

FAITH COMMUNITIES AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

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Thanks

- We thank Lilly and the Association of Theological Schools for the grant that is supporting this webinar and the study on Clergy Engagement with Suicide Intervention and Aftercare

Disclaimer and Goals

- **We will not be training you on how to assess suicide risk or treat a suicidal person.**
- We will help you
 - Understand factors that may contribute to suicide and the role of faith communities.
 - Generate information-gathering questions to ask a suicidal person so that you can refer and provide that information to another professional.
 - Gain awareness of resources for suicidal people and for further training.

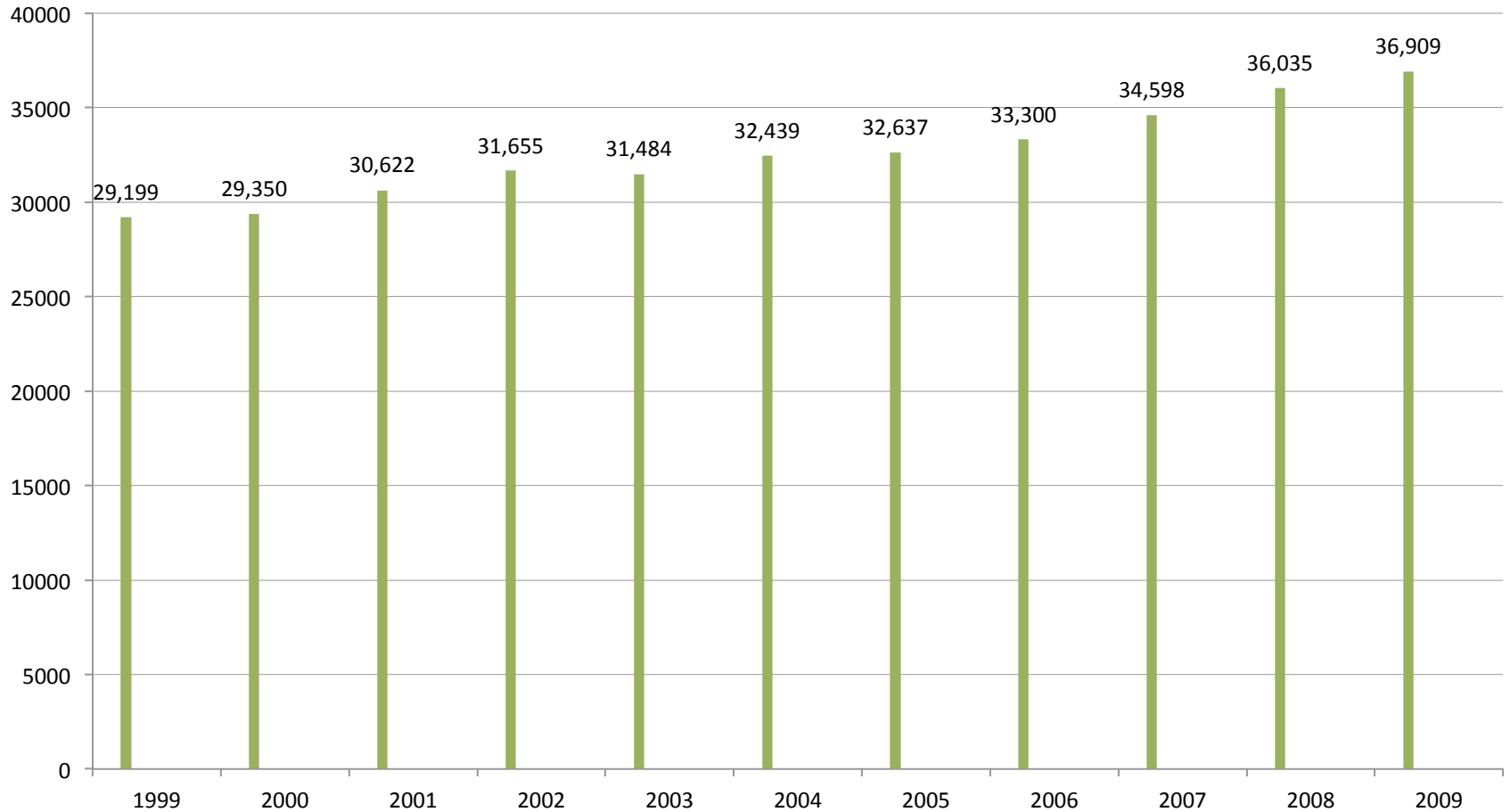
SUICIDE EPIDEMIOLOGY: A TRAGIC PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM

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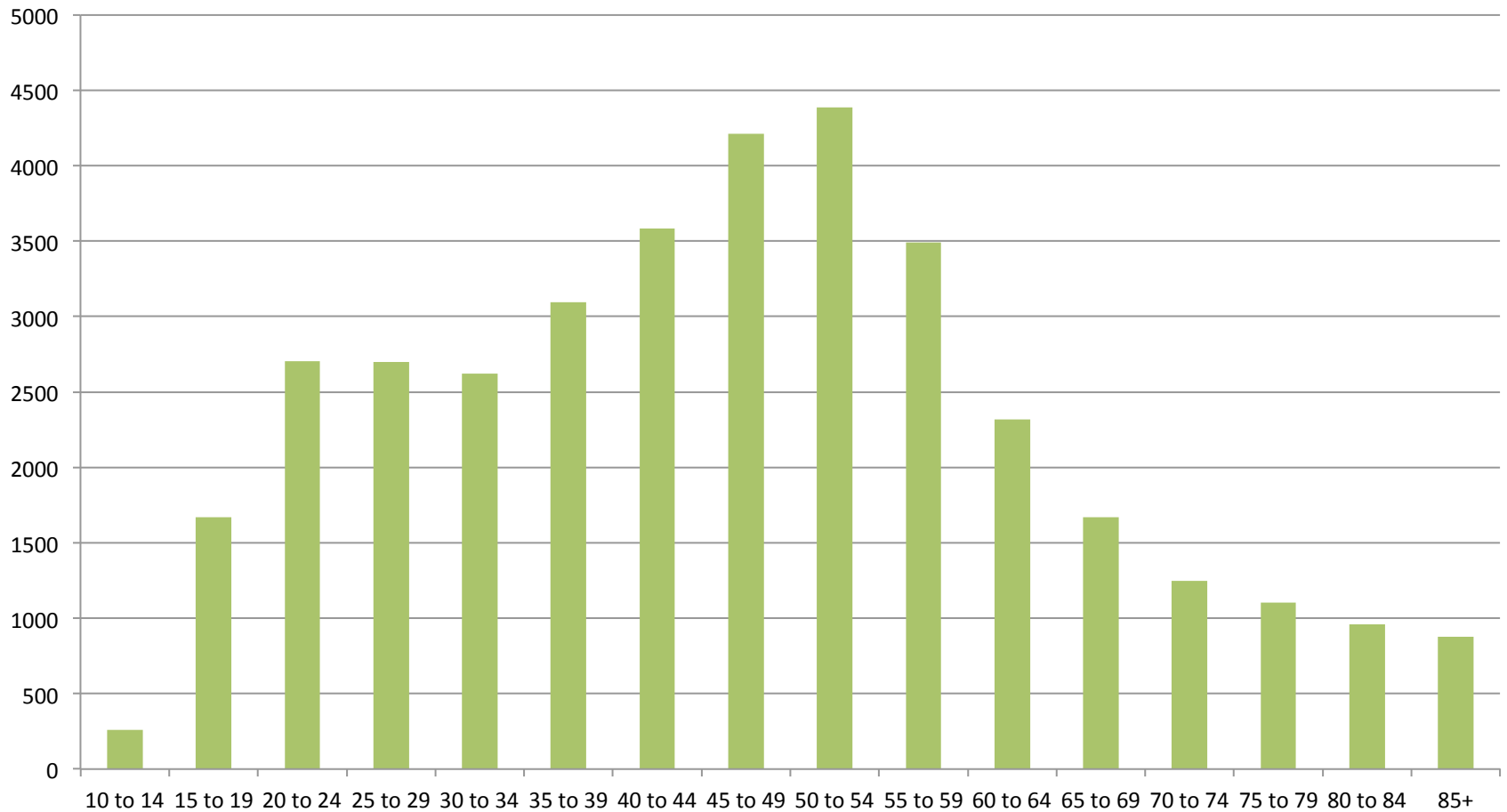
Total Number of Suicide Deaths, USA



