

## Male Suicide in Denver

Suicide is a major public health issue nationwide. According to the [Big Cities Health Data effort](#), Denver's suicide rate in 2013 ranked second highest out of 15 participating cities. In 2014, suicide caused more deaths in Denver than HIV and motor vehicle crashes combined, making it the ninth leading cause of death.

Middle-aged men are disproportionately affected by suicide in Denver. Of the 97 Denver suicides in 2014, 77 (79%) were men. More than half of Denver males who died from suicide in 2014 were between 25 and 54 years of age (59%).

Understanding how suicide is carried out can help identify opportunities for prevention. Nationally, fatal gunshot wounds are the primary means of suicide. In Denver, the two most common means are fatal **gunshot wounds** and **hanging**:

- In 2013, 40% of Denver male suicides were the result of a fatal gunshot wound; in 2014, it was 37%.
- In 2013, 25% of Denver male suicides were hanging; in 2014, it was 41%.

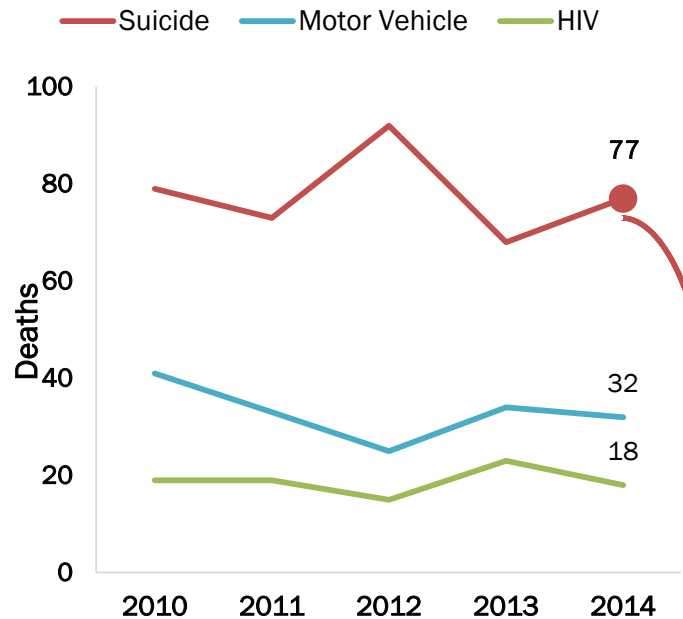
### Contributing Factors to Suicide

The decision to attempt suicide is complex and differs with each individual. There are a variety of characteristics that contribute to the risk of suicide as well as factors that protect against it. Risk factors for suicide include:

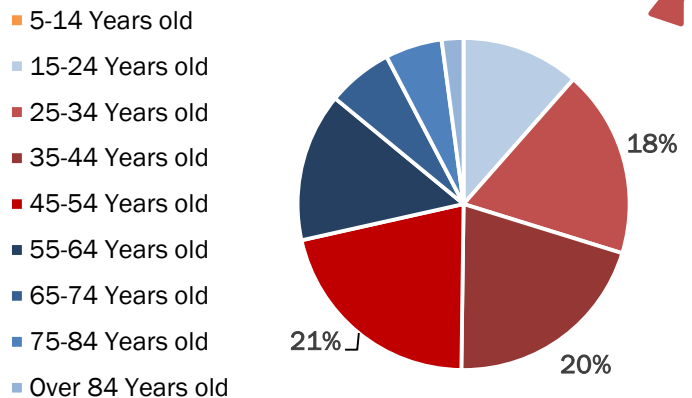
- Alcohol or drug abuse.
- Barriers to accessing mental health treatment.
- Depression or other mental illness.
- Easy access to lethal means.
- History of trauma.
- Impulsive or aggressive tendencies.
- Isolation.
- Loss.
- Unwillingness to seek help due to stigma.

According to a [2015 study](#), 38% of individuals saw a healthcare provider in the week before their suicide attempt, and 95% of individuals saw a provider in the year prior to the suicide attempt. White individuals were more likely to be seen compared to minorities.

### Trends in Denver Deaths among Males (2010-2014)



### Male Suicide Deaths in Denver by Age (2014)



Source: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment Department of Vital Statistics

## Opportunities for Prevention

There are many opportunities to prevent suicide. One is to focus on protective factors by ensuring individuals have:

- Access to clinical care and interventions (e.g. screening, therapy and/or medications).
- Connection to personal support and community resources.
- Skills in problem solving, conflict resolution and nonviolent ways of handling disputes.

Another key opportunity to prevent suicide is reducing access to lethal means. Among methods of suicide, firearms are the most dangerous.

By reducing access to these means, the chances of an individual surviving a suicide attempt are higher. According to a [2002 study](#), 90% of attempters who survive *do not* go on to die by suicide later.

## Safe Storage

Safe storage can be a way to reduce access to lethal means, and can include:

- Temporary off-site storage or using locked safes for firearms.
- Limiting access to alcohol as it can increase the probability that a person will engage in risky behavior.

### Depression: The Y Chromosome isn't Immune

Unlike women, most depressed men don't exhibit the sad, self-loathing behavior we've come to associate with the disease. In fact, guys and gals deal with depression in vastly different ways.

Men

Women

**Men**

- Blame others
- Feel angry, irritated and ego inflated
- Create conflicts
- Feel restless and agitated
- Need to feel in control
- Find it "weak" to admit despair
- Use alcohol, TV and sports to self-medicate

**Women**

- Blame themselves
- Feel sad, apathetic and worthless
- Feel anxious and scared
- Avoid conflicts at all costs
- Feel slowed down and nervous
- Have trouble setting boundaries
- Find it easy to talk about despair
- Use food, friends and "love" to self-medicate

Depression is fixable!

Sources: Mantherapy.org

### What are we doing?

- [Denver Health Medical Center](#) is working to enhance screenings for depression and referral to treatment in clinics.
- Denver Public Schools is piloting [Sources of Strength](#), a school-based program to enhance protective factors.
- [Denver Public Health](#) is developing a regional mental health stigma reduction communications campaign.

### What can you do?

- Talk about it! Break-ups, job loss or legal trouble can activate an emotional crisis.
- Learn about [lethal means counseling](#).
- Encourage increased funding for screenings and referral to treatment.
- Share information and resources such as the [Metro Crisis Services](#) hotline 1-844-493-8255 (or text TALK to 38255), [Mental Health First Aid](#), [Man Therapy](#).