

Preventing Firearm Suicide: Saving Lives Through Awareness & Action

Public Health Approach to Firearm Suicide Prevention

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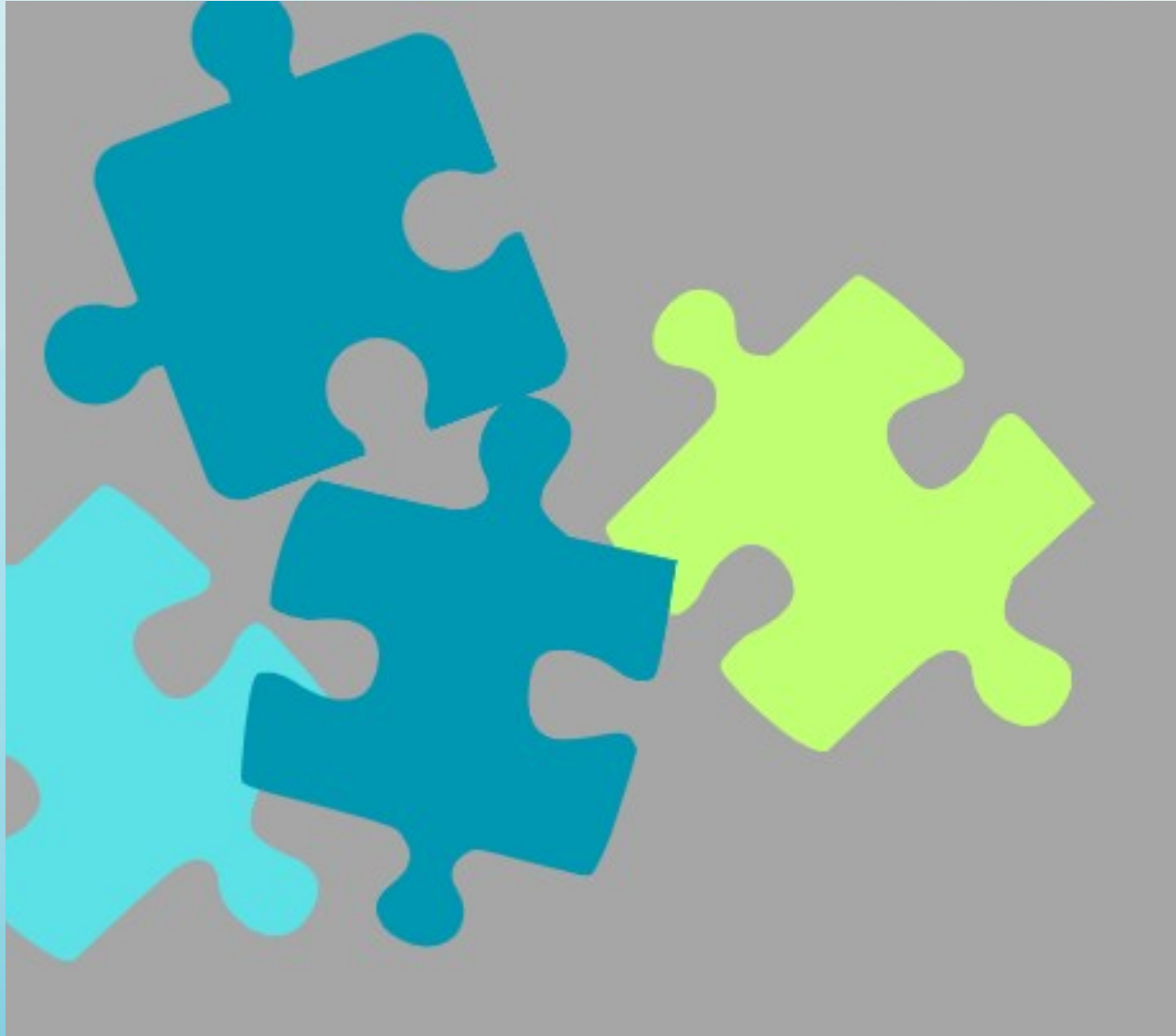
To those we have lost to suicide,
To those who struggle with thoughts of suicide,
To those who have made a suicide attempt,
To those caring for someone who struggles with thoughts of suicide,
To those left behind after a death by suicide,
To those in recovery, and
To all those who work tirelessly to prevent suicide and suicide attempts in our nation every day.

We believe that we can, and we will make a difference.

