



MESA COUNTY
PUBLIC HEALTH



2023

MESA COUNTY **SUICIDE REPORT**

DEFINITIONS

Suicide Death is a death caused by injuring oneself with the intent to die.

Suicide Attempt is when someone harms themselves with any intent to end their life, but they do not die as a result of their actions.

Suicidal Ideation, also known as suicidal thought, is thinking about, considering, or planning suicide. It can range from a passing thought to detailed planning.

KEY TAKEAWAY

The suicide death rate in Mesa County has stabilized in recent years, but remains higher than both the state of Colorado and the United States.

YOUTH

- Connected relationships reduce the risk of intense mental health challenges in teens.
- Between 2021 and 2023, serious mental health challenges and suicidality decreased. However, suicide-related hospital visits for this age group increased.

MEANS

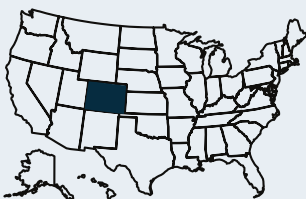
- Firearms are responsible for half of suicide deaths in Mesa County. Men are nearly three times as likely as women to use a firearm in a suicide death.

AGE

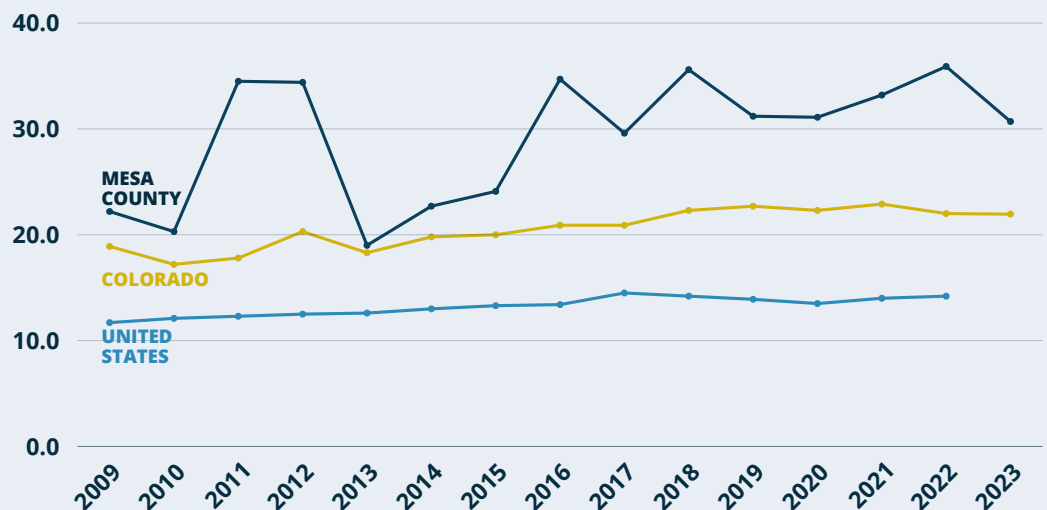
- The highest rate of suicide death was observed among working-age adults.
- The highest rate of suicide-related hospital visits was among youth and young adults.
- Rates of suicide-related hospital visits for older adult women is low, but steadily increasing.

SUBSTANCE USE

- Drugs or alcohol were involved at the time of death in over 70% of suicide deaths and over 30% of suicide-related emergency department visits.



RATE OF SUICIDE DEATH PER 100,000 IN MESA COUNTY, COLORADO, AND UNITED STATES (2009-2023)

