



ADULT SUICIDE

Overview:

MetroWest has seen an increase in suicide rates of the middle-aged and jobless. This report summarizes findings of several 2009 studies of adult suicide, including the incidence and nature of prevention hot line calls. Included are statistics from Massachusetts Department of Public Health's assessments of violent death and self-inflicted injury.

Record suicide rates highest with jobless, middle-aged, Chris Bergeron, Daily News staff, The MetroWest Daily News

- **Geography:** State
- **Year:** July 19, 2010
- **Website:** <http://www.metrowestdailynews.com/news/x999357637/Record-suicide-rates-highest-with-jobless-middle-aged>

Key Findings:

- Over the last year a "record breaking" number of people, including more middle-aged men and women, called the Samaritans suicide prevention hot line, a trend site director Eileen Davis attributes to the current recession.
- The Framingham and Boston centers of Samaritans Inc. fielded 132,000 calls between July 2009 and June 2010, up from 119,000 calls over the same period the prior year.
- Biggest age group of callers was men and women from 45 to 54 years old.
 - "Sadly, we're seeing definite increases in all age groups. But we believe we're getting more calls from people in their 40s and 50s who've been most affected by the downturn in jobs, housing and medical coverage," Eileen Davis
- Men and women between 45 and 54 years old have the highest suicide rates in the country among nine different age groups.
- Marie Cheetham, executive director of Addiction Referral Center in Marlborough, estimated "about 75 percent" of people seeking referrals for assistance at the center were unemployed. And she said "noticeably more" of the 600 people coming to the center for weekly support groups were in the "40 to 50-year-old" group.
- Cheetham said, "We're seeing lots of new faces and people who never needed our services before. They're newly unemployed and have trouble coping with some new feelings."

Young adult males' suicide on the rise, New England in brief, The Boston Globe

- **Geography:** State
- **Year:** April 10, 2009
- **Website:** http://www.boston.com/news/local/massachusetts/articles/2009/04/10/young_adult_males_suicide_rate_on_rise/

Key Findings:

- The Massachusetts suicide rate among young adult males has jumped 28 percent.
- The Department of Public Health released its 2007 report on deaths Wednesday, saying a decrease in suicide deaths among Massachusetts women was offset by the increase in suicides among males between ages 25 and 44.

Suicides and Self-Inflicted Injuries in Massachusetts: Data Summary, the Injury Surveillance Program, MA Department of Public Health

- **Geography:** State
- **Year:** Issued August, 2009
- **Website:** <http://www.sprc.org/stateinformation/statepages/showstate.asp?stateID=21>

Key Findings:

- In 2007, there were 504 suicides among Massachusetts residents; a rate of 7.8 per 100,000 residents.
- The number of suicides was 2.8 times higher than homicides (N=504 and N=183 respectively) in 2007.
- The suicide rate among MA residents was lower than that of the U.S. In 2006 (the latest statistics available nationally) the suicide rate for the U.S. was 11.2 per 100,000 residents.
- There were 4,305 hospital stays for self-inflicted injuries (FY2007).
- The leading suicide methods vary by sex. For males, suffocation (N=191) and firearm (N=108) were the most common methods. For females, the leading methods were poisoning (N=60), followed by suffocation (N=29).
- The leading method of nonfatal self-inflicted hospital stays, however, did not vary by sex. Poisoning (80%, N=3,458) was the leading method for *both* males and females.
- Most poisoning-related suicides and nonfatal self-inflicted hospital stays are the result of drug overdoses.
- In 2007, there were 398 suicides by males (12.7 per 100,000) compared with 106 by females (3.2 per 100,000).
- Most suicides occur in the middle age population; 43.8% of all suicides were among individuals ages 35-54 years.
- Among males, the highest number of suicides was among those 35-44 (N=92), but males ages 85 and older had the highest rate (38.9 per 100,000).
- Among females the highest number and rate of suicides was among those 55-64 years of age (N=25, rate=6.6 per 100,000).
- Some information on suicide circumstances is available from the MA Violent Death Reporting System, a surveillance system that collects detailed information on homicides, suicides, deaths of undetermined intent, and unintentional firearm deaths from medical examiners, police crime lab, and death certificates. In 2007, among suicides where at least one circumstance was documented: 57% had a current mental health problem such as depression; 35% left a suicide note; 30% had a history of substance/alcohol abuse; 26% had current intimate partner problems; and 26% were reported to have been depressed.
- Survey findings from the MA Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, an anonymous random digit dialing telephone survey of Massachusetts residents ages 18 and older indicates that between 2005 and 2007: 3.4% of MA adults seriously considered attempting suicide during the past year; 3.5% of males and 3.4% of females. 0.9% of MA adults, ages 18 and older, attempted suicide.