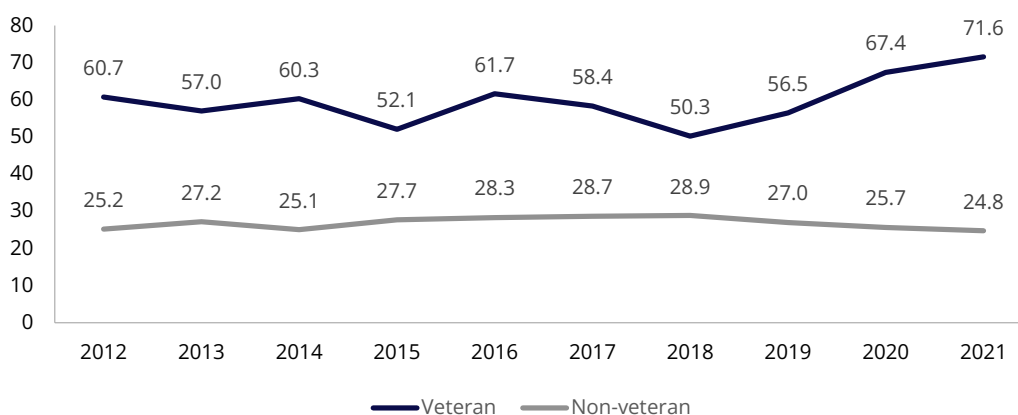


# Veteran suicides in Utah 2012–2021

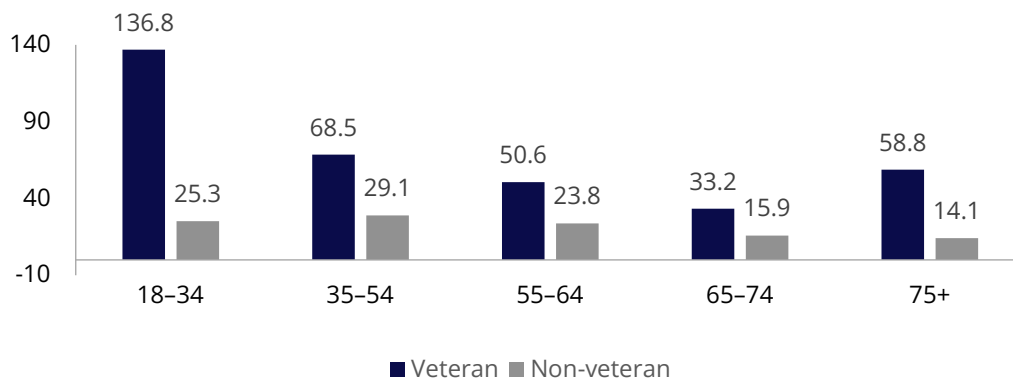
## Veteran suicides in Utah

- Veterans made up 4.9% of the Utah population aged 18 years and older. In 2021, 13.2% of suicide deaths for those aged 18 years and older were among veterans.<sup>1</sup>
- Veteran status was documented for 95.8% of the 3,068 suicide deaths in Utah for those aged 18 years and older from 2017 to 2021.<sup>2</sup>
- The rate of suicide deaths was consistently higher among veterans compared to non-veterans from 2012 to 2021.
- The rate was highest among veterans in 2021 (71.6 per 100,000 population), and the highest among non-veterans in 2018 (28.9 per 100,000 population).
- The rate of suicide deaths increased year over year from 2018 to 2021 among veterans, and for non-veterans the rate slightly decreased during the same time.
- The rate of suicide deaths was highest among veterans for those aged 18–34 years (136.8 per 100,000 population), which was more than 5 times greater than the non-veteran rate for this age group.
- Males made up 97.0% of suicide deaths among veterans.
- The percentage of suicide deaths involving firearms is higher among veterans (72.6%) compared to non-veterans (50.3%). While veterans are generally knowledgeable about firearm safety, it is important for all gun owners to recognize that during emotional or stressful times, having a delay in access to a firearm could be crucial in preventing a tragedy.

Rate of suicide deaths per 100,000 population by veteran status, aged 18+, Utah, 2012–2021



Rate of suicide deaths per 100,000 population by veteran status and age group, aged 18+, Utah, 2017–2021

