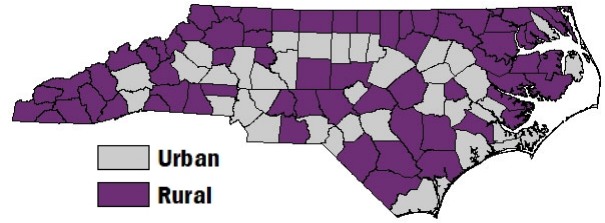


# NC Violent Death Reporting System

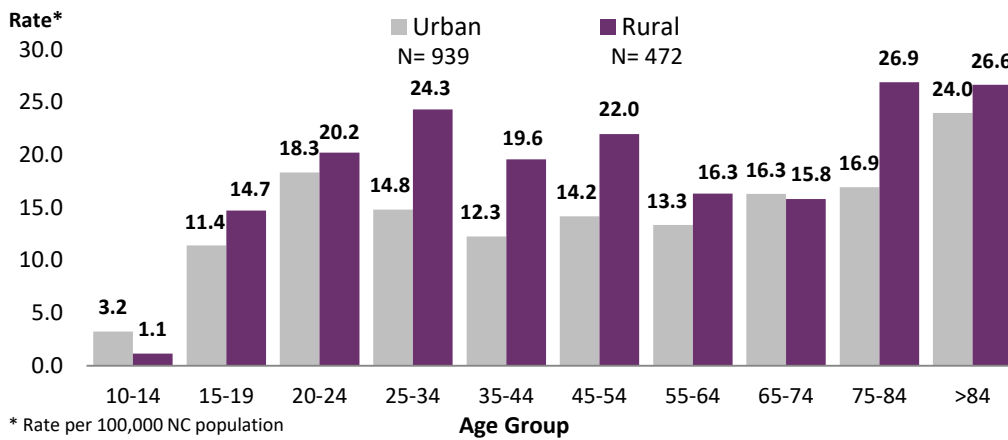
## SUICIDE IN RURAL AND URBAN NORTH CAROLINA, 2021

- Of North Carolina's 100 counties, 61 (61%) are classified as rural. Although most counties are considered rural, they are home to only 26.9% of the total state population.
- 770 (30.4%) of 2,537 violent deaths occurred among rural NC residents. Most rural violent deaths were suicides (61.3%).



### The suicide rate in 2021 was 1.3 times higher among rural residents than urban residents.

Rates of Suicide by Age Group in Rural vs Urban Counties: Ages 10 and older, 2021



- The 2021 suicide rate among rural residents was 1.3 times higher than for urban residents (18.3 and 13.8 per 100,000, respectively), and was also higher than the state suicide rate (15.1 per 100,000).

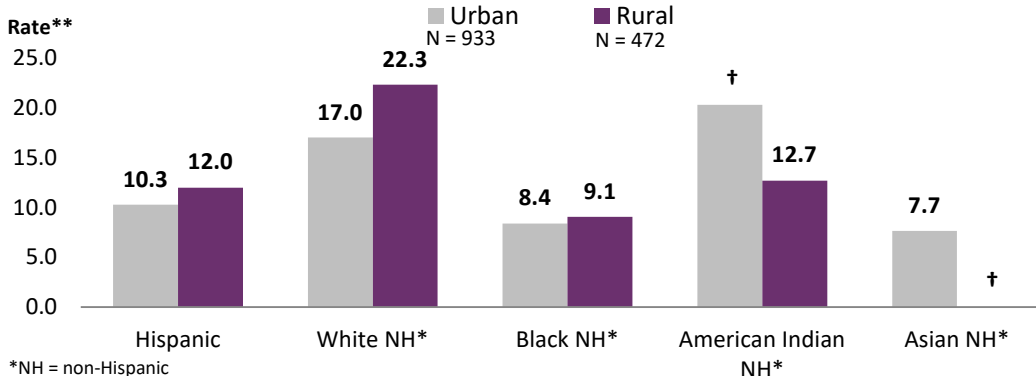
- Rural county suicide rates were consistently higher than urban county suicide rates across all age groups, with the exception of those ages 10 to 14.

