



BERRIEN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

better health. stronger communities.

Berrien County Suicide Data 2024



A review of suicide deaths in Berrien County, MI, from 2015 to 2024 to inform community members with the goal of spreading awareness and reducing suicide prevalence.

Dear Community Members,

Suicide remains one of the most complex and urgent public health challenges facing Berrien County. While the number of suicide deaths in our community has fluctuated from year to year, the overall trend remains a concern: Rates today are significantly higher than they have been historically, with an increase of more than 80% over the past two decades.

Today, suicide is the 11th-leading cause of death in Berrien County, mirroring its ranking across Michigan. This means too many families, friends and neighbors continue to experience loss and grief. It also reminds us that prevention must remain a shared priority.

We also recognize suicide does not impact all communities equally. Berrien County men and adults aged 18-25 and 45-65 years old are most impacted by suicide. Our youth struggle the most with thoughts of self-harm. This reinforces the need for culturally responsive, community informed prevention efforts.

The Berrien County Health Department (BCHD) partners with the Berrien County Suicide Prevention Coalition on suicide prevention efforts. BCHD provides support by monitoring trends, analyzing data, and helping ensure strategies are informed, coordinated and responsive to emerging needs.

The Berrien County Suicide Prevention Coalition plays a vital role in this work, bringing together organizations, advocates and residents to increase awareness, reduce stigma and connect people to care. Together with many dedicated partners, we are building a stronger safety net for those in need. The Coalition meets virtually noon-1 p.m. on the third Thursday of the month, and all are welcome.

Despite these challenges, there is reason for hope. Suicide is preventable. Evidence shows connection, early intervention and access to effective mental health care saves lives.

We each have a role in prevention. Here are some ways you can help:

- Check in on family, friends and neighbors.
- Learn the warning signs of suicide and how to respond.
- Share resources and reduce stigma around seeking help.
- Get involved with local prevention efforts – visit BerrienCares.org.

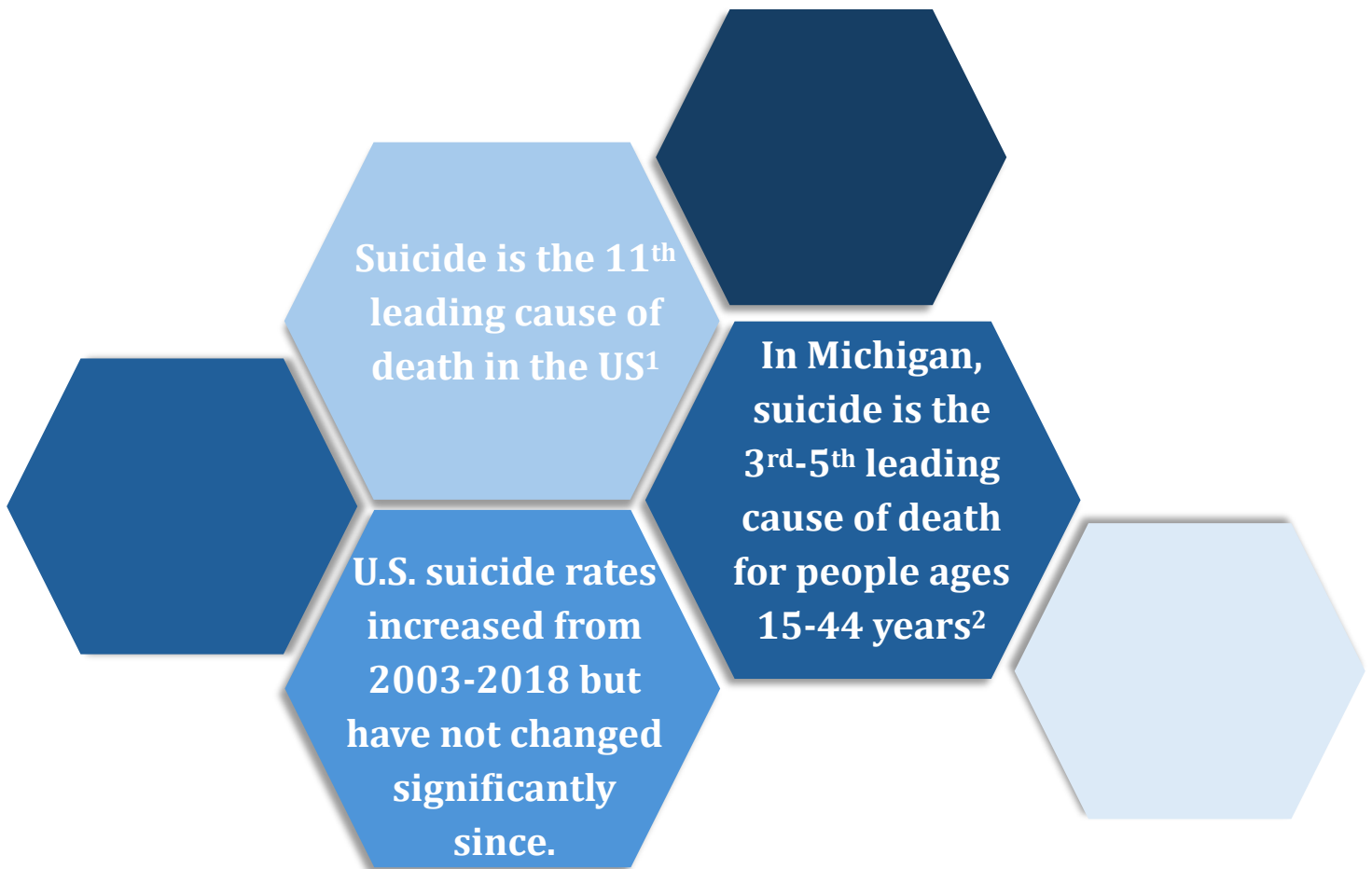
Together, we can build a community where people feel seen, supported and safe asking for help – and where hope is not the exception, but the expectation.

