

Suicides Among Older Adults in South Carolina

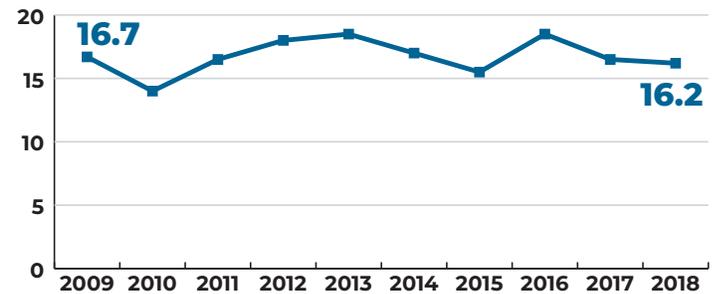
Suicide in older adults (65 years old and over) is a major public health issue. Nationally, older adults make up 12% of the population but account for 18% of all suicide deaths.¹

This is a growing concern given the number of Americans ages 65 and older is projected to nearly double in 40 years.²

In 2018, there were 146 suicide deaths among those aged 65 years and older. The rate of suicide deaths among older adults has remained relatively constant over the last 10 years.

Suicide Deaths Among Those Aged 65 Years and Older

Rate per 100,000 population



SC VDRS

Older Adult Suicide by Demographics

Older Adult Suicide Deaths Rates, by Age Group and Sex

Rate per 100,000 population



SC VDRS, 2014-2018

699

adults over the age of 65 died by suicide in South Carolina from 2014-2018.

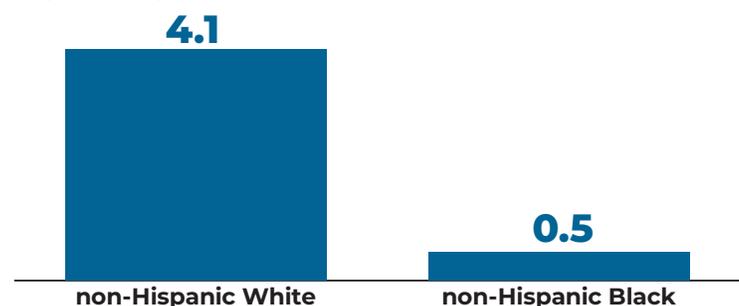
Men in the **85+ year** age group had the highest rate of suicide deaths, while women in the **65-74 year age** group had the highest rate of suicide deaths among older adult women.

81.7% are males **vs.** **18.3%** are females

Most older adult suicide deaths were among males (81.7%), while most emergency department (ED) visits and hospitalizations were among females (53%).

Older Adult Suicide Deaths Rates, by Race/Ethnicity

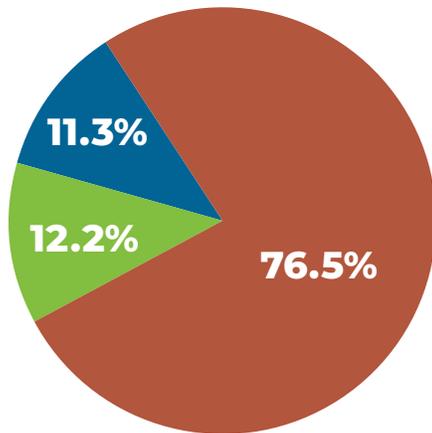
Rate per 100,000 population



SC VDRS, Ages 65+, 2014-2018

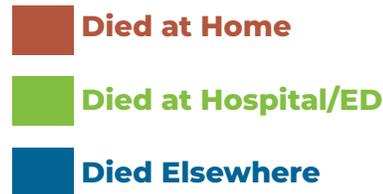
The rate of suicide deaths was **8 times higher** for non-Hispanic White older adults than non-Hispanic Black older adults.