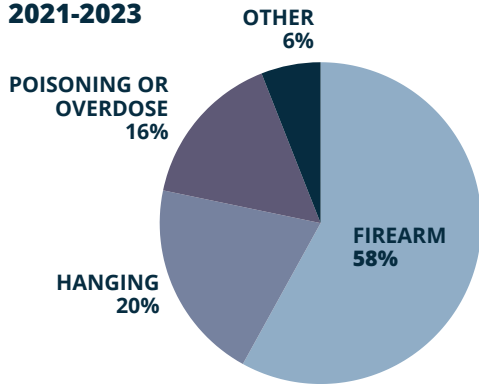


2023

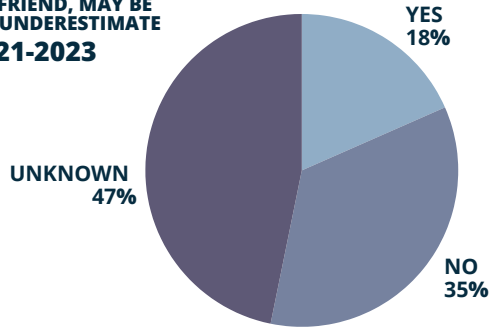
SUICIDE REPORT

DEATHS BY SUICIDE

METHOD 2021-2023



PREVIOUS SUICIDE ATTEMPT REPORTED BY FAMILY OR FRIEND, MAY BE AN UNDERESTIMATE 2021-2023



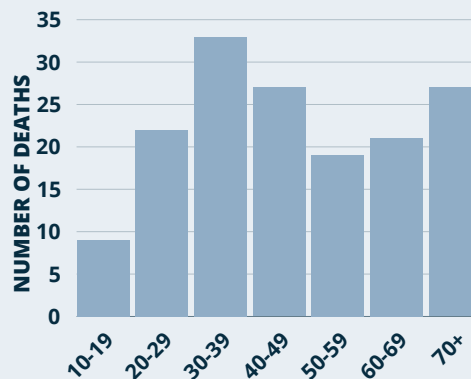
Those who die by suicide have **often made previous attempts**. From 2021 to 2023, one in six people who died by suicide had a known previous attempt.

While this information is often unknown, the data supports the idea that a person whose attempt is prevented does not automatically try again.

TOP 5 STRESSORS 2021-2023

- SUBSTANCE MISUSE
- RELATIONSHIP
- PHYSICAL HEALTH
- MENTAL HEALTH
- FINANCIAL

SUICIDE DEATHS BY AGE 2021-2023



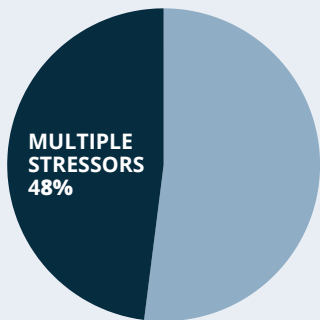
INSIGHTS

Suicide rates are **highest among working-age adults** aged 25 to 64. From 2021 to 2023, the highest prevalence of deaths by suicide were among adults aged 30 to 39.

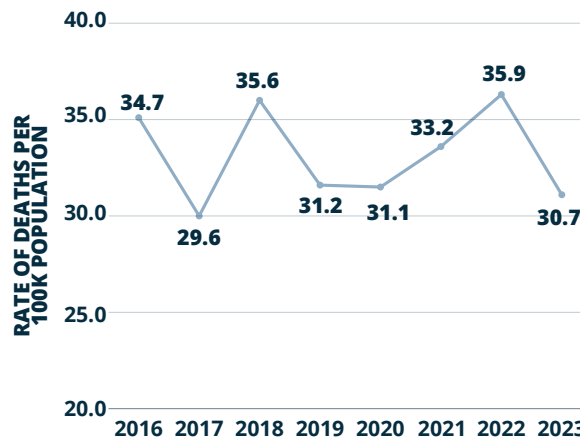
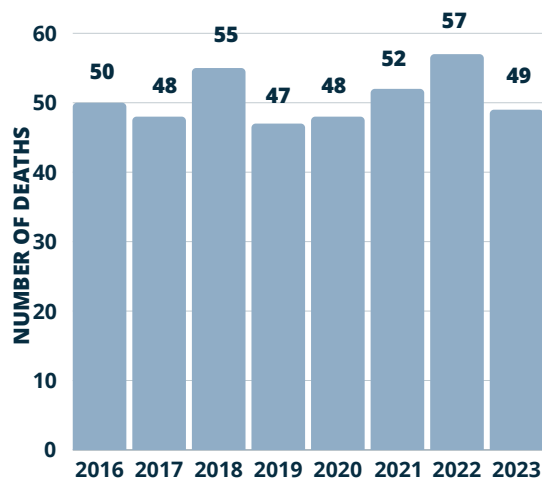
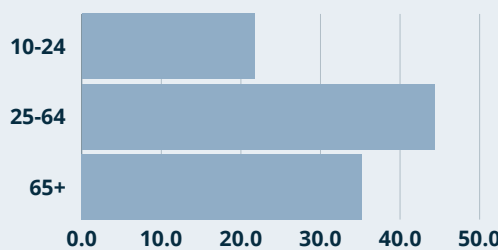
48% of people who died by suicide were **experiencing 2 or more non-substance-related life stressors** at the time of their death.

