

Suicides Outnumber Murders 6 to 1 for Whites; Murders Outnumber Suicides 3.5 to 1 for Blacks



By Alex Berezow, PhD — April 19, 2018

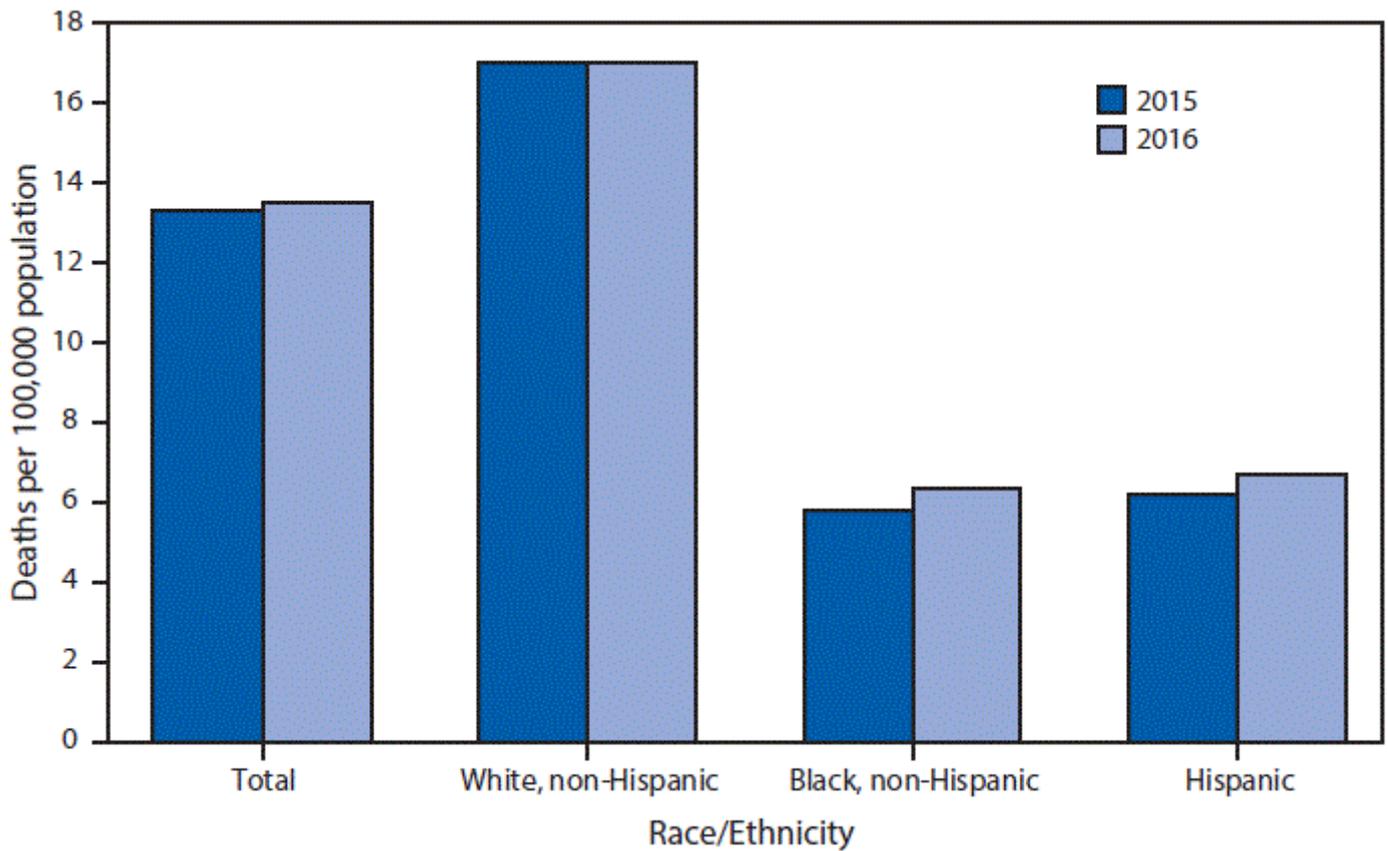


Credit: Public Domain/Wikipedia [1]

Suicide and homicide rates show strikingly different trends in the United States.

The suicide rate has been increasing. It has been led by a rise in suicides in rural America, which are up [40% in 16 years](#) [2]. The homicide rate, on the other hand, has been [decreasing over the same time period](#) [3], though there has been a slight uptick in recent years.

