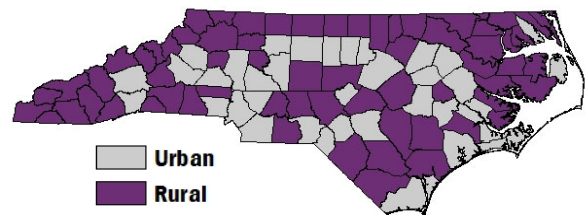


NC Violent Death Reporting System

SUICIDE IN RURAL AND URBAN NORTH CAROLINA, 2023

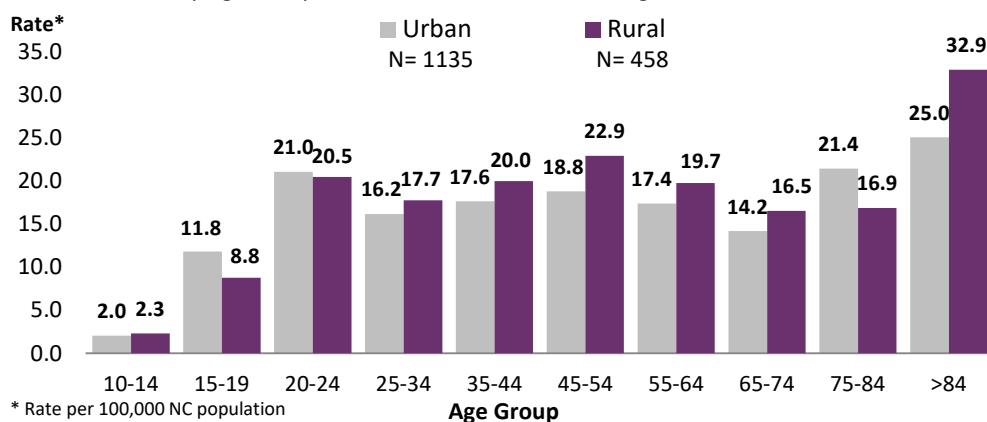
• Of North Carolina's 100 counties, 61 (61%) are classified as rural. Although most counties are considered rural, they are home to only 26.9% of the total state population.

• 764 (28.9%) of 2,647 violent deaths occurred among rural NC residents. Most rural violent deaths were suicides (59.9%).



The suicide rate in 2023 was 1.1 times higher among rural residents than urban residents.

Rates of Suicide by Age Group in Rural vs Urban counties: Ages 10 and older, 2023



• The 2023 suicide rate among rural residents was 1.1 times higher than for urban residents (17.7 and 16.2 per 100,000, respectively), and was also higher than the state suicide rate (16.6 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 15 to 19, 20 to 24, 75 to 84.

• The suicide rate was highest for rural victims ages 85 and older with a rate of 32.9 per 100,000. This was 1.3 times higher than the rate for urban county suicides among the same age group.

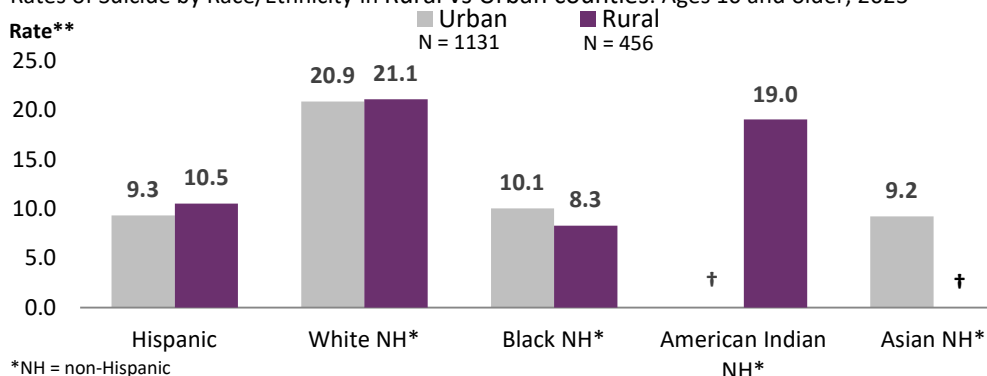
• 81.9% of rural suicide victims were male. The rate among male rural victims was 4.7 times that of female rural victims (29.5 and 6.3 per 100,000 respectively).

• Similarly, rates of suicide among urban male victims was 3.6 times higher than urban female victims (25.8 and 7.2 per 100,000 respectively).

• Most suicides in NC involve firearms (61.6%). Firearms were more commonly used in rural suicides (66.2%) than urban suicides (59.7%).

