



MARYLAND Department of Health

Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Robert R. Neall, Secretary

November 30, 2018

The Honorable Thomas M. Middleton
Chair
Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Bldg.
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

The Honorable Joan Carter Conway
Chair
Senate Education Health and
Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Bldg.
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass
Chair
House Health and Government Operations
Committee
241 House Office Bldg.
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

The Honorable George W. Owings III
Secretary
16 Francis Street, 4th Floor
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HG § 4-219(d)(4); SB 66 (Ch. 155 of the Acts of 2018) and HB 1159(Ch. 154 of the Acts of 2018) - Veteran and Armed Forces Member Suicides in Maryland Annual Report 2018

Dear Chairs Middleton, Conway, Pendergrass and Secretary Owings:

Pursuant to language set forth in HG § 4-219(d)(4), SB 66 (Ch. 155 of the Acts of 2018), and HB 1159(Ch. 154 of the Acts of 2018) Please find the Maryland Department of Health's Report on:

the suicides of veterans and members currently serving in the armed services of the United States; information regarding the age, sex, race or ethnicity, nature of service if known, and method of suicide of the veteran or armed services member; and aggregate information for the lesser of the previous 5 years or the total number of years for which information is available.

If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact Webster Ye, Deputy Chief of Staff, at (410) 767-6480 or webster.ye@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

Robert R. Neall
Secretary



MARYLAND
Department of Health

Veteran and Armed Forces Member Suicides in Maryland Annual Report 2018

Health – General Article § 4-219

**Larry Hogan, Governor
Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor**

**Robert R. Neall, Secretary
Maryland Department of Health**

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Background

Maryland Ann. Code Health-General Art., §4-219, established a requirement for the Maryland Department of Health to produce an annual report describing deaths due to suicide among Maryland residents who were veterans of the United States Armed Forces, or who were currently serving in the U.S. Armed Forces at the time of their death. This statute stipulates that the report is only to include information on suicide deaths disaggregated by age, sex, race/ethnicity, and method of suicide among those who had served in the Armed Forces. This report is to be produced and submitted annually through December 2021 to the State Department of Veterans Affairs, the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, the Senate Finance Committee, and the House Health and Government Operations Committee.

Since January 1, 2015, the Maryland Certificate of Death has included a checkbox that indicates whether a decedent had ever served in the U.S. Armed Forces. Information on whether the decedent had previously or was currently serving in the Armed Forces is provided by an informant, usually a relative or neighbor, to the funeral facility that submits the death certificate for registration. Therefore there may be cases where veteran service is missed because the informant was not aware that the decedent had served in the U.S. Armed Forces. The checkbox does not differentiate between veteran and current active service at the time of death.

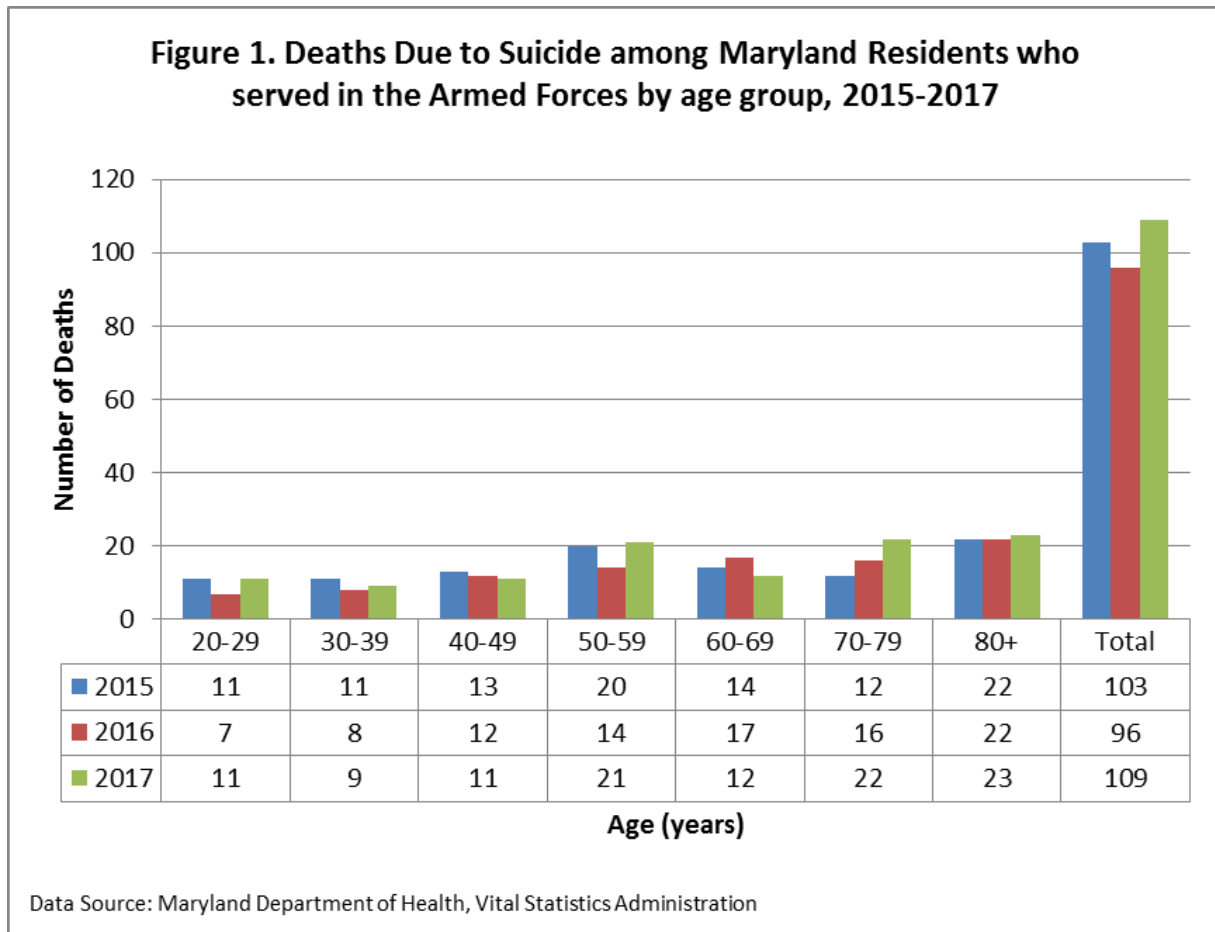
Suicides are identified by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner as intentional self-harm and indicated in the cause of death. These causes of death are then sent to the National Center for Health Statistics, which codes all cause of death literals using the International Classification of Diseases version 10 (ICD-10). The following ICD-10 codes were used to identify the deaths determined to be suicide for this report: Intentional self-harm (suicide) (U03,X60-X84,Y87.0).

