

Department of Defense Annual Report on Suicide in the Military: Calendar Year (CY) 2022



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CY 2022 | Setting the Stage

Bottom Line Up Front



The Annual Report publishes **annual suicide data (counts & rates)** for Service members and their families & describes **current and ongoing efforts to address suicide** in the Department of Defense (DoD). Some of the data appear promising but we remain cautiously optimistic and continue to aim for a decrease in long-term trends.

Key Takeaways



Service Member Data (2022)

- Fewer Service members died by suicide in 2022 (492) than last year (524). The suicide rate for the Active Component increased by 3% compared to 2021. For the Reserve and National Guard, rates decreased by 12% and 18%.
- The overall trend from 2011 – 2022 for the Active Component is increasing, and there is no decreasing or increasing trend for the R and NG between 2011-2022.
- Military suicide rates are largely similar to the US population between 2011-2021
- Firearms are the leading method of suicide death (69% Total, 65-81% by Component)

Family Member Data (2021- latest available)

- Fewer family members died by suicide in 2021 (168) than in previous years (~200) and rates are 16% lower than in 2020. Decreases observed especially for male spouses & dependents.
- Firearms continue to be the leading method of suicide death (56-61%)

Current & Ongoing Efforts / Way Forward

- Focus on fostering a supporting environment, addressing stigma as a barrier to care, improving delivery of mental health care, promoting a culture of lethal means safety, & revising suicide prevention training

Way Forward



The Department is focusing on the **suicide prevention priorities identified by the SecDef on September 26, 2023**, based on the **recommendations from the Suicide Prevention and Response Independent Review Committee (SPRIRC)**.

Implementation efforts will focus on:

- Drafting plans of action & milestones (POAMs) for approved actions
- Evaluating and tracking SPRIRC progress



CY 2022 | Service Member Key Data

BLUF

Fewer Service members died by suicide in 2022 (492) than in 2021 (524). Suicide rates in 2022 were similar in the Active Component (3% ▲ but not statistically significant) and slightly lower among the Reserve and National Guard (12% ▼ & 18% ▼ but not statistically significant) than in 2021. Between 2011-2022, AC suicide rates have an increasing trend and no trend for Reserve and National Guard. We aim for a decrease in long-term trends.

2022 Suicide Counts & Rates

492 Total Service Members Died by Suicide (CY21, 524)

331 Active | 64 Reserve | 97 Guard

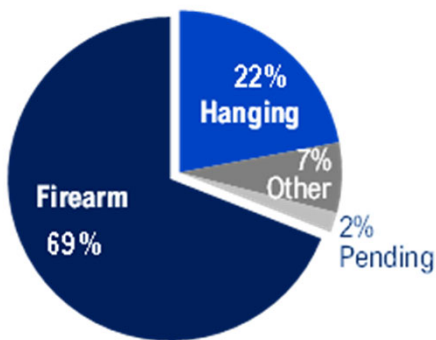
Per 100,000 Service Members

25.1 Active Component Service Members (CY21, 24.3)

19.1 Reserve Service Members (CY21, 21.8)

22.2 National Guard Service Members (CY21, 27.0)

Most Common Method | Firearm



Showing Total Force data.
By Component: AC, is 65%,
R is 70% and NG is 81%

Demographic & Contextual Data

Active Component

68% Young (under 30)
91% Enlisted
93% Male

This is similar among the Reserve and Guard, consistent with prior years and largely reflects Total Force demographics



Behavioral health problems are treatable and **seeking help is a sign of strength**

Health & Life Stressors (DoDSER)

- 45% Behavioral health diagnosis
- 42% Relationship problems
- 26% Workplace issues
- 26% Admin./legal issues
- 10% Financial issues

KEY TAKEAWAYS



Active Component suicide rates **gradually increased between 2011-2022**

(Although rates in the last two years appear slightly lower than in 2020)

Reserve & Guard suicide rates fluctuate year-to-year but there is **no increasing or decreasing trend** from 2011-2022



Since 2011, military suicide rates are, in most years, **similar to the U.S. population**

(Accounting for age & sex differences - military is younger & mostly male)

WHAT THIS TELLS US:

Suicide prevention needs a **comprehensive, integrated approach.**

The DoD aims to:

- Foster supportive environments
- Address stigma as a barrier to care
- Improve delivery of mental health care
- Promote a culture of lethal means safety
- Revise suicide prevention training



Suicide Rates | Active Component by Service

KEY TAKEAWAYS



Suicide rates for the **Active Component (AC) Service members** gradually increased 2011-2022*. Although in the **last two years the rates are lower** than in 2020†.