In partnership,

Berrien County Health Department
Berrien County Suicide Prevention Coalition

Overview

Despite the existence of effective prevention approaches, suicide continues to be a significant public health issue. Suicide is a tragedy that affects individuals of all ages and leaves a lasting psychological, emotional, and financial impact. Suicide is a priority public health concern and one of the leading causes of death in the United States. According to the CDC, there were 49,300 deaths by suicide in the US in 2024, or about 1 death every 11 minutes. For every suicide death, there are millions more individuals who seriously think about suicide, make a plan for suicide, or attempt suicide.



Notes about the Data

The following information regarding Berrien County suicide data has been generated from the historic medical examiner records at the Berrien County Health Department and the Western Michigan University Office of the Medical Examiner and Forensic Services 2024 Annual Report. The Western Michigan Medical Examiner's report can be accessed at:

https://mimedicaexaminer.com/sites/default/files/2025-08/2024%20WMed%20MEO%20Annual%20Report_Final.pdf

Please note, not all deaths are classified as a medical examiner case; however, all suicides or suspected suicide deaths in Berrien County are considered a Medical Examiner case which is investigated by the Office of the Medical Examiner and Forensic Services. These data include all persons for whom death was ruled as a suicide in Berrien County from 2015–2021. Unless stated otherwise, all rates included in this report were calculated using the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey for the year indicated and are represented as deaths per 100,000 people. All age-adjusted rates were calculated using the U.S. standard population for the year 2000 and are represented as deaths per 100,000 population. Information on national and state suicide data was retrieved from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS).

NOTE: County level health data is limited to the population contained within the county limits and thus offers a small sample size that has more year-to-year variability than an area with a larger population.

Suicides in the United States

Nationwide some groups have disproportionately high rates of suicide. In the U.S. in 2023, suicide rates were highest among non-Hispanic White individuals, non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaska Native individuals, and non-Hispanic Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander individuals (Table 1). Suicide rates were much higher in men than women, with men accounting for roughly 50% of the population but nearly 80% of the suicides in the U.S. Nationally, people 85 years and older had the highest rates of suicide in 2023. In the U.S. firearm use was the most common method for suicides in 2023. It is estimated that each year, suicides and suicide attempts cost the US over \$93.5 billion in medical and work-loss related costs. The following report includes suicide data from 2015–2024 for Berrien County, Michigan, and looks at trends based on age, sex, and mechanism.

Suicide is a leading cause of death for all age groups under 65 years old.

Table 1. Leading Causes of Death in the U.S. for Select Age Groups, 2023¹

Rank	10-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	All Ages
1	Unintentional Injury 914	Unintentional Injury 14,126	Unintentional Injury 30,163	Unintentional Injury 36,159	Malignant Neoplasms 32,867	Malignant Neoplasms 101,714	Heart Disease 554,413	Heart Disease 680,981
2	Suicide 481	Suicide 5,936	Suicide 8,453	Heart Disease 11,528	Unintentional Injury 30,559	Heart Disease 79,726	Malignant Neoplasms 461,345	Malignant Neoplasms 613,352
3	Malignant Neoplasms 463	Homicide 5,745	Homicide 5,828	Malignant Neoplasms 11,291	Heart Disease 30,430	Unintentional Injury 33,710	Cerebrovascular 140,813	Unintentional Injury 222,698
4	Homicide 338	Malignant Neoplasms 1,463	Malignant Neoplasms 3,503	Suicide 8,533	Liver Disease 8,866	Diabetes Mellitus 15,958	Chronic Low. Resp. Disease 125,603	Cerebrovascular 162,639
5	Congenital Anomalies 192	Heart Disease 835	Heart Disease 3,474	Liver Disease 5,013	Suicide 7,653	Chronic Low. Resp. Disease 15,748	Alzheimer's Disease 112,548	Chronic Low. Resp. Disease 145,357
6	Heart Disease 96	Congenital Anomalies 443	Liver Disease 1,626	Homicide 4,487	Diabetes Mellitus 6,653	Liver Disease 14,764	Unintentional Injury 73,804	Alzheimer's Disease 114,034
7	Cerebrovascular 66	Diabetes Mellitus 259	Diabetes Mellitus 1,110	Diabetes Mellitus 2,604	Cerebrovascular 5,364	Cerebrovascular 13,425	Diabetes Mellitus 68,550	Diabetes Mellitus 95,190
8	Chronic Low. Resp. Disease 58	Chronic Low. Resp. Disease 219	Cerebrovascular 579	Cerebrovascular 2,057	Chronic Low. Resp. Disease 2,641	Suicide 7,816	Nephritis 45,200	Nephritis 55,253
9	Influenza & Pneumonia 48	Cerebrovascular 162	Complicated Pregnancy 522	Septicemia 987	Homicide 2,571	Nephritis 6,196	COVID-19 44,097	Liver Disease 52,222
10	Diabetes Mellitus 35	Influenza & Pneumonia 157	Influenza & Pneumonia 458	Influenza & Pneumonia 967	Nephritis 2,442	Septicemia 5,665	Parkinson's Disease 39,238	COVID-19 49,932