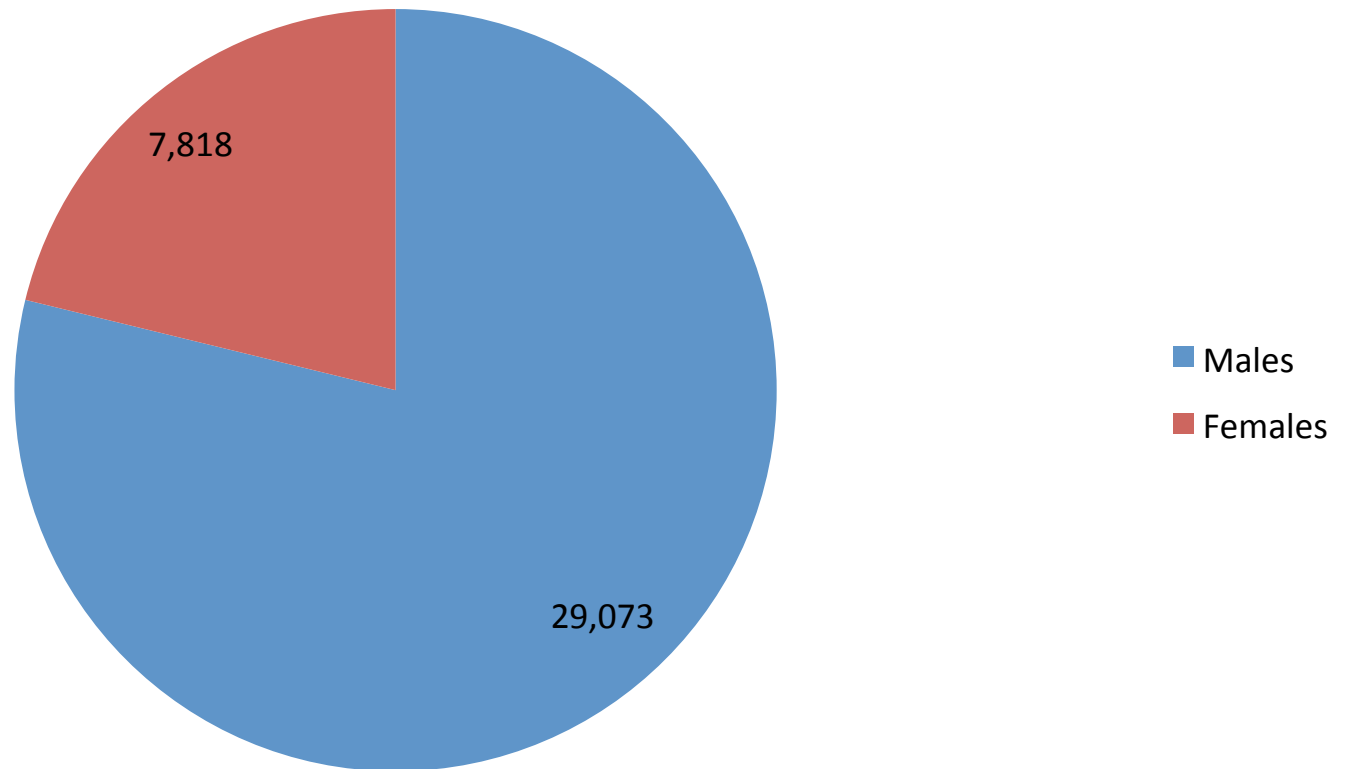
10 Leading Causes of Death, USA, 2009

Rank	<1	1-4	5-9	10-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	All ages
1	Congenital Anomalies 5,319	Unintentional Injury 1,466	Unintentional Injury 773	Unintentional Injury 916	Unintentional Injury 12,458	Unintentional Injury 14,062	Unintentional Injury 15,102	Malignant Neoplasms 50,616	Malignant Neoplasms 106,829	Heart Disease 479,150	Heart Disease 599,413
2	Short Gestation 4,538	Congenital Anomalies 464	Malignant neoplasms 477	Malignant Neoplasms 419	Homicide 4,862	Suicide 5,320	Malignant Neoplasms 12,519	Heart Disease 36,927	Heart Disease 67,261	Malignant Neoplasms 391,035	Malignant Neoplasms 567,628
3	SIDS 2,226	Homicide 376	Congenital Anomalies 195	Suicide 259	Suicide 4,371	Homicide 4,222	Heart Disease 11,081	Unintentional Injury 19,974	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 14,160	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 117,098	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 137,353
4	Maternal Pregnancy Comp. 1,608	Malignant neoplasms 350	Homicide 119	Homicide 186	Malignant Neoplasms 1,636	Malignant Neoplasms 3,659	Suicide 6,677	Suicide 8,598	Unintentional Injury 12,933	Cerebro-vascular 109,238	Cerebro-vascular 128,842
5	Unintentional Injury 1,181	Heart Disease 154	Influenza & Pneumonia 106	Congenital Anomalies 169	Heart Disease 1,035	Heart Disease 3,174	Homicide 2,762	Liver Disease 8,377	Diabetes Mellitus 11,361	Alzheimer's Disease 78,168	Unintentional Injury 118,021
6	Placenta Cord Membranes 1,064	Influenza & Pneumonia 146	Heart Disease 97	Influenza & Pneumonia 122	Congenital Anomalies 457	HIV 881	Liver Disease 2,481	Cerebro-vascular 6,163	Cerebro-vascular 10,523	Diabetes Mellitus 48,944	Alzheimer's Disease 79,003
7	Bacterial Sepsis 652	Septicemia 71	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 64	Heart Disease 120	Influenza & Pneumonia 418	Influenza & Pneumonia 807	HIV 2,425	Diabetes Mellitus 5,725	Liver Disease 9,154	Influenza & Pneumonia 43,469	Diabetes Mellitus 68,705
8	Respiratory Distress 595	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 66	Benign Neoplasms 40	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 59	Complicated Pregnancy 227	Diabetes Mellitus 604	Cerebro-vascular 1,916	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 4,664	Suicide 5,808	Nephritis 40,465	Influenza & Pneumonia 53,692
9	Circulatory System Disease 581	Perinatal Period 58	Septicemia 33	Benign Neoplasms 45	Cerebro-vascular 193	Cerebro-vascular 537	Diabetes Mellitus 1,872	HIV 3,388	Nephritis 4,792	Unintentional Injury 39,111	Nephritis 48,935
10	Neonatal Hemorrhage 517	Benign Neoplasms 53	Cerebro-vascular 32	Cerebro-vascular 42	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 187	Liver Disease 459	Influenza & Pneumonia 1,314	Influenza & Pneumonia 2,918	Septicemia 4,628	Septicemia 26,763	Suicide 36,909

