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# SUICIDE IN NEW JERSEY, 1999-2014

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THE NEW JERSEY VIOLENT DEATH REPORTING SYSTEM

CENTER FOR HEALTH STATISTICS AND INFORMATICS

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## NEW JERSEY COMPARISON TO NCHS DATA BRIEF NO. 241, APRIL 2016

“INCREASE IN SUICIDE IN THE UNITED STATES, 1999-2014” .....	3
Introduction.....	3
Female Suicide.....	4
Male Suicide .....	5
Suicide Weapons and Mechanisms.....	6
Conclusion .....	7
SUICIDE DATA FROM THE NEW JERSEY VIOLENT DEATH REPORTING SYSTEM.....	8
Table 1. Suicide Rates by Gender, 2005-2014.....	8
Table 2. Suicide Rates by Race/Ethnicity, 2005-2014 .....	8
Table 3. Suicide Rates by County of Residence, 2005-2014.....	9
Table 4a and Table 4b. Suicide Rates by Age, 2005-2014 .....	10
Table 5 and Figure 1. Suicide Weapons, 2006-2014 .....	11
Table 6 and Figure 2. Suicide Weapons by Gender, 2012-2014 .....	12
Table 7 and Figure 3. Suicide Weapons by Race/Ethnicity, 2012-2014 .....	13

Prepared April 26, 2016 by

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### **The New Jersey Violent Death Reporting System**

Center for Health Statistics and Informatics

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# NEW JERSEY COMPARISON TO NCHS DATA BRIEF NO 241, APRIL 2016

## INCREASE IN SUICIDE IN THE UNITED STATES, 1999-2014

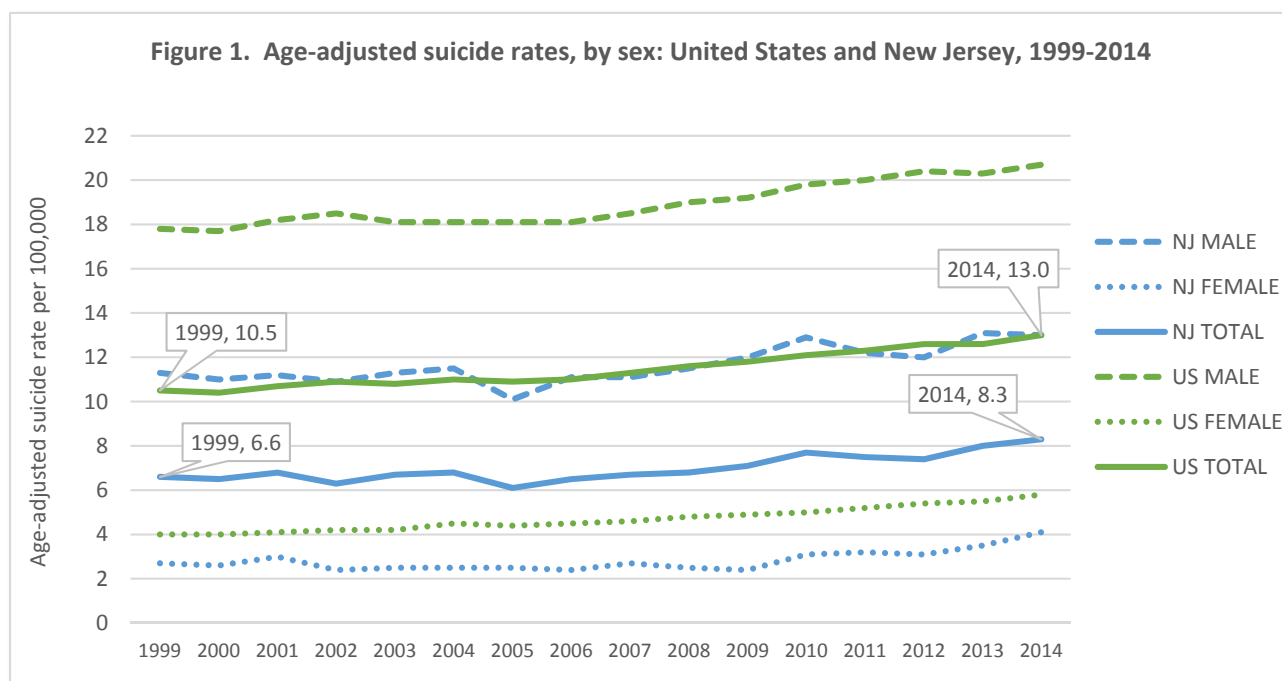
Center for Health Statistics and Informatics, New Jersey Department of Health

April 26, 2016

On April 22, 2016, the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) released Data Brief No. 241, “Increase in Suicide in the United States, 1999-2014.” This data brief describes a disturbing national trend in death by suicide- that from 1999 to 2014, the suicide rate increased from 10.5 per 100,000 to 13.0 per 100,000 population, representing a 24% rise in suicide mortality in the United States.<sup>1</sup> (Note: unless otherwise noted, all national statistics and findings referenced in this comparison paper are found in the NCHS Data Brief.)

The burden of suicide<sup>2</sup> varies dramatically from state to state. While New Jersey historically has had either the lowest or one of the lowest suicide rates in the country (and in 2014 had the second lowest suicide rate nationally at 8.3 per 100,000 population, tied with Massachusetts; New York had the lowest suicide rate at 8.1 per 100,000<sup>3</sup>), New Jersey has experienced increases in overall and group suicide rates that track closely with national trends.

