

Suicide rate decreased for the first time in a decade in 2019, CDC reports

31 December 2020, by Bethany Ao, The Philadelphia Inquirer

New data released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that the national suicide rate last year decreased for the first time since 1999.

decline in 2019 but cautioned that no one knows what 2020 is going to look like. She said that for there to be a sustained decrease in the suicide rate, systematic changes are needed.

While the suicide rate for 2019 declined by 2.1%—a total of 833 fewer deaths—from the previous year, experts said this progress could be derailed by the coronavirus pandemic. The effects of COVID-19 on suicide won't be measurable for some time, but rates are expected to have increased during 2020 as [mental health](#) worsened.

"We don't know why it happened," said Dan Romer, research director at the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania and a specialist in media and social influences on adolescent health. "The decrease didn't happen so much in the Western part of the country, which has the highest rates, and among certain age groups. That's why we don't see much reason for optimism."

Romer said the rise in suicides over the last two decades until 2019 has puzzled researchers. Some believed increased social media use may have affected rates of depression, but study results are mixed. And while the Great Recession had an impact on suicide, especially among [young people](#), [suicide rates](#) continued to increase even when the economy rebounded around 2013, bucking the established link between [economic hardship](#) and suicide, Romer said.

"It's very hard to understand these long-term trends," Romer said. "Overall the economy was doing better, so why are suicide rates going up? It has to be that within certain segments of the population and age groups, people are still not doing well."

Mary Ann Murtha, director of the Philadelphia area's American Foundation for Suicide Prevention chapter, said she was encouraged by the slight

APA citation: Suicide rate decreased for the first time in a decade in 2019, CDC reports (2020, December 31) retrieved 15 June 2021 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-12-suicide-decreased-decade-cdc.html>

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