

Gaps in Crisis Mental Health: Suicide and Homicide-suicide

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Gaps in crises of mental health include differentiating between various types of lethal violence of people who suicide and those who murder and then kill themselves and the role, if any, that substance use has in the outcome. In this study, a sample of medical examiner investigative and toxicology reports from Los Angeles and Orange counties in California were available for analysis for 432 suicide cases and 193 homicide-suicide cases.

Significant differences noted were levels of alcohol were higher in suicide victims than homicide-suicide perpetrators (p=.004). Homicide-suicide perpetrators had almost twice the level of stimulants in their system than suicide victims (p = .022) but did not have elevated levels of drugs or alcohol compared to suicide deaths.

Predictors of *suicide* included: substance abuse history, high number of drugs in system, death inside a house, and legally impaired by alcohol. Further, the cause of death was most often by gun shot or hanging. Predictors of *homicide-suicide* included gun shot as the cause of death, female gender , domestic conflict, children living in the home, and prior arrest for substance abuse.

Table 1. Comparison of Suicides and Homicide-Suicides with NVDRS Data

	Suicide victims N=431	Homicide-suicide Perpetrator N=193*	Victims N=240**	NVDRS Perpetrator 209	Victim 248
Male	335 (77.7%)	177 (91.7%)	54 (22.5%)	192 (91.9)	63 (25.4)
Female	96 (22.3%)	16 (8.3%)	185 (77.1%)	17 (8.1)	185 (74.6)
.0-14†	3 (.7)	-	38 (15.8)	-	30 (12.1)
15-24‡	52 (12.1)	7 (3.6)	22 (9.2)	18 (8.6)	38 (15.4)
25-34	57 (13.2)	37 (19.2)	35 (14.6)	47 (22.5)	41 (16.6)
35-44	70 (16.2)	42 (21.8)	48 (20.0)	52 (24.9)	51 (20.6)
45-54	96 (22.3)	35 (18.1)	33 (13.8)	43 (20.6)	35 (14.2)
55-64	74 (17.1)	27 (14.0)	24 (10.0)	21 (10.1)	16 (6.5)
65+	79 (18.3)	37 (19.2)	38 (15.8)	28 (13.4)	35 (14.2)
Marital Status					
Single status	184 (43.6%)	48 (26.7%)		33 (15.9)	
Partnered	136 (31.5%)	99 (55%)		64 (30.9)	
Separated/divorced	102 (24.2%)	33 (18.3%)		36 (17.4)	
Employed	235 (54.2%)	111 (74.6 %)			
Unemployed	139 (32.2%)	34 (23.4%)			
Death by gunshot	143 (33.1%)	168 (87%)	212 (88%)	168 (80.4)	205 (82.7)
Death by hanging	131 (30.5%)	7 (4%)	6 (2.5%)	6 (2.9)	11 (4.4)
Death by overdose	59 (13.7%)				
Other method (asphyxiation, car, jumping, etc)	98 (20.4%)	7 (4%) 7 (4%) 5 (3%)	3 (1.3%) 12 (5%) 5 (2.1%)		32 (12.9)
Suicide note	146 (33.8%)	61 (32%)		30 (15.5%)	
Prior suicide attempt	87 (20.1%)	12 (6%)		5 (2.6%)	
History of substance abuse	146 (33.8%)	21 (11%)		19 (9.1)	

\* 8 cases (4.1%) missing age of perpetrator.

\*\*2 cases missing age of victim