- The suicide rate in New Jersey increased almost 26% from 1999 to 2014, going from 6.6 suicides per 100,000 in 1999 to 8.3 per 100,000 in 2014 (Figure 1).



National mortality data from NCHS Data Brief No. 241, April 2016; New Jersey mortality data from Center for Health Statistics and Informatics, April 2016; Bridged-race Estimates for population.

<sup>1</sup> Curtin SC, Warner M, Hedegaard H. Increase in Suicide in the United States, 1999-2014. NCHS Data Brief, no 241. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2016. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db241.pdf>

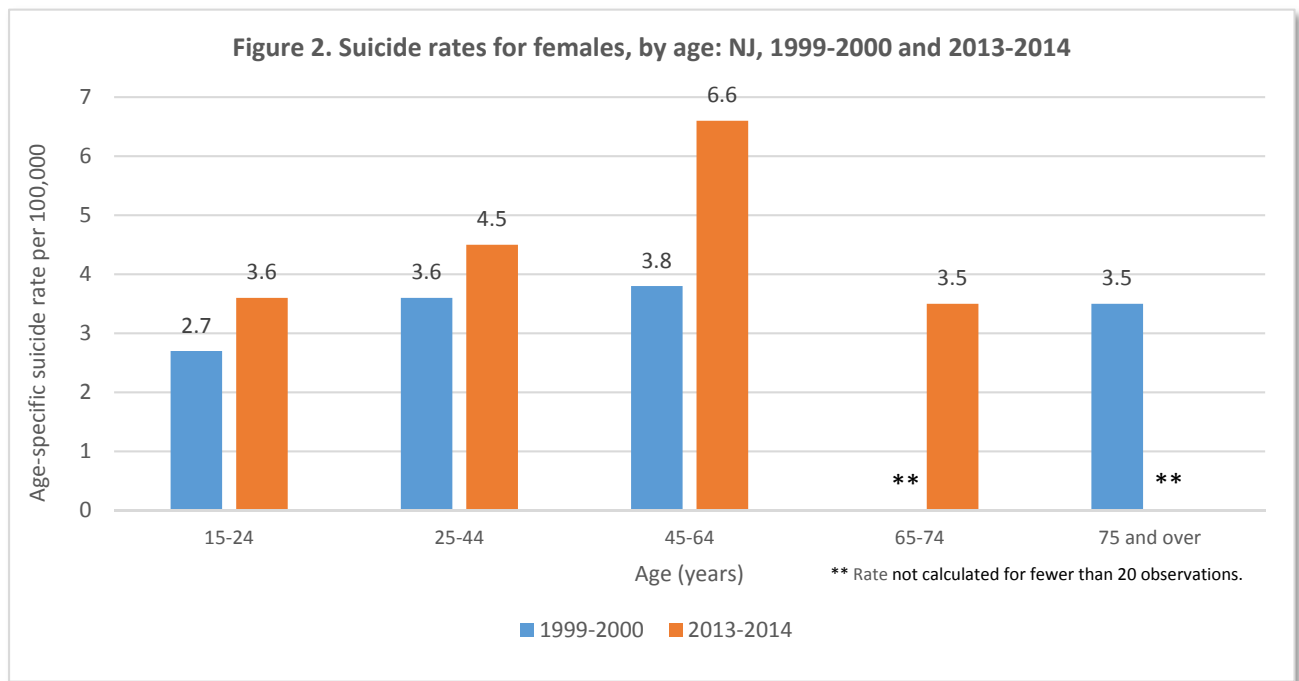
<sup>2</sup> “Suicide” is defined by the *International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, Tenth Revision* (ICD-10) underlying cause of death codes U03, X60-X84, and Y87.0.

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) [online]. (2005) [cited 2016 Apr 26]. Available from URL: [www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars](http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars)

- In 2014, the age-adjusted suicide rate for males in New Jersey was 13.0 per 100,000, more than 3 times the female rate of 4.1 per 100,000, similar to the national pattern (20.7 vs 5.8 per 100,000, respectively).
- Also seen nationally, the percent increase in the female suicide rate in New Jersey from 1999 to 2014 (from 2.7 to 4.1 per 100,000; 52%) was much greater than the percent increase in the male suicide rate during the same period (from 11.3 to 13.0 per 100,000; 15%), and greater than the increase in female suicide recorded nationally (a 45% increase).

The NCHS Data Brief presents suicide rates, categorized by age group and gender, comparing 1999 to 2014. In New Jersey, the number of deaths in several of these categories are too small for calculating comparison rates, so two years of data at each end of the time period were combined for analytical purposes.

**Female Suicide**



*New Jersey mortality data from Center for Health Statistics and Informatics, April 2016; Bridged-race Estimates for population.*

- Suicide rates for females of all age groups were higher in 2013-2014 than in 1999-2000 except for 75 and older. For the two rates not explicitly shown in Figure 2 or Table 1 because of small numbers, the rates also follow this pattern. This is consistent with the national trend shown in the NCHS Data Brief.

