



National Poll on Perceptions of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Reveals Most U.S. Adults Believe Suicide is Preventable

Disproportionately impacted groups are more likely to know someone who has thought about suicide or has attempted or died by suicide, and some are more likely to reach out to 988

NEW YORK (Oct. 9, 2024) – The latest findings from the 2024 Public Perception of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Poll reveal significant insights into how U.S. adults understand suicide and their potential roles in supporting those in crisis. Three of the nation's leading suicide prevention organizations – the [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#) (AFSP), the [National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention](#) (Action Alliance) at EDC, and the [Suicide Prevention Resource Center](#) (SPRC) – partnered with [The Harris Poll](#) to develop the bi-annual online poll, which surveyed more than twice as many U.S. adults 18+ in 2024 (over 4,000) as previous waves to be able to analyze the total sample in greater detail, particularly by key racial subgroups.

Nine out of 10 people in the U.S. believe that suicide can be prevented at least sometimes, showing an incredible shift in public understanding about suicide from decades ago when society viewed suicide as an inevitable outcome. There is a growing willingness to talk about mental health and suicide, signaling that negative attitudes are decreasing, but there is more work to do in the face of barriers. This poll shows that there is opportunity for everyone to play a role, reinforced by increases in those who would take action in supporting mental health and preventing suicide for themselves and others, and that resources like the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline and others are critically needed to help those struggling with mental health. The poll also underscores efforts needed to educate on the impact of lethal means and create culturally relevant strategies to support marginalized and racial groups who face unique challenges. Learn more at suicidepreventionnow.org.

Key Findings

The poll highlights both progress and ongoing challenges in public awareness and attitudes toward mental health and suicide prevention, including:

- **Increased Public Familiarity with 988:** Nearly two-thirds of adults (63%) have heard of 988, the three-digit number for calling, texting, or chatting with a crisis counselor, a 10% increase in awareness compared to the 2022 poll (57%), when the number launched.
- **Willingness to Reach Out in Crisis:** Nearly eight in 10 adults (78%) say they would be likely to reach out to 988 if they or someone they knew needed help, highlighting a sense of openness to seeking support during mental health crises.
- **Employer and Media Influence:** Respondents overwhelmingly believe that both employers (92%) and the media and entertainment industry (90%) have a role to play in supporting mental health and suicide prevention.
- **Misconceptions About Lethal Means:** A critical educational gap exists, with only half of adults (49%) knowing that limiting access to lethal means, including firearms, can prevent suicide.
- **Barriers to Help-Seeking Remain:** Despite increased awareness of crisis services, there are still barriers preventing individuals from reaching out for help. Fear of out-of-pocket costs (25%), lack of confidence in services (23%), and lack of insurance to cover costs (22%) are top concerns if they were struggling with thoughts of suicide or experiencing mental health distress.

- **More Lived Experiences:** Three in five adults (61%) know someone who has thought about, attempted or died by suicide, or have worried that someone might be thinking about suicide, a slight increase from 2022 (59%).
- **Openness to Discuss Mental Health:** More than half of adults (62%) are comfortable talking openly in public with others about mental health, and are increasingly more likely to reach out to someone if they were having thoughts of suicide (82% in 2024 vs. 80% in 2022, 73% in 2020, and 73% in 2018).
- **Public Desire to Help:** Most adults (93%) would take action if they were worried about someone's mental health and believe there are actions that can be taken to reduce suicide deaths. Increased access to care (77%), more training for professionals (72%), and public education (55%) are top priorities identified by respondents as actions that can reduce suicide.
- **Knowledge is Needed:** Most adults (71%) say something would stop them from talking about suicide with others, with 1 in 4 citing lack of knowledge (26%) or not knowing the right words (27%) as barriers.

"It's encouraging to see that most people believe suicide is preventable and that AFSP has made progress in educating the public about how to support someone struggling with mental health challenges," said AFSP CEO Bob Gebbia. "This data also underscores the urgency of increasing access to mental health care, and the need to continue our public education programs and advocacy efforts to address misconceptions about suicide and eliminate barriers to help-seeking for all communities."

Understanding Cultural Nuances

This year's poll was intentionally doubled to reach a wider group of respondents that reflect an increasingly diverse U.S. population. The data revealed some specific insights pertaining to key population groups, including:

- **A High Likelihood of Using 988:** 82% of American Indian/Alaska Native respondents, 79% of Black respondents, 78% of white respondents, 77% of Hispanic respondents, and 70% of Asian respondents said they are likely to reach out to 988.
- **Varying Comfort in Using a Hotline:** Adults who identify as LGBTQIA2S+ are less likely than those who do not identify as LGBTQIA2S+ to reach out to 988 (72% vs. 79%), and are less comfortable reaching out to a mental health hotline (66% vs. 72%), despite being more likely to have heard of 988 (73% vs. 62%).
- **Varying Barriers to Help-Seeking:** A more common barrier to seeking crisis services for several populations is the fear of what family, friends or others might think, including Hispanic (39%), American Indian/Alaska Native (38%) and Black respondents (33%). Meanwhile, fear of out-of-pocket costs is a more prevalent barrier for Asian respondents (30%).
- **Elevated Experiences with Suicide Among LGBTQIA2S+:** Adults who identify as LGBTQIA2S+ are more likely than those who do not identify as LGBTQIA2S+ to report knowing someone who they have worried may be thinking about suicide, or has talked to them about, attempted, or died by suicide (68% vs. 61%).
- **Elevated Experiences with Suicide Amongst American Indian/Alaska Native Adults:** Compared to other race/ethnicity groups, American Indian/Alaska Native adults are significantly more likely to know someone who they have worried might be thinking about suicide or has talked to them about, attempted, or died by suicide (77% vs. 66% Hispanic, 62% white, 55% Black, and 50% Asian), as well as having personally thought about or attempted suicide (42% vs. 30% Hispanic, 26% Black, 25% Asian, 22% white).