- The suicide rate was highest for rural victims ages 75 to 84 with a rate of 26.9 per 100,000. This was 1.6 times higher than the rate for urban county suicides among the same age group.

- 80.3% of rural suicide victims were male. The rate among male rural victims was 4.2 times that of female rural victims (30.3 and 7.2 per 100,000 respectively).
- Similarly, rates of suicide among rural female victims was 4.5 times higher than urban female victims (23.0 and 5.1 per 100,000 respectively).
- Most suicides in NC involve firearms (63.9%). Firearms were more commonly used in rural suicides (66.1%) than urban suicides (62.7%).

### After Non-Hispanic (NH) White victims, NH American Indian victims died by suicide at a higher rate than other race/ethnicities in rural NC counties.

Rates of Suicide by Race/Ethnicity in Rural vs Urban Counties: Ages 10 and older, 2021



\*NH = non-Hispanic  
 \*\*Rate per 100,000. † Rate suppressed, 1-4 deaths. Chart excludes six deaths of unknown race/ethnicity.



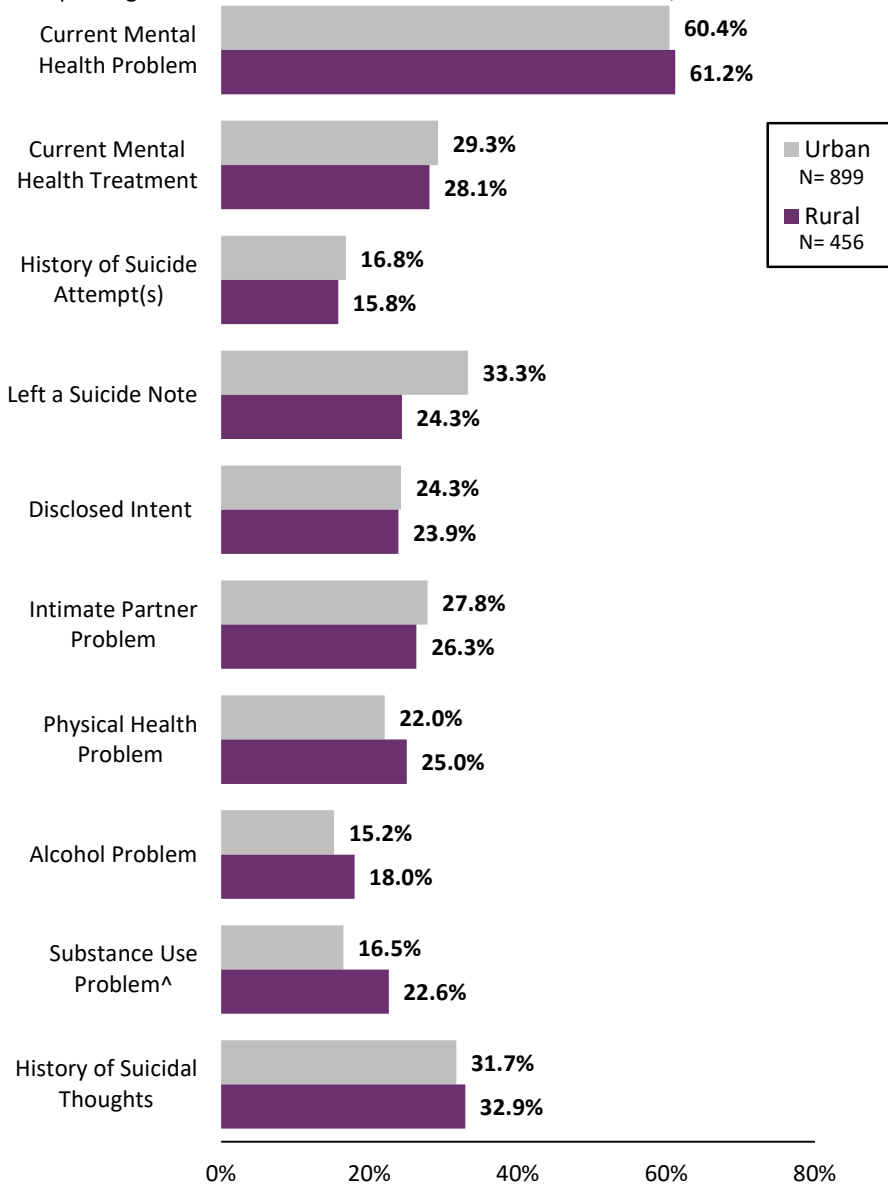
If you or someone you know needs support now, call or text 988 or chat [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org)

