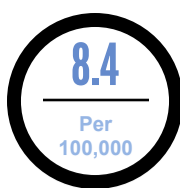


# African American Mental Health



African American Hoosiers died by suicide



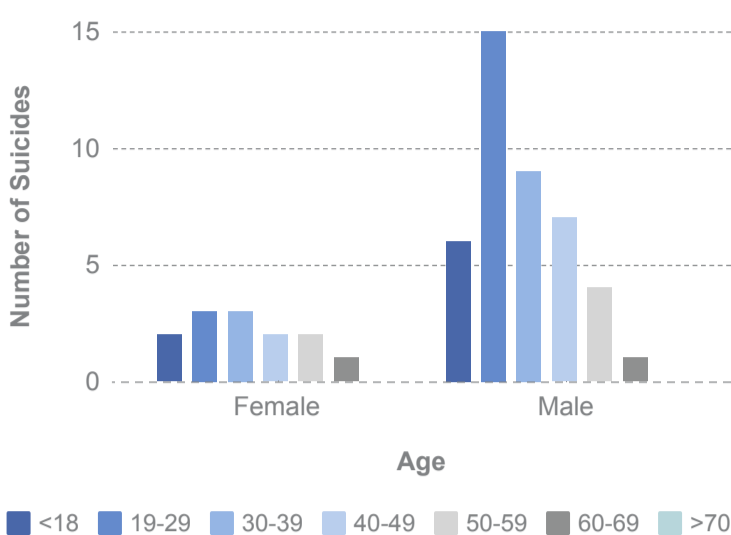
African Americans died by suicide across the country

Data shown from 2017

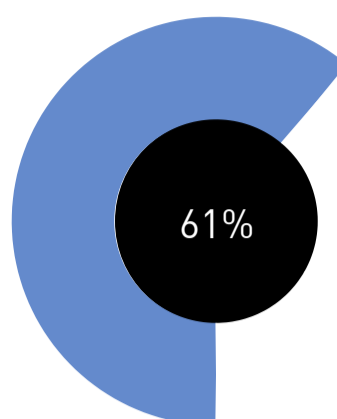
Depression is not selective. It can happen to any person of any race, ethnicity, age or gender. It is not uncommon to feel sad sometimes, but when these feelings last more than two weeks, it may indicate a mental health problem.

Not everybody is affected by mental illness the same. In fact, African Americans affected by mental illnesses tend to face greater disability because of their affliction. Furthermore, it has been found that African Americans are 20 percent more likely to experience serious psychological distress stemming from their mental health issue than whites [2]. The following information highlights discrepancies among suicide statistics for African Americans in Indiana.

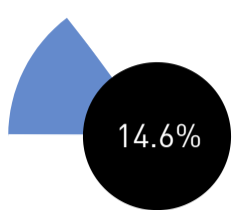
## Suicide by Age and Sex



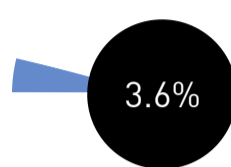
## Suicide Method



of African Americans who died by suicide in Indiana utilized a firearm



of African American Hoosiers who died by suicide in 2017 were aged 18 or under



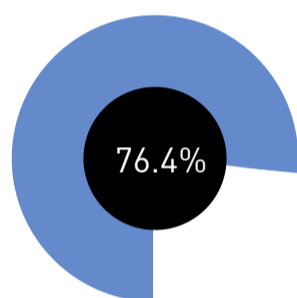
of white Hoosiers of the same age group

VS.

African Americans face many cultural, societal and personal differences when it comes to depression and anxiety. There are multiple factors at play that determine their mental health. These factors include, but are not limited to exposure to violence or racism, access to healthcare, access to stable and affordable housing, and a general misunderstanding of mental illness.

African Americans facing mental health issues typically turn to community engagement and spirituality to combat mental illness. These are excellent resources for support, but are not capable of treating the issue alone. The percentage of African Americans who seek mental health care drags behind the 40 percent of whites who are treated, at about 25 percent [1]. Unfortunately, part of this issue stems from the fact that African Americans have been historically misdiagnosed based on prejudices and received an inadequate quality of care due to cultural barriers between patients and healthcare providers.

When seeking care, do not be afraid to confront your mental healthcare provider about their cultural competency. Given the low percentage of African American mental healthcare providers, it is important that you ascertain whether or not they have relevant experience with your own cultural needs, beliefs, and understandings. While many are trained and equipped with necessary knowledge to assist anyone regardless of background, that should not sway you from finding the individual most suited for your needs.



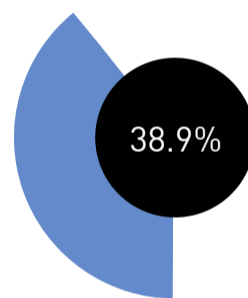
Of African American Hoosiers who died by suicide in 2017 were male

In Indiana, African-American males are more than three times as likely to die by suicide than females. This is no isolated anomaly. In the United States, African American males are more than four times as likely to die by suicide than their female counterparts. If left untreated, African American men can be put at a greater risk of alcohol and drug abuse, incarceration, homelessness, homicide and suicide [2]. Furthermore, African American men are more likely to feel tired, have trouble sleeping, become agitated, and lose interest in hobbies when confronted with a mental health issue.