In most years, the AC suicide rate was **similar to the U.S. population**, except in 2020 when it was higher*.

Suicide rates for **all Services*** gradually increased from 2011- 2022. Suicide rates for each Service in 2022 had different year-to-year changes (see below).

⚠️ Year-to-year comparisons have limited reliability and serve as preliminary insights.

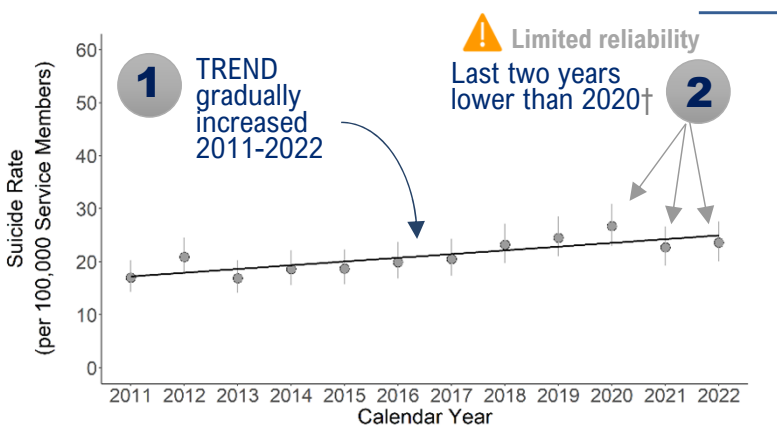


Figure 1 | AC Suicide rates over time

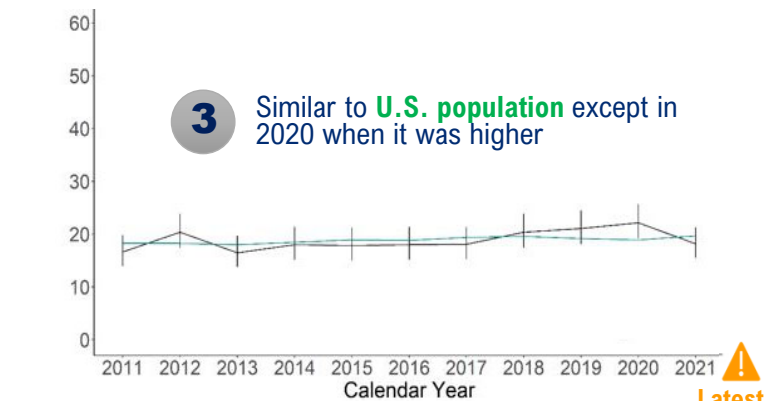
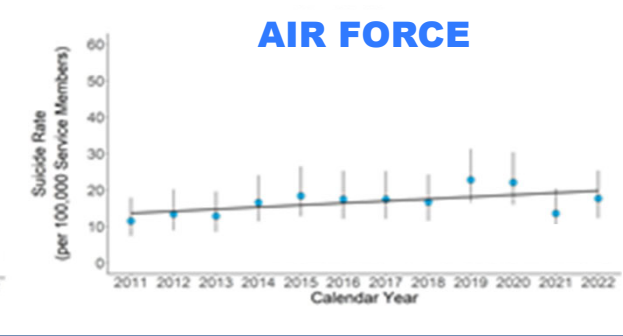
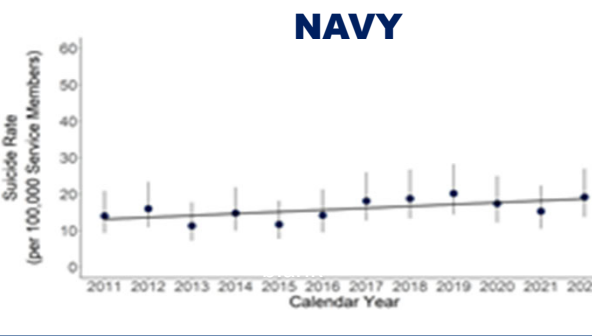
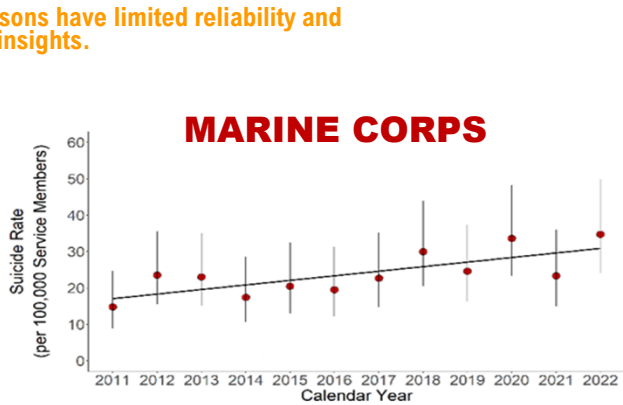