Incident Characteristics of Older Adult Suicide



Suicide Death Locations

Percent



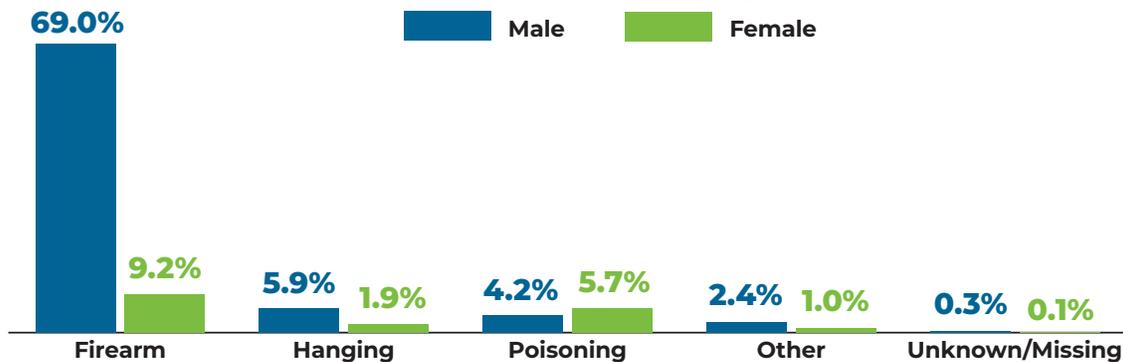
SC VDRS, Ages 65+, 2014-2018
 Note: Died elsewhere includes: Hospice, Long-Term Care Facility, Dead on Arrival, and Other

Over

3/4

of older adult suicide victims died at home, compared to nearly half for youth ages 10-24 years.

Mechanism of Injury

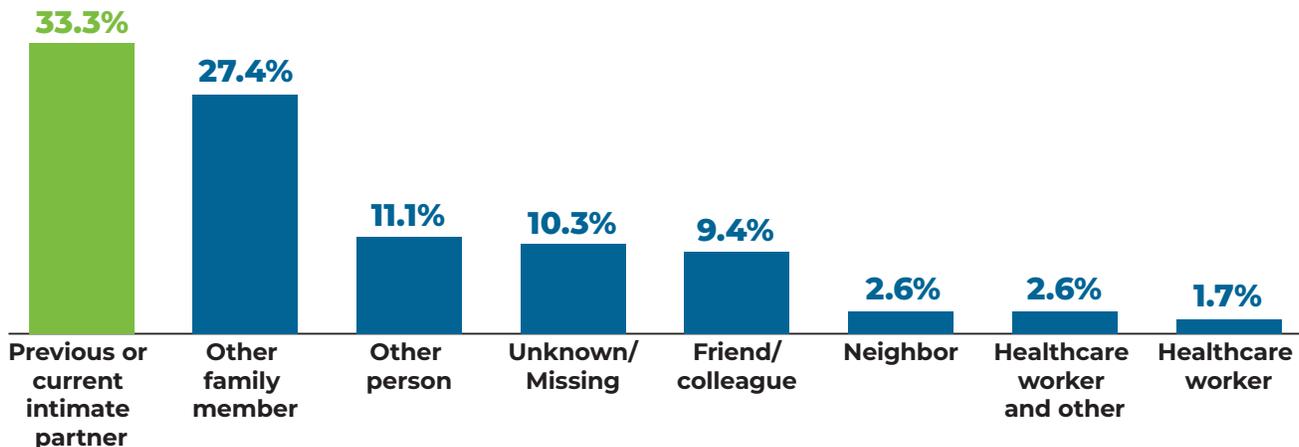


SC VDRS, Ages 65+, 2014-2018

Firearms were the most common weapon used in older adult suicides, accounting for **78.3%** of older adult suicide deaths and over two-thirds of male suicides.

