

**News Release**

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**Contact information**

# Preventable deaths by suicide rose again in 2021–2022

## Suicide is preventable, recovery is possible and help is available at any time by calling or texting 988

After a brief dip during the pandemic in 2020, the rate of suicide in Minnesota rose in 2021 and 2022. There were 808 deaths by suicide in 2021 and 835 in 2022, according to final and preliminary data respectively.

For the past 20 years, the number of suicides in Minnesota has steadily increased, mirroring patterns across the United States. The preliminary data from 2022 indicates the trend continued and reached 14.3 suicides per 100,000, a rate near the previous highest rate of 14.4 in 2019, according to the newly released MDH data brief.

Death by suicide has been one of several reasons why overall life expectancy may be declining, particularly among male Minnesotans. From 2011 to 2021, suicide, or intentional self-harm, was the eighth leading cause of death in Minnesota.

“Suicide is a significant public health issue that involves the tragic loss of human life,” said Minnesota Commissioner of Health Dr. Brooke Cunningham. “It is important for us to take a comprehensive public health approach to suicide prevention that supports connectedness, belonging and protections from lethal means.”

Minnesota’s suicide prevention efforts are based on the evidence that suicides are preventable, mental illness is treatable and recovery is possible. The Minnesota Department of Health’s (MDH) newly released [2023-2027 Minnesota State Suicide Prevention Plan](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/mnresponse/stateplan.html) [\[LINK http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/mnresponse/stateplan.html\]](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/mnresponse/stateplan.html), calls for a comprehensive approach including improving infrastructure, increasing collaboration and building capacity for local communities to implement strategies in prevention, early intervention, crisis intervention and support after a death by suicide. The plan supports suicide prevention efforts such as the [988 Lifeline](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/988/index.html) [\[LINK http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/988/index.html\]](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/988/index.html), [suicide prevention trainings \(PDF\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/documents/suicidetrainings.pdf) [\[LINK http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/documents/suicidetrainings.pdf\]](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/documents/suicidetrainings.pdf), in communities and the [Zero Suicide](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/communities/zerosuicide.html) [\[LINK http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/communities/zerosuicide.html\]](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/communities/zerosuicide.html) initiative, which is a framework to improve the suicide and self-harm care within health care and behavioral health clinics and organizations.

The MDH report also shows suicide does not affect all groups equally. According to preliminary data, male Minnesotans had a suicide rate four times higher than females in 2022. Like previous years, in 2021 the majority (80%) of suicide deaths were males. This contrasts with the fact that women accounted for 65% of hospital-treated self-harm or suicide attempts in 2016-2020. These patterns are likely related to the lethal and predominant role that firearms play in the death of males by suicide.

Efforts to reduce suicide deaths by firearms include Counseling on Access to Lethal Means (CALM) training. This training promotes strategies for removing or reducing access to the methods people use, such as firearms and medication. Gun locks are one strategy for safely storing a firearm and reducing access to lethal means for someone having suicidal thoughts. The Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) is giving away gun locks as part of its Safe and Secure Minnesota campaign. You can request up to three free locks at [SafeAndSecureMN.org](https://dps.mn.gov/safe-secure/Pages/default.aspx) [\[LINK https://dps.mn.gov/safe-secure/Pages/default.aspx\]](https://dps.mn.gov/safe-secure/Pages/default.aspx). DPS has given away more than 50,000 locks since last August.

Community partners are also working to prevent suicide. Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE), a Twin Cities-based suicide prevention nonprofit, partnered with Stock and Barrel Gun Club to hold mental health nights in January 2023. The effort was part of a community-based suicide-awareness program in Dakota County funded by MDH.

In 2021, American Indian or Alaska Natives had a higher suicide rate in Minnesota than other races or ethnicities – the highest rate for American Indians since at least 2000. The American Indian community suffers from higher suicide rates than other racial or ethnic groups in Minnesota. MDH recently held listening sessions with tribal partners who noted how historical traumas live on today as suicide risk factors, such as loss of indigenous knowledge and identity, and economic hardship.

Tribal partners said factors protecting members from suicide include positive connections through cultural activities, recognition of tribal sovereignty a sense of purpose, nature exploration, healthy eating, and reconnecting with traditional practices such as smudging, talking circles, ceremonies and indigenous medicines. For example, current MDH grantee Ain Dah Yung Center provides a healing place within the community for American Indian youth and families to thrive in safety and wholeness. Meaning "our home" in Ojibwe, Ain Dah Yung works to prevent suicide by offering opportunities for cultural connection, traditional healing practices and ceremony. Ain Dah Yung staff also provide trainings to staff and community members to recognize signs of suicide risk and how to respond.

Latino and Hispanic Minnesotans had more suicide deaths in 2021 than the previous five years. Race and ethnicity data is not yet available for 2022.

More information is available at [Data Brief: Suicide Rate Increased in 2021, 2022](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/documents/2021suicidedatabrief.pdf) (PDF). [LINK <http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/documents/2021suicidedatabrief.pdf>].

For those communicating about suicide or doing a news story, please review MDH's [Safe Messaging around Suicide](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/documents/suicidemessaging.pdf) (PDF). [LINK <http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/documents/suicidemessaging.pdf>].

-MDH-

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*Suicide is a public health issue. Media and online coverage of suicide should be informed by using best practices. The way the media cover suicide can influence behavior negatively, leading to additional suicides, or positively, by encouraging people to seek help. To learn more about best practices in suicide reporting, visit [Reporting on Suicide](https://reportingonsuicide.org/)* [LINK <https://reportingonsuicide.org/>].

**Last Updated:** 06/04/2024