Figure 2 | AC suicide rates vs U.S population ⚠️ Latest available


*Statistically significant—high confidence this is a true difference and not due to chance

†Not statistically significant—low confidence this is a true difference (e.g., likely due to chance or normal variation).



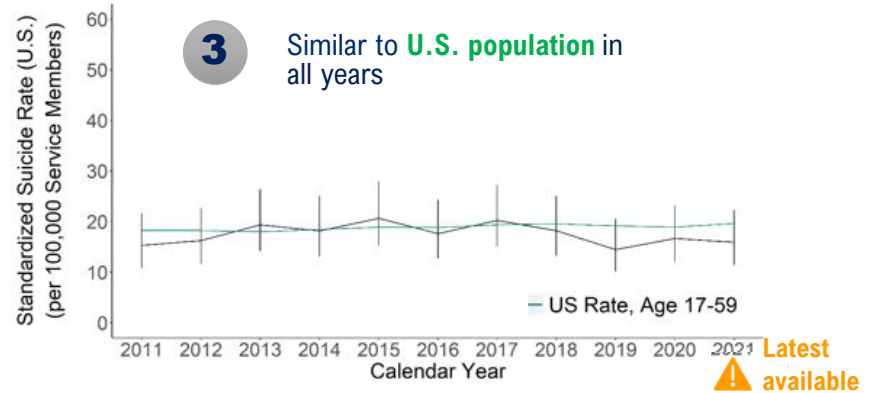
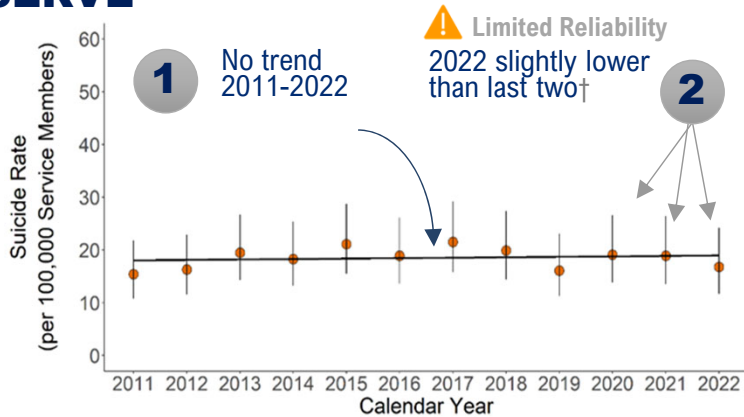
Suicide Rates | Reserve & National Guard