One of the stigmas associated with mental health is that depression is a weakness. This outdated mindset is a main contributor to the morbidity of depression and other mental illnesses. Like many obstacles, any mental illness can be overcome with the proper assistance.

If you or a loved one are experiencing any of the following signs/symptoms, it is important to seek help so that they do not progress any further [4].

- Feeling of hopelessness, loss of will to live
- Engaging in risky activities
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Withdrawing from family or friends
- Extreme mood swings
- Previous suicide attempts
- Previous exposure to suicide
- Easy access to lethal means
- Job or financial loss
- Loss of a relationship



Of African American decedents displayed a depressed mood

In addition to these warning signs, the following are risk factors that increase and individuals disposition to commit suicide [4].

- Presence of a mental health disorder
- Alcohol or substance abuse disorders
- Impulsive/aggressive tendencies
- History of trauma/abuse
- Presence of a major physical illness
- Prolonged periods of isolation
- Expressing feelings of being trapped
- Increased alcohol or drug abuse
- Anxiety, agitation, restlessness
- Talking about death or suicide

Recognizing the signs of suicidal thoughts can be difficult. According to Indiana coroner data, only about 39 percent of African American suicide decedents displayed a depressed mood. It is important to confront individuals whom you suspect to be suicidal in an appropriate manner. Proper conversation techniques are as follows [3]:

- Ask the question directly and calmly in a format that warrants a "yes" or "no" answer. Do not convey ambiguity or pose a question that implies a preferred response.
- Validate the persons emotions. Talk openly and listen to the experience they are describing. Do not judge the individual if they are willing to express their emotions.
- Encourage the individual to seek treatment. Help them search for treatment options that are best suited for their situation. Do not advocate that the illness will simply go away on its own.
- While perhaps counter-intuitive, do not promise secrecy. If the situation is near a crisis, or the individual refuses to get help despite being a danger to themselves you may need to be prepared to speak with a qualified individual on their behalf. While some may view mental illness as a weakness or punishment, it is simply not.

## YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Ending the stigma associated with talking about depression and other mental illnesses is the first step to a greater understanding of the complexities that make up mental health. Explore the following resources to find out more.

**Mental Health America of Indiana:**  
[www.mentalhealthassociation.com](http://www.mentalhealthassociation.com)

**Community Health Network: Zero Suicide:** [www.ecommunity.com/services/mental-behavioral-health/zero-suicide-initiative](http://www.ecommunity.com/services/mental-behavioral-health/zero-suicide-initiative)

**Families First - Crisis and Suicide Intervention Services:**  
[www.familiesfirstindiana.org/](http://www.familiesfirstindiana.org/)

**How to Take Care of Yourself:**  
[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-yourself/attempt-survivors/](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-yourself/attempt-survivors/)

**Indiana Association of Black Psychologists:**  
[www.abpsi.org/index.html](http://www.abpsi.org/index.html)

**Indiana Minority Health Coalition:**  
[www.imhc.org/](http://www.imhc.org/)

View the following links for more information

**Teen Mental Health and Suicide:**  
[www.teenmentalhealth.org/learn/suicide](http://www.teenmentalhealth.org/learn/suicide)

**Risk of Suicide:**  
[www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Conditions/Related-Conditions/Risk-of-Suicide](http://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Conditions/Related-Conditions/Risk-of-Suicide)

**ISDH Suicide Resource Guide 2019:**  
[www.in.gov/isdh/files/Suicide%20Resrouce%20Guide%20Jan%20202019.pdf](http://www.in.gov/isdh/files/Suicide%20Resrouce%20Guide%20Jan%20202019.pdf)

**National Alliance on Mental Illness Indiana Resources:**  
[www.namiindiana.org/resources](http://www.namiindiana.org/resources)



[1] "African American Mental Health." *Nami.org*, National Alliance on Mental Illness, [www.nami.org/find-support/diverse-communities/african-americans](http://www.nami.org/find-support/diverse-communities/african-americans).

[2] "Brother, You're On My Mind." *Nimhd.nih.gov*, National Institute on Minority Health and Disparities, [www.nimhd.nih.gov/docs/byomm\\_factsheet02.pdf](http://www.nimhd.nih.gov/docs/byomm_factsheet02.pdf).

[3] "How to Talk About Suicide." *Ihs.gov*, Indiana Health Service, [www.ihs.gov/suicideprevention/howtotalk/](http://www.ihs.gov/suicideprevention/howtotalk/).

[4] "Suicide Warning Signs and Risk Factors." *Ihs.gov*, Indiana Health Service, [www.ihs.gov/suicideprevention/riskfactors/](http://www.ihs.gov/suicideprevention/riskfactors/).