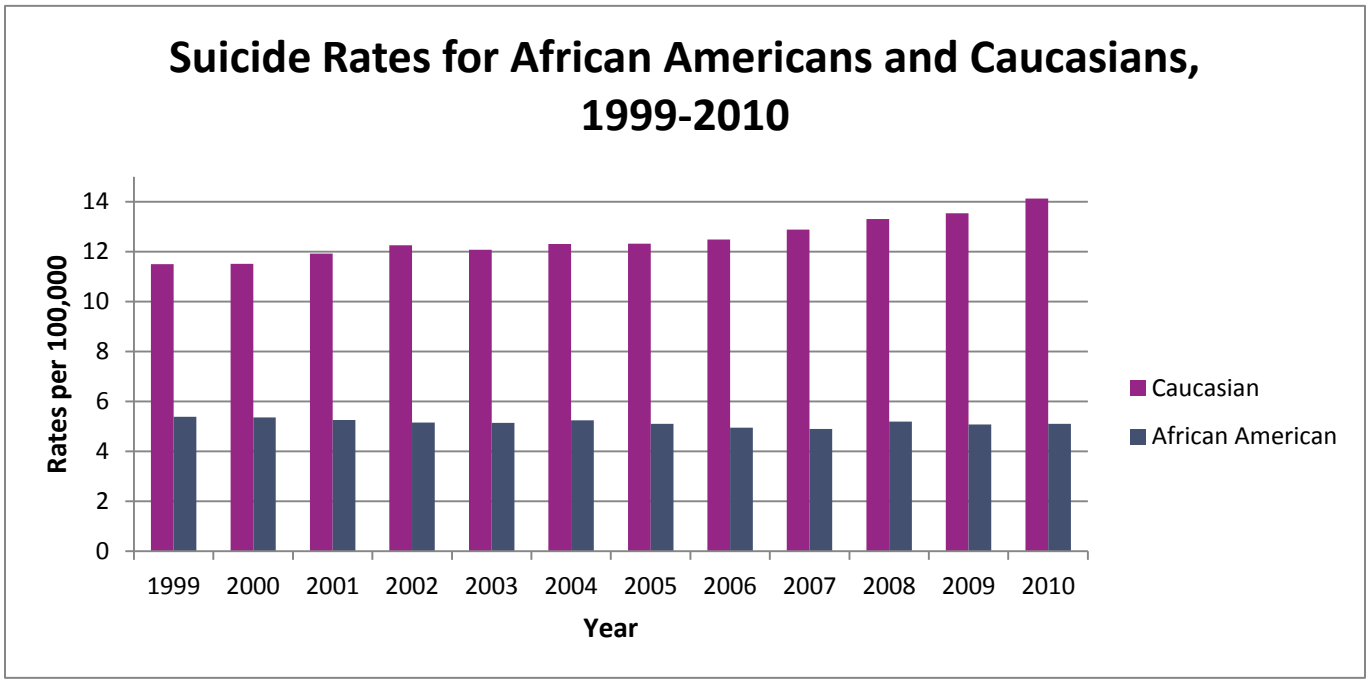
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SUICIDOLOGY

AFRICAN AMERICAN SUICIDE FACT SHEET

BASED ON 2010 DATA



- In 2010, 2,144 African Americans completed suicide in the U.S. Of these, 1,755 (81.8%) were males (rate of 9.10 per 100,000). The suicide rate for females was 1.79 per 100,000. The overall rate was 5.19 per 100,000.

- In 2010, there were 389 African American female suicides. The ratio of African American male to female was 4.9 to 1. The suicide rate among African American females was the lowest of all racial/gender groups.

- As with all racial groups, African American females were more likely than males to attempt suicide and African American males were more likely to die by suicide.

- From 1993 to 2002, the rate of suicide for African Americans (all ages) showed a small but steady decline. Since 2002, the rate has remained fairly flat, varying only between 4.9 and 5.2 per 100,000 annually.

- Suicide was the third leading cause of death among African American youth (ages 10-

19), after homicides and accidents. The suicide rate for this age group was 2.65 per 100,000 (n=196).

- For African American youth (aged 10-19), the rate of male suicides (4.062 per 100,000) was 3.4 times higher than that of females (1.19 per 100,000).

- African American youth suicide rates were generally low until the beginning of the 1980's when rates started to increase radically. Between 1981 and 1994, the rate increased 78%. Since then, the rate has decreased significantly.

- Although Caucasian youth are twice as likely as African American youth to die by suicide, the rate of suicide grew faster, between 1981 and 1994 among African American youth than it did among Caucasian youth.

- From 1981-1994, the suicide rate increased 83% for 15-24 year old African American males and 10% for African American females. Since 1994, the rates for males have decreased 26% for males and 8% for females.

- Males accounted for 87.1% of African American elderly (65 and older) suicides. Whereas, Caucasian males accounted for 84.3% of elderly suicides.

- Firearms were the predominant method of suicide among African Americans regardless of gender and age, accounting for 50.3% of all suicides. Suffocation (predominantly by hanging) was the second most commonly used method (27.8%).

Things We Can Do to Help

- Help remove the stigma and myths that suicide contradicts gender and cultural role expectations:
    - Religious stigma of suicide as the "unforgivable sin";
    - African American men are macho and do not take their own lives;
    - African American women are always strong and resilient and never crack under pressure.

- Remove barriers to treatment

- Improve access to mental health treatment

- Increase awareness in cultural differences in the expression of suicidal behaviors:
    - African American are less likely to use drugs during a suicide crisis;
    - Behavioral component of depression in African Americans is more pronounced;

  - Some African Americans express little suicide intent or depressive symptoms during suicidal crises;

- Develop liaisons with the faith community.

- Recognize warning signs and help a friend or family member get professional help.

For More Information

American Association of Suicidology www.suicidology.org

National Organization for People for Color Against Suicide www.nopcas.com

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars

Sources

The information for this fact sheet was gathered from the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC) website (www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars/default.htm) run by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Institute of Mental Health website (www.nimh.nih.gov) as well as the National Organization for People of Color against Suicide (NOPCAS) website (www.nopcas.com)

**In this fact sheet, unless otherwise specified, the information presented refers to the latest available data (i.e., 2009 data).*

American Association of Suicidology

AAS is a membership organization for all those involved in suicide prevention and intervention, or touched by suicide. AAS is a leader in the advancement of scientific and programmatic efforts in suicide prevention through research, education and training, the development of standards and resources, and survivor support services. For membership information, please contact:

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If you or someone you know is suicidal, please contact a mental health professional or call 1-800-273-TALK (8255).