KEY TAKEAWAYS

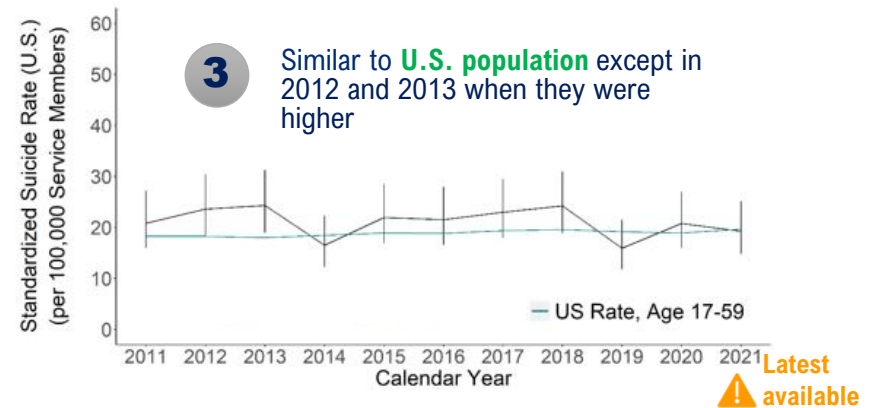
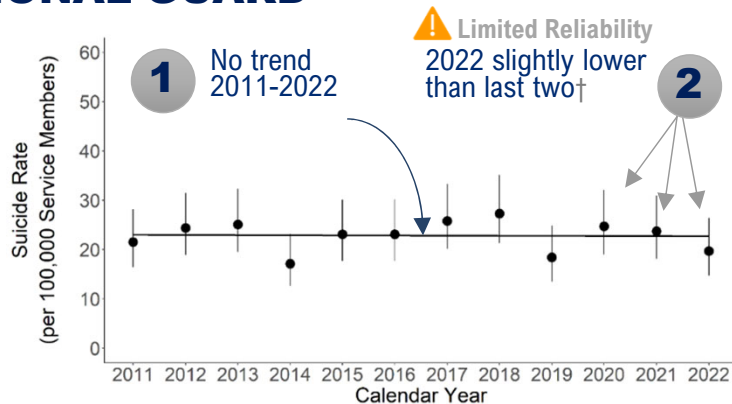
 Suicide rates for the **Reserve & National Guard did not have an increasing or decreasing trend 2011-2022**. They fluctuate year-to-year and in 2022 suicide rates for both appear slightly lower than in the previous two years[†].

Between 2011 and 2021, Reserve suicide rates were **similar to suicide rates in the U.S. population in all years**. In the same time frame, the National Guard suicides rates were similar to the U.S. population except in 2012 and 2013.

RESERVE



NATIONAL GUARD



[†]Not statistically significant—low confidence this is a true difference (e.g., likely due to chance or normal variation).



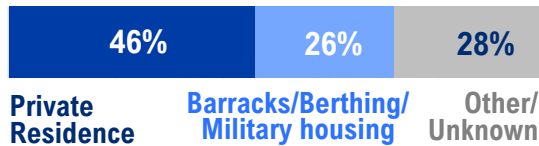
CY 2022 | AC Service Member Additional Data

From the DoD Suicide Event Report System Data (DoDSER)

Among AC Service Members who died by suicide in 2022:

87% Occurred in the **Continental U.S. (CONUS)**
 Within the U.S. suicide deaths occur typically where there are the largest concentrations of Service members for example in California, Texas, Virginia, and North Carolina)

And most occurred in either private residences or military barracks/berthing/housing (Location of injury/ death)



New in the DoDSER

4% Identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual

14% Experienced abuse before age 18

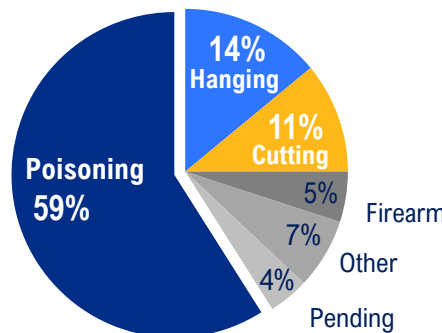


Over time, this new information from the DoDSER may help shape understanding of suicide risk

Among 1,287 reported suicide attempts for AC Service Members in 2022:

319 Army
274 Marine Corps
282 Navy
403 Air Force

31% of attempts were among female Service members and **69%** were among male Service members.



Poisoning (drug and non-drug) was the most common method among those who experienced a nonfatal suicide attempt.

Within the year before the attempt

48% Reported behavioral health diagnosis
38% Reported intimate relationship problems
26% Reported workplace difficulties
20% Reported administrative/legal problems
11% Reported experiencing assault or harassment
10% Reported financial difficulties



Behavioral and mental health problems are treatable and seeking help is a sign of strength



CY 2021* | Family Member Key Data

*Family member data lags 1 year based on sourcing from CDC

BLUF

Fewer Family members died by suicide in 2021 (168) than in previous years (~200) and rates appear slightly lower than previous years, especially for male spouses and dependents (None are statistically significant differences in rates but are moving in the right direction.) Compared to 2020 there is a 16% ▼ for all family members, 14% ▼ for spouses, 26% ▼ for dependents.