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, 2023



If you or someone you know needs support now, call or text **988** or chat **988lifeline.org**

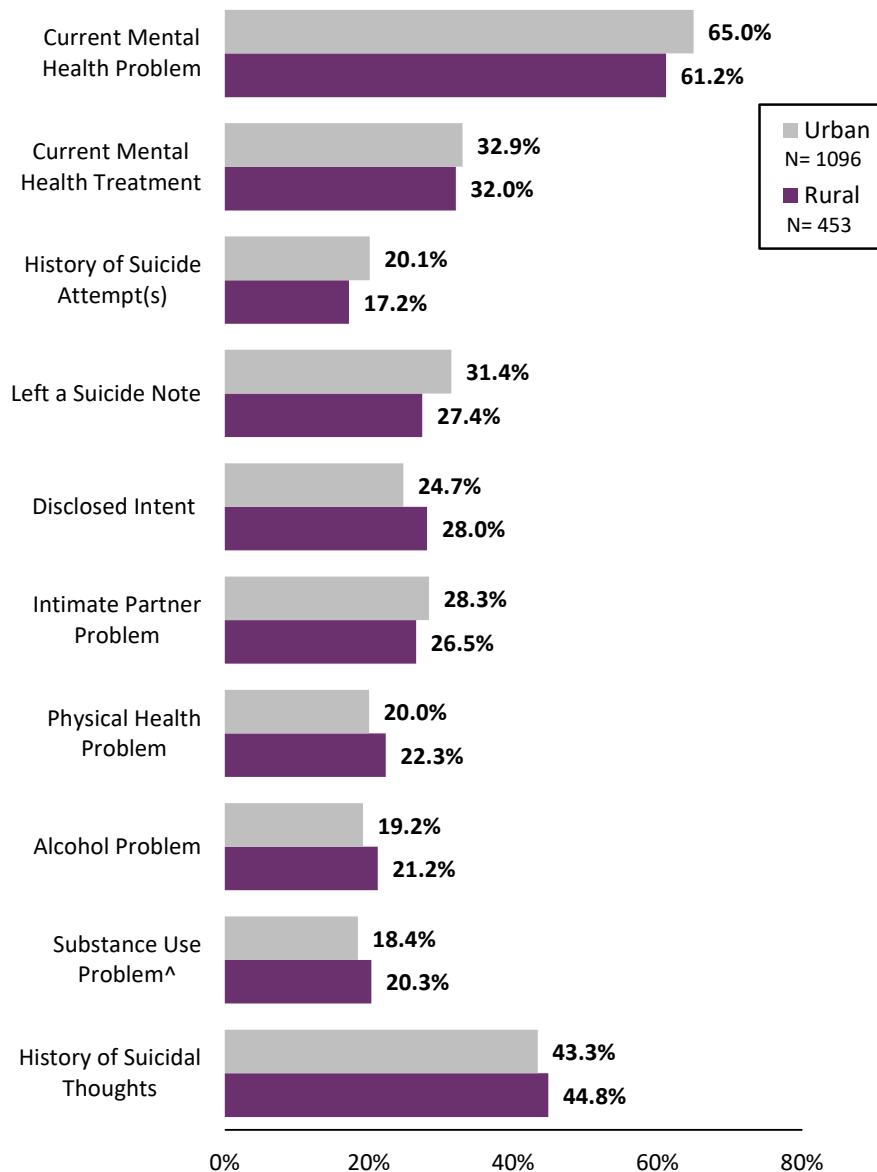
• Non-Hispanic (NH) White residents experienced the highest rates of suicide in both urban (20.9 per 100,000) and rural (21.1 per 100,000) counties.

• The second highest suicide rate for residents of rural counties was among NH American Indian (19.0 per 100,000) victims. The second highest rate of suicide in urban counties was among NH Black (10.1 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 uses 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://injuryfreenc.dph.ncdhhs.gov/About/ncVDRS.htm>.

Circumstances* surrounding urban and rural county suicides.

Precipitating Circumstances of Suicide in Rural vs Urban counties, 2023



* Chart excludes 44 deaths that did not have reported circumstance information. 98.9% of rural cases had circumstance information. Similarly, 96.6% of urban cases had circumstance information.

^ Non-alcohol substance use problem

- Slightly fewer suicide victims of rural NC counties currently had a mental health problem (61.2%) than urban suicide victims (65.0%).

- Although 61.2% of rural suicide victims currently had a mental health problem, 32.0% were known to be currently receiving mental health treatment.

- A smaller proportion of rural suicide victims had a history of suicide attempt(s) (17.2%), but a larger proportion of rural suicide victims had a history of suicidal thoughts (44.8%) compared to urban suicide victims (20.1% and 43.3% respectively).

- Rural suicide victims were slightly more likely to have an alcohol problem (21.2%) than urban victims (19.2%), and rural suicide victims were more likely to have another substance use problem (20.3%) than urban suicide victims (18.4%).

- Slightly less rural suicide victims had an intimate partner problem (26.5%) than urban suicide victims (28.3%).

- Rural suicide victims were less likely to have left a suicide note (27.4%), but more likely to have disclosed their suicide intent (28.0%) than urban victims (31.4% and 24.7%, respectively).

- Rural suicide victims were more likely to have a physical health problem (22.3%) than urban suicide victims (20.0%).

More information on suicide prevention efforts can be found at:

State Resource Partners

**Division of Mental Health,
Developmental Disabilities and Substance Use Services**
<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/mhddsus>
Office of the Chief Medical Examiner
<https://www.ocme.dhhs.nc.gov/>
Injury and Violence Prevention's Suicide Prevention Website
<https://injuryfreenc.dph.ncdhhs.gov/preventionResources/Suicide.htm>
Division of Child and Family Wellbeing
<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).

NCDHHS Division of Public Health / www.dph.ncdhhs.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

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2023 FINAL DATA 6/16/2025

Please see the NC-VDRS 2023 Annual Report for additional data and technical information:

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



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**
 Division of Public Health
 Injury and Violence Prevention Branch