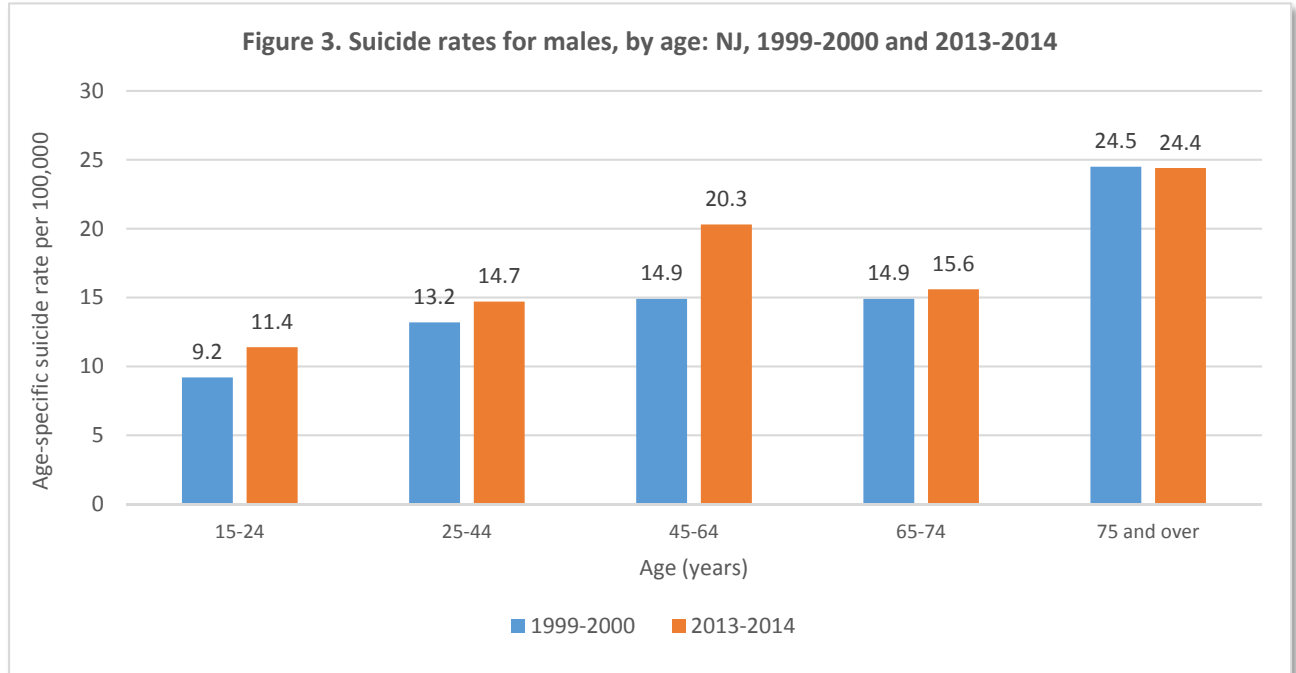
**Table 1. Suicide deaths and rates for females by age group: New Jersey, 1999-2000 and 2013-2014.**

	15-24 Years		25-44 Years		45-64 Years		65-74 Years		75 and over	
	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate
<b>1999-2000</b>	26	2.7	95	3.6	74	3.8	14	**	24	3.5
<b>2013-2014</b>	40	3.6	104	4.5	170	6.6	27	3.5	17	**

*New Jersey mortality data from Center for Health Statistics and Informatics, April 2016; Bridged-race Estimates for population.*

- The largest rate increase is seen among New Jersey females aged 45-64 years, which went from 3.8 suicides per 100,000 in 1999-2000 to 6.6 per 100,000 in 2013-2014, an increase of 74%, even larger than the national increase of 63% in the same age group.
- The number of females under age 15 who died by suicide rose from zero reported in New Jersey in 1999-2000 to 5 in 2013-2014. Nationally, this group had the largest percent increase in suicide rate, tripling from 0.5 per 100,000 in 1999 to 1.5 in 2014 (based on 150 deaths).

**Male Suicide**



New Jersey data from Center for Health Statistics and Informatics, April 2016; Bridged-race Estimates for population.

- In New Jersey, the highest suicide rates among both males and females were seen in males aged 75 and older. These rates were virtually identical at the start and end of the time period (24.5 per 100,000 in 1999-2000, 24.4 per 100,000 in 2013-2014). Nationally, this group experienced a more pronounced decrease from 1999 to 2014, dropping to 38.8 per 100,000 in 2014 from 42.4 per 100,000 in 1999, an 8% decline.
- As seen in New Jersey females, the largest rate increase is seen among males ages 45-64, where the rise from 14.9 suicides per 100,000 in 1999-2000 to 20.3 per 100,000 in 2013-2014 represents a 36% increase in the suicide rate. In comparison, the suicide rate among males in this age group increased by 43%, from 20.8 per 100,000 in 1999 to 29.7 per 100,000 in 2014.