*Dedication from the
2024 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention*

Key Takeaways

- Share evidence that supports firearm suicide prevention
- Raise awareness of current firearm suicide prevention efforts
- Inspire action to prevent firearm suicides



Suicide prevention has no single solution

Accessible Mental Health Services

Crisis Intervention Hotlines

Community Education & Awareness

Gatekeeper Training

Lethal Means Reduction

School and Workplace Based Programs

Cultural Competence

Follow-Up Care

Support for Survivors

Data Monitoring and Research

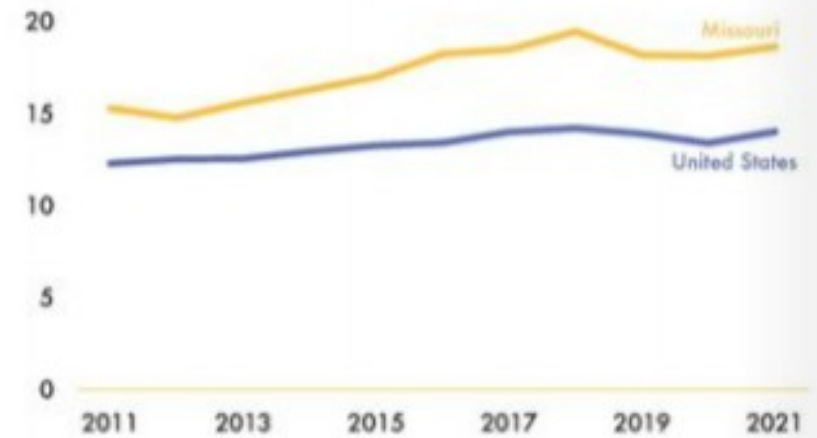
Suicide rates in Missouri are:

- Higher than U.S. national rates – in 2022, there were 1,215 suicides, which is more than the number of deaths from car accidents and murders ¹
- On the rise – in the past 10 years, suicide rates have continued to go up ¹

For Missourians, suicide is:

- The 10th leading cause of death
- The 3rd leading cause of death for people aged 10-17
- The 2nd leading cause of death for people aged 18-34

Missouri and U.S. Suicide Rates: 2011 – 2021
(Rate per 100,000)

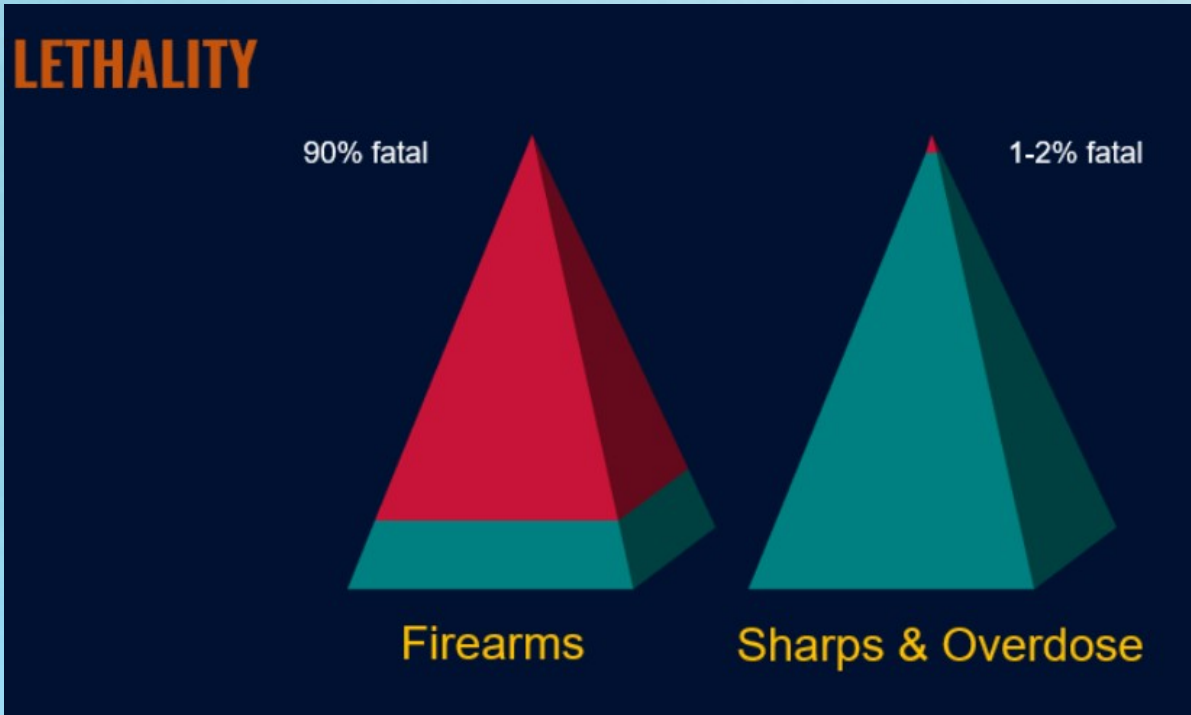


Suicide and firearms:

In 2022

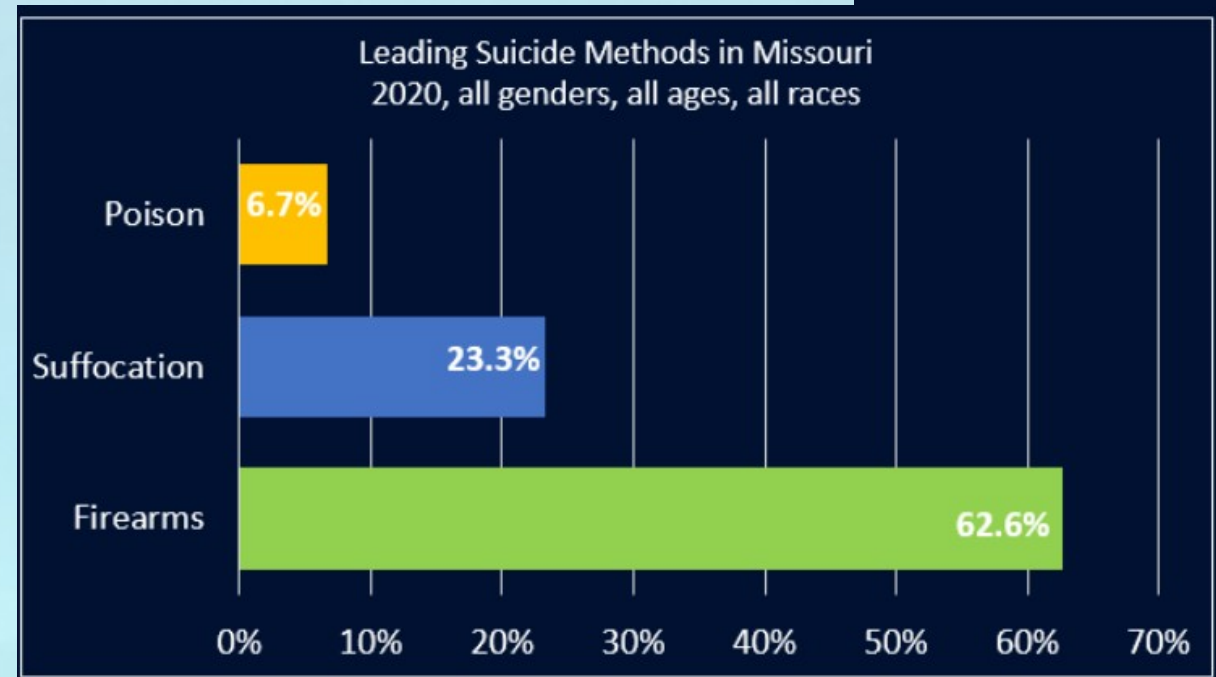
- 66% of suicide deaths in Missouri used firearms compared to other means
- Firearm-related suicides went up from 61% in 2017 to 66%
- Of those who died from firearm-related suicide, 89% were male
- 54% of all firearm-related deaths in Missouri were suicides

Why focus on firearm suicide?



Spicer & Miller (2000)

CDC WISQARS, 2021



Most people who survive a suicide attempt do *not* try again—firearm suicides often leave no second chance



