Suicide Rates Spike Among Latinos

An increase in gun ownership among Latinos may be to blame for the uptick in suicide deaths.

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The suicide rate among Latinos in the United States has increased by 72% since 2010, and the South and the West had the highest rates, according to a new study by researchers at New Mexico State University.

Study coauthor Jagdish Khubchandani, a public health sciences professor at New Mexico State, said suicides among adult Latinos increased by more than 72% from 2010 to 2020, yet the Latino population grew by only 25% during that time. What's more, suicide was the fifth leading cause of death among adult Latinos in 2020, up from the seventh leading cause of death in 2010. However, researchers noted that the suicide rate among Latinos is still lower than that among whites.

Colorado and New Mexico had the highest and second highest suicide rates at 25.5 deaths per 100,000 people and 24 deaths per 100,000, respectively. Researchers attribute this increase in part to a rise in gun ownership, which was the most common method of suicide among 20- to 64-year-olds.

"I think that, for me, the biggest surprise is that there have not been a few years where we saw a decline. It has been a constant increase, number one," Khubchandani said in a U.S. News article. "Number two, I think this study is showing how prejudice and bias affect people."

Khubchandani and his team focused on Latinos 20 to 64 years old because "this is a unique population given their upbringing, their acculturation [and] experiences in the United States."

Khubchandani noted that the mental health of more dominant groups, children, teens and the elderly tends to get more attention than that of Latino adults.

The researchers emphasized the need to destigmatize mental health issues in Latino communities by having honest conversations about mental health and suicide and having these discussions in Spanish when needed, creating stronger ties with community leaders and including more Latino mental health providers in colleges.

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