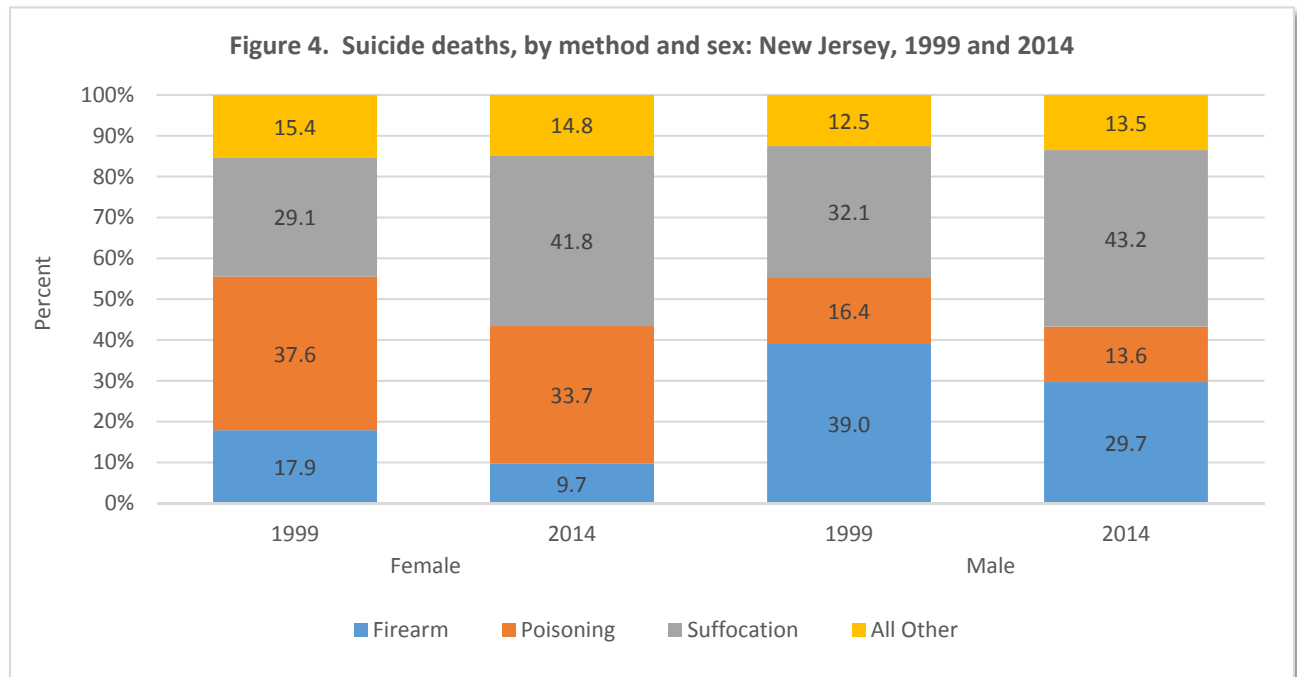
**Table 2. Suicide deaths and rates for males by age group: New Jersey, 1999-2000 and 2013-2014.**

	15-24 Years		25-44 Years		45-64 Years		65-74 Years		75 and over	
	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate
<b>1999-2000</b>	95	9.2	345	13.2	272	14.9	76	14.9	94	24.5
<b>2013-2014</b>	135	11.4	341	14.7	490	20.3	102	15.6	110	24.4

New Jersey mortality data from Center for Health Statistics and Informatics, April 2016; Bridged-race Estimates for population.

- Nationally, males under age 15 had the second largest percent increase in suicide rates from 1999 to 2014 (37%, from 1.9 to 2.6 per 100,000). In New Jersey, combining two years of data does not produce enough observations for rate calculations; however, the number of reported suicides among males under 15 actually dropped from 7 in 1999-2000 to 2 in 2013-2014.

#### Suicide Weapons and Mechanisms<sup>4</sup>



New Jersey data from Center for Health Statistics and Informatics, April 2016.

- While firearms are responsible for 55.4% of male suicides and nearly a third of female suicides nationally in 2014, in New Jersey they account for 29.7% of male suicides and just under 10% of female suicides (Figure 4). The percentages of suicides carried out with firearms decreased in New Jersey from 1999 to 2014 among both females (46% decrease) and males (24% decrease).
- Poisonings were the most common suicide weapon of choice for females in 1999 (37.6%), and firearms the most common weapon for males (39.0%), but by 2014 the most common mechanism of suicide for both male and females was suffocation, accounting for 43.2% and 41.8% of suicides, respectively. "Poisonings" include deaths from carbon monoxide exposure.
- The "Other" category in New Jersey includes cutting/piercing (2.5%), falls/jumps from high places like buildings and bridges (5.5%), and "other specified injuries" that are people being struck by trains on railroad tracks (2.8%). Of the 22 suicides carried out by being struck by a train in 2014, all but 4 were males, and all but one was white, non-Hispanic. The average age was 39 years old, with a range from 17 to 69 years of age.

<sup>4</sup> Weapons and mechanisms of injury for suicides are defined as ICD-10 underlying cause of death codes X72-X74 (firearms), X70 (hanging, strangling, and suffocation), X60-X69 (poisonings), and U03, X71, X75-X84, and Y87.0 (all other mechanisms of injury).

## Conclusion

Suicide rates in New Jersey are generally following national trends- increasing in most age groups and among both males and females, but the increase is most pronounced in the middle ages of 45-64 years, and the most frequent mechanism of suicidal injury is suffocation.

Death certificate data have limitations, however, which can hinder developing effective suicide prevention strategies. Suicide prevention efforts in New Jersey go beyond numbers and rates. The New Jersey Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics and Informatics, has been funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to establish and maintain the New Jersey Violent Death Reporting System (NJVDERS), a database of linked reports from death certificates, medical examiners, and law enforcement that seeks to improve the understanding of suicide by analyzing risk factors and other circumstances that surround suicide, beyond the underlying cause of death. These data have been used in reports, national presentations, strategic plans, peer-reviewed publications, and for informing the media and the public. Primary suicide prevention in New Jersey is being addressed in the strategic plans developed by two inter-departmental and inter-agency working groups:

- New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services, leads the Adult Suicide Prevention Advisory Council, (consisting of state and community agencies; professional, consumer, and advocacy organizations; universities, and individuals with lived experience), which is in the process of implementing the New Jersey Adult Suicide Prevention Plan 2014-2017<sup>5</sup>; and
- New Jersey Department of Children and Families, Division of Family and Community Partnerships (FCP), is the lead state agency for youth suicide prevention. A cross-cutting system of state partners including the Department of Children and Families, the Juvenile Justice Commission, the Department of Education, the Department of Human Services, and the Department of Health) are members of the New Jersey Youth Suicide Prevention Advisory Council, which, along with additional state representatives and public members, developed the New Jersey Strategy for Youth Suicide Prevention.<sup>6</sup>

For more information on adult suicide prevention initiatives, please visit the Department of Human Services, Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services at <http://www.nj.gov/humanservices/dmhas/home/hotlines/>.