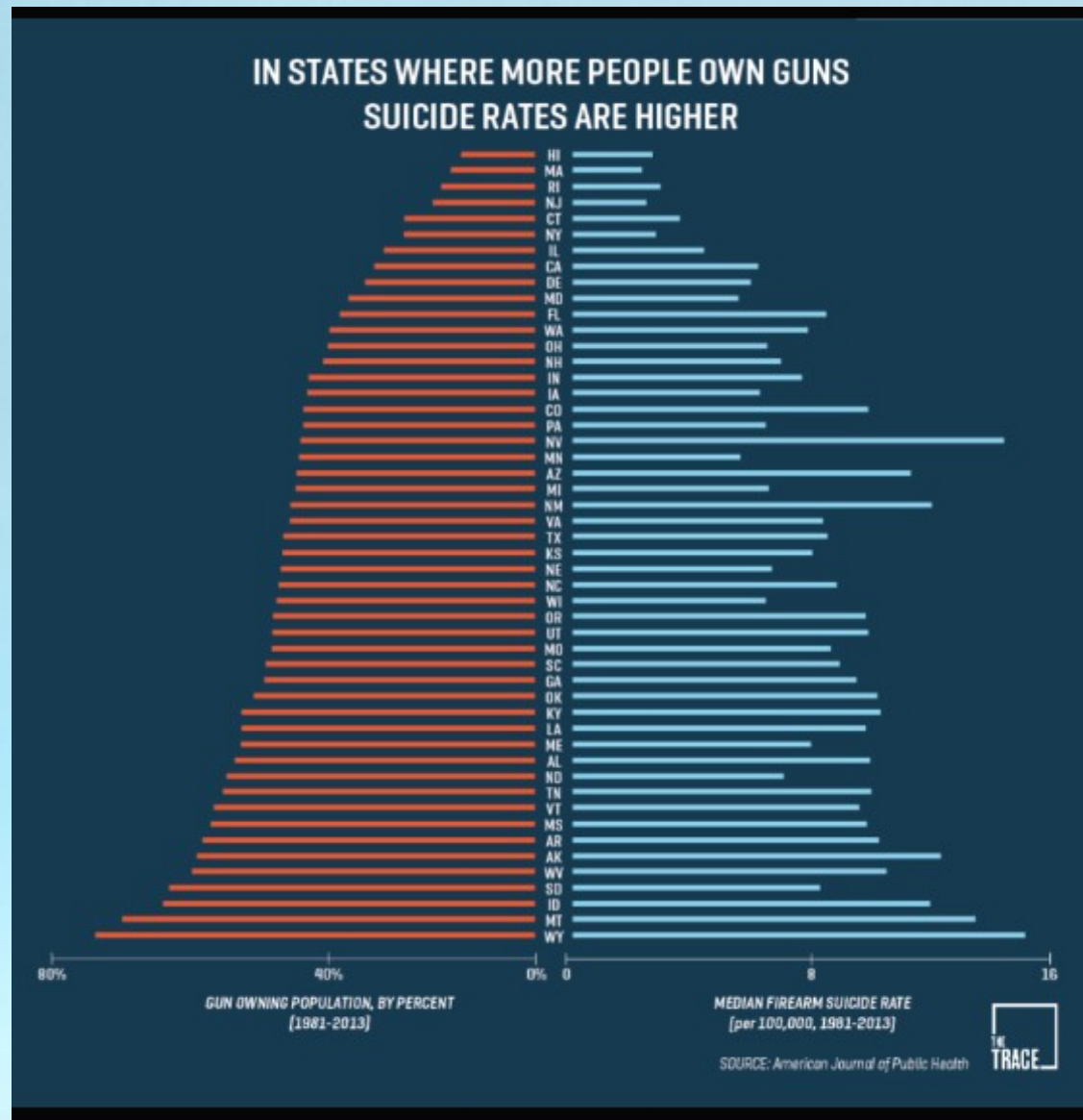
Reducing Access to Firearms Can Save Lives

Access to firearms is a key risk factor for suicide death

Are people who live in homes with guns more likely to have...		
... a mental health problem?	Yes	No
... seriously consider suicide?	Yes	No
... attempt suicide?	Yes	No

**Gun owners aren't likely to be more suicidal,
just more likely to die if they make an
attempt.**

Reducing Access to Firearms Can Save Lives



Reducing Access to Firearms Can Save Lives

2003

Reduced from 400,000 to 200,000 soldiers

**Decreased number of army-issued
firearm availability**

*Changed rules that governed post-service
ownership of military issued firearms*

**Abrupt 20% decrease of
army issued, post-service**

firearms

Enacted gun licensure for all gun owners



2007

*Changed rule regulating ammunition storage from
storage at home to storage on base*

**Reduced lethality of army issued firearms
during off-duty hours**

2013 analysis of Switzerland's suicide data
between 1995 to 2009

4% reduction in firearm-suicide of all genders

9% reduction in firearm-suicide of men

2024

National Strategy *for* Suicide Prevention



GOAL 3:

Reduce access to lethal means among people at risk of suicide.



Objective 3.1: Train community members and implement effective ways to reduce access to lethal means among people at risk, including safe and secure storage of firearms, medications and poisons, ligatures, and other means in homes, workplaces, communities, and the physical environment.

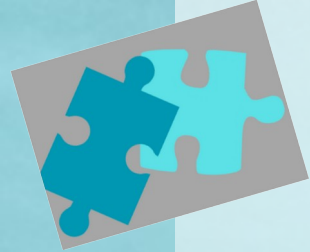


Objective 3.2: Evaluate policies, programs, and practices that put time and space between a person at risk and a lethal means of suicide, including their impact in historically marginalized communities.



Objective 3.3: Partner with firearm and other relevant organizations and communities to incorporate suicide awareness and prevention as basic tenets of firearm safety and responsible ownership.

Objective 3.4: Implement effective substance use prevention and harm reduction programs, practices, and policies that can help reduce suicide risk at the individual and community levels.



2024-2028

Missouri Suicide Prevention Plan

A statewide plan to help Missourians prevent and lower the risk of suicide in their family and community

Together, we can all help prevent suicide!



MSPP priorities and goals

Priority areas:

Priority 1

Raise public awareness about suicide risk and prevention

Priority 2

Support community-led efforts to promote suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention care (care for family, friends, and a community after a suicide)

Priority 3

Help diverse groups and organizations create suicide prevention programs, systems, and policies

Priority 1: Raise public awareness about suicide risk and prevention:

Many people do not know about the resources available to help if someone is having suicidal thoughts or thinking of suicide.

Purpose: To make sure Missourians know about available resources and how to find the information they need to build communities that are safer from suicide.