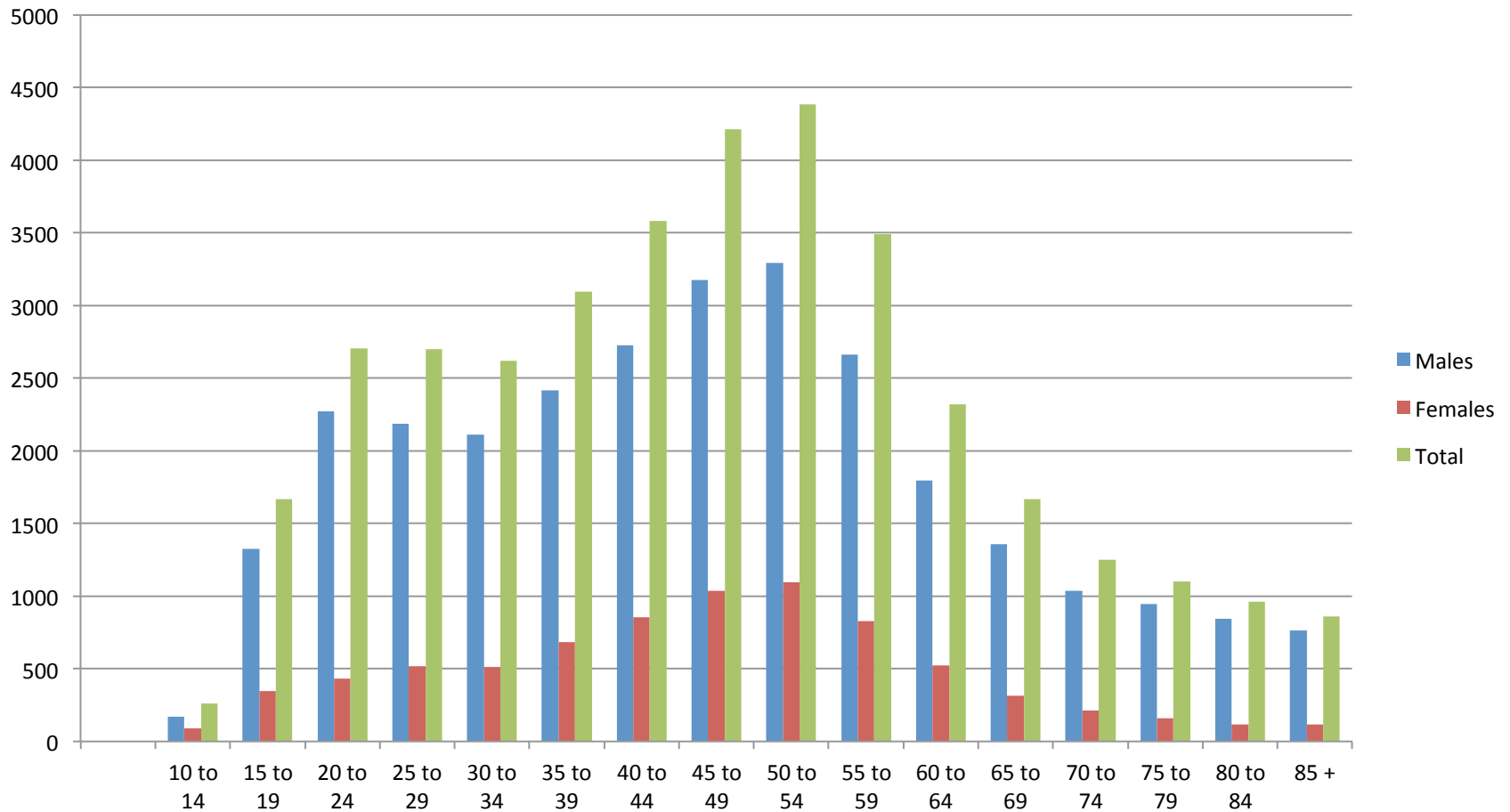
Total Number of Suicide Deaths, by age, USA, 2009