For more information on youth suicide prevention initiatives, please visit the Department of Children and Families at <http://www.nj.gov/dcf/adolescent/prevention/>.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.sprc.org/sites/sprc.org/files/Adult%20Suicide%20Prevention%20Plan%20Final%202014-17.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.nj.gov/dcf/documents/behavioral/prevention/preventionplan.pdf>

## SUICIDE DATA FROM THE NEW JERSEY VIOLENT DEATH REPORTING SYSTEM

**TABLE 1. SUICIDE DEATH RATES, BY GENDER, NEW JERSEY RESIDENTS, 2005-2014**

YEAR	TOTAL		MALES		FEMALES	
	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate
2005	553	6.2	426	10.1	127	2.7
2006	627	7.0	493	11.7	134	2.8
2007	626	7.0	490	11.5	136	2.9
2008	647	7.1	501	11.6	146	3.1
2009	649	7.1	531	12.1	118	2.5
2010	715	7.7	567	12.8	148	3.1
2011	692	7.5	534	12.1	158	3.4
2012	701	7.6	548	12.3	153	3.2
2013	772	8.2	599	13.3	173	3.6
2014	804	8.5	603	13.2	201	4.2

**TABLE 2. SUICIDE DEATH RATES BY RACE/ETHNICITY, NEW JERSEY RESIDENTS, 2005-2014**

YEAR	WHITE NH		BLACK NH		HISPANIC		ASIAN/PAC ISLAND	
	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate
2005	441	7.7	33	2.9	50	4.5	24	3.5
2006	501	8.6	48	4.1	48	3.6	25	4.1
2007	500	8.8	41	3.5	49	3.7	31	4.8
2008	516	8.9	39	3.5	49	3.6	38	6.0
2009	507	8.9	39	3.4	68	4.6	31	4.1
2010	545	9.4	58	5.0	71	5.4	31	4.7
2011	550	9.7	48	4.1	61	3.7	22	2.7
2012	537	9.8	58	4.8	57	3.6	40	5.4
2013	599	10.5	58	4.8	73	4.5	26	3.2
2014	622	11.2	52	4.3	79	5.0	38	4.7



TABLE 3. SUICIDE DEATH RATES BY COUNTY OF RESIDENCE, NEW JERSEY, 2005-2014

County of Residence	2005		2006		2007		2008		2009		2010		2011		2012		2013		2014	
	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate
ATLANTIC	22	7.9	19	**	28	10.1	27	9.6	29	9.9	35	11.5	30	10.8	40	13.8	28	10.0	37	13.1
BERGEN	51	5.5	68	7.2	71	7.7	66	6.7	52	5.2	69	7.4	60	6.3	75	7.6	71	7.3	87	8.8
BURLINGTON	28	6.2	37	8.0	26	5.8	31	6.4	28	5.9	38	8.1	37	7.8	36	7.6	50	10.1	57	12.0
CAMDEN	56	10.7	47	9.0	54	10.3	37	7.2	48	9.4	60	11.4	55	10.7	50	9.6	50	9.3	57	10.4
CAPE MAY	17	**	14	**	6	**	16	**	16	**	16	**	10	**	14	**	11	**	15	**
CUMBERLAND	15	**	8	**	16	**	19	**	12	**	11	**	16	**	12	**	17	**	10	**
ESSEX	34	4.4	42	5.3	38	4.7	31	4.1	50	6.2	43	5.2	44	5.3	48	5.9	52	6.3	48	5.8
GLOUCESTER	29	10.3	27	9.6	33	11.1	25	8.5	26	8.8	23	7.8	30	10.0	33	11.8	41	13.6	20	6.5
HUDSON	35	5.7	30	5.2	30	4.9	33	4.9	39	6.2	44	6.6	35	5.0	37	5.5	47	6.6	41	5.9
HUNTERDON	11	**	7	**	14	**	13	**	20	14.9	15	**	12	**	15	**	7	**	15	**
MERCER	18	**	24	6.5	29	7.8	31	8.1	20	5.2	37	9.3	26	7.0	23	6.0	28	7.2	24	6.4
MIDDLESEX	35	4.3	51	6.3	51	6.2	59	7.1	65	7.7	60	7.0	63	7.5	61	7.1	55	6.1	57	6.4
MONMOUTH	34	5.2	51	8.2	33	5.2	59	9.2	42	6.8	51	7.9	58	8.5	52	8.1	53	7.6	58	9.0
MORRIS	33	6.9	37	6.7	39	7.5	35	6.7	21	4.0	35	6.5	37	7.0	28	5.8	44	8.7	53	9.4
OCEAN	45	7.9	54	9.9	34	6.4	54	8.9	62	10.9	55	9.4	53	8.8	52	8.4	73	11.9	71	12.0
PASSAIC	18	**	26	5.2	26	5.2	36	7.1	38	7.3	34	6.6	30	6.2	31	5.9	39	7.6	35	7.1
SALEM	9	**	4	**	6	**	4	**	2	**	7	**	15	**	11	**	12	**	13	**
SOMERSET	20	6.6	20	6.2	25	7.5	15	**	21	6.1	22	6.6	24	6.9	23	6.3	22	6.0	28	7.7
SUSSEX	7	**	21	14.9	12	**	15	**	15	**	18	**	21	13.2	19	**	17	**	22	13.0
UNION	31	5.5	25	4.6	45	8.3	29	5.6	30	5.5	29	5.2	22	3.9	30	5.5	37	6.3	41	7.3
WARREN	5	**	14	**	9	**	11	**	13	**	13	**	14	**	11	**	18	**	15	**
UNKNOWN	-		1		1		1		-		-		-		-		-		-	
TOTAL	553	6.2	627	7.0	626	7.0	647	7.1	649	7.1	715	7.7	692	7.5	701	7.6	772	8.2	804	8.5