Disclosure of Suicidal Intent

Percent



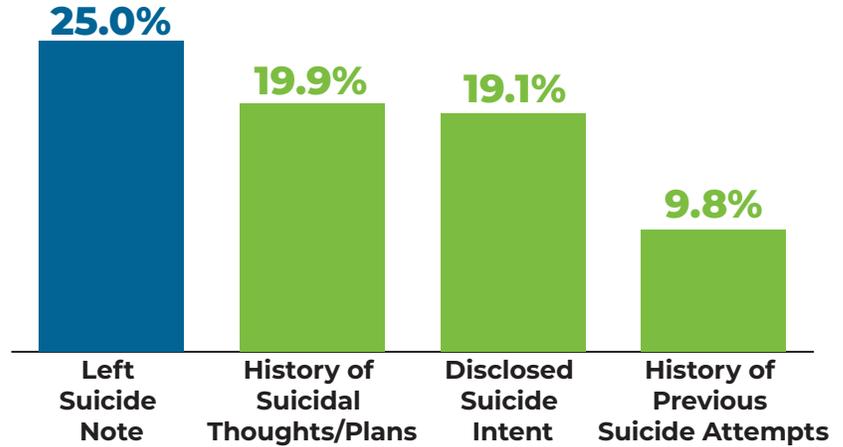
SC VDRS, Ages 65+, 2014-2018
 Note: Suicide intent disclosed within 1 month prior to fatal injury.

Of all suicide victims who disclosed intent, **1/3** reached out to a previous or current intimate partner.

Older Adult Suicide by Precipitating Circumstances

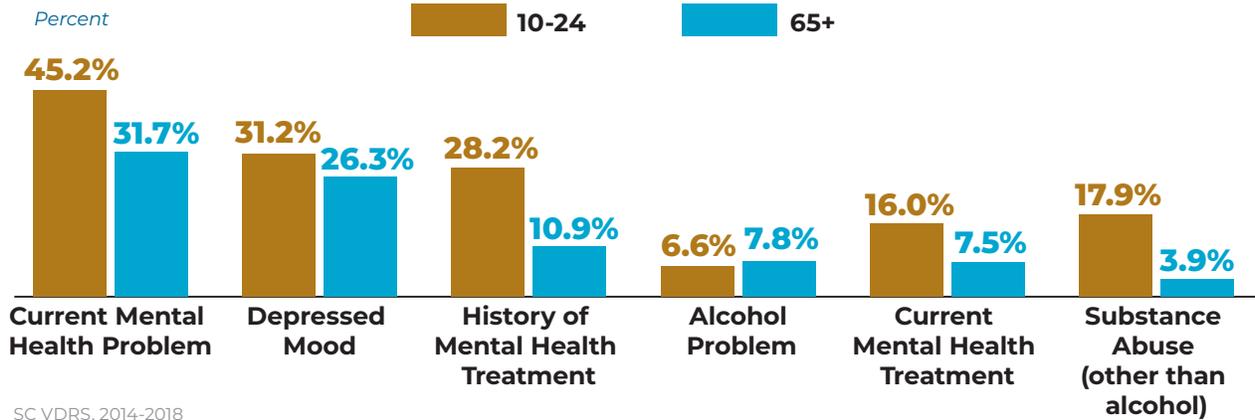
25%
of older adult
suicide victims left a
suicide note.

Suicide History and Disclosures



SC VDRS, 2014-2018

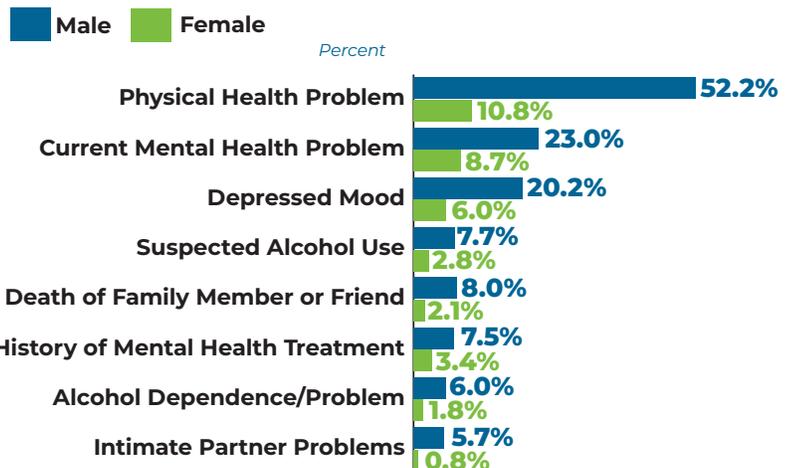
Mental Health and Substance Use Comparison by Age Group



SC VDRS, 2014-2018

A **current mental health problem** was found to be the highest in both the youth and older adult age groups. The prevalence of **history of mental health treatment** was **3 times higher** in the younger age group compared to the older age group.