2021 Suicide Counts & Rates

168 Total Family Members Died by Suicide (CY20, 202)

114 Spouses | 54 Dependents

Per 100,000 Family Members

6.5 Family Members (CY20, 7.7)
Spouses & Dependents

11.2 Spouses (CY20, 13.0)

3.4 Dependents (CY20, 4.3)
Minor & non-minor

Most Common Method | Firearm

Spouses

61%

Dependents

56%

Demographic & Contextual Data

SPOUSES

52% Female
84% < 40 years old
48% Service history

DEPENDENTS

30% Female
69% < 18 years old
<5% Service history

KEY TAKEAWAYS



Suicide rates for Family members appear slightly lower than in previous years.

Suicide rates for male family members (spouses and dependents combined) appear lower in 2021 versus 2020.



In 2021, suicide rates for **spouses & dependents were similar to the suicide rates in the U.S. population** when accounting for age and sex differences.

SPOUSES

- ▶ **Male spouses** accounted for about 48% of spouse suicides but made up about **14%** of all military spouses
- ▶ About 48% had any service history (78% of men and 20% of women)
- ▶ About **44% of female military spouses** used a firearm, whereas about 35% of women 18-60 years old in the U.S. population used a firearm

DEPENDENTS

- ▶ Male dependents accounted for about 70% of dependent suicides deaths
- ▶ About 69% of dependents who died by suicide were under 18 years old
- ▶ Less than 5% of dependents who died by suicide had any service history



Summary | Current & On-going Efforts

Fostering a Supportive Environment

- ▶ “Taking Care of Our People” initiatives delivered key quality-of life-benefits
- ▶ Hired & trained over 400 members of the specialized prevention workforce
- ▶ Conducted On-Site Installation Evaluations (OSIE) at 19 sites & 12 ships through 2023
- ▶ Expanded the year-long suicide prevention communication campaign

Addressing Stigma as a barrier to care

- ▶ Reviewed 600+ policy documents in ongoing effort to identify and remove stigmatizing language
- ▶ Revitalized the Real Warriors Campaign to support psychological health/readiness
- ▶ Created resources to support parents & educators

Improving Delivery of Mental Health Care

- ▶ Implemented the ability for Service members to request referrals for mental health evaluations for any reason
- ▶ Examined clinical & implementation intervention methods to translate into evidence-based care
- ▶ Implemented programs that help address unique challenges in accessing mental health services among the National Guard and Reserve.

Promoting a Culture of Lethal Means Safety

- ▶ Partnered with federal agencies to examine safe storage policy
- ▶ Enforcing existing restrictions on private firearms in barracks and promoting secure storage of privately owned firearms when residing on installation in barracks/dormitories and in family housing when children reside in the home.
- ▶ Initiated pilots to explore appropriate settings & effective communication on safe storage in early military career training
- ▶ Updated policy on program evaluation & supported Service-level LMS program evaluation capabilities

Highlighted Service-Specific Efforts



Army initiated efforts **to integrate LMS across the enterprise** & established a LMS Mini-site with a Communications Toolkit, a LMS Catalogue & Community of Practice for Army Professionals.



Marine Corps developed a public facing **online interactive Suicide Prevention Resource** for active duty, families, & those who support Marines, in addition to the 7 Total Force Fitness efforts.



Navy's Sailor Assistance and Intercept for Life (**SAIL**) **increased usage** from 49% (2020) to 62% (2022), with overall 2400+ Sailors voluntarily participating.



Air Force is **expanding Wingman Connect**, (increases social connection and resilience) to include Airmen and Guardians during Technical Training School.



National Guard Bureau is **implementing Project SafeGuard** in three States. PSG is a peer-to-peer program on lethal means safety, peer counseling, & gun locks delivered by trained Service members.



Way Forward |

Secretary of Defense's Priority Initiatives based on Suicide Prevention and Response Independent Review Committee (SPRIRC)

Secretary Austin approved a campaign plan with 5 Lines of Effort & enabling tasks to strengthen the DoD's suicide prevention strategy, adopted and modified from the SPRIRC recommendations. These actions are part of the unprecedented focus of DoD's leadership, consistent with the Taking Care of People initiative.