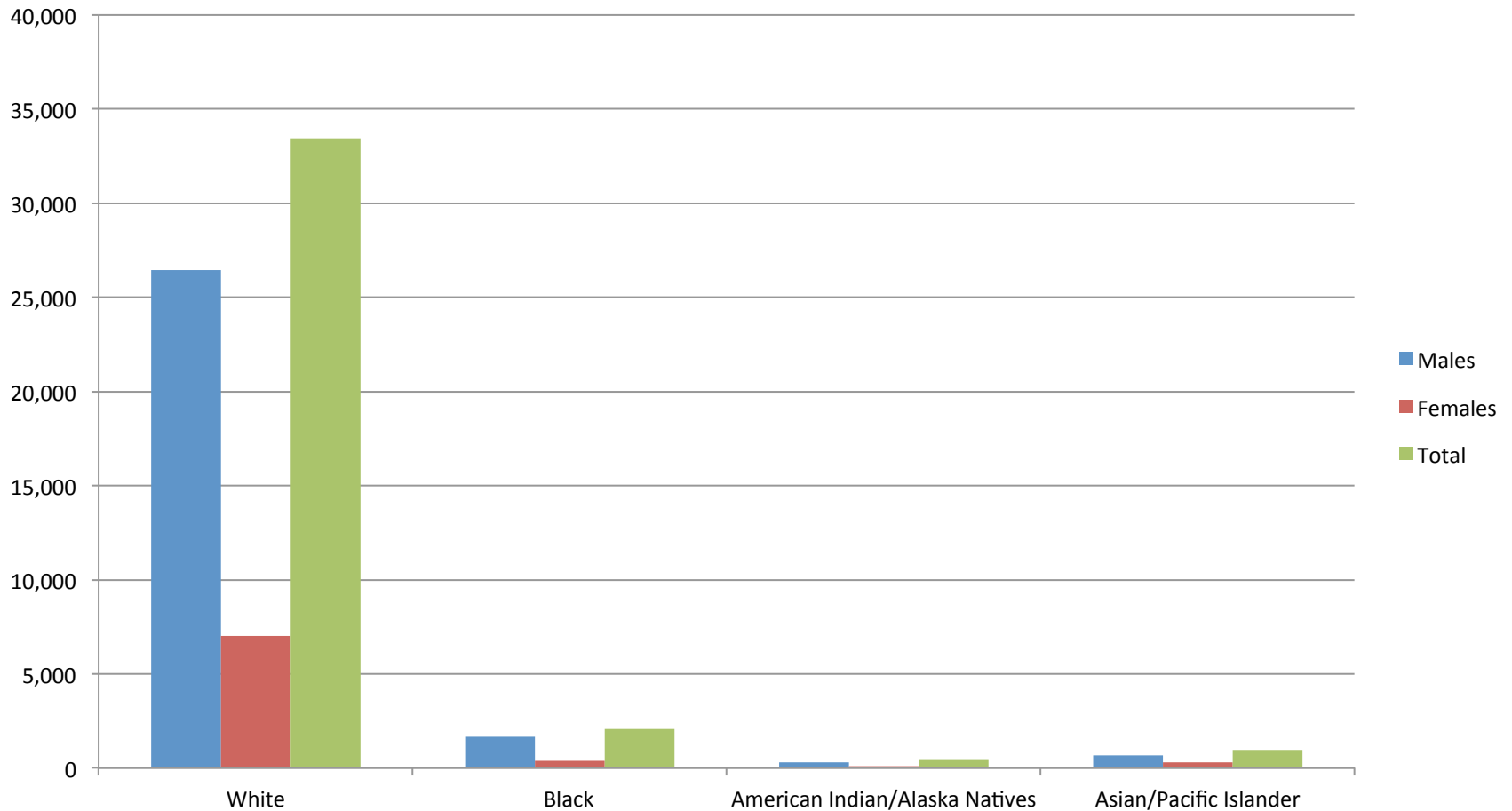
Number of Suicide Deaths, by gender, USA, 2009



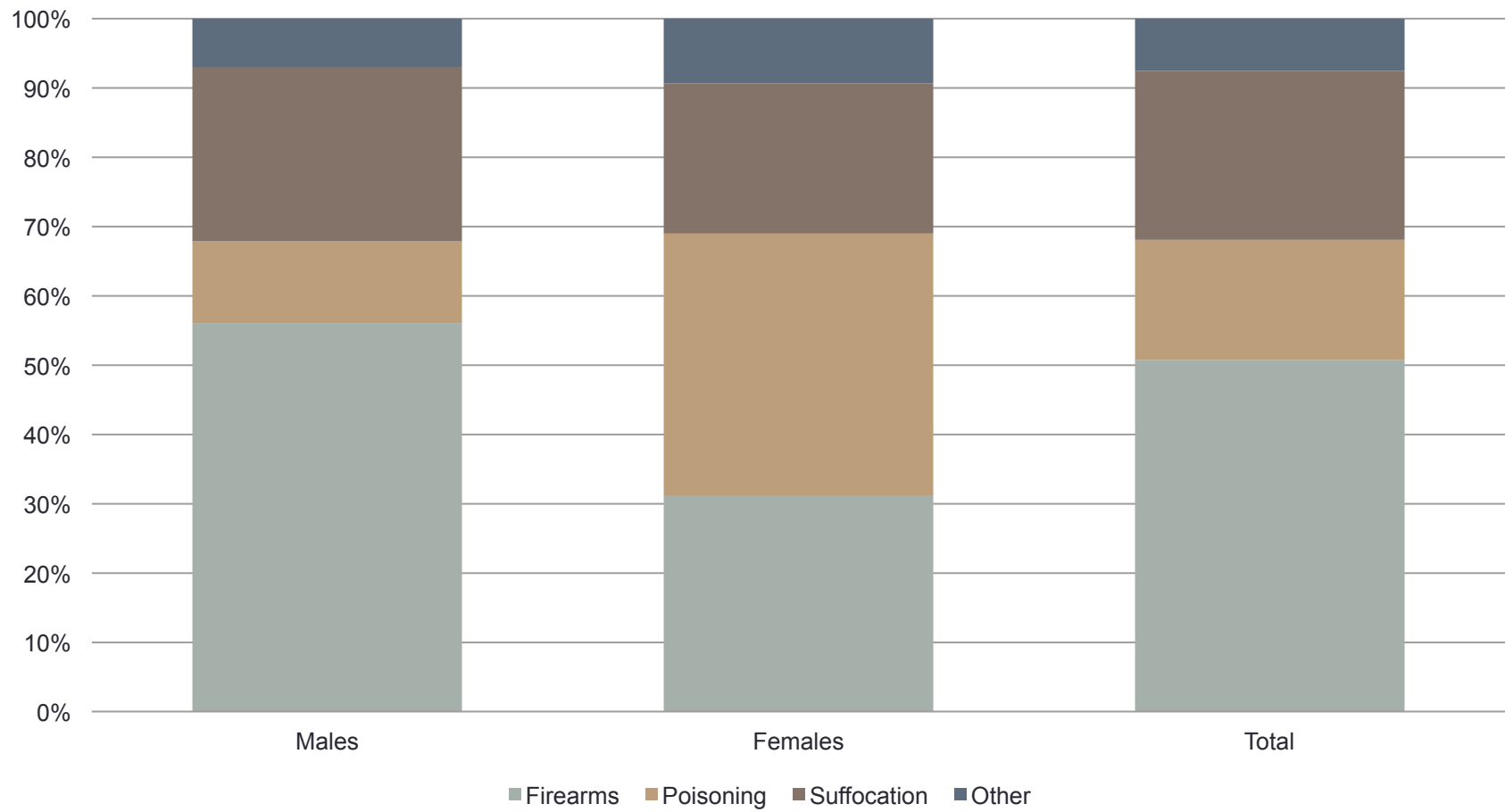
Suicide Deaths, by age & gender, USA, 2009