Medium-term goals (2-4 years):

- Create a network of Missouri suicide prevention trainers
- Create a plan to provide online and in-person suicide prevention trainings to various communities in Missouri
- Create culturally relevant materials for different communities, such as suicide prevention trainings, resources, and 988 promotional materials
- Send 988 promotional materials to Missouri areas most impacted by suicide
- Expand these promotional activities to reach people who are at a higher risk of suicide, which recent data includes:
 - Construction and manufacturing workers
 - LGBTQ+ communities
 - White men
 - Black and brown youth
 - Veterans
 - Rural Missourians
 - Older adults
 - Persons with firearms in their home
- Send out the 988-awareness survey to assess awareness of 988
- Provide education on safety and how to limit access to lethal means (any object that can be used to carry out self-directed violence, such as medicines, firearms, sharp objects, or bridges)

National Public Perception Survey on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (2024)



Among United States adults:

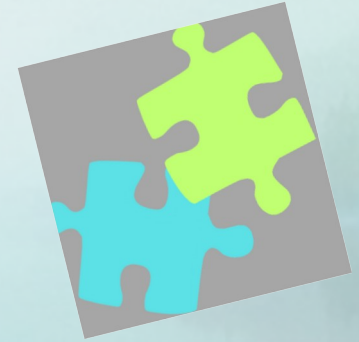
91% believe that suicide can be prevented at least sometimes

95% would take action if someone close to them was thinking about suicide

77% of people would be interested in learning how they might be able to play a role in helping someone who may be experiencing thoughts of suicide

92% believe there is a role for employers in supporting mental health and suicide prevention

Only **49%** know that limiting access to lethal means can prevent suicide



A joint effort between the firearm-owning community and the suicide prevention community to raise awareness that suicide can be prevented through safe firearm storage.



MISSOURI CORRECTIONS ASSOCIATION & MISSOURI PROBATION & PAROLE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION



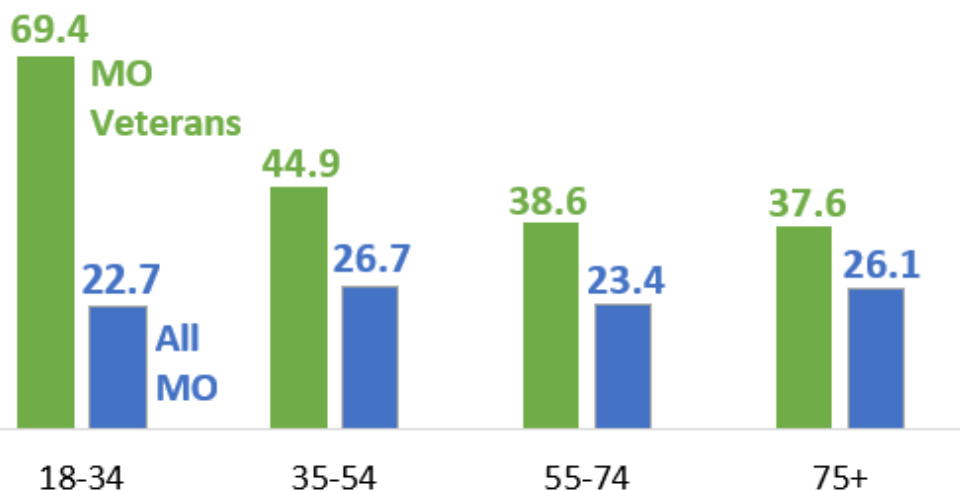


FIREARMS			
Safest	Removal from home	A trusted friend or relative	Gun range or retailer
		Self-storage facility	Pawn Shop
Safer	Make harder to access	Remove ALL ammunition from the home	Store ALL ammunition separately and locked up
		Store ALL guns unloaded & in a secured safe or lock box	Install a trigger, clam or cable lock on ALL firearms.
		Change combination to the safe or store keys away from home	
Safe	Render inoperable	Remove a key component such as the firing pin, slide, bolt, or cylinder	
Other	Distract or remind of reasons for living	Adhere a 988 sticker to gun safe	Leave photos of loved ones or reasons for living in the safe
		Freeze keys to the safe in ice	Store keys in a safety deposit box at bank
And	988 Keep physical & emotional contact	Program 988 – Suicide & Crisis Lifeline into phone so they can reach out for help. Keep bedroom doors open to maintain eyes and ears on them	

Where We Stand: Veterans

Sources: National Public Perception Survey on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (2024); US Dept. of Veterans Affairs (2018-2022)

Missouri Veterans have higher suicide rates (per 100,000) than **all Missourians** across age groups



