

Alabama Vital Stats

Alabama Department of Public Health

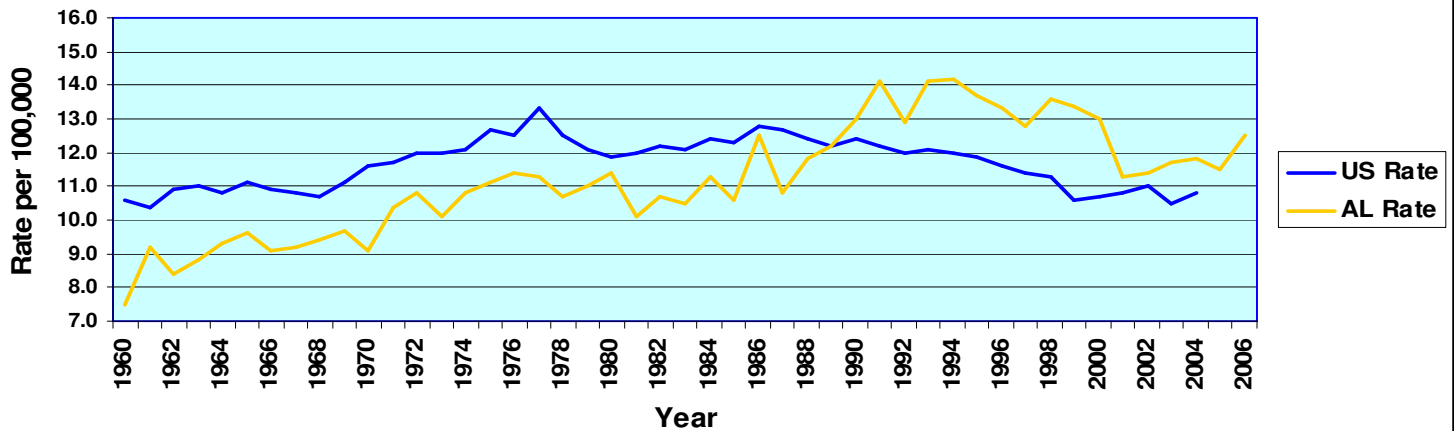
www.adph.org/healthstats

April 2008

SUICIDE: ALABAMA 2006

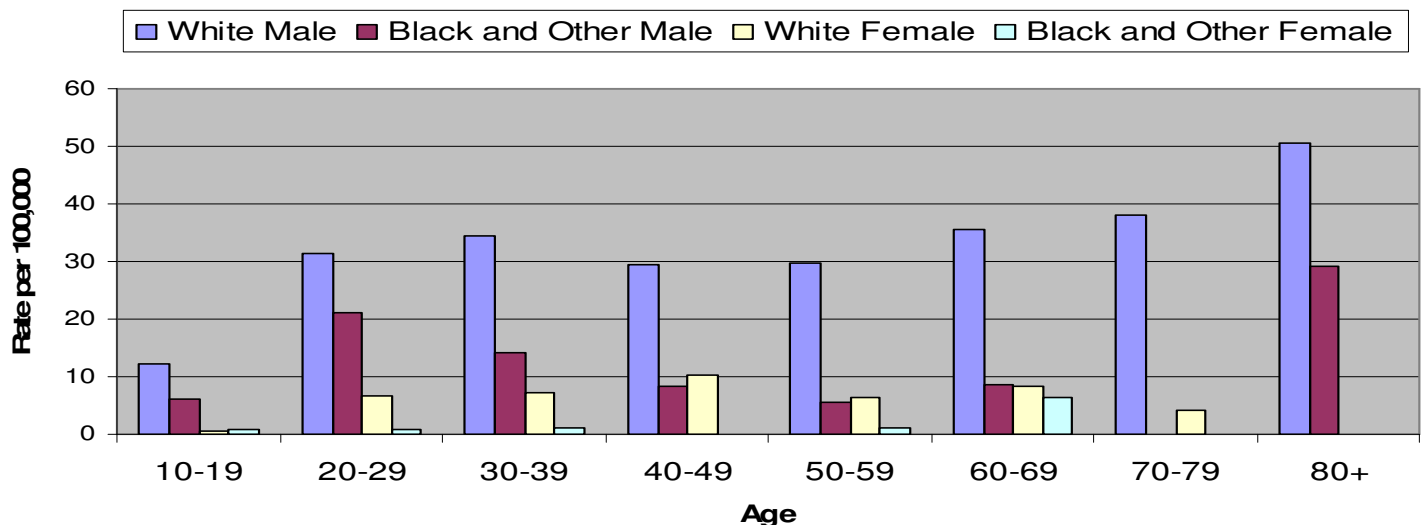
A person dies by suicide every 18 minutes in the United States, and 3 people kill themselves every 2 days in Alabama. Every day, approximately 80 Americans take their own lives and 1,500 more attempt to do so. The suicide rate in Alabama, as in the US, is higher than the homicide rate.

