

Executive Summary

Suicide is one of Oregon's most persistent yet largely preventable public health problems. Suicide is the leading cause of injury death – there are more deaths due to suicide in Oregon than due to car crashes. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among Oregonians ages 15-34, and the 9th leading cause of death among all Oregonians. This report provides the most current suicide statistics in Oregon that can inform prevention programs, policy, and planning. We analyzed mortality data from 1981 to 2007 and 2003 to 2007 data of Oregon Violent Death Reporting System (ORVDRS). This report presents main findings of suicide trends and risk factors in Oregon.

Key Findings

X In 2007, the age-adjusted suicide rate among Oregonians of 15.2 per 100,000 was 35 percent higher than the national average.

The rate of suicide among Oregonians has been increasing since 2000.

Suicide rates among women ages 45-64 rose 55 percent from 8.2 per 100,000 in 2000 to 12.8 per 100,000 in 2007.

X Men were 3.7 times more likely to die by suicide than women. The highest suicide rate occurred among men ages 85 and over (78.4 per 100,000). White males had the highest suicide rate among all races / ethnicity (25.6 per 100,000). Firearms were the dominant mechanism of suicide among men (62%).

Approximately 27 percent of suicides occurred among veterans. Male veterans had a higher suicide rate than non-veteran males (45.7 vs. 27.4 per 100,000). Significantly higher suicide rates were identified among male veterans ages 18-24, 35-44 and 45-54 when compared to non-veteran males. Veteran suicide victims were reported to have more physical health problems than non-veteran males.

Over 70 percent of suicide victims had a diagnosed mental disorder, alcohol and /or substance use problems, or depressed mood at time of death. Despite the high prevalence of mental health problems, less than one third of male victims and just about half of female victims were receiving treatment for mental health problems at the time of death.

Investigators suspect that 30 percent of suicide victims had used alcohol in the hours preceding their death.

The number of suicides in each month varies. But there was not a clear seasonal pattern.

Introduction

Suicide is an important public health problem in Oregon. Each year there are more than 550 Oregonians who died by suicide and more than 1800 hospitalizations due to suicide attempts. Suicide is the leading cause of injury death in Oregon with more deaths due to suicide among Oregonians than car crashes. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among Oregonians ages 15-34, and the 9th leading cause of death among all ages in Oregon¹. The cost of suicide is enormous. In 2006 alone, self-inflicted hospitalization charges exceeded 24 million dollars; and the estimate of total lifetime cost of suicide in Oregon was over 570 million dollars^{1,2}. The loss to families and communities broadens the impact of each death.

“Suicide is a multidimensional, multi-determined, and multi-factorial behavior. The risk factors associated with suicidal behaviors include biological, psychological, and social factors”³. This report provides the most current suicide statistics in Oregon, provides suicide prevention programs and planners a detailed description of suicide, examines risk factors associated with suicide and generates public health information and prevention strategies. We analyzed mortality data from 1981 to 2007 and 2003 to 2007 data from the Oregon Violent Death Reporting System (ORVDRS). This report presents findings of suicide trends and risk factors in Oregon.

Methods, data sources and limitations

X // Suicide is a death resulting from the intentional use of force against oneself. In this report, suicide deaths are identified according to International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision (ICD-10) codes for the underlying cause of deaths on death certificates. Suicide was considered with code of X60-84 and Y87.0.⁴ Deaths relating to the death with Dignity Act (physician-assisted suicides) are not classified as suicides by Oregon law and therefore are excluded from this report.

¹ Injury in Oregon, 2008 Annual Report. http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/ipe/docs/report2008v2_2.pdf. Accessed on March. 26, 2010.

² Phaedra S. Corso, James A. Mercy, Thomas R. Simon et al, Medical Costs and Productivity Losses Due to Interpersonal and Self-Directed Violence in the United States. Am J Prev Med. 2007;32(6):474-482.

³ Ronald W Maris, Alan L. Berman, Aorton M. Silverman. (2000). Comprehensive Textbook of suicidology. New York: The Guilford Press. (p378)

⁴ Paulozzi LJ, Mercy J, Frazier Jr L, et al. CDC's National Violent Death Reporting System: Background and Methodology. Injury Prevention, 2004;10:47-52.