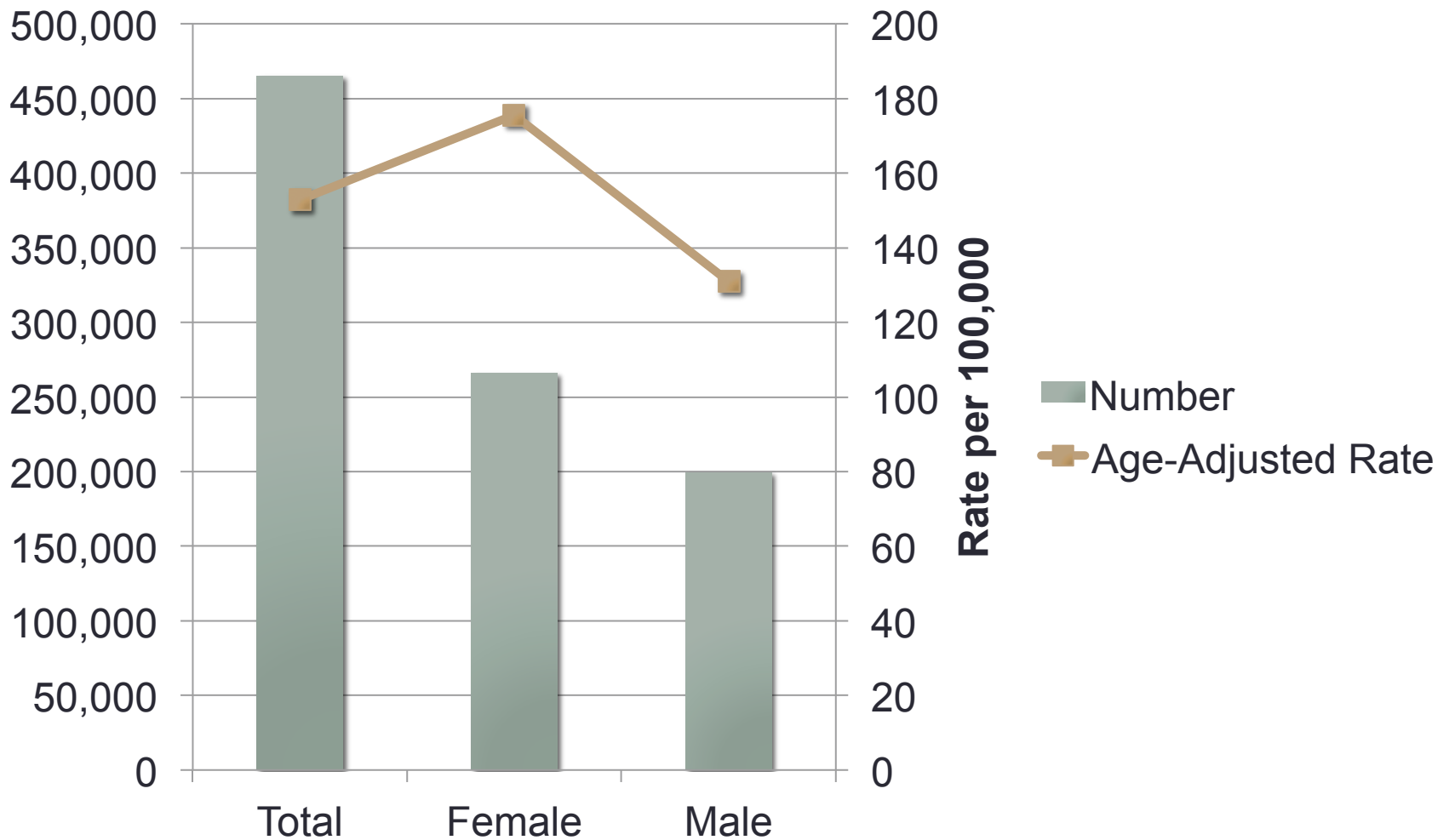
Number of Suicide Deaths, by gender & race, USA, 2009



