

# Suicide Decedents in Virginia: Current or Former Service Members 2003-2017

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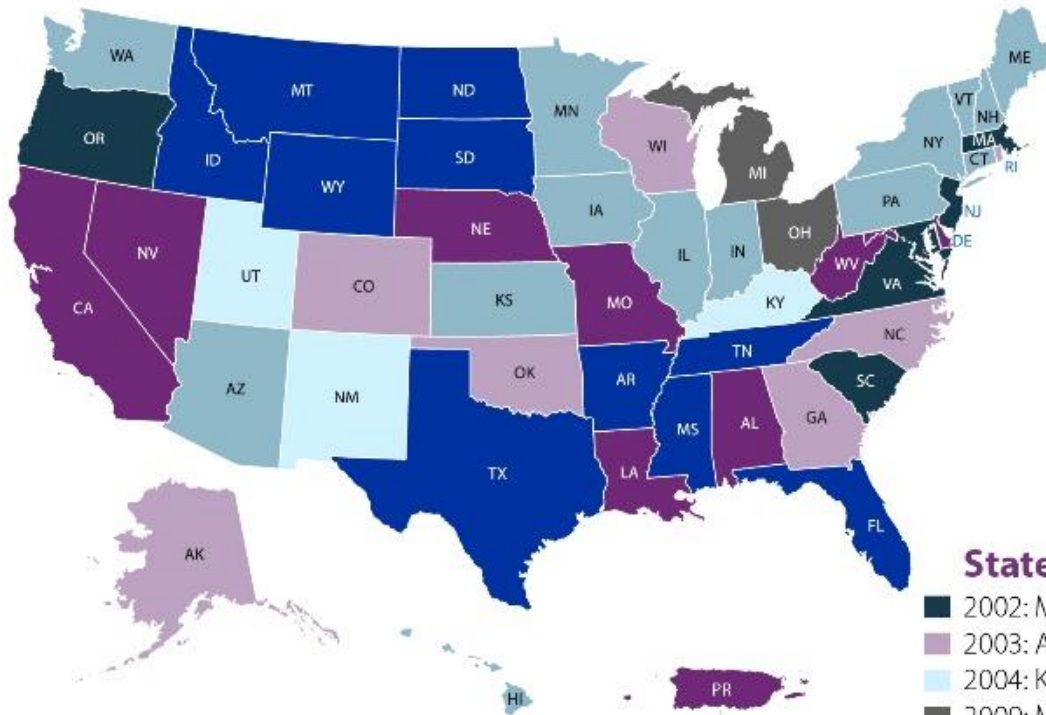
Program Manager, Virginia Violent Death Reporting System

Governor's Challenge - July 10, 2019

Richmond, VA

# Virginia Violent Death Reporting System

- Surveil all suicides, homicides, legal interventions, deaths of undetermined intent, unintentional firearms, deaths due to terrorism
- OCME
- Data Sources
  - Required: medical examiner, death certificate, law enforcement, and toxicology
  - Supplemental sources



