



Suicide Health Alert for August 2022

Dear Community Providers,

The following is to notify you that confirmed suicides in Pima County have surpassed the alert threshold for the month of August 2022.

Methods

The Health Department's Community Mental Health and Addiction unit conducts routine surveillance of local suicide trends. Surveillance looks at specific data sets to monitor and record trends in critical public health indicators commonly associated with suicide and self-harm. The CMHA team uses a six-month moving average to set thresholds for issuing health alerts. The alert indicator is set at two standard deviations above the six-month rolling average. This alert indicator allows for standardized methodology for the team to issue alerts when local suicide trends reach higher than expected totals.

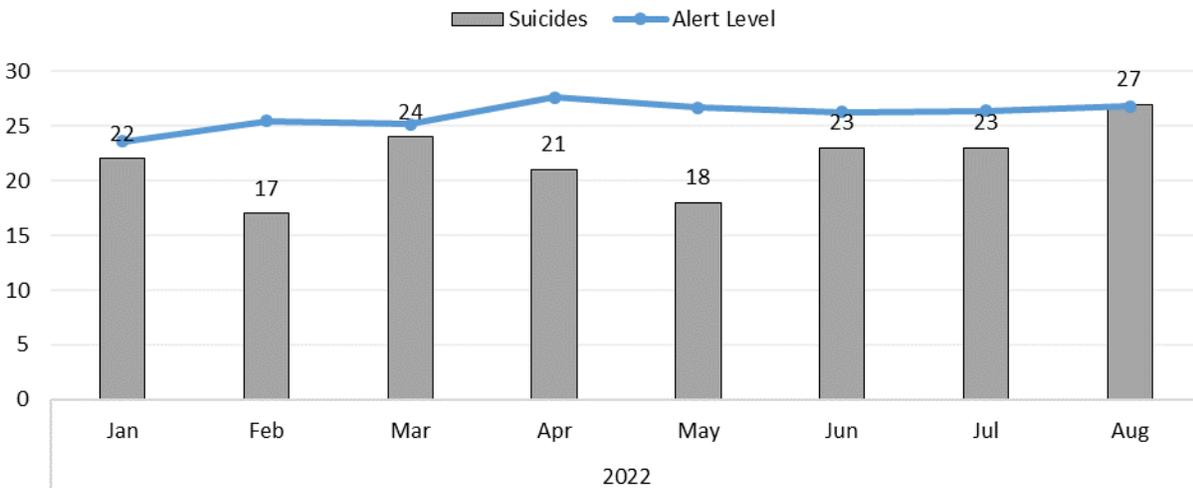
Mortality Data

Data from Arizona Department of Health Services' Vital Records and Pima County's Office of the Medical Examiner were used in this alert. There is an inherent data lag in the death certification process and the required time to complete the medical examination. Given these two factors, this report is limited to information available at the time the report was completed.

Alert

A point in time count on Sept. 14, 2022, confirmed 27 suicides that occurred in Pima County during the month of August 2022. This total exceeds the alert threshold for the month (*Figure 1*) generating the following alert. Note, counts are preliminary, as some cases may still be pending.

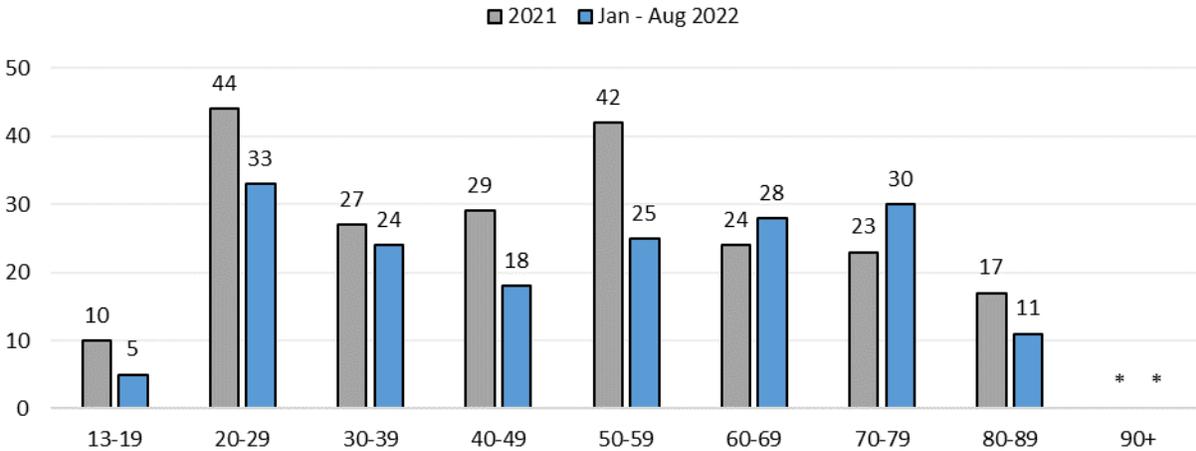
Figure 1. Suicides by Month with Alert Indicator
(Six Month Moving Average + 2 standard deviations)



Age Groups: Suicides in 2022 have been highest in those aged 20-29 years old. However, 2022 suicides in those aged 60-69 and 70-79 have already exceeded their 2021 totals.