Suicide Deaths among Maryland Residents who served in the U.S. Armed Forces:

Over the three year period that Maryland has been capturing information on Armed Forces service on death records, 2015 through 2017, there was an average of 103 deaths by suicide among Maryland residents who had served in the Armed Forces. Over this period, suicides represented one percent of all deaths among Maryland residents whose death certificate indicated they had served in the U.S. Armed Forces. Deaths by suicide among those who had served in the Armed Forces represented 17.5% of all suicides among Maryland residents during this three year period.

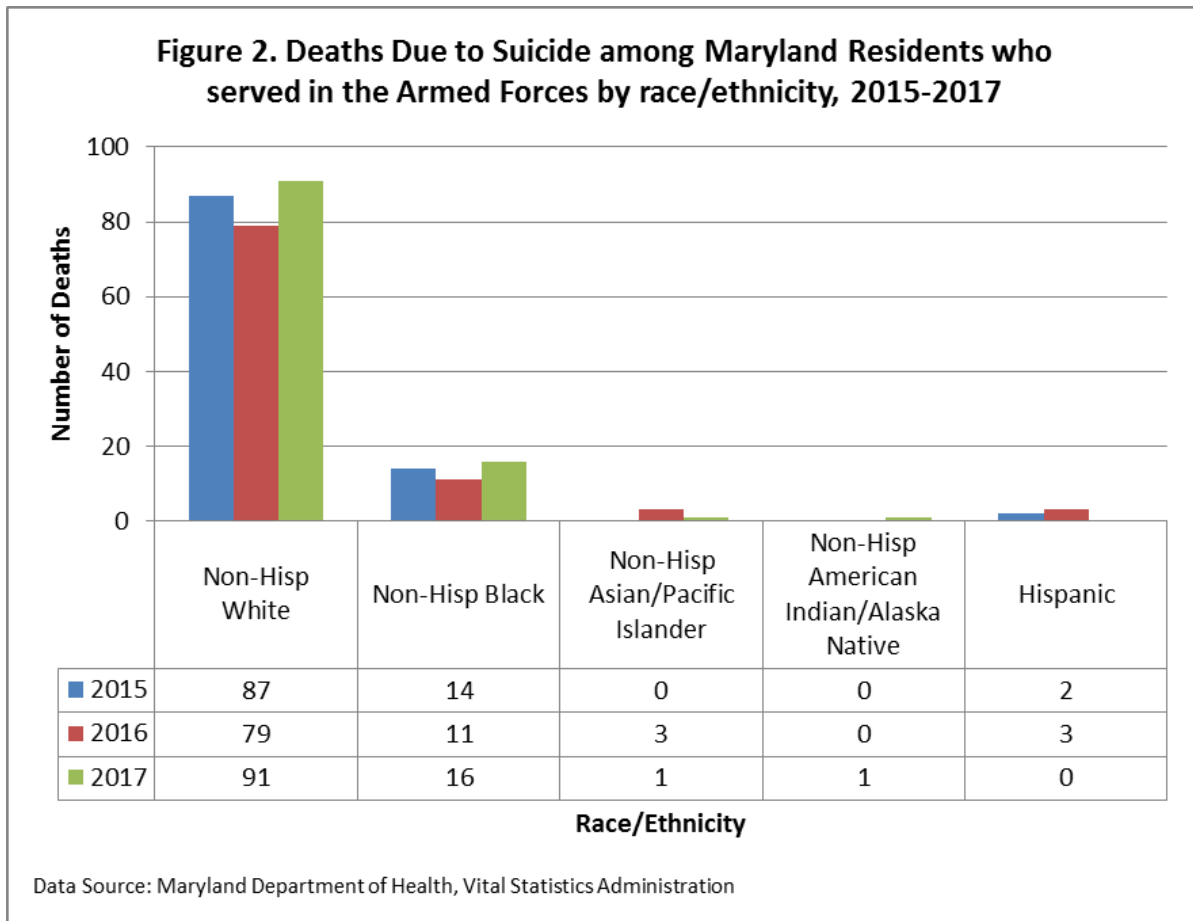
By Age Group

Figure 1, shows the number of suicides by age group and year of death. In each year, the highest number of suicides occurred in the 80 years and older group. The youngest age groups, 20 to 39 years, had the fewest suicide deaths.