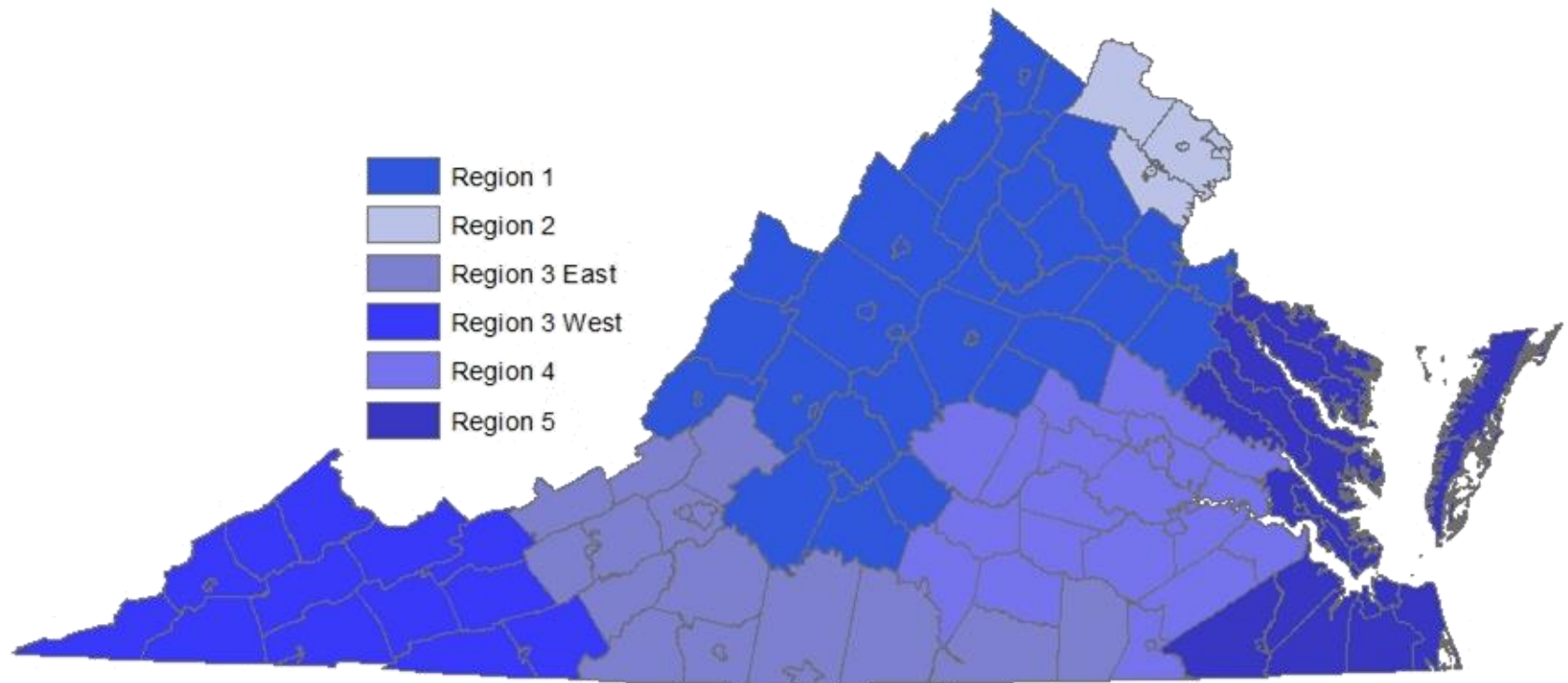
## States added by year:

- 2002: MA, MD, NJ, OR, SC, VA
- 2003: AK, CO, GA, NC, OK, RI, WI
- 2004: KY, NM, UT
- 2009: MI, OH
- 2014: AZ, CT, HI, IA, IL, IN, KS, ME, MN, NH, NY, PA, VT, WA
- 2016: AL, CA, DE, DC, LA, MO, NE, NV, Puerto Rico, WV
- 2018: AR, FL, ID, MS, MT, ND, SD, TN, TX, WY

# Who is a Veteran?

- Any current or former service member
- Where reported, also track:
  - Active duty
  - Branch of Service
- Limitations:
  - Reservists are probably undercounted
  - Active duty and branch of service are not always reported
- Analysis here is for veteran and civilian
  - Civilian is those ages 18 years or older who were known or unknown to have any military service