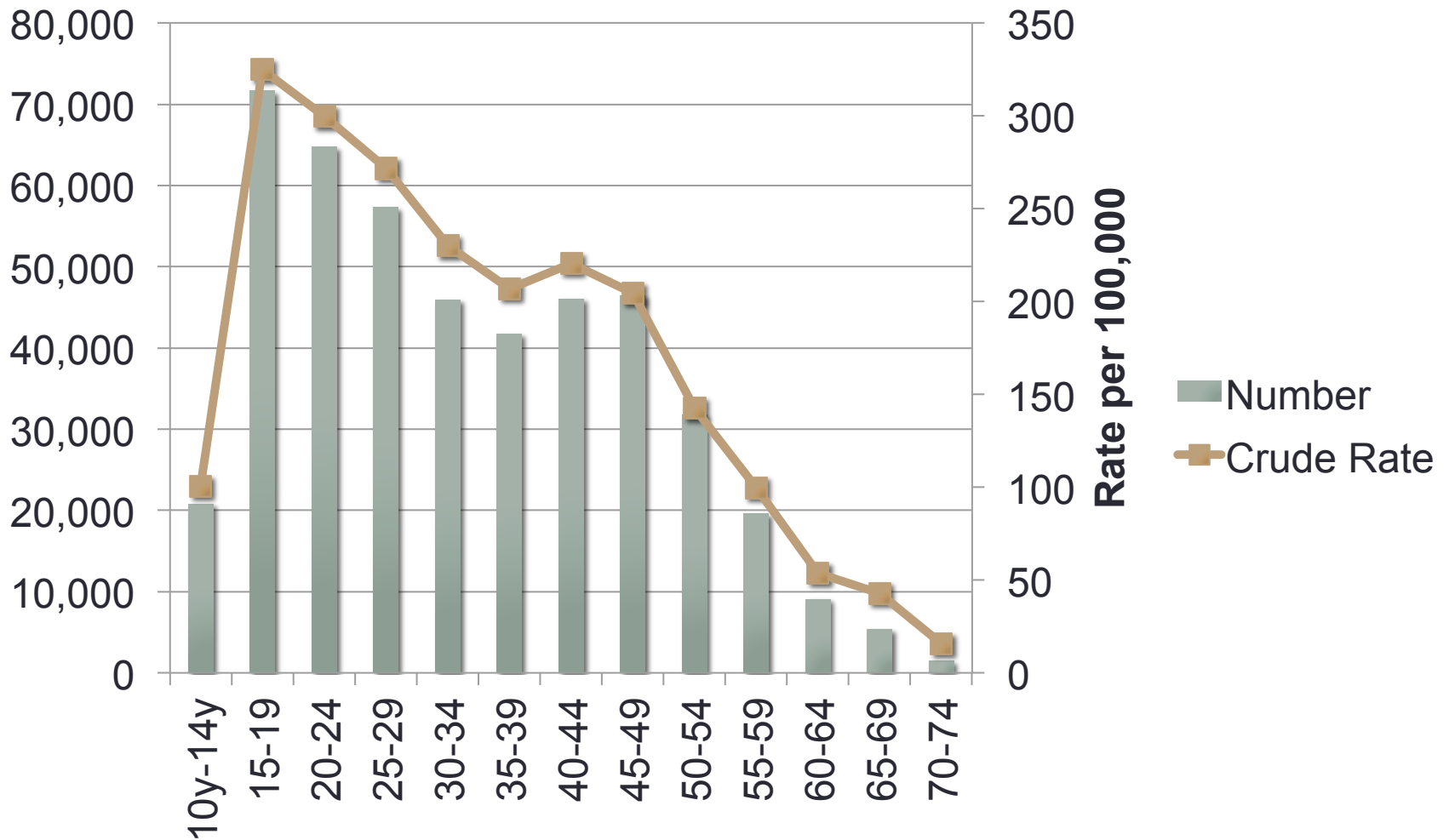
Suicide deaths, by method, USA, 2009



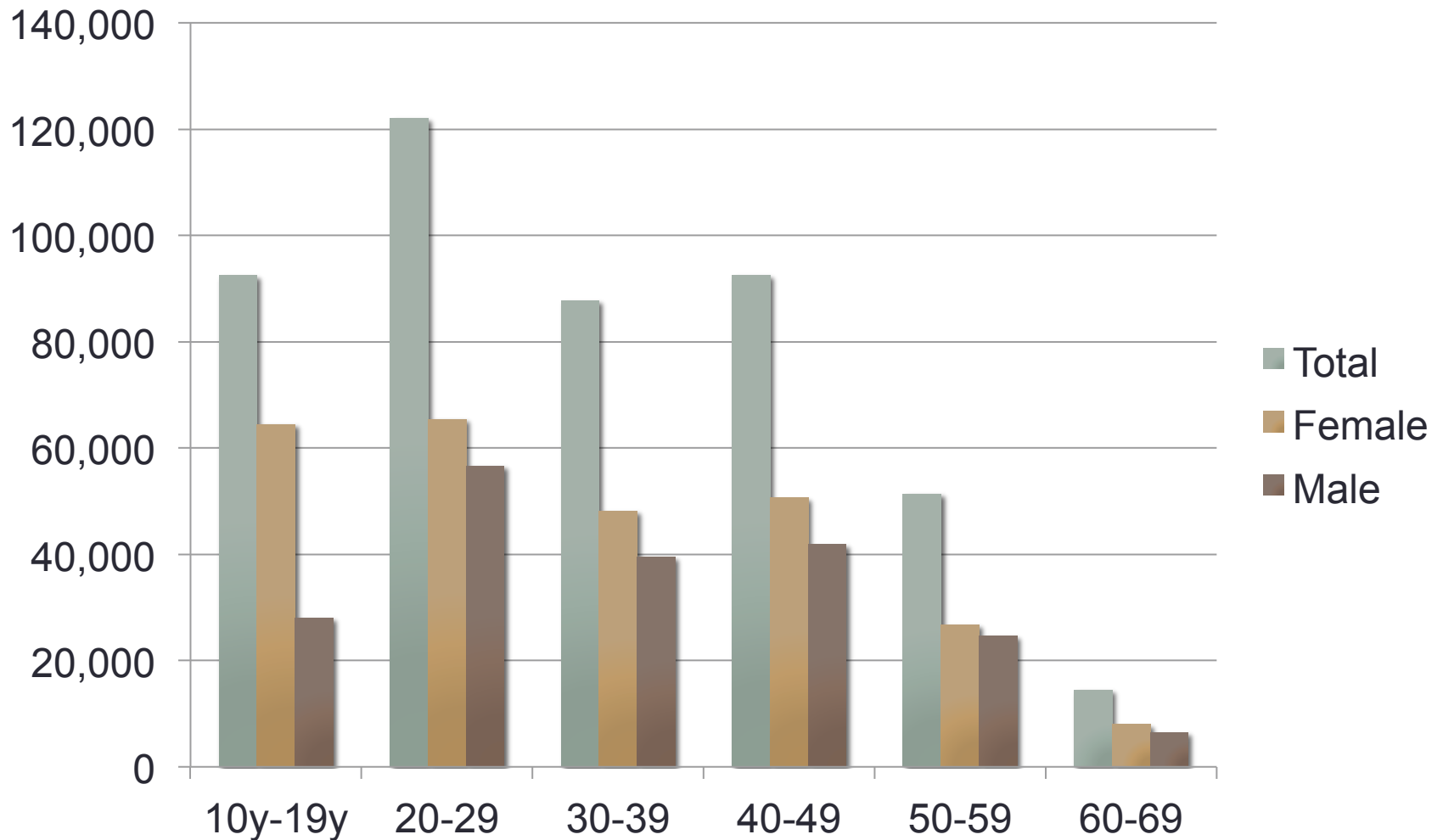
Nonfatal Self-Harm, by gender, USA, 2010