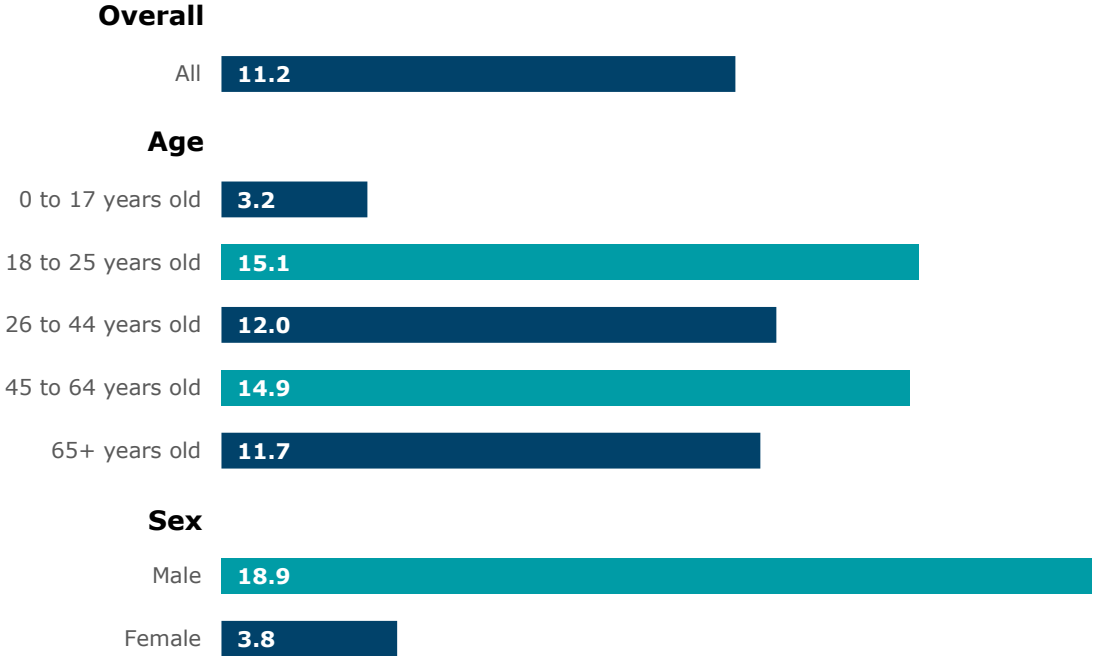
Chronic Low. Resp. Disease- Chronic lower respiratory disease.

Berrien County 2024 Suicide Data Overview

In 2024, the suicide rate in Berrien County was 11.2 per 100,000 people. Individuals in the 18 to 25 and 45 to 64 year-old age groups had the highest suicide rates (Figure 1). The suicide rate for males was almost five times higher than for females. Evaluating trends over time within these groups is important for understanding if rates are declining.

Suicide rates were highest for males and those 18 to 25 and 45 to 64 years old.

Figure 1. Suicide rates per 100,000 people by demographic group in 2024



Berrien County Suicide Trends Over Time

The number of suicides in Berrien County fluctuates year to year. Over the past 10 years the average annual number of suicides has been 22 (Table 2). This number has ranged from a low of 10 in 2021 to a high of 31 in 2015. The suicide rate per 100,000 people has ranged from a low of 6.5 to a high of 20.1, with a ten-year annual average of 14.4. No cause for the spike in 2015 has been identified as suicides are the result of many complex factors.

The five-year moving average suicide rate in Berrien County declined until the year 2000 but then rose almost continuously for the next 24 years, an 82% increase overall (Figure 2). Statewide, Michigan experienced a similar increase in suicide rates over this time period.

