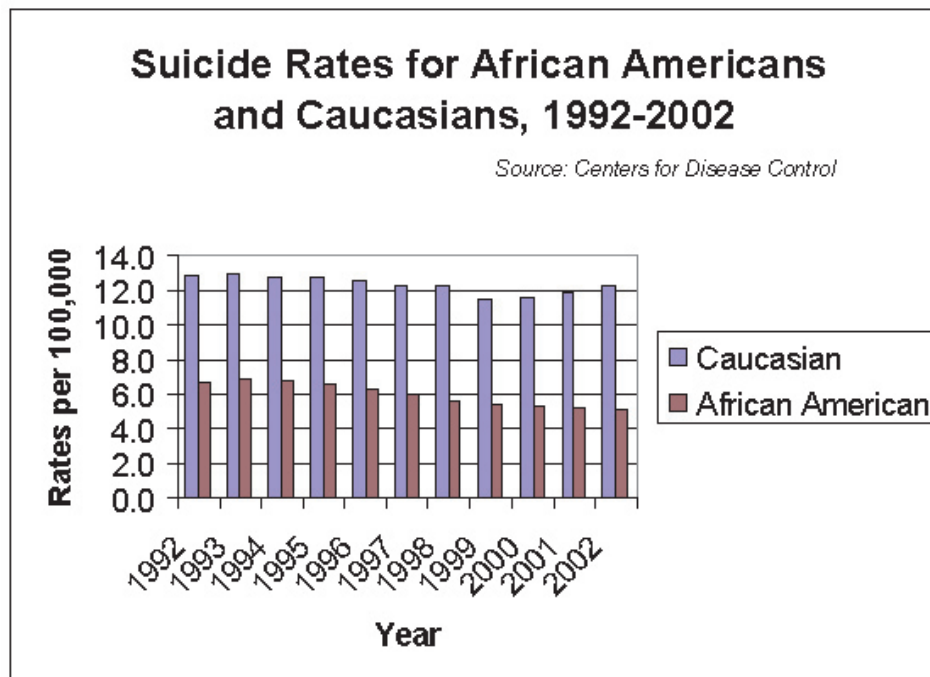




African American Suicide Fact Sheet¹

- In 2002, 1,939 African Americans completed suicide in the U.S. Of these, 1,633 (84%) were males (rate of 9.1 per 100,000). The suicide rate for females was 1.6 per 100,000.
- In 2002, there were only 306 African American female suicides. The ratio of African American male to female was 5.34 to 1. The suicide rate among African American females was the lowest of all racial/gender groups.
- As with all racial groups, African American females were more likely than males to attempt suicide and African American males were more likely to complete suicide.
- From 1993 to 2002, the rate of suicide for African Americans (all ages) showed a small but steady decline (from 6.9 in 1993 to 5.2 in 2002). For Caucasians, the rate declined until 1999 (from 13.0 in 1993 to 11.5 in 2009), and then increased slightly since 2000 (see graph below).



- Suicide was the third leading cause of death among African American youth, after homicides and accidents. The suicide rate for young African American youth was 6.5 per 100,000 (n = 403).
- For African American youth², the rate of male suicide (11.3 per 100,000) was 6.6 times higher than that of females (1.7 per 100,000).

In this fact sheet, unless otherwise specified, the information presented refers to the latest available data (i.e., 2002 data).

² The term 'youth' refers to individuals 15 to 24 years of age.

- African American youth suicide rates were generally low until the beginning of the 1980's when rates started to increase radically. Between 1981 and 1994, the rate increased 78%. Since then, the rate has decreased 43%, from 11.48 in 1994 to 6.5 in 2002.
- Although Caucasian youth are twice as likely as African American youth to complete suicide, the rate of suicide grew faster in this time period among African American youth than among Caucasian youth.
- From 1981-1994, the suicide rate increased 83% for 15-24 year old African American males and 10% for African American females. Since 1994, the rates for males have decreased 45%.
- Males accounted for 86.5% of African American elderly (65 and older) suicides.
- Firearms were the predominant method of suicide among African Americans regardless of gender and age; among 15 to 24 year olds, 63% of all suicides were by firearm, among 24 to 35 year olds, 54% of all suicides were by firearm, and among those 65 and older, 74% of all suicides were by firearm.

Proportion of African American Suicides by Firearm, 2002

	Both genders	Males	Females
All ages	55%	59%	38%
15-24	63%	67%	40%
25-34	54%	58%	36%
65 and older	74%	79%	38%

Things We Can Do to Help:

- Help remove the stigma and myths that suicide contradicts gender and cultural role expectations:
 - Religious stigma of suicide as the “unforgivable sin”;
 - African American men are macho and do not take their own lives;
 - African American women are always strong and resilient and never crack under pressure.
- Remove barriers to treatment.
- Improve access to mental health treatment.
- Remove stigma associated with mental health treatment.
- Increase awareness in cultural differences in the expression of suicidal behaviors:
 - African American are less likely to use drugs during a suicide crisis;
 - Behavioral component of depression in African Americans is more pronounced;
 - Some African Americans express little suicide intent or depressive symptoms during suicidal crises;
- Develop liaisons with the faith community.
- Recognize warning signs and help a friend or family member get professional help.

Warning Signs of a Suicidal Person:

A suicidal person may:

- Threaten to hurt or kill him/herself, or talking of wanting to hurt or kill him/herself;
- Look for ways to kill him/herself by seeking access to firearms, pills or other means;
- Talk or write about death, dying or suicide when these actions are out of the ordinary for that person;
- Express a sense of hopelessness;
- Experience rage, uncontrolled anger, and seek revenge

- Act reckless or engage in risky behavior and activities, seemingly without thinking;
- Feel trapped, that there's no way out;
- Increase alcohol or drug use;
- Withdraw from friends, family and society;
- Feel anxious, agitated, and experience an increase or decrease in the amount of sleep;• Experience dramatic mood changes;
- Feel that there is no reason to live, that live no longer has a sense of purpose.

If you or someone you know is suicidal,
please contact a mental health professional
or call 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

For More Information:

American Association of Suicidology

www.suicidology.org

National Organization for People for Color Against Suicide

www.nopcas.com

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control

www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars

Sources

The information for this fact sheet was gathered from the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC) website (www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars/default.htm) run by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Institute of Mental Health website (www.nimh.nih.gov/) as well as the National Organization for People of Color Against Suicide (NOPCAS) website (www.nopcas.com).

American Association of Suicidology

The goal of the American Association of Suicidology (AAS) is to understand and prevent suicide. AAS promotes research, public awareness programs, education, and training for professional, survivors, and all interested persons. AAS serves as a national clearinghouse for information on suicide. AAS has many resources and publications, which are available to its membership and the general public. For membership information, please contact:

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