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Women are more likely to attempt suicide and be diagnosed with depression. However, for nearly 20 years, men's suicide rates have been much higher and the reason why is still confounding the experts and people who work to prevent them.

In California from 2000 to 2017, men have committed suicides at a rate more than three times that of women per a population of 100,000, according to [Let's Get Healthy California](https://data.ca.gov/dataset/suicide-deaths-per-100000-population-lghc-indicator), a state government task force that aggregated statistical datasets gathered from California death records.

Educators and community workers have pointed to several causes for the high rates among males.

Dr. Eric Caine founded the University of Rochester Center for the Study and Prevention of Suicide in 1998, where he served as its Co-Director up until 2021. Through his research, he has focused on males' high suicide rates compared to females.

Caine recognized that women were attempting suicide at a higher rate but saw that men were often killing themselves more often.

"When you think about suicide, you're thinking about, at a statistical level, what it comes down to is the dead. It's a product of the number of attempts and what's called the case fatality rate, or case fatality percent of each attempt," Caine said.

While women were attempting suicide 1.5 times more than men, according to the [2018 National Survey of Drug Use](https://www.samhsa.gov/data/release/2018-national-survey-drug-use-and-health-nsduh-releases), it was about what method they were choosing and its fatality rate compared to what way men were choosing.

"You take something like a firearm, right, a gun? And the case fatality is 85 or 90%, or something like that. You take an overdose. Someone goes to the bathroom medicine cabinet and grabs a bunch of pills; the case fatality rate of that is less than 2%," Caine said.

Men own guns at a [higher rate](https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2017/06/22/the-demographics-of-gun-ownership/) than women, 48% for men compared to 39% for women, according to Pew Research data. Men often chose this method much more than women primarily because of their access to firearms.

"When men attempted, even though collectively they attempted less often than their female peers, they more often used firearms. The case fatality percent was much higher. When you look across the life course, what you see is that men use much more lethal methods. And now, suicides are higher in rural areas, and there are lots of firearms in rural areas," Caine said.

Now, the method used in suicide is one answer for this higher rate. However, when examining areas where the same method is used, it is still more common for men to commit suicide than women.

"[Studies out of Taiwan](https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1471-2458-10-480), for example, where they were interested in charcoal burning as a method because it gives off a lot of carbon monoxide. And what they find, in general, is that when men and women attempt the same amount, men have a higher case fatality rate, even with the same method," Caine said.

One possible correlation between high suicide rates among males in the U.S. could be the high number of men joining the military and the high rates of suicides among veterans. In 2021, women comprised 17.3% of the active-duty military force, according to the [Department of Defense](https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3246268/department-of-defense-releases-annual-demographics-report-upward-trend-in-numbe/).

Molly Scott works in Sonoma County for Nation's Finest, which provides support to veterans and their families in California, Arizona and Nevada. One of the services offered is mental health support, including a suicide hotline, which is one of Scott's duties.

"I have talked to a lot of veterans really going through a lot. It is hard to hear from someone who has given so much to their country who feels that level of despair on an everyday basis," Scott said.

Scott sometimes speaks with dozens of veterans daily dealing with mental health issues that range a large spectrum.

"Sometimes I think it's someone who just needs to talk, but a lot of times, this is someone going through a severe crisis. I try to do as much as I can for them, but often it feels like we aren't equipped in this country to provide for them," Scott said.

Though Scott does speak to many men, she is surprised how many women call in, considering the large ratio of males compared to females in the military.

In [2017](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/data-sheets/2019/2019_National_Veteran_Suicide_Prevention_Annual_Report_508.pdf), 6,139 veterans committed suicide out of the 24 million veterans, according to the National Veterans Suicide Prevention annual report. But Caine points out that it cannot be one of the driving causes. He said that out of the total number of suicides, which was [47,173](https://intheforefront.org/resources/suicide-data/) in 2017 in the U.S., the number of veterans is only a fraction of that population.

Caine is concerned that not enough people are doing something to end the high suicide rates among males. He said people are more concerned about young people in schools committing suicide as a whole rather than the older population.

"People have been drawn to the schools and the attempts on kids or young people, and I do not want to say devalued people who are adults, but undervalued," Caine said. "If you want to make the national suicide rate go down, you really need to struggle with that challenge of how do I deal with the big populations that account for most of it?"