



Washtenaw County Health Department

For Immediate Release

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Washtenaw County Health Department Releases Suicide Report

Local suicide death rates have been increasing for the past two decades

**Please take note of the media resources at the bottom of this release for best practices and recommendations for reporting on suicide.*

YPSILANTI, Mich., April 6, 2023 – The Washtenaw County Health Department has released a new [Suicide Report](#) detailing recent local suicide data trends. Suicide death rates have been increasing since 2000 at the county, state, and national level.

“Washtenaw County has had lower suicide rates compared to Michigan and the U.S.,” says Shannon Phillips, MPH, Washtenaw County Health Department epidemiologist. “Unfortunately, this gap has been narrowing in the last few years, as suicide rates in Washtenaw County seem to be increasing faster than state and national trends.”

Overall suicide death rates for Washtenaw County were not substantially impacted by the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, for residents under 25 years old, the number and rate of suicide completions doubled from 2019 to 2020 and then decreased slightly in 2021. This data may suggest that the first year of the pandemic had a bigger impact on youth mental health than other age groups in the county.

In 2021, 47 Washtenaw County residents died by suicide. Males made up 81% of those deaths. This overrepresentation of males among suicide completions is consistent with state and national trends.

From 2019 to 2021, 82% of Washtenaw County residents who died by suicide identified as White and 17% identified as part of another racial group (this included Black/African American, Asian, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and other – not including those of unknown race).

Individuals under the age of 25 had the lowest rate of suicides from 2017 to 2021, but with a slightly increasing trend since 2017. The rate of suicide completions among residents over the age of 65 has increased over the last few years. This age group has the highest rate of suicide completions from 2018 to 2020.

“Every life lost to suicide is deeply felt in our community,” says Laura Bauman, MPH, Washtenaw County Health Department epidemiology program manager. “Suicide is preventable and support is available. We encourage everyone to check in with their loved ones and have honest conversations about mental health. If you need help, please reach out to a friend, family member, or professional. Mental health support and treatment can save lives.”

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Local suicide prevention work is ongoing. The [Wish You Knew Washtenaw campaign](#) works to reduce stigma and promote resources for youth mental health. Driven by community conversations and funded by the Washtenaw County Mental Health and Public Safety Preservation Millage, the campaign aims to spark honest and supportive conversations about mental health between youth and adults. [Washtenaw Alive](#) is the suicide prevention planning collaborative of Washtenaw County. The coalition meets virtually on Zoom every third Thursday of the month at 12 PM. New members, collaborators, and guest speakers are always welcome.

Additional data is available in the full report: <https://bit.ly/wchdsr23>. We plan to release annual Suicide Reports moving forward. Visit www.washtenaw.org/suicide for additional local data and resources.

Suicide prevention resources

Suicide is preventable and help is available. Anyone in Washtenaw County can call the Community Mental Health CARES team 24/7 with any mental health questions or concerns: 734-544-3050. If you feel suicidal, call 988, text 988, or visit <https://988lifeline.org/chat/> for the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. You can also text HELLO to 741741 (Crisis Text Line). If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call 911.

It's important to know the warning signs for those at risk of suicide, including:

- Talking about wanting to die, feeling hopeless or having no purpose, feeling trapped or in unbearable pain, or being a burden to others
- Looking for a way to kill oneself
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
- Acting anxious, agitated, or recklessly
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge
- Displaying extreme mood swings

If someone you know shows warning signs of suicide, assume you are the only one who will reach out. Take them seriously, talk to them in private, and ask directly if they are thinking about suicide. See more recommendations on what to do if someone is at risk for suicide [here](#).

Media resources

Media plays an important role in preventing suicide. We encourage media to consider these [safe reporting recommendations](#) to minimize hopelessness and to increase help-seeking when covering this report and topics related to suicide. Note that the Suicide Report contains data on methods. This is important public health information, but sharing method details can be harmful to those who are struggling and has shown to cause contagion, according to the [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#).

Washtenaw County Health Department

The Washtenaw County Health Department promotes health and works to prevent disease and injury in our community. Our mission is to assure, in partnership with the community, the conditions necessary for people to live healthy lives through prevention and protection programs.

Local public health information and updates are always available at www.washtenaw.org/health. The Health Department also provides frequent social media updates (@wcpublichealth) and sends regular email updates, sign up at <http://bit.ly/WCHD555>.

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