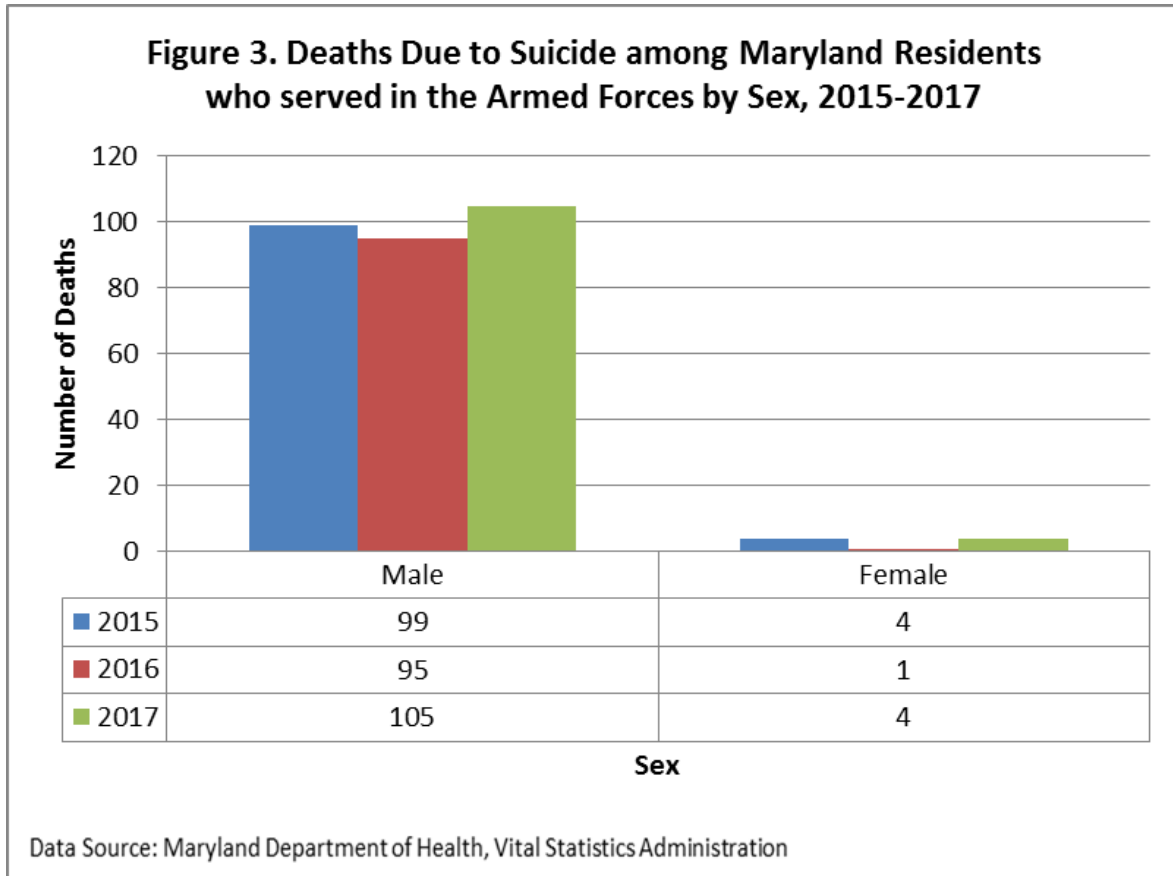
By Race and Ethnicity

The majority of suicide deaths among Maryland residents that had served in the Armed Forces were among non-Hispanic Whites (Figure 2). In 2017, 84% of the suicide deaths occurred among non-Hispanic Whites, 15% occurred among non-Hispanic Blacks, and <1% among other race/ethnicities.



By Sex

In 2017, 96% of suicide deaths among Maryland residents who had served in the Armed Forces were men (Figure 3).



By Method of Suicide

The majority suicides among Maryland residents who had served in the Armed Forces were committed using a firearm (Figure 4). In 2017, 72% of these suicides involved a firearm, 20% were committed by hanging, 4% by exposure to gases and <2% involved drug or alcohol intoxication.