Source: New Jersey Violent Death Reporting System, v.04/04/2016  
 Center for Health Statistics and Informatics  
 Health Care Quality and Informatics  
 Office of Population Health  
 New Jersey Department of Health  
 April 27, 2016

TABLE 4a. SUICIDE DEATH RATES BY AGE GROUPS, NEW JERSEY RESIDENTS, 2005-2014

	2005		2006		2007		2008		2009		2010		2011		2012		2013		2014	
	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate
UNDER 15 YEARS OLD	4	**	5	**	4	**	7	**	2	**	4	**	2	**	1	**	2	**	5	**
15-24 YEARS OLD	74	6.7	63	5.7	70	6.2	58	5.1	79	7.0	83	7.3	77	6.7	95	8.3	87	7.6	93	8.1
25-34 YEARS OLD	79	7.1	79	7.2	94	8.6	88	8.0	86	7.8	79	7.1	89	8.0	99	8.7	108	9.5	122	10.6
35-44 YEARS OLD	118	8.6	138	10.2	129	9.7	124	9.6	125	9.9	124	10.0	136	11.2	131	11.0	109	9.2	115	9.8
45-54 YEARS OLD	116	9.0	132	10.1	139	10.4	155	11.5	173	12.6	195	14.1	149	10.8	154	11.3	191	14.1	203	15.2
55-64 YEARS OLD	68	7.4	98	10.4	95	9.8	104	10.6	108	10.6	118	11.3	122	11.2	124	11.2	142	12.5	141	12.2
65-74 YEARS OLD	35	6.3	48	8.6	38	6.7	50	8.5	38	6.3	57	9.3	54	8.5	51	7.6	67	9.4	63	8.7
75-84 YEARS OLD	43	10.4	45	11.0	39	9.6	48	11.9	29	7.3	34	8.6	44	11.2	27	6.9	46	11.8	42	10.7
85 AND OLDER	15	**	18	**	17	**	13	**	9	**	21	11.7	18	**	19	**	20	10.4	20	10.3
UNKNOWN AGE	1		1		1		-		-		-		1		-		-		-	
TOTAL	553	6.2	627	7.0	626	7.0	647	7.1	649	7.1	715	7.7	692	7.5	701	7.6	772	8.2	804	8.5

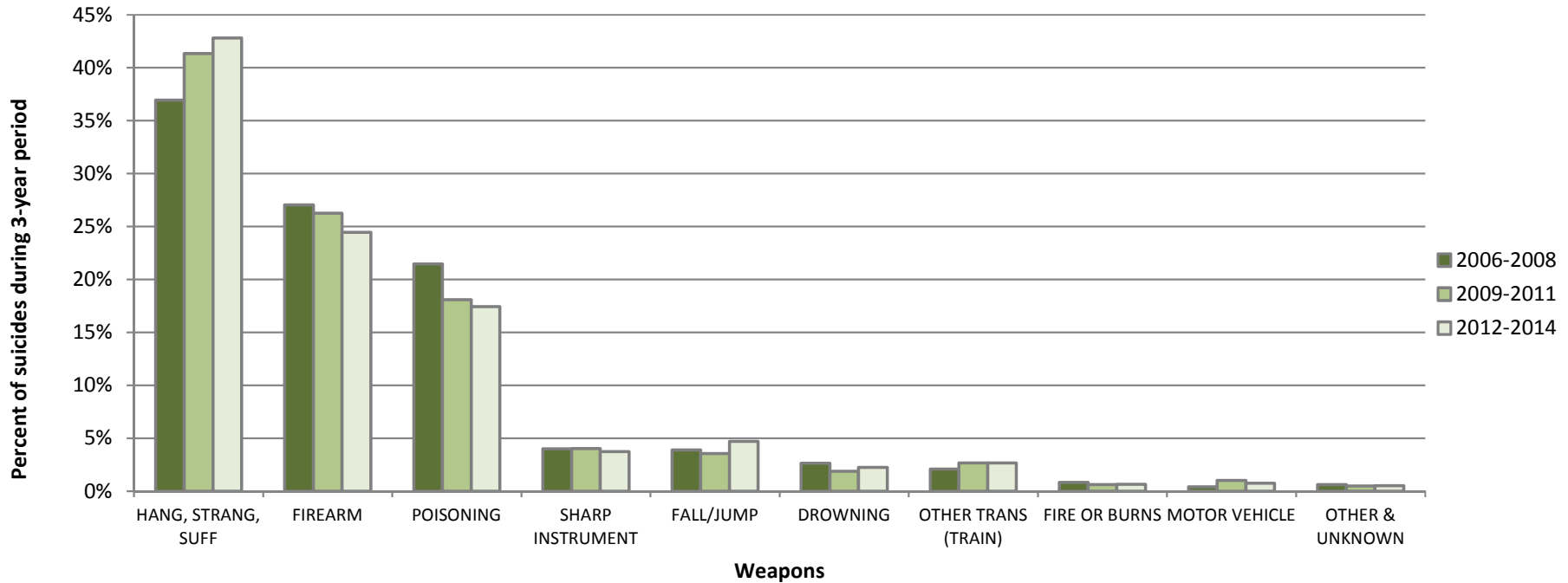
TABLE 4b. SUICIDE RATES, SPECIALIZED AGE GROUPS, NEW JERSEY RESIDENTS, 2005-2014