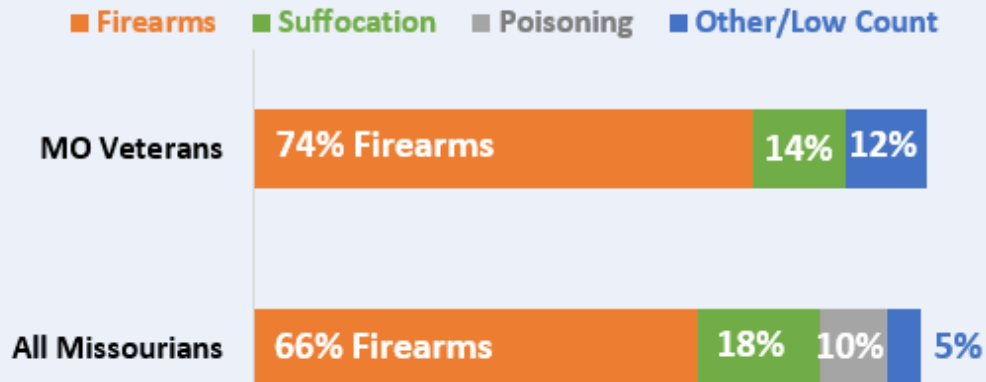
902 MO Veteran Suicides
from 2018 to 2022

Although they make up only 6% of Missouri's population, Veterans account for 16% of all suicides in the state.

The **Missouri Veteran rate (42.6)** was higher than:

- The national Veteran rate (34.7)
- The Missouri general population rate (24.5)
- The national general population rate (18.4)

Missouri Veterans die by suicide using firearms more than the general population



mogovchallenge.com



**PREVENTING SUICIDE
AMONG SERVICE MEMBERS,
VETERANS & THEIR FAMILIES**



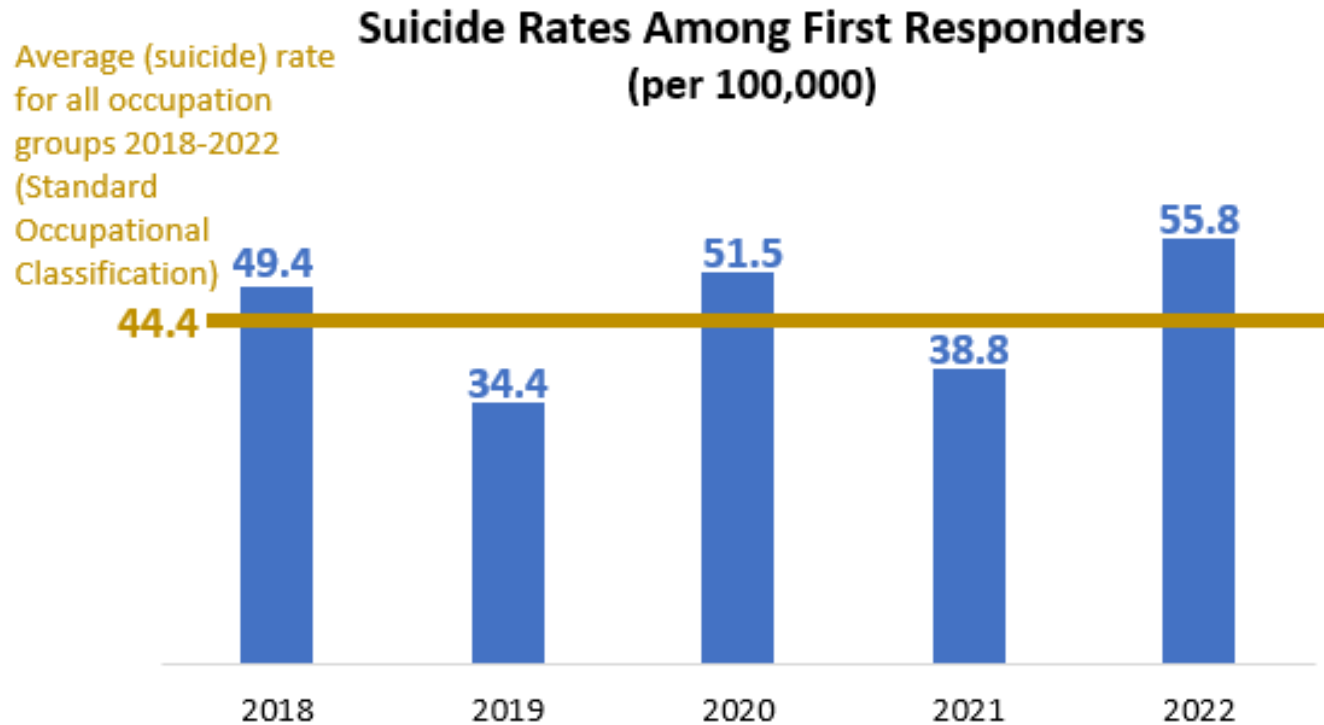
thekaufmanfund.org

Where We Stand: First Responders* (2018-2022)