The Berrien County suicide rate for the 2020-2024 period is essentially unchanged from the rate ten years ago in 2011-2015, decreasing by only 1.4%. However, rates did not remain constant during this period. Instead, rates increased before the pandemic and then decreased again, leaving the overall change for the past ten years minimal but showing concerning spikes.

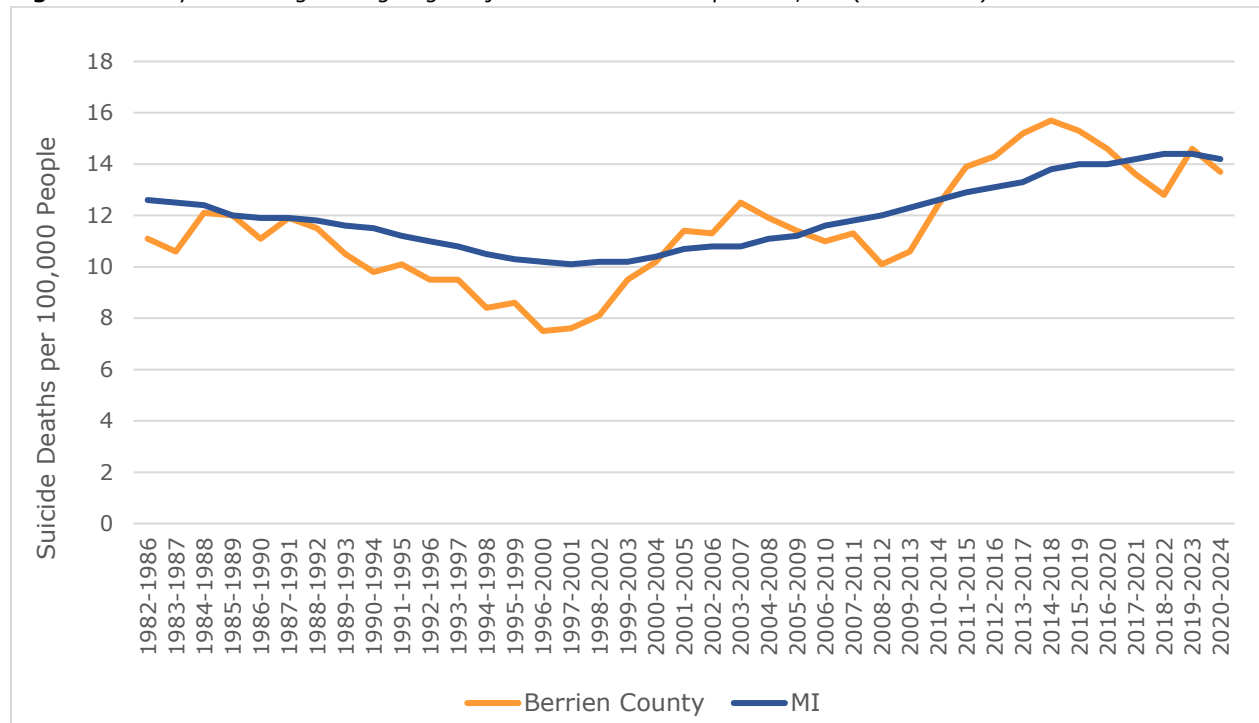
Berrien County had an annual average of 22 suicides from 2015-2024.

Table 2. Number of Suicides in Berrien County, 2015-2024

Suicides	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Annual Average
Count	31	21	23	26	21	21	10	21	29	17	22.0

Suicides have increased by 84% in Berrien County since 2000.

Figure 2. Five-year Moving Average Age-adjusted Suicide Rates per 100,000 (1982-2024)



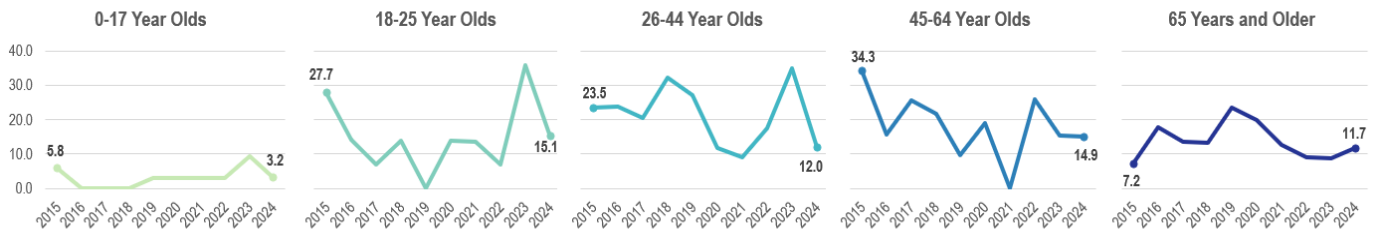
This steady increase over the past 24 years indicates that there continues to be a high need for interventions and programming toward suicide prevention and more investments for mental health resources.