About half of people who died by suicide were experiencing substance use stressors. Most people who had substance use stressors also experienced one or more other life stressors.

MULTIPLE NON-SUBSTANCE RELATED STRESSORS 2021-2023



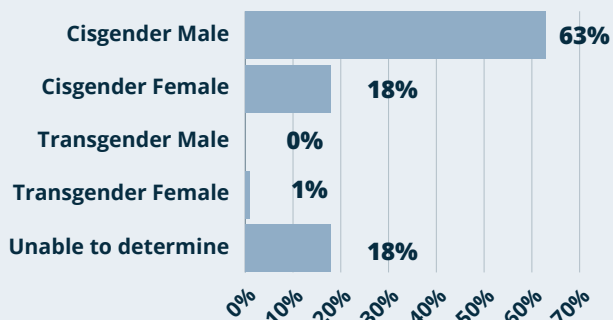
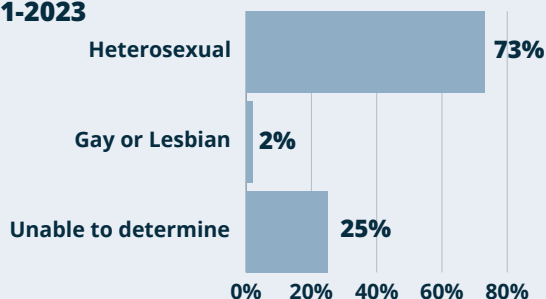
SUICIDE DEATH BY AGE, RATE PER 100,000 IN MESA COUNTY 2021-2023



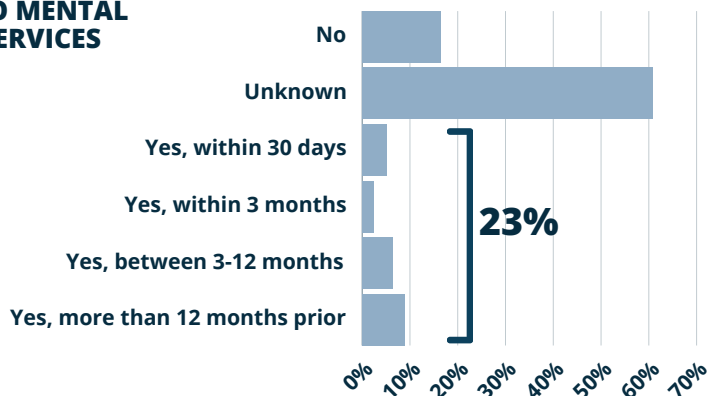
The rate of suicide deaths in Mesa County was on an increasing trend from the early 2000s until 2016. From 2016 to 2023, the rate appears to have stabilized and may no longer be increasing.