*Includes protective service occupations, EMT, and Paramedics

Sources: Anestis, et al. (2020); Bond, et al. (2024); Missouri Violent Death Reporting System (2022); Ruderman Foundation (2017)

First Responders are dying by suicide more often than in the line of duty



85% of first responder suicide deaths were by firearm

Where We Stand: Occupations at High Risk of Suicide

Sources: CDC (2022); MO Violent Death Reporting System (2018-2022)

Occupational Groups with the Highest Suicide Rates (per 100,000) in Missouri (2018-2022)

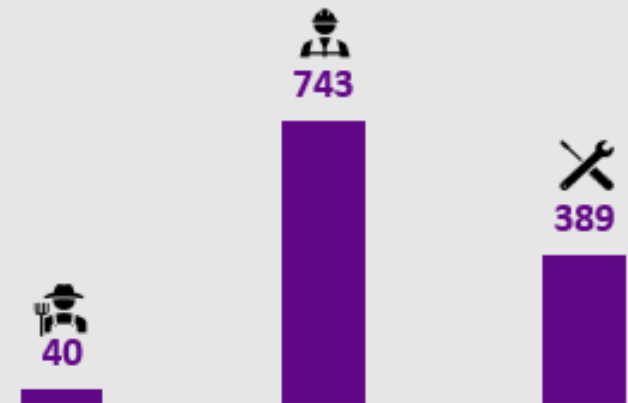


Average rate for all occupation groups (Standard Occupational Classification): 44.4

Rates are highest among **farmers**, but the number of suicides is highest among **construction workers**.

Number of Suicides

Among Farming, Construction, and Installation



67% of suicide deaths were by firearm

Where We Stand: Faith Community

Sources: Community Readiness Survey (2022); LifeWay Research; National Public Perception Survey on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (2024); YouGov (2024)

Faith is a strong protective factor against suicide

10% of faith leaders have completed degrees in counseling



41% of Missourians pray daily



49% of US adults believe training faith leaders on identifying and helping someone in a suicidal crisis would help reduce suicide deaths

Faith leaders will likely encounter suicide either via direct interaction, or congregants who lost a family members

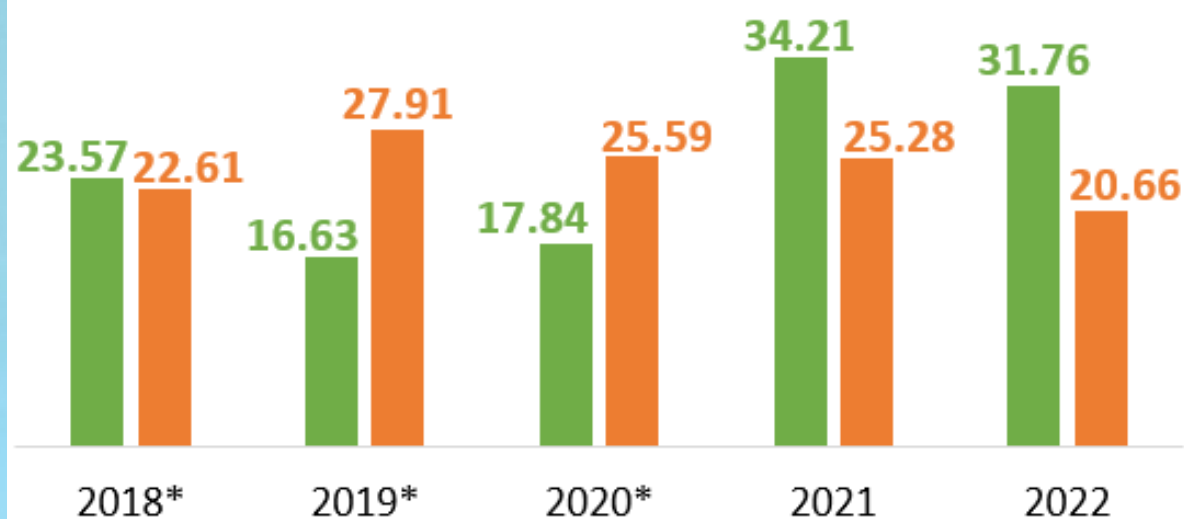
Faith leaders are key gatekeepers, since a broad range of community members attend a faith-based organization, and individuals may feel more at ease speaking to their spiritual leader due to stigma and shame.