	2005		2006		2007		2008		2009		2010		2011		2012		2013		2014	
	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate	N	Rate
10-17 YEARS OLD ("UNDER 18")	12	**	14	**	14	**	14	**	16	**	17	**	24	2.5	11	**	15	**	22	2.4
18-24 YEARS OLD	66	6.4	54	5.2	59	5.6	51	4.8	65	6.0	70	6.4	55	5.0	85	7.6	74	6.5	76	6.7
15-19 YEARS OLD	21	3.6	21	3.5	24	4.0	19	**	28	4.7	33	5.5	33	5.5	25	4.2	28	4.8	35	6.1
10-24 YEARS OLD ("YOUTH")	78	4.6	68	4.0	73	4.2	65	3.8	81	4.7	87	5.0	79	4.6	96	5.6	89	5.2	98	5.7
25 YEARS AND OLDER ("ADULT")																				
Age-Adjusted	475	8.1	559	9.5	552	9.4	582	9.8	569	9.4	628	10.3	613	10.1	605	10.0	683	10.9	706	11.3
Unadjusted	475	8.2	559	9.6	552	9.4	582	9.9	569	9.6	628	10.5	613	10.2	605	10.0	683	11.2	706	11.5
45-64 YEARS OLD	184	8.3	230	10.2	234	10.2	259	11.1	281	7.8	313	12.9	271	11.0	278	11.2	333	13.4	344	13.8
65 AND OLDER	93	8.3	111	9.9	94	8.3	111	9.6	76	6.5	112	9.4	116	9.6	97	7.8	133	10.4	125	9.5
75 AND OLDER	58	10.3	63	11.1	56	9.8	61	10.7	38	6.6	55	9.6	62	10.8	46	7.9	66	11.3	62	10.6

TABLE 5. PRIMARY WEAPONS USED IN SUICIDE, NEW JERSEY RESIDENTS, 2006-2008, 2009-2011, AND 2012-2014

	2006-2008		2009-2011		2012-2014	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
HANG, STRANG, SUFF	702	36.9%	850	41.3%	975	42.8%
FIREARM	514	27.1%	540	26.3%	557	24.5%
POISONING	408	21.5%	372	18.1%	397	17.4%
SHARP INSTRUMENT	76	4.0%	83	4.0%	85	3.7%
FALL/JUMP	74	3.9%	73	3.6%	107	4.7%
DROWNING	50	2.6%	39	1.9%	51	2.2%
OTHER TRANS (TRAIN)	40	2.1%	55	2.7%	61	2.7%
FIRE OR BURNS	16	0.8%	13	0.6%	15	0.7%
MOTOR VEHICLE	8	0.4%	21	1.0%	17	0.7%
OTHER & UNKNOWN	12	0.6%	10	0.5%	12	0.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,900</b>		<b>2,056</b>		<b>2,277</b>	

Figure 1. Suicide weapons, NJ residents 2006-2008, 2009-2011, and 2012-2014

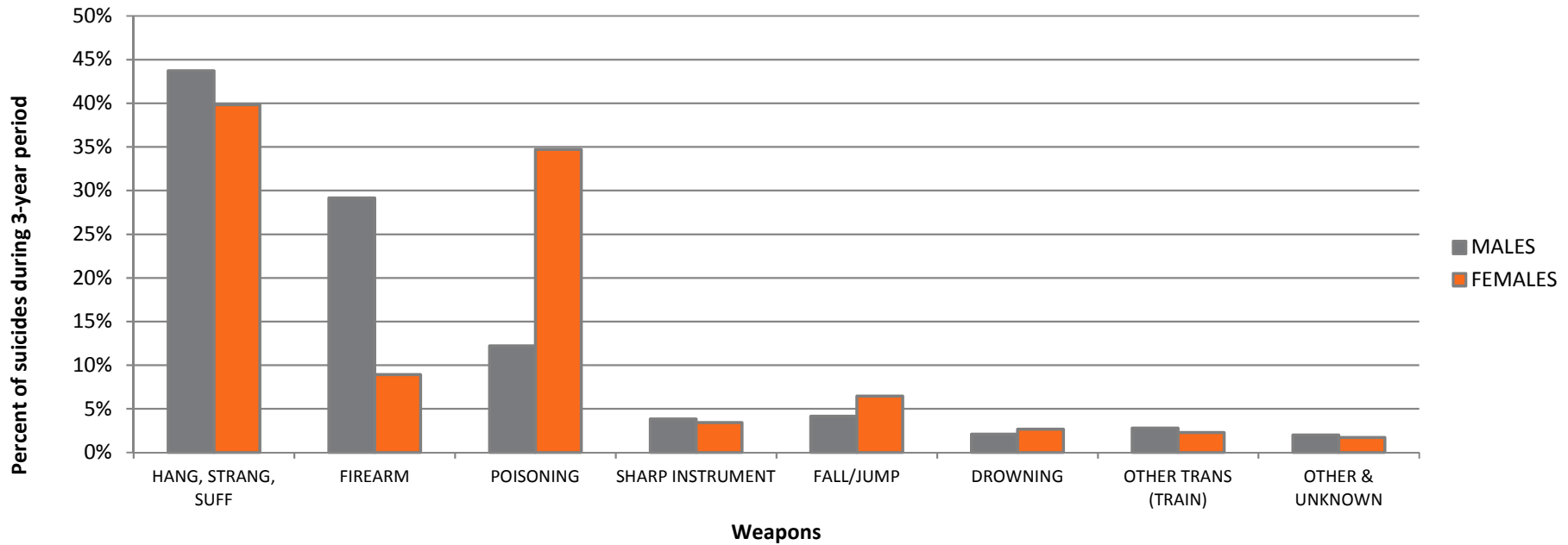


Data Source: New Jersey Violent Death Reporting System, v.04/04/2016, Center for Health Statistics & Informatics, NJDOH

