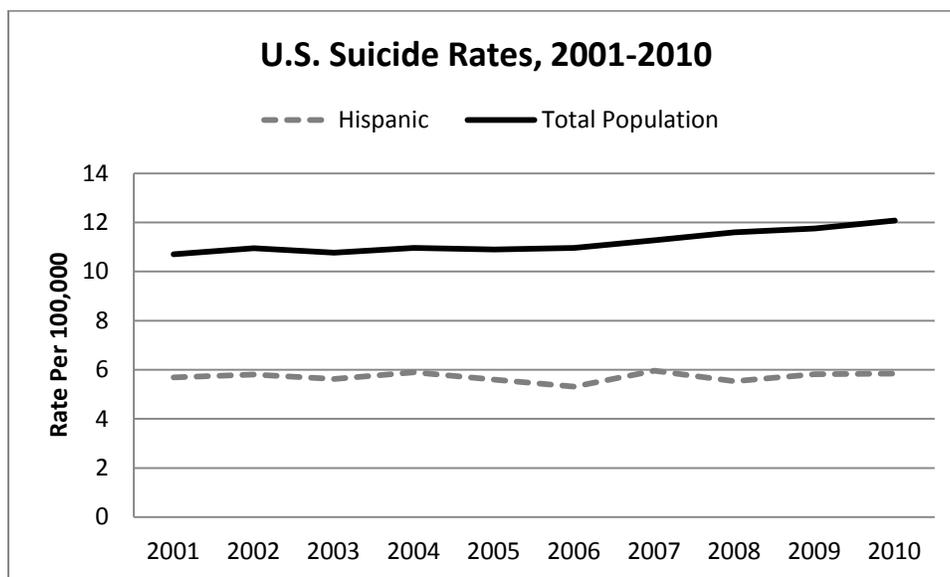


# Hispanics



This fact sheet is one in a series that summarizes data and research on suicidal behavior among particular racial and ethnic populations.\* The Office of Management and Budget defines *Hispanic* or *Latino* as a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.<sup>1</sup> Although *Hispanic* and *Latino* are terms often used to describe this population, most national health data sources and the U.S. Census use the term *Hispanic*. In 2010, people of Hispanic origin comprised 16% of the U.S. population.<sup>†, 2</sup>



Source: CDC, 2010 Fatal Injury Reports.

## Mortality Data

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports the following statistics:<sup>‡, 3</sup>

- At 5.85, the suicide rate for Hispanics of all ages was slightly less than half of the overall U.S. rate of 12.08.
- Suicide was the 12th leading cause of death for Hispanics of all ages and the 3rd leading cause of death for Hispanic males ages 15 to 34.

\* Visit <http://www.sprc.org> for the other fact sheets on suicide among different racial/ethnic populations.

<sup>†</sup> This statistic reflects Hispanics of all races because that is how the census data are reported for Hispanics.

<sup>‡</sup> These statistics reflect Hispanics of all races because that is how the suicide mortality data are reported for Hispanics.

## Suicide Deaths: Rates per 100,000

Age	Hispanic Rates		U.S. Rates	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Total	9.81	2.11	19.78	4.99
15-24	10.69	3.11	16.90	3.89
25-34	11.40	2.09	22.50	5.34
35-64	11.98	2.77	27.64	8.21
65-84	14.35	2.39	26.89	4.36
85+	30.58	0.57*	47.33	3.27

\* Number of deaths too low for precision

## Suicidal Behavior

### Adults

Hispanic adults ages 18 or older who responded to a national survey reported similar rates of suicidal behavior compared to adults in the total U.S. population:<sup>4</sup>

### *Results of 2011 National Survey of Drug Use and Health<sup>§</sup>*

<b>"In the past year have you:"</b>	<b>Hispanics</b>	<b>Total U.S. Population</b>
<b>Had serious thoughts of suicide</b>	2.5%	3.7%
<b>Made suicide plans</b>	0.8%	1.0%
<b>Attempted suicide</b>	0.5%	0.5%
<b>Gotten medical attention for a suicide attempt</b>	0.2%	0.3%

The *lifetime* prevalence of *suicidal ideation* and *suicide attempts* of Hispanics has been placed at 11.35% and 5.11%, respectively.<sup>5</sup>

Among Hispanic ethnic subgroups in the United States, the following was reported:<sup>6</sup>

- Puerto Rican adults had the highest rates of suicide attempts.
- During the 10 years between 1992 and 2001, the lifetime prevalence of suicide attempts increased significantly among 18- to 24-year-old Puerto Rican women and Cuban men, and among 45- to 64-year-old Puerto Rican men.

Among Hispanic people who reported having attempted suicide at any point in their lifetime, most attempts occurred before age 18.<sup>7</sup>

Suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, and immigration:

- Hispanics born in the United States have higher rates of suicidal ideation and suicide attempts than Hispanic immigrants.
- Immigrants who came to the United States as children have higher rates than those who came as adolescents and adults.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>§</sup> These statistics reflect Hispanics of all races because that is how the data in this survey are reported for Hispanics.