Survey results from a group of rural community members in Southeast MO indicate that **15%** turn to clergy and spiritual communities when affected by suicide

Where We Stand: Faith Community and Black Youth

Sources: CDC (2022); Community Readiness Survey (2022); National Public Perception Survey on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (2024); YouGov (2024)

Suicide rates (per 100,000) higher among **Black young adults** (ages 19-24) than **white young adults** of the same age in recent years



*Unstable value among Black young adults, less than 20 deaths

Most Black youth suicides were among ages 19-24 (2018-2022)



60% of Black youth suicides were by firearm (ages 10-24, from 2018-2022)

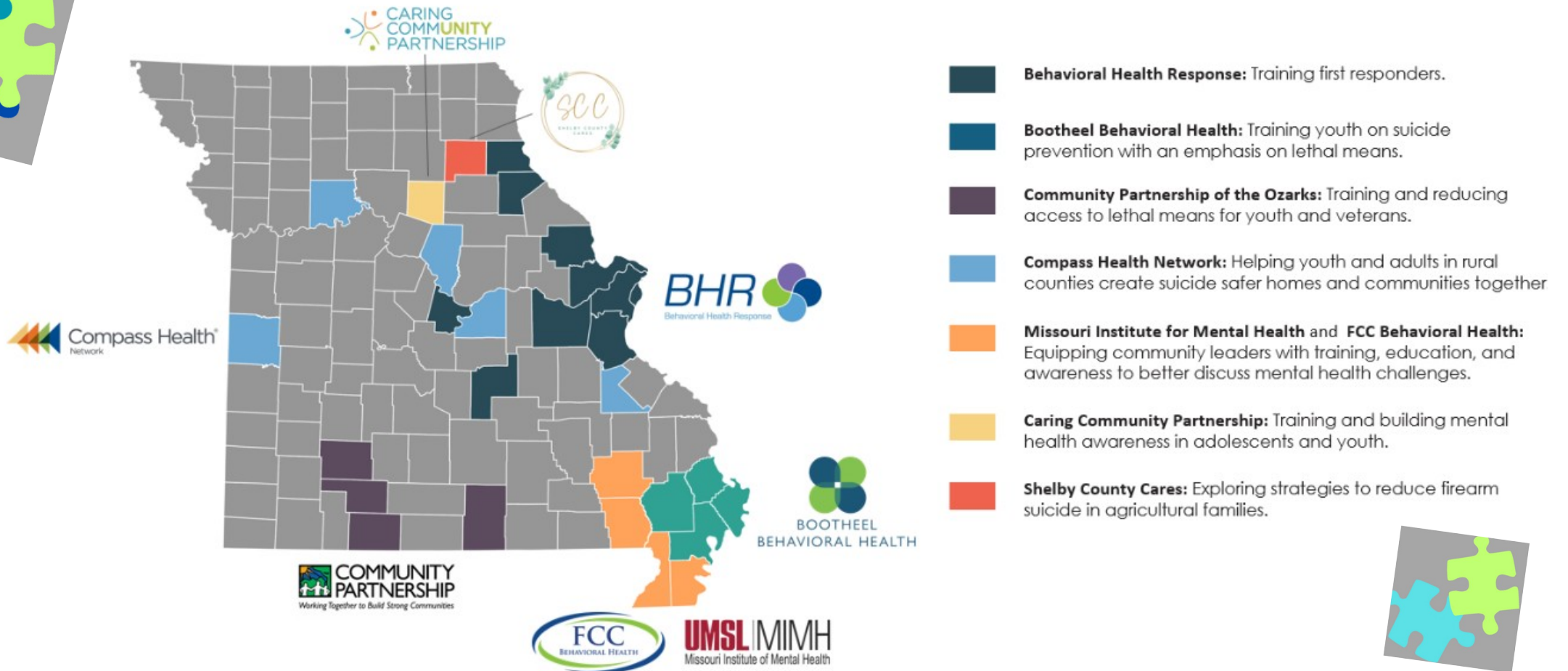
Faith is a strong protective factor against suicide

49% of Black Missourians pray daily; significantly higher than White Missourians

49% of US adults believe training faith leaders to identify and help someone in a suicidal crisis would help reduce suicide deaths



Missouri Firearm Suicide Prevention Learning Cohort Initiatives



St. Louis Regional Suicide Prevention Coalition

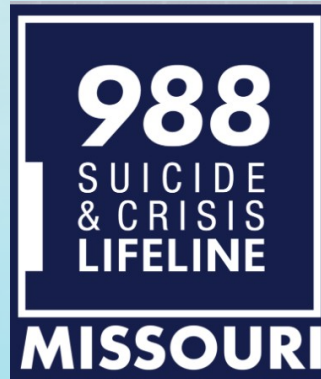
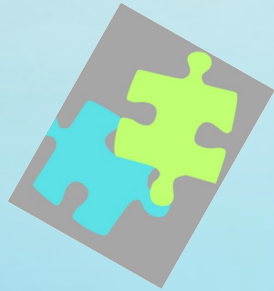


Serving as the Region's
Gateway to Hope



**American
Foundation
for Suicide
Prevention**

AFSP Missouri



**PREVENTING SUICIDE
AMONG SERVICE MEMBERS,
VETERANS & THEIR FAMILIES**

Missouri Suicide Prevention Coalition Academy



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