Foster a Supportive Environment

These actions aim to improve the quality of life for Service members and empower leaders to address problems before concerns become challenges and escalate to crises



Improve the Delivery of Mental Health Care

These actions aim to improve access to, and delivery of, behavioral and mental health care, and better support, recruit, and retain mental health providers



Address Stigma and Other Barriers to Care

These actions aim to help Service members overcome stigma and reduce barriers to mental health care to promote a culture of help-seeking behavior



Revise Suicide Training

These actions aim to modernize the delivery of suicide prevention and postvention training, emphasizing the integration of primary prevention principles to reduce harmful behaviors



Promote a Culture of Lethal Means Safety

These actions aim to promote lethal means safety, with a goal to improve the overall safety culture within the Department

Examples of Key Enabling Tasks

- Improving schedule predictability and after-hours communication
- Promoting leadership focused on strengthening support to Service Members & their Families

- Recruiting and retention for behavioral health providers
- Improving coordination of care
- Increasing appointment availability by revising mental health staffing models

- Expanding:
- Non-medical counseling for suicide prevention
 - Mental health services in primary care
 - Telehealth services for mental health
 - "Episodes of care" treatment models

- Modernizing content, delivery, and dosage of suicide prevention training
- Training behavioral health technicians in evidence-based practices
- Providing leader tools to facilitate difficult conversations

- Incentivizing secure firearm storage
- Public education campaign for safe storage
- Ensure safety in barracks and dormitories
- Provide additional storage locations on installations



Back-up Slides



CY 2022 | Service Member Suicide Data

Table 1. Annual Suicide Counts and Unadjusted Rates per 100,000 Service Members in the Active Component, Reserve, & Guard, and by Service, CY 2020–2022

	CY 2020		CY 2021		CY 2022	
	Rate	Count	Rate	Count	Rate	Count
Active Component	28.6	383	24.3	328	25.1	331
Army	36.2	174	36.1	175	28.9	135
Marine Corps	34.5	63	23.9	43	34.9	61
Navy	19.0	65	17.0	59	20.6	71
Air Force	24.3	81	15.3	51	19.7	64
Space Force	--	NA	--	NA	--	0
Reserve	21.7	77	21.8	76	19.1	64
Army	22.2	42	24.8	46	20.8	37
Marine Corps	--	10	--	14	--	6
Navy	--	13	--	10	--	7
Air Force	--	12	--	6	--	14
National Guard	27.5	121	27.0	120	22.2	97
Army	31.5	105	31.2	105	24.8	82
Air Force	--	16	--	15	--	15



Service Member | Demographics

Table 2 Demographic and Contextual Characteristics of Active Component Service Members who died by suicide in CY 2022 (Rate per 100,000, count (number), percent)

	Total	Rate Count Percent		
		--	331	100%
Sex				
Male	28.3	308	93.1%	
Female	9.9	23	6.9%	
Age Group				
17-19	--	16	4.8%	
20-24	31.9	135	40.8%	
25-29	23.8	73	22.1%	
30-34	24.0	51	15.4%	
35-39	23.6	38	11.5%	
40-44	--	16	4.8%	
45-49	--	2	0.6%	
50+	--	0	0.0%	
Race				
White	26.3	237	71.6%	
Black/African American	22.5	51	15.4%	
Asian/Pacific Islander	--	18	5.4%	
Am. Indian/Alaskan Native	--	4	1.2%	
Other/Unknown	22.8	21	6.3%	
Rank				
E (Enlisted)	28.2	301	90.9%	
E1-E4	28.1	153	46.2%	
E5-E9	28.3	148	44.7%	
O (Commissioned Officer)	11.1	24	7.3%	
W (Warrant Officer)	--	5	1.5%	
Cadet	--	1	0.3%	
Marital Status				
Never Married	27.6	165	49.8%	
Married	22.4	147	44.4%	
Divorced	--	19	5.7%	
Widowed	--	0	0.0%	

Table 3 Demographic and Contextual Characteristics of Reserve and National Guard Service Members who died by suicide in CY 2022 (Rate per 100,000, count (number), percent)