Circumstances Preceding Suicides, by Sex



SC VDRS, Ages 65+, 2014-2018

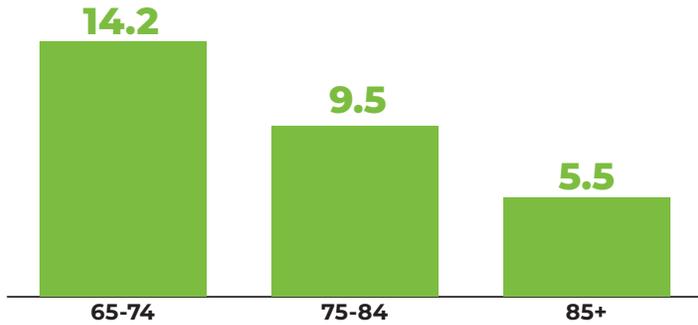
Physical health problem was the leading circumstance for older adult suicides, found in **63%** of suicides and the most common circumstance among older adult men.

*Suicide circumstances were known for 88% of older adult suicides and multiple circumstances are displayed in chart.

Nonfatal Older Adult Suicide ED Visits & Hospitalizations

Nonfatal Older Adult Suicide Emergency Department Visits, by Age Group

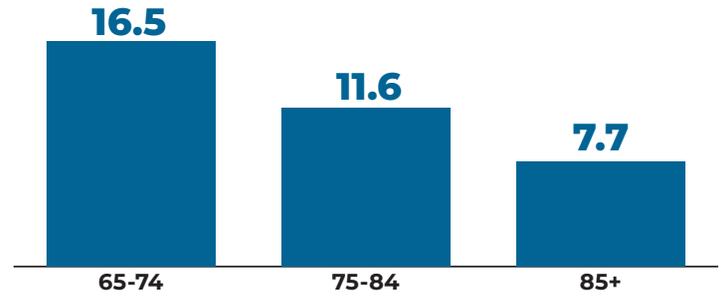
Rate per 100,000 population



SC RFA, 2019

Nonfatal Older Adult Suicide Hospitalizations, by Age Group

Rate per 100,000 population



SC RFA, 2019

112 older adults aged 65 years and older visited the emergency department (ED) and **133** were hospitalized for nonfatal suicide in 2019.

Older adults ages **65-74 years** had the highest rate for both ED visits and hospitalizations for nonfatal suicide.

\$829,763

Emergency Department Visits

+

\$7,166,749

Hospitalizations

Total charges for attempted suicide among those 65+ years in South Carolina totaled nearly 8 million in emergency department visits and hospitalizations in 2019.

Data Considerations/SC VDRS Limitations

The SC Violent Death Reporting System (SC VDRS) combines data from various sources to identify known stressors and events that have contributed to elderly suicides in our state.

- SC VDRS data includes all elderly who fatally injured themselves within South Carolina whether they were South Carolina residents or not. South Carolina resident seniors who fatally injured themselves outside of South Carolina are not included in this report.
- Known circumstances leading to the suicide event are subject to the knowledge of family members, friends, and others who report to coroners and law enforcement during investigations.
- Those 65+ years who died by suicide may differ by demographic profile, circumstances, or use of methods from those 65+ years who survived a suicide attempt.

SOURCES:

SC VDRS 2014-2018, SC RFA 2019

1 <https://www.webmd.com/healthy-aging/features/suicide-rates-older-adults#1>

2 Census 2017 National Population Projections

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