MESA COUNTY SUICIDE DEATHS, COUNT AND RATE

SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER 2021-2023



ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES 2021-2023



INSIGHTS

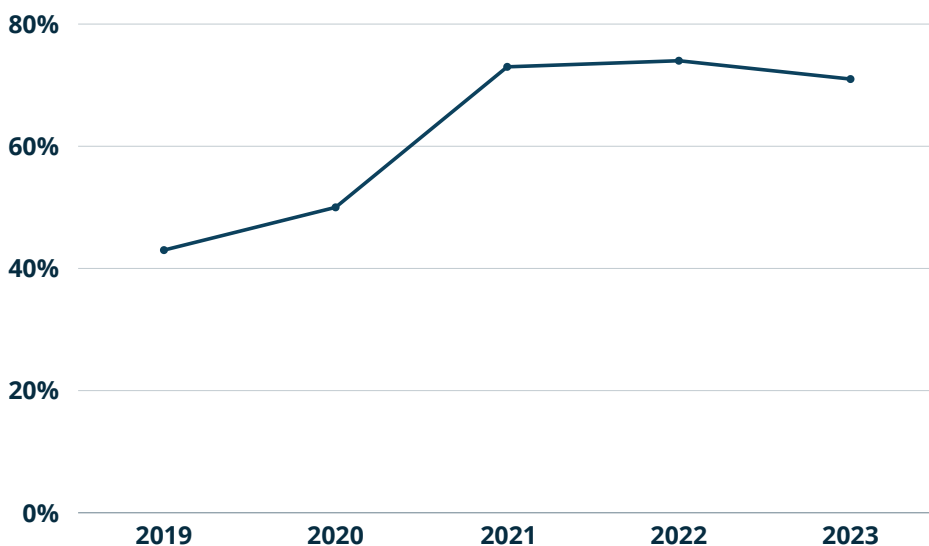
Nationally, most suicide investigations do not consistently collect sexual orientation or gender identity. From 2021 to 2023, about one quarter of local suicide death reports did not include this information.

In Mesa County from 2021 to 2023, **the majority of suicide deaths were cisgender males**. Nationally, men die by suicide at nearly four times the rate of women.

Though women are equally likely to attempt suicide in Mesa County, men are more likely to die by suicide. **This may be related to the more common methods used by men compared to women**. From 2021 to 2023, the majority of men (71%) used a firearm, compared to only 1 in 4 women.

Mental health concerns are some of the most frequently cited stressors on suicide death reports. Though about 1 in 3 suicide deaths included known history of mental illnesses, only 23% had received a mental health evaluation.

The prevalence of substance use at time of death increased dramatically in 2021 and has remained at elevated levels over 70% since that time.



DRUG OR ALCOHOL INVOLVEMENT AT TIME OF DEATH 2019-2023

Data was collected on **suicide attempts and ideation resulting in an emergency department visit** in Mesa County from 2021-2023. Due to an improved data analysis technique, more visits are available for review than in previous reports. Rates included here appear higher, but this does not reflect an increase in the amount of suicide crisis in the emergency department. Rather, it reflects an improved ability to find those visits in the dataset.



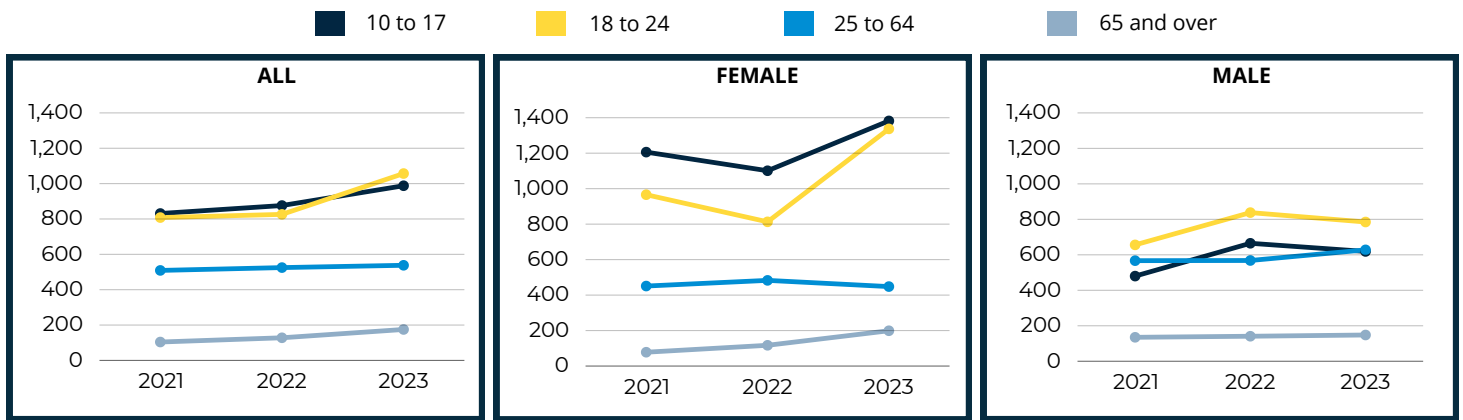
51% WERE FEMALE

NUMBER OF VISITS BY AGE, 2023

- 162** Age 10 to 17
- 164** Age 18 to 24
- 435** Age 25 to 64
- 65** Age 65 and over

The data included here are from **St. Mary's Hospital and Community Hospital**. VA Western Colorado Health System, Family Health West Hospital, and West Springs Hospital also serve suicide attempt and ideation in an emergency department context, but their data is not included in this analysis.

