging remains the most common method. (MHLW, 2024). Japan's suicide-prevention efforts show that culturally tailored interventions can rapidly decrease male suicide deaths when used consistently.

Because of this, the U.S. needs to have urgent priorities. First, male suicide mortality needs immediate attention through lethal-means safety interventions. Second, female and youth suicide morbidity needs strengthened mental-health services in schools, crisis-intervention pathways, and digital-environment protections. At the systems level, further investment in the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, standardized state-level reporting, and integration of mobile crisis teams can close access gaps that disproportionately affect men, adolescents, and rural populations. Together, this data indicates that U.S. suicide risk is not gender neutral. Instead, it requires targeted, sex-specific resource allocation and policy design informed by both domestic and international evidence.

Works Cited

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023). *Youth Risk Behavior Survey: Data summary & trends report 2011–2021*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/index.htm>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024). *FastStats: Suicide and self-inflicted injury*.

National Center for Health Statistics. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/suicide.htm>

Garnett, M. F., Curtin, S. C., & Hedegaard, H. (2024). *Suicide mortality in the United States, 2002–2022* (NCHS Data Brief No. 472). National Center for Health Statistics.

<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db472.htm>

Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions. (2023). *U.S. firearm suicide statistics and trends*. <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/gun-violence-solutions>

Jones, S. E., Ethier, K. A., & Hertz, M. F. (2023). Mental health, suicidality, and risk behaviors among U.S. adolescents. *MMWR Supplements*, 72(2), 1–14.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35358165/>

Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. (2024). *Suicide statistics in Japan: Annual report 2023*.

Government of Japan. <https://www.mhlw.go.jp>

National Institute of Mental Health. (2023). *Mental illness statistics: Treatment among adults with serious mental illness*. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics>