


**Homicide**

A homicide is any intentional injury inflicted by another person with the intent to kill.¹ Homicide, especially among young people, is a serious public health issue in the U.S.² Homicide is currently the second-leading cause of death nationwide in young adults ages 15-24, and is the third-leading cause of death among adults ages 25-34.³,⁴ In 2003, a total of 17,732 homicide deaths were reported in the U.S., and 5,570 of these homicide victims were ages 10-24.⁴,⁵

**Key Point:** The homicide rate in South Texas was very similar to rates in the rest of Texas and the nation. In South Texas, Hispanics had a higher homicide rate than non-Hispanic whites.

Nationally, males are almost four times more likely to die from homicide than females.⁶ African-Americans were more than seven times more likely to be murdered than non-Hispanic whites in 2002, and Hispanics also had a higher homicide rate than non-Hispanic whites.⁷ In the U.S., homicide rates are highest among young adults ages 18-25, with a peak at age 21. However, among individuals less than age 18, a “U-shaped” trend in homicide is seen, with infants having almost as high of a homicide rate (7.5/100,000)
as 17-year-olds (8.7/100,000).\textsuperscript{7} Other risk factors associated with homicide include living in urban areas, low socioeconomic status, and access to firearms.\textsuperscript{6,8-10}

**Homicide in South Texas**

Overall, the age-adjusted homicide rate in South Texas (6.2/100,000) was very similar to homicide rates in the rest of Texas (6.4/100,000) and nationwide (6.0/100,000).\textsuperscript{5} In South Texas, a higher rate of homicide was observed among Hispanics (6.7/100,000) than among non-Hispanic whites (4.1/100,000) (Figure 10.2). Among Hispanics, homicide rates in South Texas (6.7/100,000) were slightly lower than in the rest of Texas (7.7/100,000) (Figure 10.2).

**Figure 10.2.** Homicide rates by location and race/ethnicity, 1999-2003.

Source: Texas Health Data (http://soupfin.tdh.state.tx.us/death10.htm)

In South Texas, homicide rates were highest among infants less than age 1 (9.8/100,000) and individuals ages 15-34 (10.1/100,000 – 10.6/100,000). The average annual age-adjusted homicide rate for South Texas infants in 1999-2003 (9.8/100,000) was higher than the age-adjusted homicide rate among infants nationwide in 2002 (7.5/100,000).\textsuperscript{7} Overall, males in South Texas were three times more likely to be murdered than females, and among Hispanics, males were four times more likely to be murdered. The homicide rate difference between the two sexes was much smaller for non-Hispanic whites, however (Figure 10.3).
Figure 10.3. Homicide rates in South Texas by sex and race/ethnicity, 1999-2003. Source: Texas Health Data (http://soupfin.tdh.state.tx.us/death10.htm)

A slightly higher homicide rate was seen in Bexar County than in South Texas as a whole, while the Lower Rio Grande Valley area had a lower homicide rate than all of South Texas (Figure 10.4).

Figure 10.4. Homicide rates in selected South Texas locations, 1999-2003. Source: Texas Health Data (http://soupfin.tdh.state.tx.us/death10.htm)
There were enough homicide cases within Bexar County to stratify these cases by race/ethnicity. In Bexar County, the homicide rate was four times higher among African-Americans (17.1/100,000) and two times higher among Hispanics (8.8/100,000) than among non-Hispanic whites (4.3/100,000) (Figure 10.5).

Figure 10.5. Homicide rates in Bexar County by race/ethnicity, 1999-2003. Source: Texas Health Data (http://soupfin.tdh.state.tx.us/death10.htm)

References


Suicide

Suicide is the intentional act of taking one’s own life. Suicide is the 11th-leading cause of death overall in the U.S., the second-leading cause of death among adults ages 25-34, and the third-leading cause of death among individuals ages 10-24.1,2 Suicide is responsible for more than 30,000 deaths in the U.S. each year.2,3 In 2001, 3,971 young adults ages 15-24 committed suicide.4 However, suicide numbers only indicate a small portion of the amount of suicidal behaviors taking place in the U.S. In 2003, more than 175,000 individuals were hospitalized after attempting suicide, and another 130,000 were seen in emergency departments and released.5 Firearms are used in the majority of suicide deaths in the U.S.4,5

While females are more likely to think about and to attempt suicide, males are at least four times more likely to die from suicide.4,5 In fact, suicide is the eighth-leading cause of death among U.S. males, and 80% of all suicide deaths occur in males. Suicide rates in the U.S. increase with age, and are highest among individuals ages 65 or older.4,5 Nationally, non-Hispanic whites have higher suicide rates than all other race/ethnic groups.4,6 Risk factors for suicide include previous suicide attempts, a history of depression, having easy access to lethal methods, alcohol or drug abuse, physical illness, and feelings of isolation.4,5