SUICIDE-RELATED EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT VISITS BY AGE AND GENDER, RATE PER 100,000 PEOPLE, MESA COUNTY



NATIONAL SYNDROMIC SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM

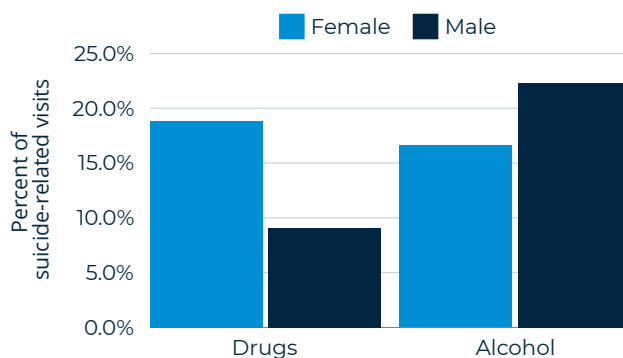
INSIGHTS

All age groups except working age adults had higher rates in 2023 than in 2021. Notably, these trends vary based on gender.

While low, the rate of visits for older adult women is increasing. Working age men have somewhat higher visit rates than working age women.

Young women age 10-17 have the highest overall rate of suicide-related emergency department visits. The Youth Risk and Protective Factors section indicates that self-reported mental health distress and suicide attempt and ideation have decreased since 2021. However, for youth and young adult men and women, rates of ED visits increased.

SUICIDE-RELATED EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT VISITS WITH ALCOHOL OR DRUGS BY GENDER (2021-2023)



NATIONAL SYNDROMIC SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM

TOP 3 SUBSTANCE TYPES IN OVERDOSE ATTEMPTS

- **OVER THE COUNTER MEDICATIONS (SUCH AS ASPIRIN)**
- **ANTIDEPRESSANTS**
- **OTHER PRESCRIPTION DRUGS (SUCH AS PAIN MEDICATION)**

When school personnel are concerned about a student, **they make a referral to trained staff to complete a Suicide Risk Screener (SRS)**. This screener determines the level of intervention required and can initiate immediate safety planning. The number of referrals is related to staff awareness and **concern about behaviors that may be warning signs of suicidal risk**.

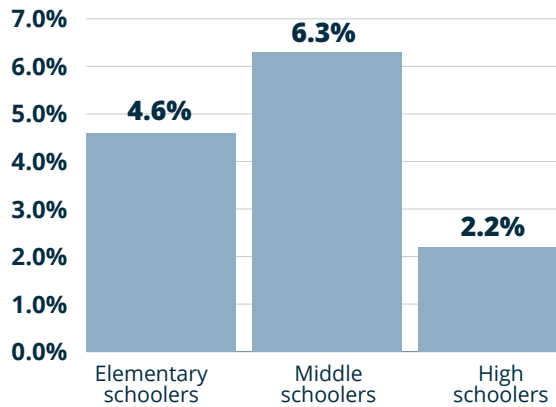
RISK SCREENERS

2023-2024



NUMBER OF SCREENERS COMPLETED BY MESA COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT 51.

RISK SCREENERS BY SCHOOL LEVEL



58% WERE MALE

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BOYS WERE TWICE AS LIKELY TO BE SCREENED THAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GIRLS.

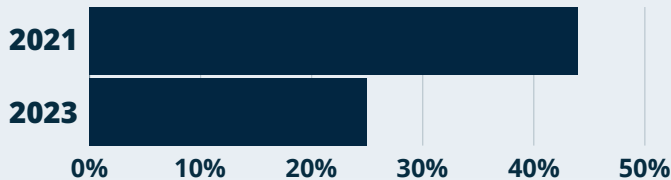
INSIGHTS

Middle school students were most likely to receive suicide risk screeners through School District 51.