	Total	Reserve			National Guard			
		Rate	Count	Percent	Rate	Count	Percent	
		--	64	100%	--	97	100%	
Sex								
Male	21.9	56	87.5%		25.2	88	90.7%	
Female	--	8	12.5%		--	9	9.3%	
Age Group								
17-19	--	5	7.8%		--	2	2.1%	
20-24	--	15	23.4%		40.8	45	46.4%	
25-29	--	18	28.1%		--	15	15.5%	
30-34	--	8	12.5%		--	15	15.5%	
35-39	--	9	14.1%		--	11	11.3%	
40-44	--	5	7.8%		--	2	2.1%	
45-49	--	3	4.7%		--	3	3.1%	
50-54	--	1	1.6%		--	4	4.1%	
55-59	--	0	0.0%		--	0	0.0%	
60-74	--	0	0.0%		--	0	0.0%	
Race								
White	18.3	41	64.1%		22.7	77	79.4%	
Black/African American	--	14	21.9%		--	14	14.4%	
Am. Indian/Alaskan Native	--	3	4.7%		--	1	1.0%	
Asian/Pacific Islander	--	5	7.8%		--	3	3.1%	
Other/Unknown	--	1	1.6%		--	2	2.1%	
Rank								
E (Enlisted)	22.7	58	90.6%		24.3	91	93.8%	
E1-E4	30.8	37	57.8%		29.3	55	56.7%	
E5-E9	14.6	21	32.8%		19.3	36	37.1%	
O (Commissioned Officer)	--	6	9.4%		--	5	5.2%	
W (Warrant Officer)	--	0	0.0%		--	1	1.0%	
Cadet	--	0	0.0%		--	0	0.0%	
Marital Status								
Never Married	25.0	38	59.4%		26.5	62	63.9%	
Married	--	18	28.1%		14.6	26	26.8%	
Divorced	--	8	12.5%		--	8	8.2%	
Widowed	--	0	0.0%		--	1	1.0%	

Suicide Rates and Demographics Military Family Members



Table 4. Military Family Member Suicide Rates per 100,000 Individuals by Their Service Member's Military Population, CY 2019–CY 2021

Military Population	CY 2019		CY 2020		CY 2021	
	Rate	Count	Rate	Count	Rate	Count
Total Force	7.7	202	7.7	202	6.5	168
Spouse	12.6	130	13.0	133	11.2	114
Dependent	4.5	72	4.3	69	3.4	54
Active Component	7.1	117	7.9	130	6.4	103
Spouse	12.6	85	13.0	87	11.7	78
Dependent	3.3	32	4.4	43	2.6	25
Reserve	8.7	40	8.4	38	8.1	36
Spouse	--	17	15.0	25	12.3	20
Dependent	7.9	23	--	13	--	16
National Guard	8.5	45	6.5	34	5.6	29
Spouse	14.6	28	11.1	21	--	16
Dependent	--	17	--	13	--	13

Notes | Source(s): DEERS, Military Services, NDI, Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC; denominators only); Rates for groups with fewer than 20 suicides are not reported because of statistical instability (DoDI 6490.16); Only DoD Services are reported here; therefore, Coast Guard family member suicide rates are not included in this report; Includes family members who were also themselves Service members to capture the full extent of suicide among military family members (22.5% currently serving in CY 2021, 18.8% in CY 2020).

Table 5. Military Spouse & Dependent Suicide Rates per 100,000 Individuals by Sex, CY 2019–CY 2021

SPOUSES	CY 2019		CY 2020		CY 2021	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Total Force	51.2	6.8	47.4	7.7	39.6	6.7
Active Component	52	7	47.5	7.9	42.2	7.1
Reserve	--	--	--	--	--	--
National Guard	--	--	--	--	--	--
DEPENDENTS						
Total Force	6.7	--	6.2	--	4.8	--
Active Component	4.4	--	5.9	--	4.3	--
Reserve	--	--	--	--	--	--
National Guard	--	--	--	--	--	--

Notes | Source(s): DEERS, Military Services, NDI (suicide counts); DMDC (denominators); Per CDC requirements, counts under 10 are suppressed and corresponding percentages are suppressed or masked (i.e., < 1.0%) to protect the confidentiality of military family members;