- One study found that U.S. born Hispanic adolescents with U.S. born parents have higher rates of suicide attempts than U.S. born Hispanic adolescents with immigrant parents.<sup>9</sup>

## Youth

Hispanic high school students report higher rates of suicidal behaviors than the general population of U.S. high school students:<sup>\*\*</sup>,<sup>10</sup>

### *Results of 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of high school students:*

<b>"In the past 12 months have you:"</b>	<b>Hispanics</b>	<b>Total U.S.</b>
<b>Had serious thoughts of suicide</b>	16.7%	15.8%
<b>Made suicide plans</b>	14.3%	12.8%
<b>Attempted suicide</b>	10.2%	7.8%
<b>Got medical attention for a suicide attempt</b>	3.2%	2.4%

The percentage of Hispanic female students reporting suicidal thoughts and behaviors was higher than that of non-Hispanic White female students and Hispanic male students:

<b>"In the past 12 months have you:"</b>	<b>Hispanic Females</b>	<b>Non-Hispanic White Females</b>	<b>Hispanic Males</b>
<b>Had serious thoughts of suicide</b>	21.0%	18.4%	12.6%
<b>Made suicide plans</b>	17.6%	13.7%	11.1%
<b>Attempted suicide</b>	13.5%	7.9%	6.9%
<b>Got medical attention for a suicide attempt</b>	4.1%	2.2%	2.2%

Studies have consistently shown that since 1995 Hispanic adolescent females have higher rates of suicidal thoughts and behavior (but not deaths) than Black or White females.<sup>11, 12</sup>

## Strengths and Protective Factors

Across all populations, some of the most significant protective factors are:<sup>13, 14</sup>

- Effective mental health care
- Connectedness to individuals, family, community, and social institutions
- Problem-solving skills
- Contacts with caregivers

In addition, research has shown the following to be among the most significant protective factors in Hispanic populations:

**Familism:** Hispanics have scored high on measures of familism, which has been described as the strong feelings of commitment, loyalty, and obligation to family members that extends beyond the nuclear family. The interdependent nature of family includes making family needs a priority over individual needs and

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<sup>\*\*</sup> These statistics reflect people who identify as just Hispanic and not another racial group because that is how the Youth Risk Behavior Survey data are reported for Hispanics.

being able to turn to family for support. Youth reporting strong, supportive relationships with their parents are less likely to attempt suicide.<sup>15, 16</sup>

Ethnic affiliation: Latina adolescents with greater involvement in Hispanic culture have more positive relationships with their mothers and fewer withdrawn-depressive behaviors and suicide attempts.<sup>17</sup> In addition, ethnic identity is positively associated with self-esteem among Latino/Latina adolescents, and has been shown to moderate the relationship between perceived discrimination and depression.<sup>18</sup>

Religiosity and moral objections to suicide: Individuals identifying themselves as Hispanic report higher scores on measures of moral objections to suicide and on measures of religiosity compared to people who are not Hispanic.<sup>19</sup> They are also more likely than other racial/ethnic groups to belong to religious denominations that have strong beliefs prohibiting suicidal thoughts and behaviors.<sup>20</sup>

Caring from teachers: One recent national study found that perceived caring from teachers was associated with a decreased risk of suicide attempts by Latina adolescents.<sup>21</sup>

### Risk Factors

Across all populations, some of the most significant risk factors are:<sup>22, 23</sup>

- Prior suicide attempt(s)
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Mood and anxiety disorders
- Access to a means to lethal means

For individuals who are already at risk, a “triggering” event causing shame or despair may make them more likely to attempt suicide. These events may include relationship problems and breakups, problems at work, financial hardships, legal difficulties, and worsening health.

In addition, research has shown the following to be among the most significant risk factors in Hispanic populations:

Alcohol: According to the National Violent Death Reporting System 2003–2009, of the Hispanic suicide decedents tested for alcohol, about 28% were legally intoxicated at the time of death. Of the four racial/ethnic minority groups studied, Hispanics had the second highest rate of alcohol use during an attempt.<sup>24</sup>

Mental health services access and use: Compared to non-Hispanic Whites, Hispanics underutilize mental health services, are less likely to receive care that follows recommended guidelines, and are more likely to rely on informal supports (e.g., family) and primary care providers than on mental health specialists for mental health services.<sup>25</sup>

In a large national survey, Hispanic adults who reported suicidal thoughts or attempts were less likely than non-Hispanic White adults to seek or receive psychiatric services.<sup>26</sup> The chart below shows the percentages of adults who did **not** seek or receive any psychiatric services in the year prior to having suicidal thoughts or attempts:

	Hispanics	Whites
Suicidal Thoughts	61.6%	42.8%
Suicide Attempts	45.7%	24.1%

In a recent survey, Hispanics were less likely than other racial/ethnic groups to call a suicide crisis line during a suicidal crisis.<sup>27</sup>

Alienation: In an analysis of suicide notes to determine motivation, reported alienation among Hispanics was double that of non-Hispanic Whites. Alienation causes a loss of well-being when the individual feels emotionally disconnected from his or her family of origin or society.<sup>28</sup>

Acculturative stress and family conflict: Differences between the level of acculturation in parents and their children can create conflict and stress in the relationship, especially with Hispanic adolescent girls, given the high value placed on the family. This conflict and stress appears to play a pivotal role in Hispanic girls' suicide attempts.<sup>29,30</sup>

Hopelessness and fatalism: In a four-year analysis of a nationally representative sample, Hispanic adolescents and young adults had the highest rates of hopelessness and fatalism among all racial/ethnic groups.<sup>31</sup>

Discrimination: Perceived racial discrimination is associated with suicide attempts among Hispanic college students (Gomez, 2011).<sup>32</sup>

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## Endnotes

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