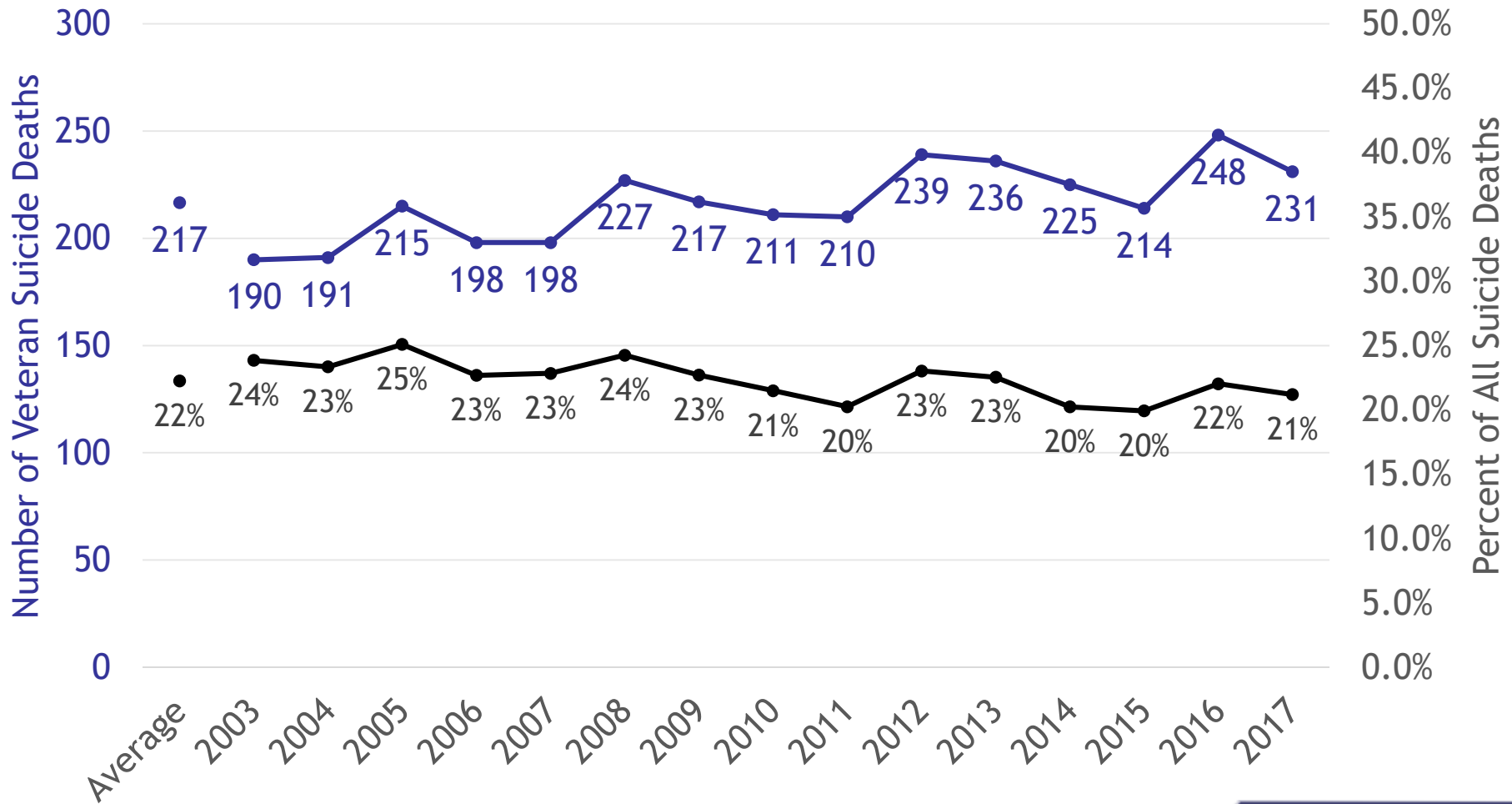
# Regions for Analysis



# Number of Suicide Deaths by Veteran Status

Region	Veteran		Non-Veteran	
Region 1	643	21.1%	2,410	78.9%
Region 2	539	19.9%	2,166	80.1%
Region 3 East	348	21.2%	1,294	78.8%
Region 3 West	245	19.1%	1,041	80.9%
Region 4	481	20.3%	1,894	79.7%
Region 5	989	31.6%	2,145	68.4%
Unknown	5	17.2%	24	82.8%
TOTAL	3,250	22.8%	10,974	77.2%

# Number of Veteran Suicide Deaths by Year: Virginia



# Demographics and Injury

- Demographics
  - White males - 80% or more in every region
  - Active Duty (~4%) is largely Navy
  - Few had been served by Veteran's Administration Medical Center (VAMC)
- Injury
  - Firearms (60%-83%)
  - Asphyxia (6%-18%)
  - Poison (5%-14%)
  - Took action to prevent suicide (23.3%)
    - 17% of these actions were to restrict access to any type of lethal means

# Key Differences by Age Groups

18-34	35-64	65+
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental health               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While a mental health diagnosis is present for almost half of all decedents, the percentage of diagnosed decedents increases for 20-24 [39.9%] to 25-34 [53.4%]). It remains fairly steady across the remainder of the lifespan, decreasing slightly after age 65</li> <li>• Diagnosis - PTSD (25-34; 14.0%)                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only age group where the percentage exceeds 5%</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Substance abuse</li> <li>• Criminal legal problems (25-34 years)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpersonal problems               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family relationship problems</li> <li>• Intimate partner relationship problems</li> <li>• Civil legal problems (i.e. divorce or custody cases)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Alcohol abuse</li> <li>• Mental health diagnosis - depression</li> <li>• Current mental health treatment - highest during these ages; decreases after age 65</li> <li>• Job and financial problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical health problems - half or more of decedents beginning at age 65</li> <li>• Recent death or suicide death of a friend or family member</li> <li>• Current depressed mood</li> </ul>
<p>Reactive suicides - crises, recent arguments, intimate partner problems</p>		<p>Less reactive suicides</p>



# 2017 Highlights

- Highest number and percent of female veterans since VVDRS began collecting data (n=15)
- There were 259 violent deaths of veterans in Virginia. 89% were suicide deaths
- Veteran decedents were 3 times as frequently diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
  - Among veterans with a mental health diagnosis, PTSD was especially elevated for ages 20-24 (37.5%), 25-34 (28%), and 35-44 (18.8%)

# For more information:

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