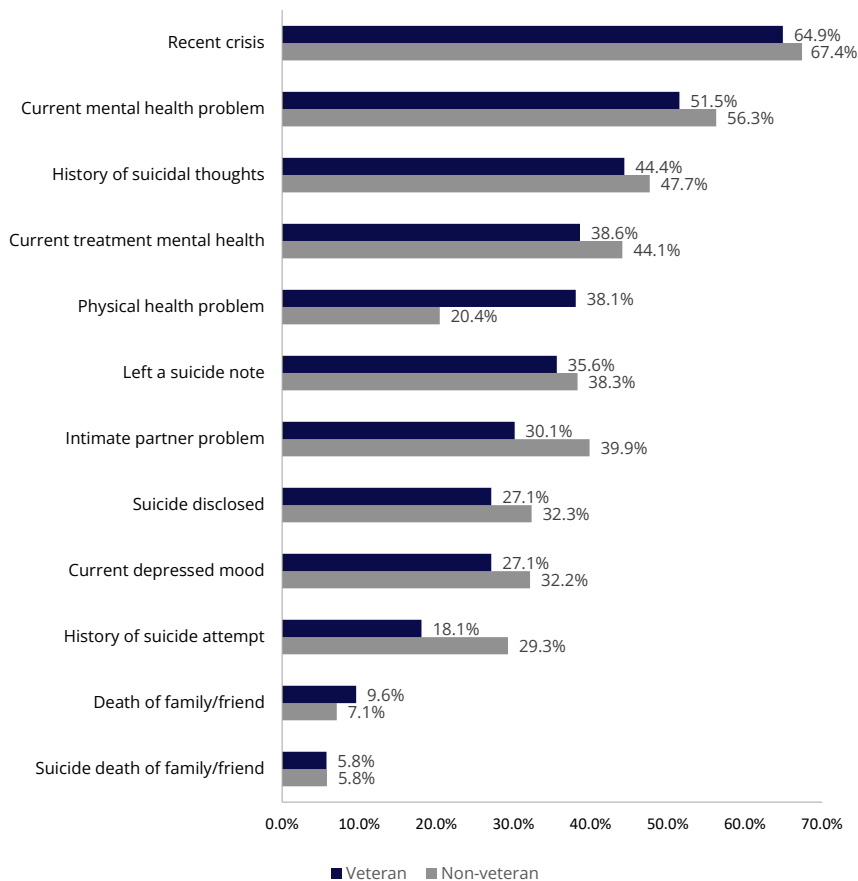


### Understanding the circumstances related to suicide deaths is a step toward prevention

The National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) collects information about the specific circumstances that are reported or perceived as being related to the violent death. These circumstances are categorized into 5 areas: interpersonal, life stressors, mental health, substance use, and suicidal events. The percentage of circumstances is based on the number of cases reporting circumstances. A death can have more than 1 circumstance.

- Circumstances were available for 98.7% of all suicide deaths from 2017 to 2021.
- The most common circumstances for veterans who died by suicide were recent crisis (64.9%), current mental health problem (51.5%), history of suicidal thoughts (44.4%), and current treatment mental health (38.6%).
- Veterans aged 65 years and older who died by suicide (66.2%) were 3 times more likely to have a physical health problem contributing to their death than non-veterans (21.6%) of the same age group.
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can affect anyone who experiences or witnesses a traumatic event. One-quarter of veterans who died by suicide with a current mental health problem were diagnosed with PTSD compared to only 2.4% of non-veterans who died by suicide with a current mental health problem. Ongoing efforts to reduce stigma around asking for help and increase access to care for chronic pain, PTSD, and other mental disorders can help reduce suicide risk among veterans.

Percentage of suicide circumstances by veteran status, aged 18+, Utah, 2017-2021



## Knowing the facts can help prevent suicide

The NVDRS is the only comprehensive surveillance system that helps us know the “who, when, where, and how” about violent deaths. It helps provide insights about the “why” these deaths happened. The system links records from many sources (medical examiner reports, death certificates, law enforcement reports) into an anonymous database.

## Suicide is preventable

The [Utah Suicide Prevention State Plan](#) provides guidance on how individuals and communities can address suicide. It’s important to know what to do and what not to do when somebody discloses their suicide intent to you.

Risk factors for suicide among veterans include mood and anxiety disorders, stressful situations, and physical health issues. Protective factors consist of effective care for mental and physical health, life skills training, and social connections.<sup>3</sup> Some suicide prevention tips include.<sup>4</sup>

- Take any warning signs or threats of suicide seriously.

- Call [988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) anytime you or someone you know is struggling with their mental or emotional health. It's free, confidential, and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- If a friend or relative outside your residency is having suicidal thoughts, ask to store their firearms or security keys with you. Always recommend they seek help.

### Suicide prevention resources

- 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, <https://988lifeline.org>
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, <https://afsp.org>
- Governor's Challenge, <https://veterans.utah.gov/governors-challenge/resources>
- LiveOn Utah, <https://liveonutah.org>
- LiveOn Military Playbook, available on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, <https://live-onutah.org>
- National Alliance on Mental Illness Utah Chapter, <https://namiut.org>
- SafeUT, <https://safeut.org>
- The Trevor Project, <https://thetrevorproject.org>
- Tran Lifeline, <https://translifeline.org>
- Utah Poison Control Center, <https://poisoncontrol.utah.edu>
- Utah Suicide Prevention Coalition, <https://utahsuicideprevention.org>

### References

1. U.S. Census Bureau, 5-year Population Estimates by Age and Veteran Status for 2017–2021 in Utah.
2. Utah Violent Death Reporting System, Violence and Injury Prevention Program, Utah Department of Health and Human Services, 2021 data [cited 2023 December].
3. Suicide Prevention Resource Center—Military Service Members and Veterans, <https://sprc.org/populations/military-veterans/> [cited 2024 January].
4. Help Guide, Suicide Prevention, <https://www.helpguide.org/> [cited 2024 January].

To learn about suicides among specific Utah groups or other violent deaths, visit <https://vippp.utah.gov/nvdrs/>.

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