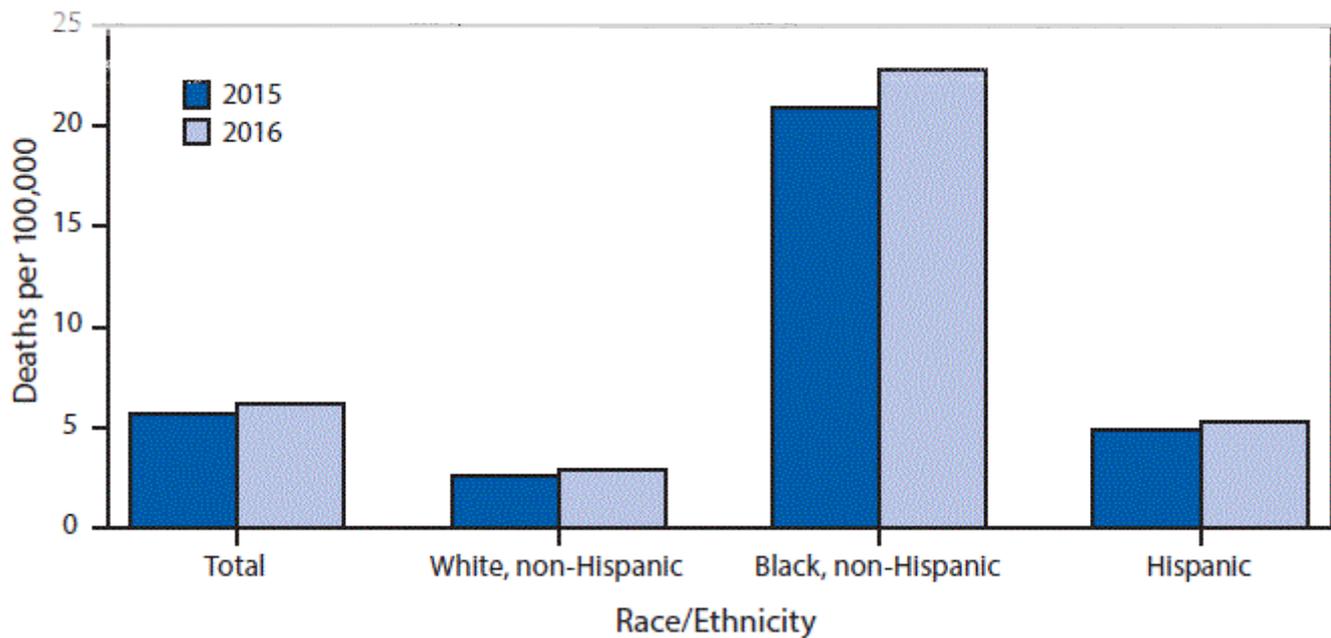
Racial differences in homicide and suicide rates are particularly eye-catching. Over the past week, the CDC has released data, first on suicides:



As shown, the overall, age-adjusted suicide rate in the U.S. is 13.5 per 100,000. The suicide rate (per 100,000) among whites (17.1) is more than 2.5 times the rate among blacks (6.3) and Hispanics (6.7).

To put those numbers into perspective, the [death rate in 2016 from car accidents](#) ^[4] in the U.S. was 11.6 per 100,000. That means that the average white person was more likely to die by suicide than in a car accident, while the average black or Hispanic person was likelier to die in a car accident than by suicide.

The data for homicide rates are shown below:



Overall, the age-adjusted homicide rate was 6.2 per 100,000, a slight increase from 2015. In 2016, the homicide rate (per 100,000) for whites was 2.9, blacks 22.8, and Hispanics 5.3. Put another way, compared to whites, Hispanics were roughly twice as likely and blacks eight times as likely to be murdered.

Comparing Suicides to Homicides by Race

The contrast between races is further underscored by creating a "suicide-to-homicide" rate ratio (or vice versa). For whites, there are roughly 6 suicides for every 1 homicide; among blacks, there are about 3.5 homicides for each suicide; and the rate ratio among Hispanics is roughly 1:1, with suicide slightly edging out homicide.

When we discuss our "gun violence" and "suicide" epidemics in this country, these statistics should help clarify where public health and safety resources are best spent. Suicide disproportionately affects whites, while homicide disproportionately affects blacks.

Source #1 [5]: "QuickStats: Age-Adjusted Suicide Rates, by Race/Ethnicity — National Vital Statistics System, United States, 2015–2016." MMWR 67(14): 433. Published: 13-Apr-2018. DOI: 10.15585/mmwr.mm6714a6.

Source #2 [6]: QuickStats: Age-Adjusted Homicide Rates, by Race/Ethnicity — National Vital Statistics System, United States, 2015–2016. MMWR 67(15): 462. Published online: 20-Apr-2018. DOI: 10.15585/mmwr.mm6715a8.

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Source URL: <https://www.acsh.org/news/2018/04/19/suicides-outnumber-murders-6-1-whites-murders-outnumber-suicides-35-1-blacks-12861>

Links

[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suicide#/media/File:Edouard_Manet_-_Le_Suicid%C3%A9.jpg

- [2] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2017/03/16/suicides-rural-america-increased-more-40-16-years-11010>
- [3] <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-u-s-murder-rate-is-up-but-still-far-below-its-1980-peak/>
- [4] <http://www.iihs.org/iihs/topics/t/general-statistics/fatalityfacts/state-by-state-overview>
- [5] <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6714a6.htm>
- [6] <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6715a8.htm>