

2023 Annual Report

Veteran Suicide in Florida

Overall Summary

As a part of its mission to end veteran suicide, The Fire Watch created the Watch Stander program, equipping community members with the skills they need to identify veterans in crisis and point them toward resources. The Fire Watch is also working hard to ensure that data is tracked, by gathering data from the American Community Survey and the Florida Department of Health and performing independent analyses, including this report, with data partner NLP Logix. Tracking data is beneficial to The Fire Watch in two ways:

- Identifying emerging trends within veteran suicide data to create tailored approaches to pre-emptively combat areas of concern.
- Ensuring that the efforts put forward by The Fire Watch are a part of “turning the curve” and decreasing veteran suicides.

Data in this report represents the most recent data provided by the Florida DOH for veterans where census tract was unavailable. Rates are calculated based on the total population and percentage of veterans from the US Census. The rate of veteran suicides was lower in 2020 and 2021 as compared to the baseline year of 2019. Of the last 10 years, the rate of veteran suicide has been at its lowest for the last two years (2020 and 2021), though there was an increase between 2020 and 2021. Reductions from the 2019 baseline are most significant in Northeast Florida. Emerging trends include increases in the rate of suicide for female veterans.

636

Deaths by Suicide to Veterans in the Baseline year (2019)

542

Deaths by Suicide to Veterans in 2020

611

Deaths by Suicide to Veterans in 2021

35.5

Deaths by Suicide per 100K Veterans in the Baseline year (2019)

30.2

Deaths by Suicide per 100K Veterans in the Baseline year (2020)

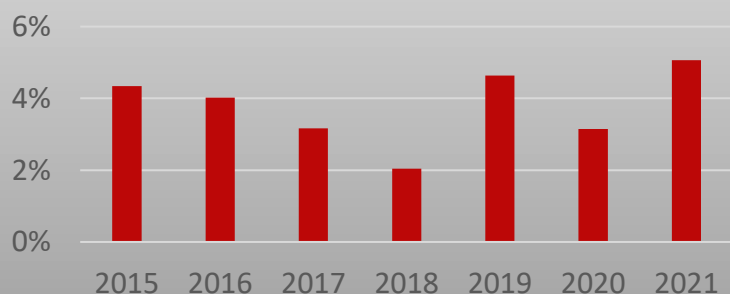
34.1

Deaths by Suicide per 100K Veterans in the Baseline year (2021)

In 2021, 611 Florida veterans died by suicide. With veterans making up 8.1% of the Florida population, this translates to a rate of **34.1** suicides per 100,000 veterans. In the same year, non-veteran suicide occurred at a rate of **16.4**. The non-veteran rate was 15.5 in 2020 and 16.8 in 2019.

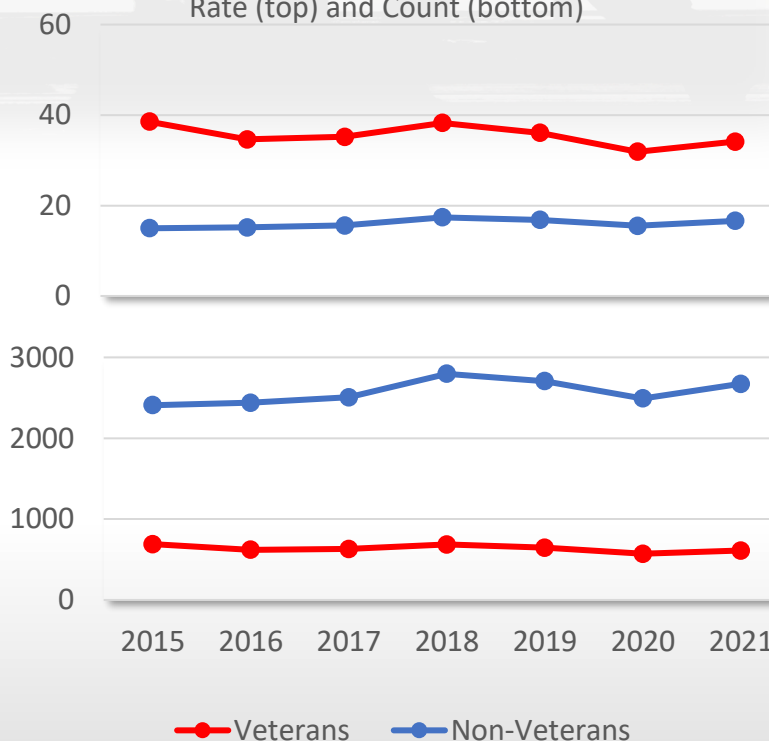
From 2020 to 2021 there has been a 13% increase in the rate of veteran suicide as compared to a 7% increase in the rate of suicides overall. Despite this increase veteran suicide remains lower than prior years, with 2021 being the **second lowest year** for veteran suicide in Florida over the last 10 years. Both populations experienced a significant decrease in 2020, with the rate of veteran suicide dropping by 15%.

