



# Suicide Prevention Amongst Hispanics and Latinos

## THE FACTS

What is suicide? Suicide means ending your own life. It is a public health problem affecting our communities regardless of race, skin color, age, economic or social status. Suicide is preventable. When a person dies from suicide it was not because they wanted to end their life, but instead wanted to put an end to excruciating emotional pain.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), suicide is responsible for more than 48,000 deaths in 2018, resulting in about one death every 11 minutes.<sup>1</sup> Suicide behaviors have grown among Hispanics in the last decade, especially for females and for youth. One in four Latina and Hispanic girls and one in four Hispanic and Latino boys have considered suicide. Latinx and Hispanic lesbian, gay or bisexual individuals attempt suicide at even higher rates.<sup>2</sup>

### A Wake-Up Call: Suicide and COVID 19

The CDC conducted a study in the US during the week of June 24-30, 2020, in which adults reported considerably elevated adverse mental health conditions associated with COVID-19. Hispanic respondents reported a higher prevalence of symptoms of anxiety disorder or depressive disorder, COVID-19-related trauma- and stressor-related disorder (TSRD), increased substance use, and suicidal ideation than did non-Hispanics.

Younger adults, racial/ethnic minorities, essential workers, and unpaid adult caregivers reported having experienced disproportionately worse mental health outcomes, increased substance use, and elevated suicidal ideation.<sup>3</sup>

According to a Kaiser Family Foundation 2020 brief and a Health Affairs 2020 article, people of color (POC) have an increased risk for serious illness if they contract COVID-19 due to higher rates of underlying health conditions, such as diabetes, asthma, hypertension, and obesity compared to Caucasians.

Research also shows that people of color also:

- are more likely to be uninsured and lack a usual source of care which is an impediment to accessing COVID-19 testing and treatment services.
- are more likely to work in the service industry such as restaurants, retail, and hospitality which are particularly at a higher risk for loss of income during the pandemic;
- are more likely to live in multigenerational family housing units or low-income/public housing that make it difficult to social distance or self-isolate; and
- often work jobs that are not amenable to teleworking and use public transportation that puts them at a higher risk for exposure to COVID-19.<sup>4</sup>

### Risk Factors Amongst Hispanics and Latinos

There are some risk factors associated with increased suicide risk amongst Latinos. Hispanics and Latinos can face very stressful life conditions such as poverty, migration, lack of transportation, isolation, a low sense of belonging, lack of access to prevention programs, mental health services, and access to culturally and linguistically appropriate services. Also, stress related to acculturation and discrimination have been associated with over three times increased odds of suicide attempts among Hispanic emerging adults.<sup>5</sup>

### Protective Factors Amongst Hispanic and Latinos

Culture itself serves as prevention as it is closely tied with cultural values, familism, parental and familial connectedness, bonding, and positive relationships with parents that can reduce the risk of suicide in youth.

Caring from teachers is an example: One national study found that perceived caring from teachers was associated with a decreased risk of suicide attempts by Latina adolescents.

### Spirituality and moral objections to suicide

Individuals identifying as Hispanics and Latinos report higher scores on moral objections to suicide and spirituality measures. They are also more likely to have strong beliefs prohibiting suicidal thoughts and behaviors.<sup>6</sup>





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## Signs of Suicide

- Talking about feeling hopeless
- Talking about great guilt or shame
- Talking about feeling trapped or feeling that there are no solutions
- Feeling unbearable pain (emotional pain or physical pain)
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Using alcohol or drugs more often
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Changing hygiene eating and/or sleeping habits
- Talking or thinking about death often
- Giving away important possessions
- Saying goodbye to friends and family
- Putting affairs in order, making a will
- Prior suicide attempt(s)
- Alcohol and drug abuse

## How can I prevent suicide?

### Ask the Questions:

*“Are you thinking about killing yourself?”*  
*“Do you have a plan?”*

Don't be afraid to ask these questions. Studies show that [asking at-risk individuals](#) if they are suicidal does not increase suicides or suicidal ideation.

**Listen:** carefully and actively and learn what the individual is thinking and feeling. Research suggests [acknowledging and talking about suicide](#) may [reduce rather than increase](#) suicidal thoughts.

**Persuade:** To seek professional mental health.

**Refer:** To a mental health professional immediately.

Keep the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline's (1-800-273-TALK (8255)) and the Crisis Text Line's number (741741) at hand.

Linea de Teléfono Nacional de Prevención del Suicidio 1-888-628-9454. Lifeline ofrece 24/7, servicios gratuitos en español, no es necesario hablar inglés si usted necesita ayuda.

You can also help make a connection with a family member, friend, and/or spiritual leader.

**Keep Them Safe:** Reducing a suicidal person's access to highly lethal items or places is an important part of suicide prevention. If possible, never leave them alone.