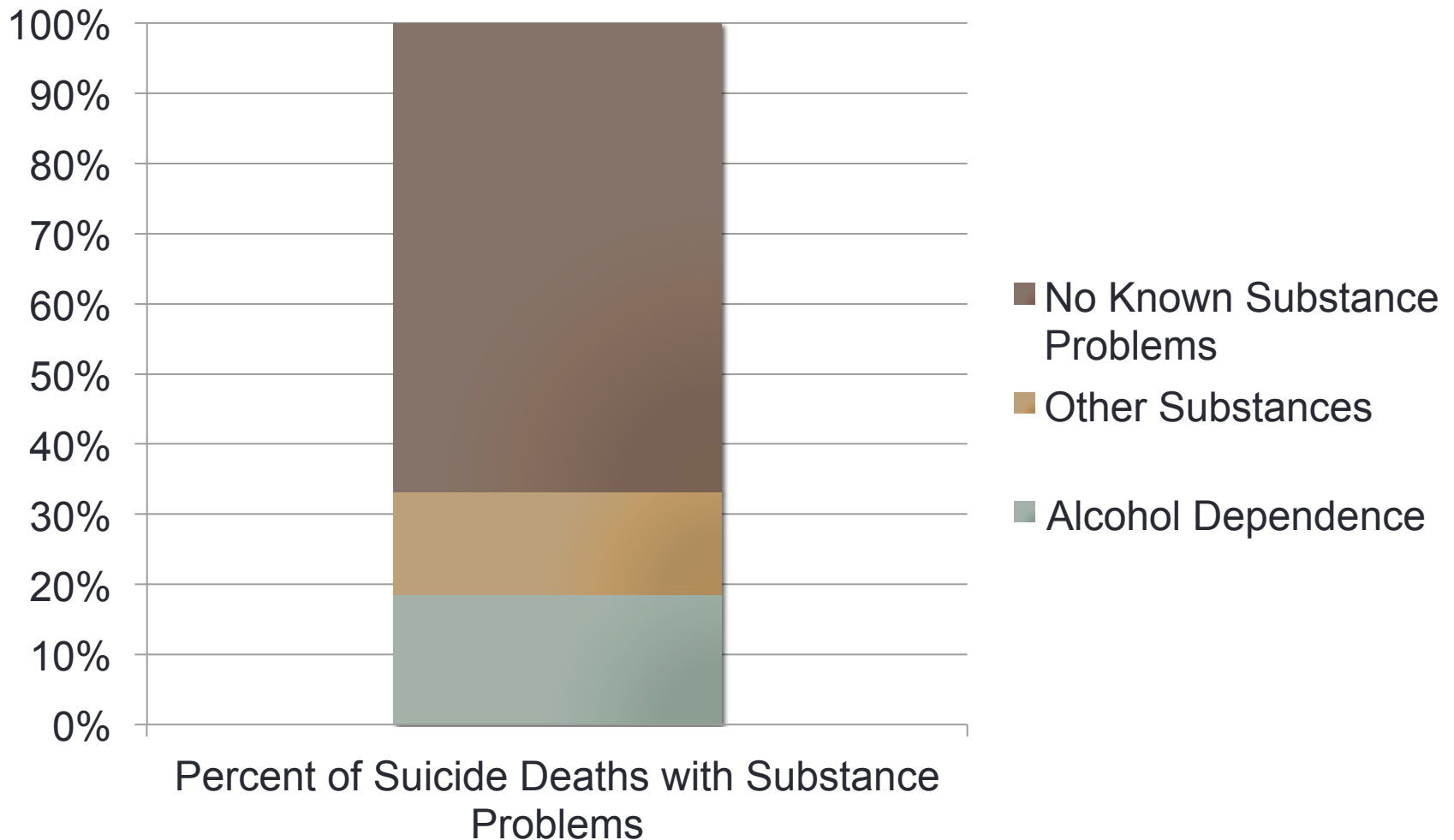
Nonfatal Self-Harm, by age, USA, 2010



Nonfatal Self-Harm, by gender & age, USA, 2010



Substance Abuse and Suicide, USA, 2009, NVDRS (16 states)



Q&A

WHY FAITH COMMUNITIES?

Karen Mason, Ph.D.

Psychologist/Associate Professor of Counseling and Psychology
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Faith Communities and Suicide Prevention

- *The National Strategy for Suicide Prevention: Goals and Objectives or Action* recognizes faith communities as having a key role in suicide prevention.

U.S. Dept. Of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service. (2001). *National strategy of suicide prevention: Goals and objectives for action*. Rockville, MD

<http://www.samhsa.gov/prevention/suicide.aspx>

Clergy are contacted by suicidal folks

- Surveys by the National Institute of Mental Health found that clergy are equally likely to be contacted for help as mental health professionals by a person with a major mental health diagnosis.

Hohmann, A. A., & Larson, D. B. (1993). Psychiatric factors predicting use of clergy. In E. L. Worthington (Ed.), *Psychotherapy and Religious Values*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

Clergy are contacted by suicidal folks

- Approximately 25% of the National Comorbidity Survey sample of persons with all types of mental health disorders contacted clergy for help. ... Suicidal ideation, plans or attempts were some of the significant predictors of making contact. In fact, suicidal persons who sought treatment were as likely to contact the clergy as other providers.

Wang, P., Berglund, P., & Kessler, R. (2003). Patterns and correlates of contacting clergy for mental disorders in the United States. *Health Services Research, 38*(2), 647-673).

Clergy are frontline caregivers

- Clergy report being contacted by a suicidal person about 1 per year.
- For example, one clergy said, “Within the first week of my being [at my first church] a woman called me, said she was sitting at her home and she had a razor blade beside her, and she didn’t see any reason to live anymore, and that was like day two or three on the job.”

Mason, K., Polischuk, P., Pendleton, R., Bousa, E., Good, R., Wines, J.D. Jr. (2011). Clergy referral of suicidal individuals: a qualitative study. *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling*, 65(3).

Theological Questions about Suicide

- Why doesn't God give me joy?
- Is suicide a sin?
- Will a person who dies by suicide spend eternity in Hell?
- Why couldn't I protect my son or daughter?

Mason, K., Polischuk, P., Pendleton, R., Bousa, E., Good, R., Wines, J.D. Jr. (2011). Clergy referral of suicidal individuals: a qualitative study. *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling*, 65(3).

Some faith communities have developed a position on suicide

- The General Council of Assemblies of God
- Catechism of the Catholic Church
- The Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America
- A 2008 interfaith statement called “A Consensus Statement on Suicide and Suicide Prevention”
- The United Church of Christ 22nd General Synod
- The United Methodist Church

Religiosity protects against Suicide

- Religiosity is a known protective factor for suicide, a factor that reduces the risk of suicide

Brenner, Homaifar, Adler, Wolfman & Kemp, 2009; Dervic et al., 2004; Dervic et al., 2011

- Religiosity has been found to be used to cope with suicidal thoughts

Alexander, Haugland, Ashenden, Knight, & Brown, 2009; Weaver & Koenig, 1996

Ministry of Presence and community

- One clergy described what she offers suicidal people: “I think it would probably be more of a supportive presence, a spiritual listening, than actual in-depth kind of counseling.”

Mason, K., Polischuk, P., Pendleton, R., Bousa, E., Good, R., Wines, J.D. Jr. (2011). Clergy referral of suicidal individuals: a qualitative study. *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling*, 65(3)

- One of my (Mason) non-church-going clients says she's alive today because she joined a ladies' group at her sibling's church.
- Refer for mental health treatment

Q&A

VIGNETTES

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Vignette #1: Linda

- Linda calls you and says that her husband just walked out on her. She is crying hysterically. After you talk with her, she calms down and tells you that she was so angry she thought about killing herself just to show her husband.

Vote: What will you ask Linda?

- You're not seriously thinking of killing yourself, right?
- Do you think you would follow up on this thought of killing yourself to get back at your husband? Today? Have you thought of ways that you might hurt yourself?
- Have you thought about suicide before? Have you made a plan and attempted suicide before?
- I'm concerned for you. Are you feeling depressed?
- I'm here to help. Do you mind sharing with me your reasons to live?

Vignette #2: Bernice

- Bernice tells you in confidence that she's been depressed since a date rape about 6 months ago. She still feels too ashamed to tell any of her other friends or family what happened and she wonders why God let this happen. She looks depressed and when you ask, she says that her primary care doctor started her on an antidepressant last week. She tells you that, when she was 12, when her parents were going through a divorce, she tried cutting her legs a few times, but she stopped because it didn't help. She goes on to say that she has some upsetting suicidal thoughts some days.

Vote: What will you ask Bernice?

- You've had some pretty difficult things happen to you. Can you tell me how you've been handling this trauma during the last 6 months? Have you talked to rape counselors?
- When you were younger and cutting yourself, did you think about suicide back then? Did you ever make a plan or decide on how you would kill yourself?
- It takes courage to get help for depression. Besides the antidepressant, are you also talking with a therapist? Have you ever considered this as an option?
- I want you to know that you are not alone. I care about what's going on with you. Let's talk about the ways we can help you deal with this trauma.
- You mentioned you were experiencing some "suicidal thoughts" recently. Can you tell me more about those thoughts?