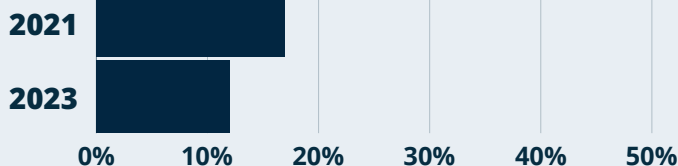
The rate of serious mental health challenges in Mesa County high schoolers dropped by half between 2021 and 2023. **The rate of suicide attempt or plans dropped by one-third** - the first time this figure has significantly decreased since 2017. The prevalence of suicide plans or attempt is lowest among students who are heterosexual and cisgender, higher for students with a different sexual orientation, and highest for students with a different gender identity.

PERCENT OF MESA COUNTY HIGH SCHOOLERS WHO:

FELT SO SAD OR HOPELESS ALMOST EVERY DAY FOR TWO WEEKS IN A ROW OR MORE THAT THEY STOPPED DOING SOME USUAL ACTIVITIES.



ATTEMPTED OR MADE A PLAN ABOUT HOW THEY WOULD ATTEMPT SUICIDE IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS.



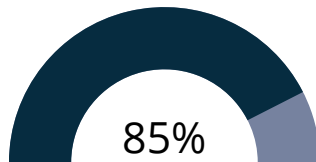
ATTEMPTED OR MADE A PLAN ABOUT HOW THEY WOULD ATTEMPT SUICIDE IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS, 2023.

- 8%** Heterosexual & cisgender students
- 22%** Lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, or asexual and cisgender students
- 33%** Any sexual orientation and transgender or nonbinary students

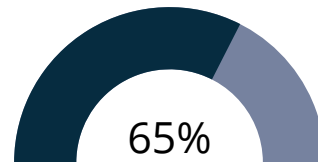
YOUTH SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

Family support and a sense of belonging at school are profoundly correlated with student mental health. **Students who have poor relationships with their parents or peers are more than twice as likely to struggle with their mental health.**

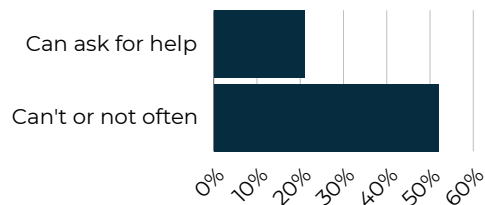
STUDENTS WHO CAN ASK THEIR PARENTS FOR HELP



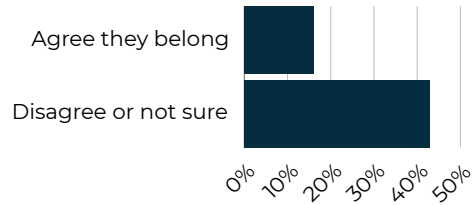
STUDENTS WHO FEEL LIKE THEY BELONG AT SCHOOL



STUDENTS WITH SERIOUS MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES BY FAMILY SUPPORT



STUDENTS WITH SERIOUS MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES BY SENSE OF BELONGING



HEALTHY KIDS COLORADO SURVEY, 2023

SUICIDE PREVENTION IN ACTION



Grand Valley Connects is an enhanced resource navigation program that **assists community members with complex needs.**



Mesa County Opioid Response Group partners **provide community trainings and substance abuse recovery support.**



Gun shops and pawn shops participate in Colorado's Gun Shop Project, **providing information about suicide risk and distributing gun locks to encourage safe storage** of firearms.



Veteran Programs in Mesa County foster **connection and economic stability.**



The Behavioral Health Steering Committee **works to address gaps in our mental health care system.**



Mesa County Libraries **host events related to mental health, grief, resilience and more,** with partners such as HopeWest, Hilltop, and others.



INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE?
SPMESACOUNTY@GMAIL.COM



The Colorado National Monument provides opportunities to increase resiliency and wellness through **educational outreach and programming.**



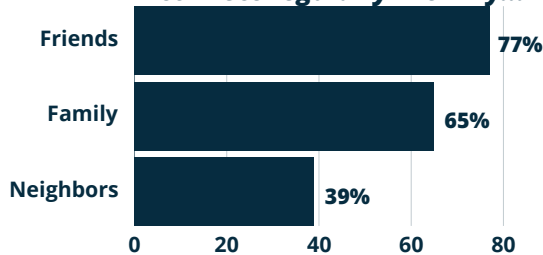
SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT

CONNECTEDNESS

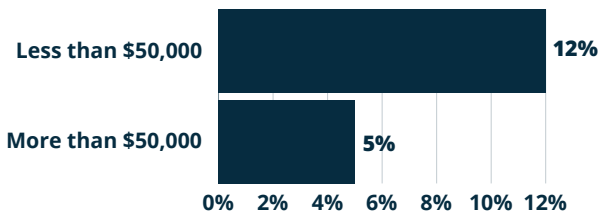
Feeling connected to other people, schools, neighborhoods, workplaces, faith communities, and cultural groups **protects** people from suicide risk.

The Mesa County Suicide Prevention Coalition supports school-based social and emotional learning programs, **advises workplaces about policies that help people feel included, and facilitates events and activities across the community.**

"I connect regularly with my..."



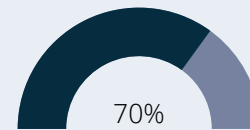
CONNECTION WITH FRIENDS, FAMILY, OR NEIGHBORS 2022



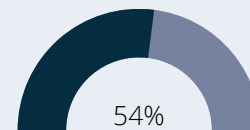
LITTLE CONNECTION WITH FRIENDS, FAMILY, OR NEIGHBORS BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME 2022

SOCIAL ISOLATION IS IMPACTED BY INCOME

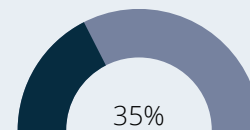
STUDENTS WHO FEEL LIKE THEY BELONG AT SCHOOL 2023



Cisgender and heterosexual



Cisgender and lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, or asexual



Transgender or nonbinary and any sexual orientation

HEALTHY KIDS COLORADO SURVEY



HEALTH CARE AND ACCESS

ACCESS TO SAFER CARE

By implementing best practices for safer care, health care systems and organizations will see improvement in quality of patient care and **reduction of suicide risk, attempts, and deaths** for those within their system.

All **three non-profit hospitals** in Mesa County, St. Mary's, Community Hospital, and Family Health West, are working to implement the **Zero Suicide Initiative** to improve outcomes for patients experiencing suicidal crisis.

The hospitals are at different stages of implementation, but in 2023 their work focused on **improving staff training and streamlining systems** for effective screening, suicide care, and follow up.

VA Western Colorado is working on similar goals under their own suicide prevention program.



SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT

POSTVENTION

A loss of a loved one to suicide is a known risk factor for suicide death.

Postvention is the response to and care for individuals and communities affected by a suicide attempt, crisis, or death.

Examples include safe reporting and messaging about suicide by the media and affected organizations. It also includes caring follow up contacts after a suicide attempt or mental health crisis.

Effective **postvention response includes coordinated efforts** from a broad set of agencies, organizations, and individuals across the community. This can include mental health providers, employers, school districts, law enforcement, emergency response, county and municipal agencies, hospitals, non-profits, and more.

Suicide Prevention Mesa County is developing a community postvention plan that will outline best practices for responding to a suicide death. **This will increase robust, timely support for Mesa County residents experiencing a suicide loss.** The plan will be released in 2025.

In 2023, the Mesa County Coroner's Family Support Coordinator supported valley residents who recently lost a loved one to suicide.



2023

63

INDIVIDUALS
SUPPORTED

221

PHONE CALLS,
TEXTS, MEETINGS



EDUCATION

EDUCATION & AWARENESS

The training and awareness levels of community members and medical providers protects people at risk of suicide by ensuring that when they need help, **they get it from knowledgeable and skillful people.**



You could be the difference in the life of someone experiencing a suicidal crisis - your neighbor, your employee, your child, your friend.

Training is available for free in Mesa County. Options range from one to two hours in person or online or two full-day in person training.

[Click here](#) or scan the QR code at right to see current trainings.