**Stay Connected:** Staying in touch after a crisis or after being discharged from care can make a difference. [Studies have shown](#) the number of suicide deaths goes down when someone follows up with the at-risk person.

## Creating Suicide-Safer Communities

- The public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic should increase intervention and prevention efforts to address associated mental health conditions.
- Community-level efforts, including health communication strategies, should prioritize young adults, racial/ethnic minorities, essential workers, and unpaid adult caregivers.
- Community-level intervention and prevention efforts should include strengthening economic supports to reduce financial stress, addressing stress from experienced racial discrimination, promoting social connectedness, and supporting persons at risk for suicide.
- Expanded use of telehealth, an effective means of delivering treatment for mental health conditions, including depression, substance use disorder, and suicidal ideation, might reduce COVID-19-related mental health consequences.
- Timely translation and access of public health guidance is critical.
- Language matters in reducing stigma around suicide, for example: instead saying, “this person committed suicide” we can say “this person died by suicide”.





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- Culturally tailored interventions are needed to reduce suicide risk among Hispanics and Latino communities.
  - Raising community awareness and breaking down the taboo is important to make progress in preventing suicide.
  - Increase access to bilingual bicultural prevention and mental health services.
  - For the media and social platforms, avoid language which sensationalizes or normalizes suicide or presents it as a solution to problems. Also, take particular care in reporting celebrity suicides.
  - Culturally and linguistically tailored prevention messaging regarding practices to improve emotional well-being.
  - Hispanic and Latino /bicultural/ bilingual workforce development to sustain a culturally and linguistically competent mental health workforce.
  - Culture is prevention. We need to celebrate our cultures, families, diversity, and look to the future with hope.
- [NAMI's Compartiendo Esperanza](#): A 90-minute program to increase mental health awareness in Latino communities by sharing the presenters' journeys to recovery and exploring signs and symptoms of mental health conditions. The program also highlights how and where to find help.  
  
Compartiendo Esperanza: No Hay Salud Sin Salud Mental  
Through stories and quotes, this booklet provides mental health information in a sensitive manner. Recovery is possible, and this booklet tells you where to find more information, seek help and be supportive. [You can preview the booklet for free](#) or buy hard copies through the [NAMI Bookstore](#)
  - [Understanding the Diverse Needs of Children whose Parents Abuse Substances](#)
  - [Suicide among Hispanics in the United States](#)
  - [Risk and Protective Factors: Hispanic Populations](#)
  - [Mental Health, Substance Use, and Suicidal Ideation During the COVID-19 Pandemic — United States, June 24–30, 2020](#)
  - [Communities of Color at Higher Risk for Health and Economic Challenges due to COVID-19](#)
  - [American Association of Suicidology. "Facts and Statistics." Accessed September 6, 2019](#)

## Resources

- Talk Saves Lives TM | AFSP  
An Introduction to Suicide  
Prevention education program  
<https://afsp.org/>

To learn about more about our National Hispanic and Latino Prevention Technology Transfer Center, please visit <https://pttcnetwork.org/centers/national-hispanic-latino-pttc/home>

- 1 <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/suicide/fastfact.html>
- 2 <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/2019/11/26/research-brief-suicide-attempts-among-lgbtq-youth-of-color/>
- 3 [https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6932a1.htm?s\\_cid=mm6932a1\\_w](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6932a1.htm?s_cid=mm6932a1_w)
- 4 <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/covid19-behavioral-health-disparities-black-latino-communities.pdf>
- 5 <http://www.sprc.org/resources-programs/risk-protective-factors-hispanic-populations>

You can visit the following websites for more information.

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**  
Toll Free: 1-888-628-9454  
English: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)  
(TTY): 1-800-799-4TTY (4889)  
Spanish:  
<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-yourself/en-espanol/>  
English:  
<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Linea de Teléfono Nacional de Prevención del Suicidio **1-888-628-9454**.  
Lifeline ofrece 24/7, servicios gratuitos en español, no es necesario hablar ingles si usted necesita ayuda.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline's Crisis Text Line's number (741741).

**SAMHSA Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator**  
<https://findtreatment.gov>

**SAMHSA's National Helpline**  
Toll-Free: 1-800-662-HELP (24/7/365 Treatment Referral Information Service in English and Español)  
Website: <http://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>

**SAMHSA's Disaster Distress Helpline**  
Toll Free: 1-800-985-5990 (español e inglés)  
Text in Spanish: Envíe "Háblanos" al 66746  
Text in English: "TalkWithUs" al 66746  
(TTY): 1-800-846-8517  
English:  
<http://www.disasterdistress.samhsa.gov>  
Spanish:  
<https://www.samhsa.gov/disaster-distress-helpline/espanol>



National Latino Behavioral Health Association **NLBHA**



**American Foundation for Suicide Prevention**