

# Key Findings from the 2023 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report

12/2023



## Anchors of Hope

Hope is essential to life, and hope serves an important role within suicide prevention efforts. Within the challenges faced in 2021, key areas of hope emerged.

### Veterans Aged 75-Years-Old and Older

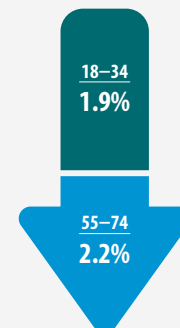
|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| Decrease in male Veteran suicide rates                      | <b>8.1%</b> |
| Decrease in suicide rates of male Recent Veteran VHA* users | <b>8.6%</b> |
| Decrease in suicide rates of male Veterans not in VHA care  | <b>7.8%</b> |

\*Veterans Health Administration (VHA)

### Recent Veteran VHA Users From 2020 to 2021

Suicide rates **fell by 1.9%** for male Recent Veteran VHA users aged 18- to 34-years-old.

Suicide rates **fell by 2.2%** for Recent Veteran VHA users aged 55- to 74-years-old.



**6,392** Veteran suicide deaths in 2021

**33.9 suicides per 100,000** Veterans in 2021  
(up from 32.6 per 100,000 in 2020)

**6,042** suicide deaths among Veteran men

**350** suicide deaths among Veteran women

## Veteran Firearm Suicide

**72%**

of Veteran suicides were by firearm in 2021.

**1 in 3**

Veteran firearm owners store **at least one** firearm unlocked and loaded.



Veteran **firearm suicide rates** from 2001 to 2021 increased by

**58.3%**

**45%**

Veterans

**19%**

Non-Veterans

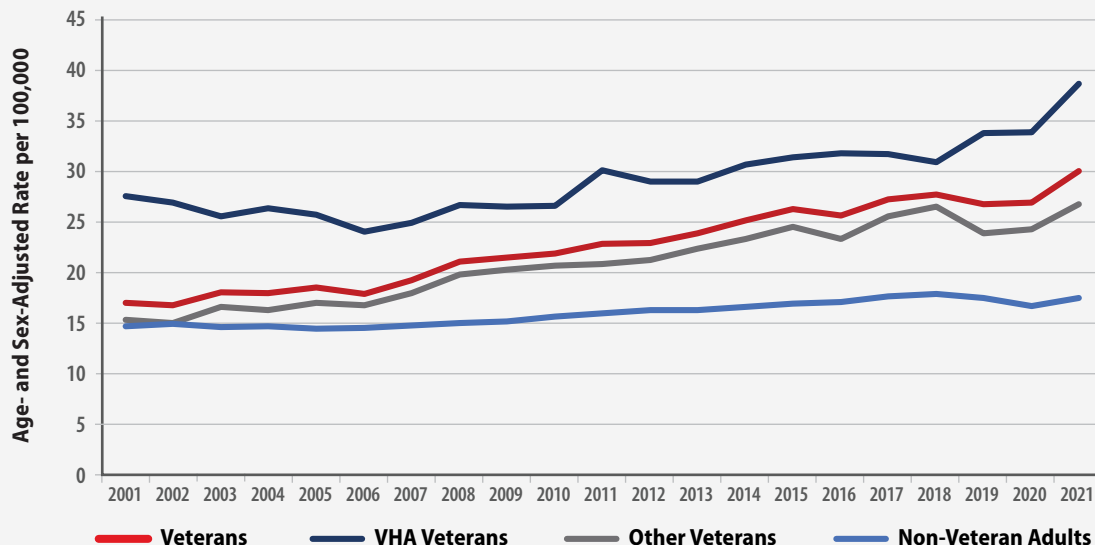
Firearm ownership is **more prevalent among Veterans (45%)** than non-Veterans (19%).



Firearm suicide rate among Veteran women was **281.1% higher** than non-Veteran women in 2021.



## Increase in U.S. Suicide Rates, 2001-2021



# VA's Commitment to Veterans

Consistent with trends for the overall U.S. population, the most recent National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report shows increases in Veteran suicide rates. VA takes a department-wide approach to Veteran suicide prevention that integrates strategic planning, program operations, and program evaluation across VA, including the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Veterans Benefits Administration, and National Cemetery Administration.



## Heavily Impacted Groups in 2021



### Women Veterans

- **24.1%** increase in the age-adjusted suicide rate from 2020–2021



### American Indian/Alaska Native Veterans

- Unadjusted suicide rate was **46.3 per 100,000**
- **51.8%** increase in the unadjusted suicide rate from 2020–2021



### Recent Veteran VHA Users with Homelessness

- **112.9 per 100,000** suicide rate in 2021, the highest observed from 2001–2021
- Suicide rate increased **38.2%** since 2020
- Suicide rate was **186.5%** higher than for those not homeless



### Recent Veteran VHA Users with Justice Program Services

- Suicide rate of **151.0 per 100,000** was the highest over this period
- Suicide rate increased **10.2%** since 2020

## Call to Action: 7 Themes

Promote secure firearm storage for Veteran suicide prevention.

Implement and sustain community collaborations focused upon community-specific Veteran suicide prevention plans.

Continue expansion of readily accessible crisis intervention services.

Improve tailoring of prevention and intervention services to the needs, issues, and resources unique to Veteran subpopulations.

Advance suicide prevention meaningfully into non-clinical support and intervention services, including financial, occupational, legal, and social domains.

Increase access to and utilization of mental health services across a full continuum of care.

Integrate suicide prevention within medical settings to reach all Veterans.

We can't do it alone—everyone has a role to play in preventing Veteran suicide.