Suicide by Age

Berrien County suicide rates by age group have fluctuated over time. Evaluating the most recent 10-year period suggests suicide rates have decreased overall since 2015 for all age groups except those 65 and older (Figure 3). However, this gives an incomplete picture as overall Berrien County suicide rates were exceptionally high in 2015. There was a sharp increase in rates for most age groups in 2022 to 2023. Due to the complexity of factors associated with suicides it is unclear why these increases occurred. Currently those 18-25 and 45 to 64 years old have the highest suicide rates in the county.

Suicide rates are below 2015 rates for all age groups except those 65 years and older.

Figure 3. Suicide rates per 100,000 by age group in Berrien County from 2015 to 2024



Suicide rates were highest for those 18-25 and 45-64 years old in 2024.

Table 3. Berrien County suicide counts and rates per 100,000 people by age group

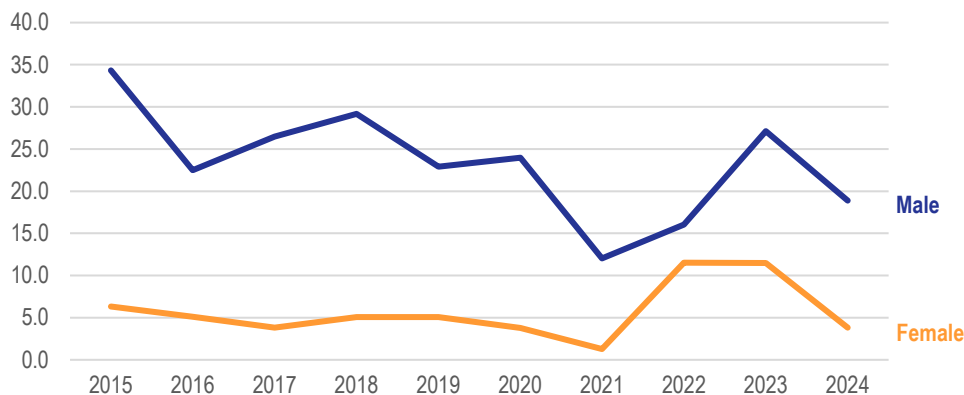
Year	0-17 years		18-25 years		26-44 years		45-64 years		65+ years		All ages	
	Count	Rate	Count	Rate	Count	Rate	Count	Rate	Count	Rate	Count	Rate
2015	2	5.8	4	27.7	8	23.5	15	34.3	2	7.2	31	20.1
2016	0	0.0	2	14.3	8	23.8	7	15.8	5	17.8	22	14.3
2017	0	0.0	1	7.1	7	20.6	11	25.5	4	13.6	23	14.9
2018	0	0.0	2	14.0	11	32.3	9	21.6	4	13.2	26	16.9
2019	1	3.0	0	0.0	9	27.2	4	9.7	7	23.4	21	13.8
2020	1	3.0	2	14.0	4	11.9	8	19.0	6	20.0	21	13.7
2021	1	3.0	2	13.6	3	8.9	0	0.0	4	12.6	10	6.5
2022	1	3.1	1	7.1	6	17.4	10	25.8	3	9.1	21	13.8
2023	3	9.3	5	35.8	12	35.0	6	15.5	3	8.8	29	18.9
2024	1	3.2	2	15.1	4	12.0	6	14.9	4	11.7	17	11.2
Annual Average	1	3.0	2.1	14.9	7.2	21.3	7.6	18.2	4.2	13.7	22.1	14.4

Suicides by Sex

Males are at higher risk for suicide compared to females, accounting for 84% of the suicides in Berrien County over the past ten years. This disparity between sexes is consistent with state and national data. During this time period the average annual suicide rate was 23.3 per 100,000 people for males and 5.7 for females (Figure 4). The suicide rate for males declined from 2015 to 2021. Then it rose sharply before declining again in 2024. The rate for females was steady from 2015 going into 2021 then also rose sharply before declining again in 2024. Neither group has returned to the low rates observed in 2021. Historical data indicate that White males had the highest suicide rates; however, recent medical examiner reports do not include race and ethnicity data.

Suicide rates were declining but increased sharply in 2021 then decreased again.

Figure 4. Suicide rates per 100,000 people by sex in Berrien County 2015 to 2024



In 2024, males had suicide rates almost five times higher than females.