Figure 2. Suicides by Age Groups

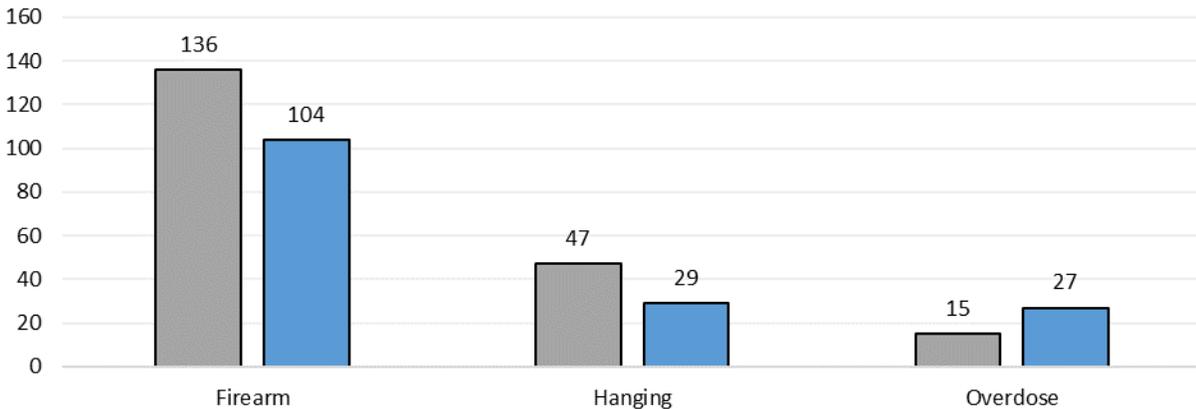
*suppressed for privacy



Cause of Death: Firearms continue to be the most common method used in suicides locally. Year to date, 59% of suicides were caused by a firearm in 2022. However, intentional overdoses have increased substantially. Suicides in 2022 caused by intentional overdose have exceeded their respective 2021 totals and have accounted for 15% of suicides (up from 7% in 2021).

Figure 3. Suicides by Top Three Methods

Legend: 2021 (Grey), Jan - Aug 2022 (Blue)



Provider Recommendations and Risk Factors

Risk Factors for Suicide

- Access to lethal means, particularly firearms
- Prior suicide attempts
- Mental health disorders, particularly depression and other mood disorders
- Use of alcohol or other drugs
- Family history of suicide
- Suicide death within social network
- Social isolation
- Having debilitating, chronic disease or disability
- Lack of access to behavioral health and substance use care
- Untreated mental health or substance use conditions

Protective Factors Against Suicide

- Engaging in behavioral health care and substance use treatment
- Connectedness to individuals, family, community, and social institutions
- Engaging in meaningful and/or social activities
- Life skills (such as problem solving, resiliency)
- Self-esteem and a sense of purpose or meaning in life

Provider Recommendations

- Utilize a suicide risk assessment tool, such as the [Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale \(C-SSRS\)](#), to assess individuals who present with risk factors
- Refer individuals in crisis to the 2-1-1 crisis counseling program: [Resilient Arizona Crisis Counseling](#)
- Promote safe storage of firearms and medications, such as locks and safes.
 - To request gun locks for distribution, please call Pima County Health Department at (520) 724-7940 or email Sam.Chia@pima.gov.
- Share resources and 24-hour crisis lines, such as:
 - Local Community Wide Crisis Line: 1-866-495-6735 or 520-622-6000
 - Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: 988
 - Teen Lifeline, call or text: 602-248-TEEN (8336)
 - Veterans Crisis Line: 988, then press 1
 - Substance Use Referral and Treatment Hotline: 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

Organization Recommendations

- Have all staff certified in [QPR Gatekeeper Training](#) and/or [Mental Health First Aid](#)
- Make an organizational commitment: [About Zero Suicide](#)

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Every one. Every where. Everyday.



- Create internal protocols and policies to help others surrounding a suicide: [Suicide Postvention](#)
- Print and distribute attached crisis line information to clients

Our Commitment

The Health Department continues to conduct surveillance to closely monitor changes in trends and will keep you informed through these types of updates. For more information or to schedule trainings, including Mental Health First Aid and QPR Gatekeeper Training offered by certified public health instructors, visit pima.gov/mentalhealth or contact our team at CMHA@pima.gov.

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