Vignette #3: David

- David calls you and says he is struggling with his wife's death from breast cancer a year ago today. He wonders why God didn't heal her. As he continues to talk, you realize that he seems depressed and doesn't seem to look forward to the future. He keeps saying, "I can't imagine life without Jane." As you continue to question him, you find out that he has a gun next to him and he plans to kill himself after hanging up the phone unless you can give him a reason to live.

Vote: What will you ask David?

- David, please put the gun away. I have a hard time concentrating on how to help you when I know there is a gun there.
- It must be very hard for you since your wife passed away. Tell me about her.
- Let's talk about how you're feeling – alone, depressed, hopeless.
- I know you will find this hard to believe but there are a number of resources to help you with your grief. Let's talk about which ones might work for you.
- Let's talk about how you've coped during this first year and see if we can give you a lot of reasons to live and feel hopeful again.

Q&A

RESOURCES

Debbie Helms, B.S.
Executive Coordinator
Samaritans of Merrimack Valley
Family Service, Inc.

SAMARITANS USA *working together to prevent suicide*



Help Lines

- Google: “Suicide crisis lines in [name of state]”
- Samaritans of Merrimack Valley
 - Toll Free: 1-866-912-4673
 - Local: 978-327-6607
 - Teen Line: 978-688-TEEN (8336)
 - Samaritans Statewide help line
 - Toll Free: 1-866-870-4673
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
 - Toll Free: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
 - Press 1 or say Veteran for the Veterans help line
- The Dougy Center
 - 1-866-775-5683 (support for children grieving the death of someone)
- The Trevor Project
 - 1-866-488-7386 (support for GLBTQ youth)
- Compassionate Friends – 1-877-969-1000 (on line support for the loss of a child)

Websites

- Google: “State suicide prevention efforts in [name of state]”
- Samaritans of Merrimack Valley:
www.familyserviceinc.com/Samaritans
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:
www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
- S.A.V.E. – Statewide Empowerment for Veterans’ Advocacy:
www.mass.gov/veterans
- Mass. Coalition for Suicide Prevention:
www.masspreventssuicide.org
- National Alliance of Mental Illness: www.namimass.org
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: www.afsp.org
- American Association of Suicidology: www.suicidology.org
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center: www.sprc.org
- The Trevor Project: www.thetrevorproject.org

Books and Literature

- **Why People Die by Suicide – Thomas Joiner, 2006, Harvard University Press**
- **Myths About Suicide – Thomas Joiner, 2010, Harvard University Press**
- **Clergy Response to Suicidal Persons and their Family Members: An Interfaith Resource Book for Clergy and Congregations – D.C. Clark, Ed., 1993, Chicago: Exploration Press**
- **How I Stayed Alive While My Brain was Trying to Kill Me – Susan Rose Blauner, 2002, Harper Collins Publishers Inc.**
- **Night Falls Fast: Understanding Suicide – Kay Redfield Jamison, Ph.D., 2000, New York: Alfred Knopf**
- **Reducing Suicide: A National Imperative – Sara K. Goldsmith, T.C. Pellmar, A.M. Leinman, W. E. Bunney (Eds.) – 2002, National Academies Press**
- **The Suicidal Mind – Edwin S. Schneidman, 1996, New York: Oxford University Press**
- **The Role of Faith Communities in Preventing Suicide: a Report of an Interfaith Suicide Prevention Dialogue - 2009, Suicide Prevention Resource Center, Newton, MA: Education Development Center, Inc.**

Survivors of Suicide Loss Resources

- Samaritans of Merrimack Valley –1-866-912-4673 or 978-327-6671; teen line – 978-688-8336 – Massachusetts has over 12 support groups for survivors.
- Samaritans Statewide Help line – 1-877-870-4673
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- Hospice of North Shore – 978-774-7566*
- Merrimack Valley Hospice – 978-470-1615*
- The Children’s Room – 781-641-4741*
- Compassionate Friends – 1-877-969-0010

*Grief support groups not specific to suicide deaths

Survivors of Suicide Loss Resources

- Samaritans of Merrimack Valley:
www.familyserviceinc.com/Samaritans
- Mass. Coalition for Suicide Prevention:
www.masspreventssuicide.org
- Hospice of North Shore: www.hns.org*
- Merrimack Valley Hospice: www.merrimackvalleyhospice.org*
- The Children's Room: www.childrensroom.org*
- Compassionate Friends: www.compassionatefriends.org*
- The Dougy Group: www.dougy.org*
- Survivors of Suicide: www.survivorsofsuicide.org
- Survivor Support for Military and Veterans: www.taps.org
- National Alliance on Mental Illness: www.namima.org
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: www.afsp.org
- American Association of Suicidology: www.suicidology.org
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center: www.sprc.org

Survivors of Suicide Loss Resources

- MUSIC FOR SURVIVORS

- Before Their Time – www.beforetheirtime.org
- Chaos of the Heart – www.musicforthesoul.org

- BOOKS FOR SURVIVORS

- No Time To Say Goodbye: Surviving the Suicide of a Loved One by Carla Fine
- After Suicide Loss: Coping with Your Grief by Bob Baugher and Jack Jordan
- Suicide Survivors Handbook by Trudy Carlson
- Survivors of Suicide by Rita Robinson and Phyllis Hart
- After Suicide: a Workbook for Grieving Kids available through the Dougy Group
- Someone I Love Died by Suicide: A Story for Child Survivors and Those Who Care for Them by Doreen Cammarata
- My Son, My Son by Iris Bolton
- Fierce Goodbye: Living in the Shadow of Suicide by G. Lloyd Carr and Gwendolyn C. Carr, 2004, Herald Press
- After a Suicide: Recommendations for Religious Services and Other Public Memorial Observances: Suicide Prevention Resource Center, 2004, Newton, MA: Education Development Center, Inc.

Trainings

- SOS – Signs of Suicide – 90 minute online training or can be conducted on site – www.mentalhealthscreening.org
- QPR – Question, Persuade and Refer – can be done online or in person – www.qprinstitute.com
- ASIST – Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training – 2 day workshop in person – www.livingworks.net
- Connect Suicide Prevention Project – 3 to 3 ½ hour on site trainings for both suicide attempts and threats as well as after a suicide death. Discipline specific for clergy.
In Massachusetts, contact Debbie Helms at 978-327-6671 or at dhelms@familyserviceinc.com – For all other states, contact knorton@naminh.org
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center – Has a number of online trainings – <http://training.sprc.org>

Q&A

- Resources
- Over the webinar

Thank You for Participating Today

- Slides will be emailed to you after today's webinar.
- A List of Resources are on the GCTS website at <http://www.gordonconwell.edu/academics/documents/clergy-engagement-handout.pdf>
- Study results will be available sometime next fall.

Contact us

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