

US suicide rate fell last year after decade of steady rise

October 23 2020, by Mike Stobbe



This Dec. 11, 2019 file photo shows gravestones at a cemetery in New Jersey. The U.S. suicide death rate fell slightly in 2019, the first annual decline in more than a decade, according to new government data. (AP Photo/Seth Wenig)

The U.S. suicide rate fell slightly last year, the first annual decline in

more than a decade, according to new government data.

It's a small decrease and the data is preliminary, but the decline is "really exciting," said Dr. Christine Moutier, chief medical officer of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

The fall may be partly due to years of [suicide prevention](#) efforts, like increasing mental health screenings, she said. Other factors, like the pre-pandemic economy, might also have played a role, she added.

Experts aren't sure how the coronavirus will influence this year's [suicide](#) numbers, though American mortality overall is looking far bleaker.

Suicides had been on the rise since 2005. In 2018, the national suicide rate hit its highest level since 1941—14.2 per 100,000 people. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention posted new business closures, some temporary and some permanent. Millions of people were forced to stay at home, many of them alone. Surveys suggest more Americans are reporting depression, anxiety and drug and alcohol use. Adding to that dangerous mix, telemedicine.

Anderson noted many COVID-19 deaths have been in the same set of late-middle-aged white people who are considered at high risk for suicide.

"It's possible that the rise in COVID-19 is sort pushing down the suicide rate," he suggested.

© 2020 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without permission.

Citation: US suicide rate fell last year after decade of steady rise (2020, October 23) retrieved 8 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-10-suicide-fell-year-decade-steady.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.