TABLE 6. PRIMARY WEAPONS USED IN SUICIDE BY SEX, NEW JERSEY RESIDENTS, 2012-2014

	MALES		FEMALES	
	N	%	N	%
HANG, STRANG, SUFF	765	43.71%	210	39.85%
FIREARM	510	29.14%	47	8.92%
POISONING	214	12.23%	183	34.72%
SHARP INSTRUMENT	67	3.83%	18	3.42%
FALL/JUMP	73	4.17%	34	6.45%
DROWNING	37	2.11%	14	2.66%
OTHER TRANS (TRAIN)	49	2.80%	12	2.28%
OTHER & UNKNOWN	35	2.00%	9	1.71%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,750</b>		<b>527</b>	

Figure 2. Suicide weapons by sex, NJ residents  
2012-2014

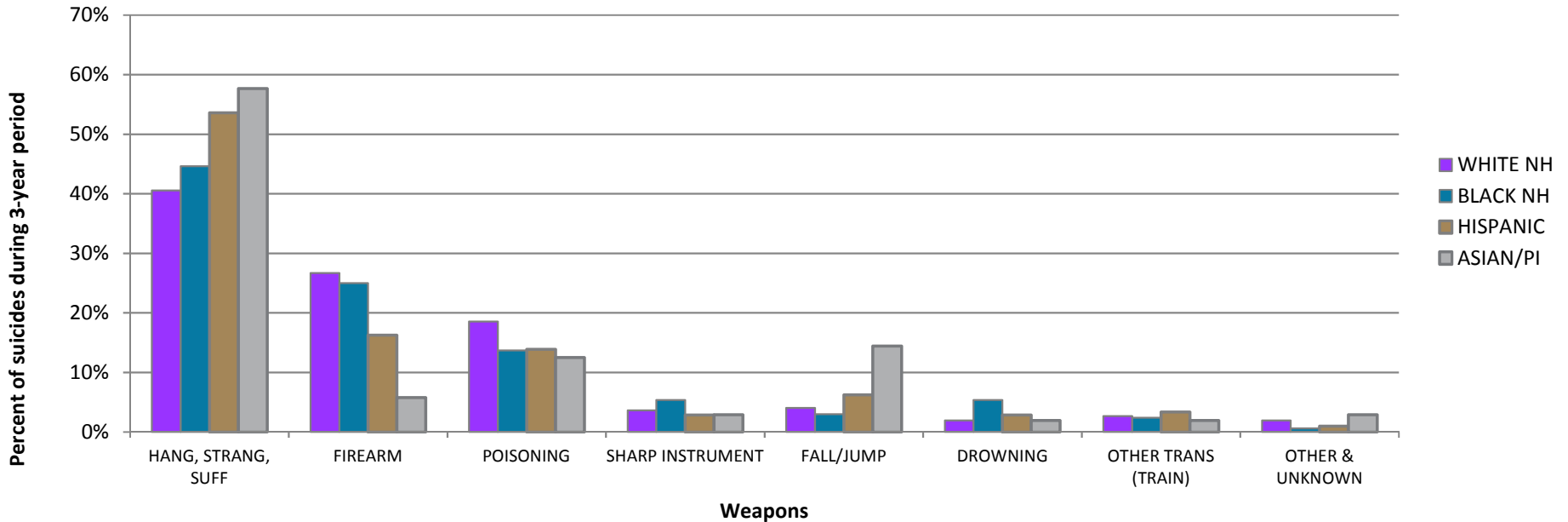


Data Source: New Jersey Violent Death Reporting System, v.04/04/2016, Center for Health Statistics & Informatics, NJDOH

TABLE 7. PRIMARY WEAPONS USED IN SUICIDE BY RACE/ETHNICITY, NEW JERSEY RESIDENTS, 2012-2014

	WHITE NH		BLACK NH		HISPANIC		ASIAN/PI	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
HANG, STRANG, SUFF	713	40.56%	75	44.64%	112	53.59%	60	57.69%
FIREARM	469	26.68%	42	25.00%	34	16.27%	6	5.77%
POISONING	326	18.54%	23	13.69%	29	13.88%	13	12.50%
SHARP INSTRUMENT	64	3.64%	9	5.36%	6	2.87%	3	2.88%
FALL/JUMP	71	4.04%	5	2.98%	13	6.22%	15	14.42%
DROWNING	34	1.93%	9	5.36%	6	2.87%	2	1.92%
OTHER TRANS (TRAIN)	47	2.67%	4	2.38%	7	3.35%	2	1.92%
OTHER & UNKNOWN	34	1.93%	1	0.60%	2	0.96%	3	2.88%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,758</b>		<b>168</b>		<b>209</b>		<b>104</b>	

Figure 3. Suicide weapons by race/ethnicity, NJ residents 2012-2014



Data Source: New Jersey Violent Death Reporting System, v.04/04/2016, Center for Health Statistics & Informatics, NJDOH