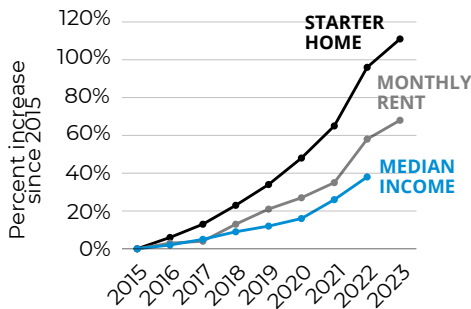


ECONOMIC STABILITY

ECONOMIC STABILITY

Economic stability increases resilience and reduces financial stress - a risk factor for suicide. **Policies and practices for increased food security, affordable housing, family-friendly employment, and access to affordable, quality child care are suicide prevention efforts.**

RELATIVE HOUSING COSTS AND MEDIAN INCOME, MESA COUNTY



GRAND VALLEY CONNECTS

An enhanced resource navigation program that assists community members with more complex needs.

The program was established by Mesa County Public Health in 2022. In 2023, **757 Mesa County residents** reached out to Grand Valley Connects.

The top needs identified are **counseling, housing, and benefit enrollment.**

LETHAL MEANS

Access to lethal means describes the ability of a person experiencing a suicidal crisis to access the tools required to end their life. Suicide Prevention Mesa County focuses on safe storage of firearms and appropriate storage and disposal of medications to reduce this risk.

90%

FROM 2021 TO 2023, 90% OF MESA COUNTY'S 103 FIREARM DEATHS WERE SUICIDE DEATHS.

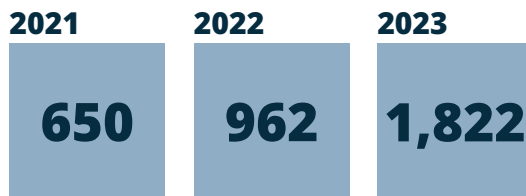
Differences in regional suicide rates are better explained by levels of household gun ownership than by mental health problems, suicide ideation, or suicide attempt. Half of Mesa County adults report having a firearm in their home, compared to 37% statewide.

Having a firearm in the home increases risk of suicide death by more than three times because firearms are more lethal than other methods of suicide attempt.

Secure storage of firearms can prevent unauthorized access and save lives. The majority of firearm owners in Colorado, 65%, keep all firearms in the home locked and unloaded. However, 29% of Mesa County high school students said they could fire a loaded gun without adult permission in less than an hour.



NUMBER OF GUN LOCKS DISTRIBUTED BY VA WESTERN COLORADO HEALTH SYSTEM IN MESA COUNTY



POUNDS OF MEDICATION DISPOSED OF THROUGH MEDICATION TAKE BACK SITES



2023

SUICIDE REPORT

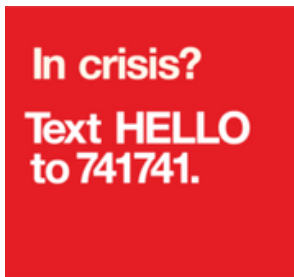
RESOURCES

SUICIDE PREVENTION MESA COUNTY

Suicide Prevention Mesa County (SPMC) is a partnership of professionals, organizations, and community members working on community-based strategies to prevent suicide in Colorado.

Mesa County is a proud participant in the SPMC. SPMC is working to ensure **Mesa County becomes a safer-from-suicide community.**

CRISIS RESOURCES



Free, 24/7, confidential
crisis support by text.

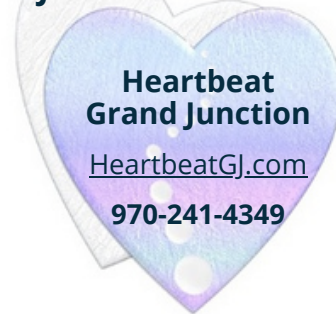
CRISIS TEXT LINE |



TheTrevorProject.org

LOSS RESOURCES

*Looking for support
after a suicide loss?*



988

SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

SOURCES

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Healthy Kids Colorado Survey, 2021-2023

Mesa County Community Health Needs Assessment, 2024-2026

Mesa County Coroner's Office, Suicide Death Data

Mesa County Public Health Suicide Attempt Surveillance, 2021-2023

Mesa County Tell Us Survey, 2022

National Syndromic Surveillance Program, 2021-2023

School District 51, 2023-2024

PREVIOUS REPORTS

See previous annual suicide reports on
the [MCPH Community Reports page](#).



  SUICIDE **PREVENTION**
MESA COUNTY  