Table 4. Berrien County suicide counts and rates per 100,000 people by sex 2015 to 2024

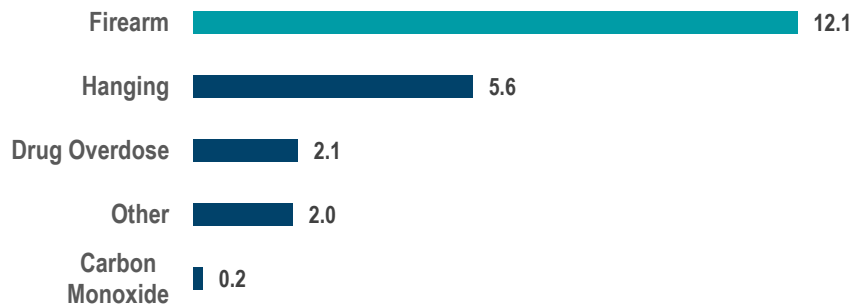
Year	Male		Female		Total	
	Count	Rate	Count	Rate	Count	Rate
2015	26	34.3	5	6.3	31	16.8
2016	17	22.5	4	5.1	21	20.1
2017	20	26.5	3	3.8	23	13.6
2018	22	29.2	4	5.1	26	14.9
2019	17	22.9	4	5.1	21	16.9
2020	18	24.0	3	3.8	21	13.6
2021	9	12.0	1	1.3	10	13.7
2022	12	16.0	9	11.5	21	6.5
2023	20	27.1	9	11.5	29	13.8
2024	14	18.9	3	3.8	17	19.0

Suicides by Method

The most common methods of suicides in Berrien County are firearms (55.0%), hanging (25.5%), and drug overdose (9.5%) (Figure 5). This is consistent with patterns seen at the state and national level as well. There are sex differences with firearms being the most common method for men and drug overdose being the most common method for women at both the state and national level. While most suicide attempts do not result in death, use of a firearm is fatal in 90% of cases. County level data on method by sex is not available in medical examiner reports.

Firearm use has been the most common suicide method in the past ten years.

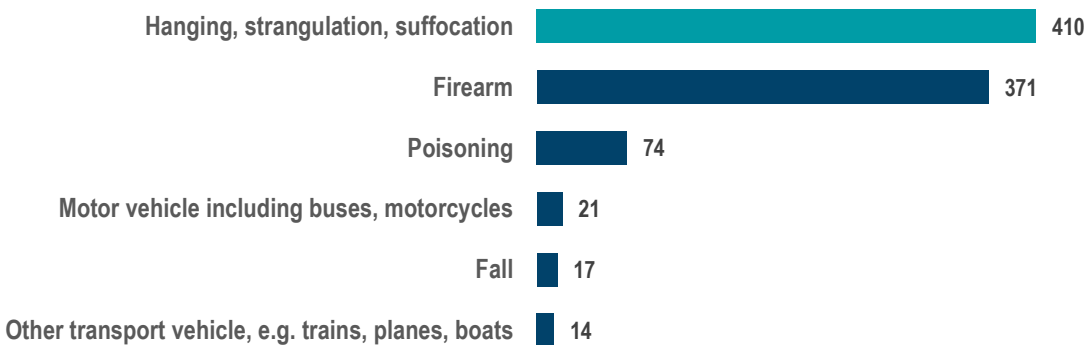
Figure 5. Average annual number of suicide deaths by method in Berrien County 2015 to 2024



Differences also exist between age groups. In Michigan, for teens nineteen years old and younger, the most common method is hanging, strangulation, suffocation followed by firearms and then poisoning. After age twenty, firearms shift to the most common method used.

The most common suicide method for those 19 years and younger is hanging, strangulation, suffocation followed by firearms.

Figure 6. Number of suicide deaths by method in Michigan for those aged 0-19 years old 2014 to 2023.



-Data from the MiVDRS dashboard⁴

Suicidal Ideation and Self Harm

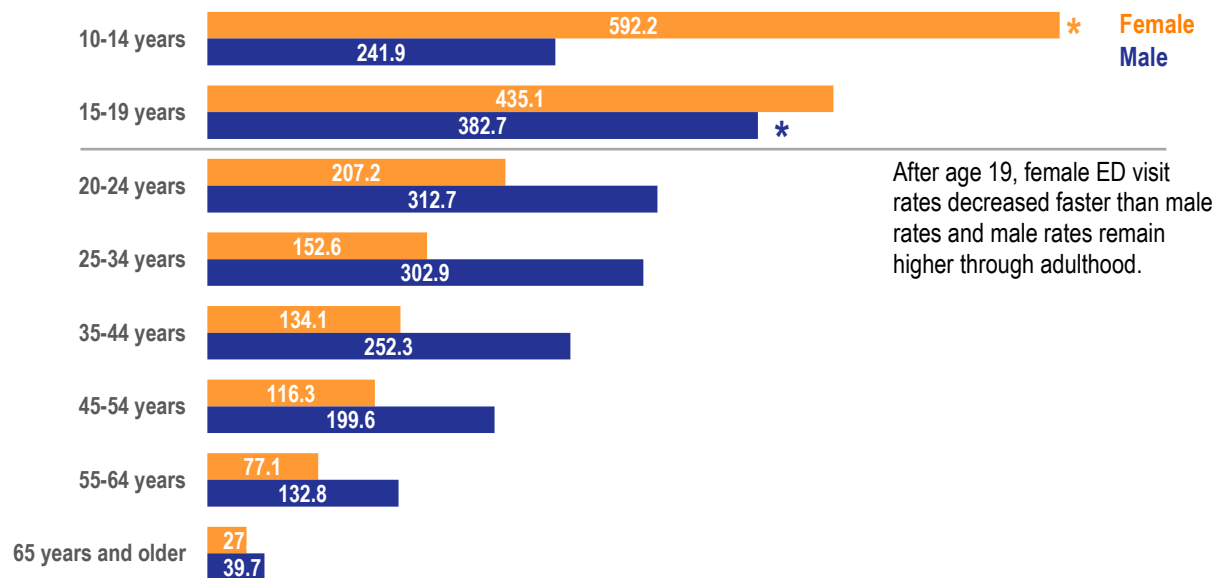
While evaluating suicide deaths provides important information, it doesn't account for individuals who have struggled with suicidal thoughts or those who have attempted suicide. Suicidal ideation is when someone has thoughts of ending their life but does not act on those thoughts. Suicide attempts occurs when someone harms themselves with an attempt to end their life, but it does not lead to death.