Suicide Rates in Alabama and US, 1960-2006

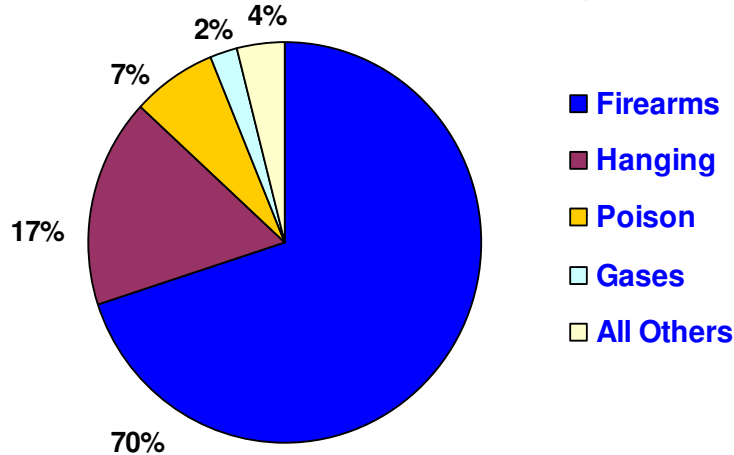


In 2006, 573 people committed suicide in Alabama. Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death among those aged 15-24. It is the 8th leading cause of death for men throughout their lifespan and the 11th leading cause of death overall. Men are 4 times more likely to die of suicide than women. Whites made up 89%, men made up 83%, and white men made up 73% of all of all suicides in Alabama. Elderly white males had higher suicide rates than other age groups. In 2006, White Males aged 70-79 had a rate of 38.1 per 100,000 and white males aged 80+ had a rate of 50.5 per 100,000 population.

2006 Suicide Rate by Age, Race and Sex



Methods of Suicide in Alabama, 2006



Alabama has a higher percentage of suicides by firearms (70%) than the US average of 55%. This is true for both women (57%) and men (72%). This might be due to the accessibility of firearms in a rural culture that hunts and uses guns to eliminate predatory animals. The second most common method is by hanging or suffocation (17%). Suicide by poison (7%) is overwhelmingly by use of medication, either prescription or over-the-counter.

Locking up firearms and prescription drugs may prevent vulnerable populations, such as children, from harming themselves.

Risk Factors for Suicide

- Alcohol or drug abuse;
- History of attempted suicide, or the suicide of a family member;
- Impulsivity—impulsive individuals are more likely to attempt suicide;
- Psychiatric disorders, including depression, anorexia nervosa, bulimia, and post-traumatic stress disorder;
- Geography—rural areas have higher rates of suicide because of lack of economic & social opportunities, lack of mental health services;
- Access to lethal means, such as having a firearm or prescription drugs available;
- Social isolation.

Protective Factors

- Network of family and friends (social support);
- Religious convictions that condemn suicide and provide social support;
- Marital Status—married individuals make fewer attempts;
- Restricted access to lethal means.

Provided by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

What can you do to help a loved one if you think he/she is suicidal?

- Take any threat of suicide seriously—75% of all suicides give some warning of their intentions to a friend or family member.
- Listen to his/her fears and problems without trying to persuade them not to attempt suicide and without being judgmental. Often having someone actually listen will ease the desperation that he/she feels at that moment.
- Don't be afraid to ask "are you thinking of killing yourself?" Simply asking about suicide will not cause anyone to decide to kill him/herself. Be willing to listen and help that person see that they have other options.
- Seek professional help—don't just encourage a suicidal person to seek counseling, accompany them to counseling or take them to a mental health center or the emergency room.
- Remove any lethal means from the vicinity. This includes firearms, ammunition (lock up separately from guns), medications, and sharp objects.
- Do not leave this person alone until help is available.

*American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Association of Suicidology*

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1- 800- 273 - TALK (784-2433)
Alabama Suicide Prevention Task Force website: adph.org/suicideprevention

For more information contact the Center for Health Statistics at (334) 206-3902
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