- In rural NC victims, the suicide rate was highest among Non-Hispanic (NH) White whereas in urban NC victims the suicide rate was highest among Non-Hispanic (NH) American Indian.
- The second highest suicide rate for residents of rural counties was among NH American Indian (12.7 per 100,000) victims. The second highest rate of suicide in urban counties was among NH White (17.0 per 100,000) residents.

The North Carolina Violent Death Reporting System (NC-VDRS) is a CDC-funded statewide surveillance system that collects detailed information on violent deaths that occur in North Carolina including: homicide, suicide, unintentional firearm deaths, legal intervention, and deaths of undetermined intent. NC-VDRS triangulates information from death certificates, medical examiner reports, and law enforcement reports to understand and aid in the prevention of violent deaths. For more information, please visit <https://www.injuryfreenc.ncdhhs.gov/About/ncVDRS.htm>.

## Circumstances\* surrounding urban and rural county suicides.

Precipitating Circumstances of Suicide in Rural vs Urban Counties, 2021



- Slightly fewer suicide victims of rural NC counties currently had a mental health problem (61.2%) than urban suicide victims (60.4%).

- Among rural suicide victims, 28.1% were known to be currently receiving mental health treatment.

- A smaller proportion of rural suicide victims had a history of suicide attempt(s) (15.8%), and fewer a history of suicidal thoughts (32.9%) compared to urban suicide victims (16.8% and 31.7% respectively).

- Rural suicide victims were slightly less likely to have an alcohol problem (18.0%) than urban victims (15.2%), yet rural suicide victims were more likely to have another substance use problem (22.6%) than urban suicide victims (16.5%).

- Slightly fewer rural suicide victims had an intimate partner problem (26.3%) than urban suicide victims (27.8%).

- Rural suicide victims were less likely to have left a suicide note (24.3%), and less likely to have disclosed their suicide intent (23.9%) than urban victims (33.3% and 24.3%, respectively).

- Rural suicide victims were more likely to have a physical health problem (25.0%) than urban suicide victims (22.0%).

\* Chart excludes 56 deaths that did not have reported circumstance information. 96.6% of rural cases had circumstance information. Similarly, 95.7% of urban cases had circumstance information.

^ Non-alcohol substance use problem

### More information on suicide prevention efforts can be found at:

#### State Resource Partners

**NC Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Use Services**  
<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/mhddsas>

**North Carolina Office of the Chief Medical Examiner**  
<https://www.ocme.dhhs.nc.gov/>

**NC Injury and Violence Prevention's Suicide Prevention Website**  
<https://injuryfreenc.dph.ncdhhs.gov/preventionResources/Suicide.htm>

**NC Division of Child and Family Well-Being**  
<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/division-child-and-family-well-being>

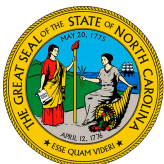
#### National Resources

**The Suicide Prevention Resource Center**  
<http://www.sprc.org/>

**The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention**  
<https://afsp.org/>

**The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**  
 call or text 988  
 or chat 988lifeline.org

The North Carolina Violent Death Reporting System is supported by Cooperative Agreement 5NU17/CE002613-05-00 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).



NC DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**  
 Division of Public Health



NC Division of Public Health / [www.publichealth.nc.gov/](http://www.publichealth.nc.gov/) / Injury Epidemiology & Surveillance Unit/ 919-707-5425  
 NC Violent Death Reporting System / 919-707-5432  
 State of North Carolina / Department of Health and Human Services / [www.ncdhhs.gov](http://www.ncdhhs.gov)  
 NCDHHS is an equal opportunity employer and provider.

2021 FINAL DATA 8/14/2024  
 Please see the NC-VDRS 2021 Annual Report for additional data and technical information:

<https://www.injuryfreenc.ncdhhs.gov/DataSurveillance/ViolentDeathData.htm>