A better understanding of suicidal ideation and suicide attempts could aid in identifying individuals most vulnerable to suicide and providing targeted interventions and prevention programming. Data on suicidal ideation and suicide attempts are not available at the county level. However, state of Michigan data can provide some important insights.

In Michigan from March 2025 through February 2026, the rate of Emergency Department (ED) visits for suicidal ideation was 152.6 per 10,000 ED visits³. For females, the highest rate of suicidal ideation occurred in those aged 10-14 years old at 592.2 per 10,000 ED visits (Figure 7). For males, the highest rate occurred in those aged 15-19 years old at 382.7 per 10,000 ED Visits (Figure 7). Rates decreased with age for both sexes, but there was a larger decrease for females after age 19 than males. After age 19 males had higher rates than females throughout adulthood.

Suicidal ideation was highest at ages 10-14 for females* and 15-19 for males*.

Figure 7. Rate per 10,000 ED visits for MI residents

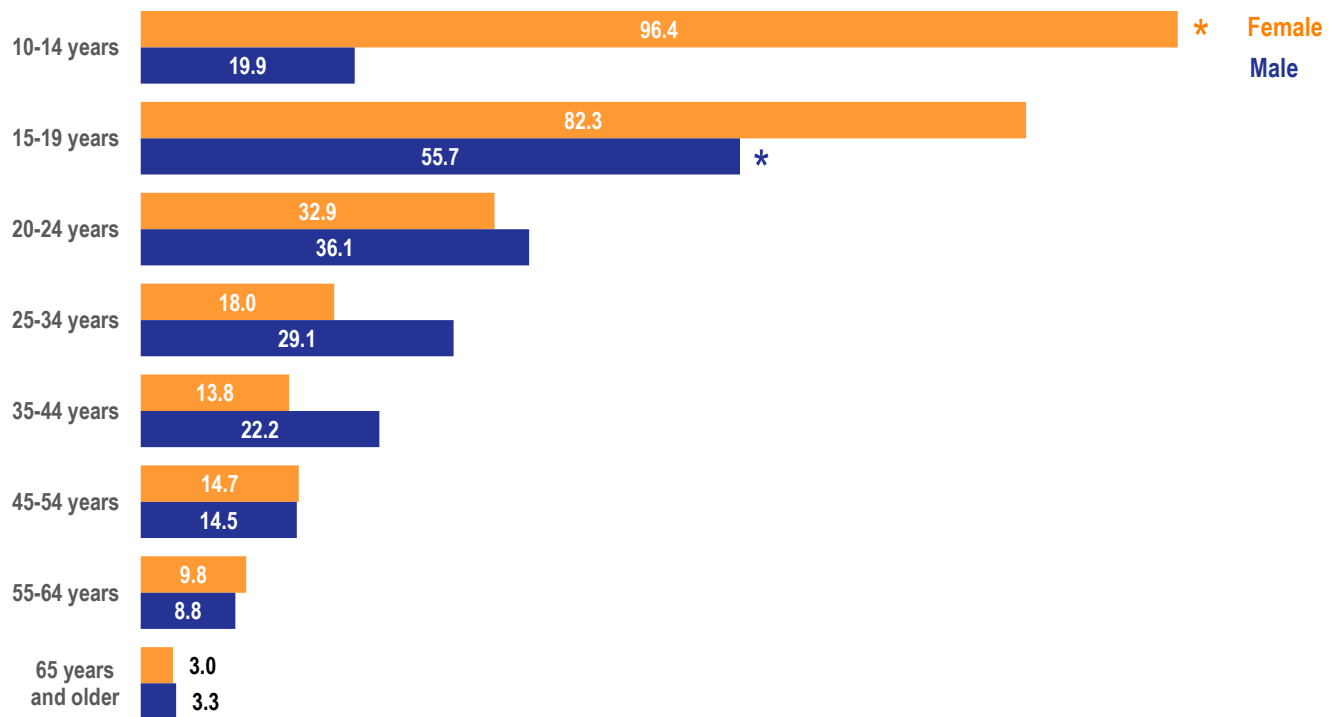


-Data from MDHHS Non-fatal Suicide Dashboard⁵

During this time period, the rate of suicide attempts was 17.7 per 10,000 ED visits⁵. For females, the highest rate of suicide attempts was in those aged 10-14 years old at 96.4 per 10,000 ED visits (Figure 8). In males, the highest rate of suicide attempts was in those aged 15-19 years old at 55.7 per 10,000 ED visits (Figure 8). While suicide rates are much higher in males than females, national data shows suicide attempts are higher in females than males (196.7 vs 123.4 per 100,000 for 2019-2023)⁶.

