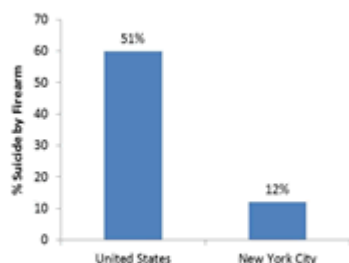


Health Department Announces Suicide Rate in NYC is Half the National Rate and Is Lower than Other Major U.S. Cities

Percent of suicides by firearm in NYC is less than one-fourth that of the U.S

Feb. 23, 2012 – The New York City Health Department announced today that the city's overall suicide death rate is just over half the national rate (6 deaths per 100,000 in NYC vs. 11 deaths per 100,000 people in the U.S.), according to a newly released "[NYC Vital Signs](#)" report on suicide and self-inflicted injuries. The percent of suicides by firearm in New York City is less than one-fourth the nationwide proportion and is low compared to other major U.S cities.

Suicides by Firearm in New York City vs. U.S. Overall



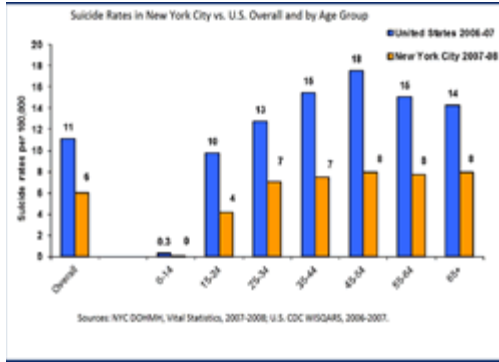
Source: NYC DOHMH, Vital Statistics, 2010; U.S. CDC WISQARS, 2009

In New York City, both the overall suicide and suicide by firearm rates have declined over the past two decades. The proportion of suicides where a gun was used has also decreased: In 2010, guns were used in 12% of the city's 503 suicides while in 1991 guns were used in 19% of the city's 649 suicides.

"People who have ready access to guns are more likely to kill themselves with guns than people who do not," said Health Commissioner Dr. Thomas Farley. "New York City has the lowest rate of suicides by firearm than any other large U.S. city, but to further reduce suicide rates we need to continue our efforts to limit access to guns, reduce drug and excessive alcohol use, create safer environments, and improve identification of people with depression and help them get treatment."

New York City's lower suicide by firearm rate suggests that the city's strict gun policies may be contributing to its lower suicide rate compared to other major U.S. cities. To monitor gun access, the city rigorously reviews applications for firearm permits and New York state law carries one of the nation's highest penalties for illegal possession of a handgun. The Health Department's new report suggests that these laws may have saved some New Yorkers who might have taken their lives. Suicide rates are higher in regions of the country with weaker gun laws.

The demographics of New Yorkers who take their own lives mirror nation-wide patterns. Both locally and across the United States suicide rates were lower among young adults, blacks, and Hispanics and highest among whites and men. Approximately three quarters of New York City's suicides were among men. While suicide rates are low in young adults, rates of hospitalization for self-inflicted injuries are highest in this group, particularly among young women.



The Health Department's "Vital Signs"

report also explains how suicide risk is closely linked to an individual's mental well-being. For example, of the 7,017 patients hospitalized in 2007 and 2008 for self-inflicted injuries, more than 90% (6,459 people) were diagnosed with a mental health condition as depression or anxiety. Proper identification and access to treatment for mental health disorders can help reduce the risk of suicide.

Alcohol is also often associated with suicide. In New York City, one-third of people who committed suicide in 2007 and 2008 had been drinking near the time of the incident. Addressing substance abuse among people struggling with depression can help reduce their risk for suicide. The Health Department has public education campaigns aimed at reducing excessive drinking and limiting access to alcoholic beverages for youth.

For help and information on depression or a drinking or substance abuse problem talk to your doctor or call 1-800-LIFE-NET, a free, confidential help line for New York City residents. You can call 24 hours per day/seven days per week. The hotline's trained mental health professionals help callers find mental health and substance abuse services.

More information about suicide and self-inflicted injuries is available by searching "suicide report" on www.NYC.gov.