Percent of Veteran Suicides by Female Veterans



Suicides in Florida by Year

Rate (top) and Count (bottom)



Suicide in the veteran population affects male veterans at a significantly higher rate. Despite making up 10% of veterans, only 5% of veterans who died by suicide were female.

However, when the change in rate is considered, the rate of suicides for female veterans has a disproportionate increase. In 2021, this proportion (5%) reached its highest point over the last 10 years. Between 2020 and 2021, the rate of suicide for female veterans increased by 72.5%.

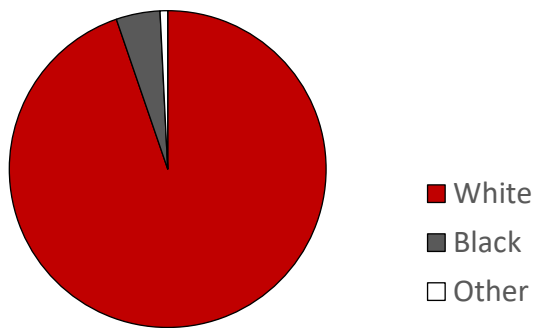
As in previous years, suicide in veterans is disproportionately common in white veterans, with white veterans making up 92% of suicides and 81% of veterans. However, this proportion is slightly lower than in previous years, with a 3% increase in the proportion of minority suicides.

The proportion of suicides involving the use of a firearm has increased significantly from the baseline year, with 81% of veteran who died by suicide used a firearm versus 75% previously.

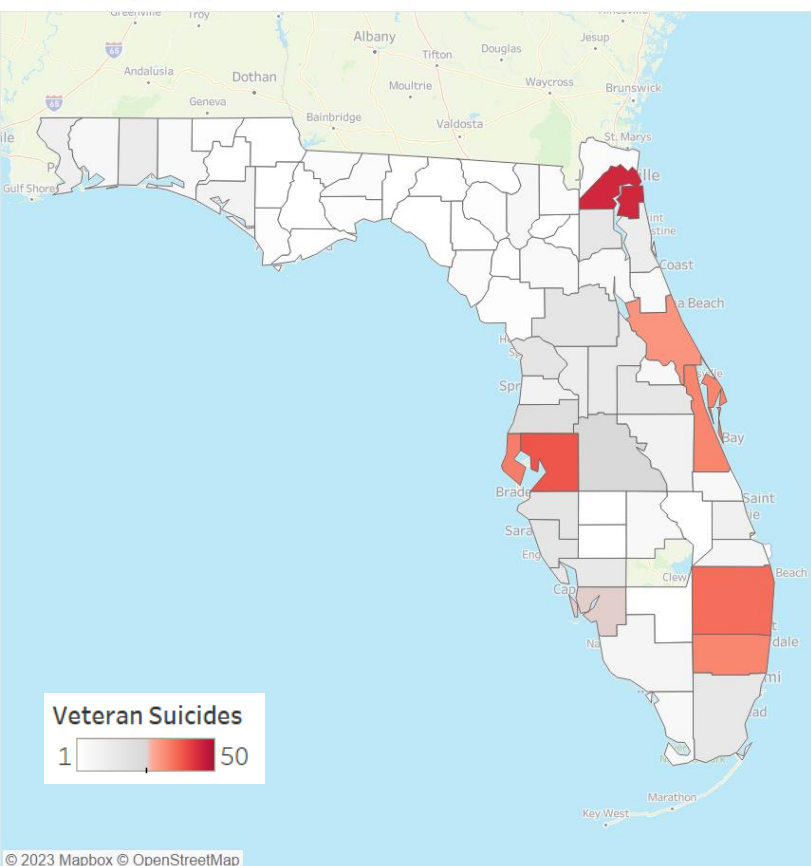
The change in the rate of veteran suicides per 100,000 people varies significantly by region. For counties with lower population, fluctuations for rates can be large due to the small denominators. When isolating to only counties with 10 or more Veteran suicides per 100,000, the most significant differences are identified in the Northeast (Saint Johns, Duval, and Clay all had significant differences), Central Florida (Sumter and Polk), and in Southwest Florida (Sarasota, Charlotte, Manatee).

Saint Johns County went from 11 suicides in 2019 to 4 suicides in 2021. Similarly, Duval County went from 45 veteran suicides in 2019 to 24 in 2021. County by county data is seen in the graph below.

Breakdown of Suicide by Race



Baseline (2019)



2021