Suicide attempts were highest at ages 10-14 for females and 15-19 for males.

Figure 8. Rates per 10,000 ED visits for MI residents.

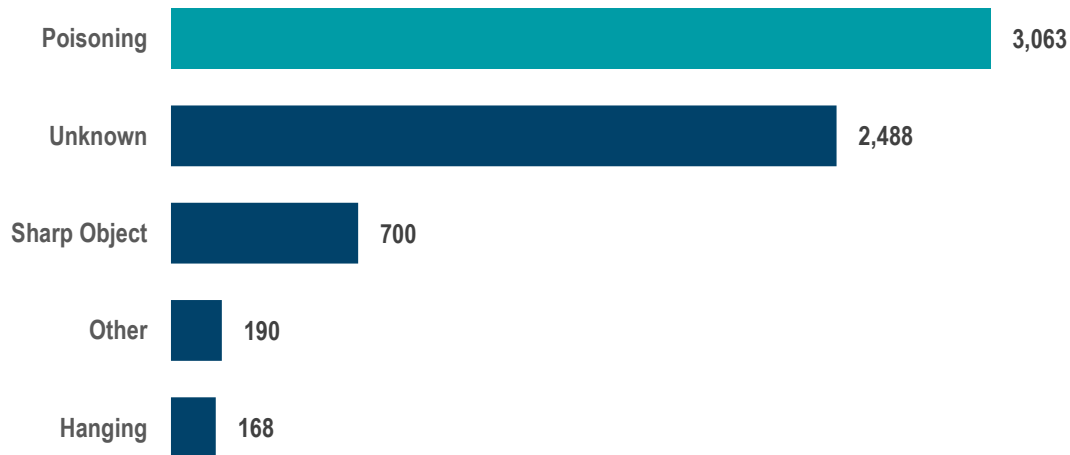


-Data from MDHHS Non-fatal Suicide Dashboard⁵

Poisoning, defined as intentional self-harm due to poisoning by drugs, medications and biological substances, was the most common method used during suicide attempts accounting for 46% of suicide attempts in Michigan (Figure 9).

Poisoning was the most common method used in suicide attempts.

Figure 9. Count of ED visits by method



-Data from MDHHS Non-fatal Suicide Dashboard⁵

Summary

Suicide continues to be a major public health concern with increasing rates at the county, state, and national level. In Berrien County, the suicide rate has increased 82% in the past twenty-four years. The data in this report includes only county level suicide deaths and does not account for the many more Berrien County residents who have struggled with suicidal thoughts and/or attempted suicide in their lives. The high rate of suicides within our community highlights the need for greater community awareness and more investments in mental health and suicide prevention resources.

Resources and Local Response

1. [988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#)
2. [Andrews University Community Counseling Center](#)
3. [Berrien County Suicide Prevention Coalition](#)
4. [Children’s Advocacy Center of Southwest Michigan](#)
5. [Corewell Health- Mental Health First Aid](#) (contact info in flyer)
6. [OutCenter Southwest Michigan](#)
7. [Riverwood Center](#)

References

1. CDC. Leading Causes of Death in the United States for Selected Age Groups (2023). <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/suicide>
2. MDHHS. Number of Deaths and Underlying Cause of Death Michigan 2024. <https://vitalstats.michigan.gov/osr/chi/Deaths/frame.html>
3. WMU Medical Examiner and Forensic Services. Annual Reports. <https://mimedicaexaminer.com/annualreports>
4. MDHHS. Michigan Violent Death Reporting System Dashboard. <https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/safety-injury-prev/injuryprevention/programs/mivdrs>
5. MDHHS. Michigan Non-fatal Suicide Dashboard. <https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/safety-injury-prev/environmental-health/injury-and-violence-data/nonfatal-suicide-dashboard>
6. CDC. WISQARS Fatal and Non-fatal Injury Reports: Self-harm ED Visit Counts, Rates, and Age-adjusted Rates per 100,000. <https://wisqars.cdc.gov/reports/?o=NFI&y1=2019&y2=2023&d=0&i=2&m=3000&g=00&me=&s=0&r=0&ry=2&e=0&a=ALL&q1=0&q2=199&a1=0&a2=199&r1=SEX&r2=NONE&r3=NONE&r4=NONE&adv=true>