

# PUBLIC HEALTH SURVEILLANCE OF VIOLENT DEATHS IN NEW YORK CITY

New York Violent Death Reporting System—NY VDRS

Injury and Violence Prevention Program, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

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In 2015, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene began participating in the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) in collaboration with the New York State Department of Health, Bureau of Occupational Health and Injury Prevention. New York's Violent Death Reporting System (NY VDRS) combines information from medical examiner records, death certificates and police reports to enhance the public health surveillance of violent deaths and violent incidents. These multiple data sources are entered into the standardized NVDRS database, which has been operating under the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's direction since 2002. Currently, 40 states, along with the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, participate in NVDRS.

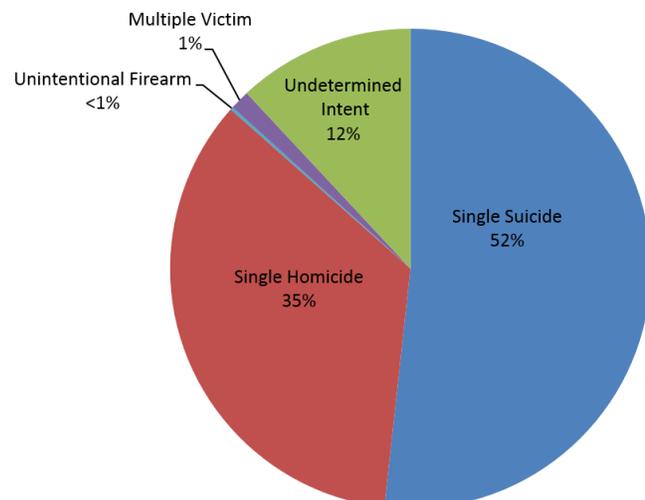
## NVDRS definition of violent deaths

- The World Health Organization defines violent death as “a death resulting from the intentional use of physical force or power against oneself, another person, or against a group or community.”<sup>1</sup>
- In NVDRS, violent deaths include<sup>2,3</sup> :
  - a. Suicide – death resulting from the intentional use of force against oneself
  - b. Homicide – death resulting from the intentional use of force or power, threatened or actual, against another person, group, or community
  - c. Death due to legal intervention – death in which the decedent was killed by or died as a result of a law enforcement officer or other persons with specified legal authority to use deadly force, including military, acting in the line of duty
  - d. Death of undetermined intent – death resulting from the use of force or power against oneself or another person for which the evidence indicating one manner of death is no more compelling than the evidence indicating another manner of death
  - e. Unintentional firearm injury death – death resulting from a penetrating injury or gunshot wound from a weapon that uses a powder charge to fire a projectile when there was a preponderance of evidence that the shooting was not intentionally directed at the victim.

## Violent Death Incidents

- NY VDRS is an incident-based system; it captures information on each individual violent death, and also links related deaths to create an incident.
- In 2015, there were 1054 violent incidents in NYC, resulting in 1070 violent deaths.
  - ◇ Over half of all violent incidents were suicides.
  - ◇ The youngest victim in a violent death incident was less than one day old and the oldest victim was 96 years old.
  - ◇ Males were almost three times more likely than females to be the victim of a violent death.
- Multiple victim incidents include multiple homicides, multiple suicides, and homicide(s) followed by suicide(s).
  - ◇ In 2015, there were 14 multiple victim incidents resulting in 30 deaths.

Figure 1. Violent Death Incidents in NYC, NY Violent Death Reporting System, 2015 (n = 1,054)



## Violent Incident Circumstances

- NY VDRS collects information on the documented circumstances surrounding each violent death in an effort to more fully describe patterns in violent deaths and violent death incidents.
- In 2015, circumstances were identified for 794 of 1054 (75%) violent death incidents in New York City.

**Circumstances Explored in NVDRS**

- ◇ Mental health, substance use disorders, other addictions
- ◇ Crime and criminal activity
- ◇ Relationship and life stressors (e.g. arguments, job loss, divorce)
- ◇ Suicide attempt history, ideation, disclosure

- In 2015, 43% of all violent death incidents with documented circumstances in NYC involved a mental health circumstance.

- ◇ More than three-quarters of all incidents involving a mental health circumstance were single suicides (84%). Single homicides made up 3% of incidents with a mental health circumstance.

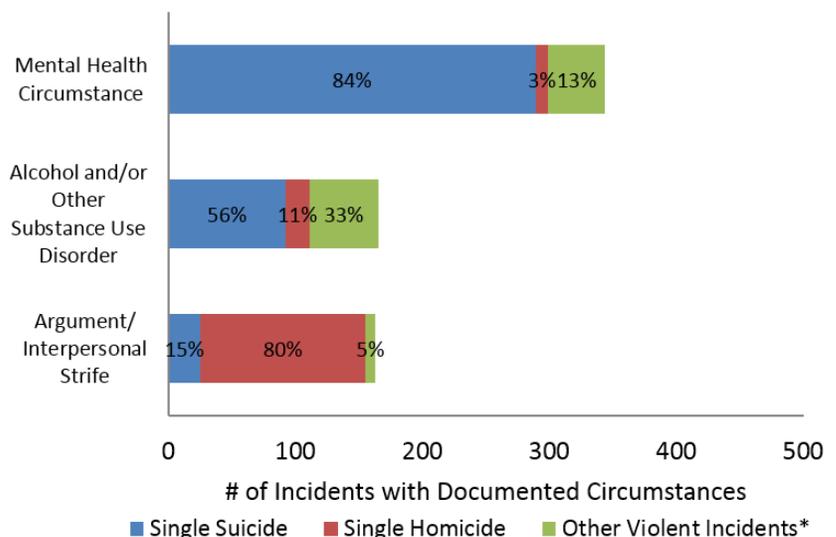
- Circumstances related to alcohol and/or other substance use disorders were present in nearly 21% of violent incidents.

- ◇ While most of these incidents were single suicides (56%), single homicides accounted for about 11% of these incidents.

- Slightly over 20% of violent death incidents with documented circumstances were precipitated by an argument.

- ◇ Most of these incidents were single homicides (80%); however, 15% of violent incidents precipitated by an argument were single suicides.

**Figure 2. Documented Circumstances Among Violent Death Incidents in NYC, NY Violent Death Reporting System, 2015 (n = 794)**



Note: More than one circumstance can be related to an incident

\*Other violent death incidents include: multiple victim, undetermined intent and unintentional firearm death incidents

### References

1. World Health Organization Global Consultation on Violence and Health. Violence: a public health priority. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization, 1996 (document WHO/EHA/SPI.POA.2).
2. World Health Organization. ICD-10: International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems: 10th Revision. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization; 1992.
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) Coding Manual Revised [Online] 2016 National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (producer). Available from URL: [www.cdc.gov/injury](http://www.cdc.gov/injury)

### Acknowledgments

Office of Vital Statistics, NYC DOHMH  
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 New York City Police Department  
 NYS DOH Bureau of Occupational Health and Injury Prevention

### Suggested citation

Clark, C, Stayton, C, Radcliffe, S. Public Health Surveillance of Violent Deaths in New York City, 2015 (<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/data/health-tools/injury.page>)  
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