“To truly advance our suicide prevention efforts, it was critical to expand our data collection efforts this year,” said SPRC Executive Director Shelby Rowe. “The expanded data, which has doubled in size compared to previous years, highlights the urgent need for education to address barriers to suicide prevention. The insights gained help us understand the unique challenges diverse communities face in accessing mental health care. Coupled with lived experience, this information will guide SPRC’s strategies to strengthen suicide prevention efforts nationwide, ensuring they are inclusive and equitable for all communities.”

“Preventing suicide, like many other public health issues, requires leadership, collaboration, and sustained support at the federal, state, and community-levels across the country,” said Action Alliance Director Colleen Carr. “As the nation’s public-private partnership for suicide prevention and a steward of the 2024 *National Strategy for Suicide Prevention*, we know the importance bringing together the best thinking and resources to further these efforts and address the many factors associated with suicide. Building on the whole-of-society approach that is the foundation for the *National Strategy*, the Action Alliance is ready to convene public and private partners to advance strategic objectives and align the field behind this critical data.”

The 2024 Public Perception of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Poll builds on research conducted since 2015 by AFSP, SPRC and the Action Alliance, and serves as a vital resource for understanding public attitudes and guiding future initiatives. As awareness grows, so does the responsibility to address barriers and misinformation. You can learn more about the poll data from 2015 through 2024 and access helpful resources at suicidepreventionnow.org.

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METHODOLOGY: This survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC), and the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention (Action Alliance) at EDC from July 15 - 29, 2024 among 4,394 U.S. adults ages 18 and older.

Data are weighted where necessary by education, age, sex, race/ethnicity, household income, household size, marital status, LGBTQIA2S+ status, political party affiliation, and smoking status to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population.

FOR REPORTERS: Suicide is a public health matter and most often a result of a mental health condition in combination with other risk factors. Research shows that how we talk about suicide in the media can influence the health outcomes of those who are vulnerable and reduce the risk of contagion, when exposure to information about a death by suicide influences others who are at risk for suicide. We urge all members of the media working on these stories to refer to ReportingonSuicide.org. AFSP is available for consultation on related questions at pr@afsp.org. You can also consult the Associated Press Style Book entry on “Suicide” for similar guidance.

When reporting on suicide, please include the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline number 9-8-8, which provides 24/7, free, and confidential support via call, text, or chat (988lifeline.org) or the Crisis Text Line (text TALK to 741741). For guidance on reporting on 988, consider using the [988 media reporting guidance](https://988media.org).



PARTNERS:

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

[The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#) is dedicated to saving lives and bringing hope to those affected by suicide, including those who have experienced a [loss](#). AFSP creates a culture that's smart about mental health through public education and community programs, develops suicide prevention through research and advocacy, and provides support for those affected by suicide. Led by CEO Robert Gebbia and headquartered in New York, with a public policy office in Washington, D.C., AFSP has local chapters in all 50 states, D.C. and Puerto Rico, with programs and events nationwide. Learn more about AFSP in its latest [Annual Report](#) and join the conversation on suicide prevention by following AFSP on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [TikTok](#).

About the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC)

The [Suicide Prevention Resource Center](#) (SPRC) is the only federally funded resource center devoted to advancing the implementation of the *National Strategy for Suicide Prevention*. SPRC is supported by a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS). Find up-to-date information, guidance, and tools to support effective suicide prevention efforts in communities, states, Tribal settings, health/behavioral health care systems, and other settings at [sprc.org](#) and on [X](#), [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), and [LinkedIn](#). Sign up for the [Weekly Spark](#) to receive the latest news, research, and announcements from SPRC.

About the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention

The [National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention](#) (Action Alliance) is a nonpartisan, independent, public-private national partnership for suicide prevention. The Action Alliance brings together the best thinking and resources from the public and private sectors to steward and advance the goals and objectives of the [National Strategy for Suicide Prevention \(National Strategy\)](#) – the road map for a comprehensive approach to preventing suicide. The [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#), through the [Suicide Prevention Resource Center \(SPRC\)](#) grant, provides funding to the [Education Development Center \(EDC\)](#) to operate and manage the Secretariat for the Action Alliance, which was launched in 2010. Learn more at [theactionalliance.org](#) and join the conversation on suicide prevention by following the Action Alliance on [Facebook](#), [X](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [YouTube](#).

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