



# Suicide in Humboldt County, CA

2003-2007

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Suicide and attempted suicide continue to be an issue of concern for Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). This report is intended to provide information as part of the ongoing public discussion of this important topic.

The report compiles data to look at two important areas:

- What does the data tell us about suicide in Humboldt County?
- What steps can we take to prevent future suicides?

### **Did you know?**

- Suicide is related to depression, which is treatable through medicine and psychotherapy/counseling.
- Suicide is a national public health concern, especially in rural areas and in the Western States.
- Fifty percent of elderly suicide victims in the United States consult a physician within a month or less of their death.
- “Problems are complex and go beyond the capacity, resources or jurisdiction for any single person, program or organization to change or control.” Lasker & Weiss, Broadening Participation in Community Problem Solving. Journal of Urban Health, March 2003
- More Americans die by suicide each year than by homicide (2005); Suicide 32,637 vs. Homicide 18,124
- More Californians die by suicide each year than by homicide (2005); Suicide 3,206 vs. Homicide 2,540

### **How does Humboldt County compare with other counties and communities?**

- While Humboldt County is not ranked highest in suicide rates in California, it ranks among the top 10 counties in California with the highest rates.
- Counties with high rates of suicide and demographically similar to Humboldt include Trinity, Plumas, Tuolumne, Siskiyou, Calaveras, Yuba, Amador, Mendocino and Butte.
- In a review of counties across the United States with population base under 250,000 and at least 20 suicides per year, the suicide rates ranged from Douglas County, Oregon at 19.7 per 100,000 population, to Carson City, Nevada at 39.8 per 100,000<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Suicide mortality and vital statistic data from all 50 states and D.C. was accessed from each state’s respective Public Health, Health Statistics, or Vital Statistics website(s) from 3/11 to 3/18/2008.

- In a review of the 13 counties on the Pacific Northwest coast, the suicide rates ranged from 16.0 per 100,000 population in Del Norte County, California to 34.0 per 100,000 in Curry County, Oregon. All counties in this comparison are largely rural, have lower median household income and 85% of counties had a higher proportion of people living in poverty as compared to the national percentage. All of these counties have a white non-Hispanic and Native American population greater than the national proportion<sup>2 3</sup>.

While trying to objectively measure the burden of suicide on Humboldt County compared to other communities, is important to recognize that focusing solely on rankings can obscure that locations with similar population and demographic characteristics to Humboldt also share a similar burden of suicide mortality.

### **What can we do?**

- Utilize a collaborative approach to develop a Suicide Prevention Plan.
- Work to eliminate stigma of mental illness and increase the number of depressed persons who receive treatment
- Reduce substance abuse.
- Promote healthy connections with others and prevent social isolation.
- Train physicians and other health care providers to identify and address depression.

### **How can we utilize a Public Health Approach to Suicide Prevention?<sup>4</sup>**

- Promote awareness that suicide is a public health problem that is preventable
- Develop broad-based support for suicide prevention
- Develop and implement strategies to reduce the stigma associated with being a consumer of mental health, substance abuse and suicide prevention services
- Develop and implement suicide prevention programs
- Promote efforts to reduce access to lethal means and methods of self-harm
- Implement training for recognition of at-risk behavior and delivery of effective treatment
- Develop and promote effective clinical and professional practices
- Improve access to and community linkages with mental health and substance abuse services
- Improve reporting and portrayals of suicidal behavior, mental illness, and substance abuse in the Entertainment and News Media
- Promote and support research on suicide and suicide prevention
- Improve and expand surveillance systems

The word suicide evokes strong emotional reactions, ranging from fear and anger to disbelief. People are often silent about suicide because they are afraid they will say the wrong thing. Talking about this community problem in a public forum can help us all be in a better position to help people in their moment of need.

<sup>2</sup> 2006 CA County Health Profiles, AVSS, US individual state Health/Vital Statistics website(s).

<sup>3</sup> American FactFinder. US Census Bureau website. [http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?\\_lang=en](http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en). Accessed 3/18/2008.

<sup>4</sup>1999 U.S. Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent Suicide, National Strategy for Suicide Prevention Goals.

**Definition:**

Number of suicides and suicide rate (age-adjusted deaths per 100,000 population), and number of uncompleted suicide attempts resulting in hospitalizations, and hospitalization rate for Humboldt County residents (This suicide definition includes all fatal, self-inflicted injuries)

**Healthy People 2010 National Objectives<sup>5</sup>:**

Reduce suicide rate\* to no more than 5 per 100,000 population

**California Suicide Rate<sup>6</sup>:**

California average annual suicide mortality rate per 100,000 population, 2002-2004: **9.4**

**Humboldt County 2003-2007 Age-Specific Mortality By Cause**

KEY

---: Signifies that there were less than 5 deaths from a particular cause within the age range for 2003-2007 or not applicable

Rate per 100,000 for leading causes of mortality by age group, 2003-2007<sup>7</sup>

**ALL RACE/ETHNICITY 2003-2007 WITH AVERAGE ANNUAL AGE-SPECIFIC RATE PER 100,000 PERSONS**

(Note: 2003-2007 average annual infant mortality (under age 1) from all causes for Humboldt County is 6.0 per 1000 live births)

(\*The 2003-2007 average annual mortality rate for ages 1 to 14 is 13.0 per 100,000)

AGE RANGE	#1 CAUSE	#2 CAUSE	#3 CAUSE	#4 CAUSE	#5 CAUSE
<1 (see above note)	---	---	---	---	---
1 to 14*	---	---	---	---	---
15 TO 24	MOTOR VEHICLE INJURIES (18.5)	FATAL UNINTENTIONAL INJURIES (9.7)	SUICIDE (8.8)	HOMICIDE (6.2)	---
25 TO 44	UNINTENTIONAL AOD OVERDOSE (43.4)	CANCER, ALL (22.9)	SUICIDE (21.7)	MOTOR VEHICLE INJURIES (19.9)	CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE (19.3)
45 TO 64	CANCER, ALL (211.8)	CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE (150.5)	LIVER DISEASE & CIRRHOSIS (65.9)	UNINTENTIONAL AOD OVERDOSE (57.2)	COPD & EMPHYSEMA (48.4)
65+	CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE (1560.1)	CANCER, ALL (1106.9)	STROKE (548.5)	COPD & EMPHYSEMA (403.6)	PNEUMONIA (314.5)

<sup>5</sup> Healthy People Objectives and Measures. <http://wonder.cdc.gov/data2010/obj.htm>

<sup>6</sup> 2006 County Health Status Profiles. CADPH. Center for Health Statistics. Office of Health Information and Research

<sup>7</sup> AVSS

## Humboldt County Baseline Data:

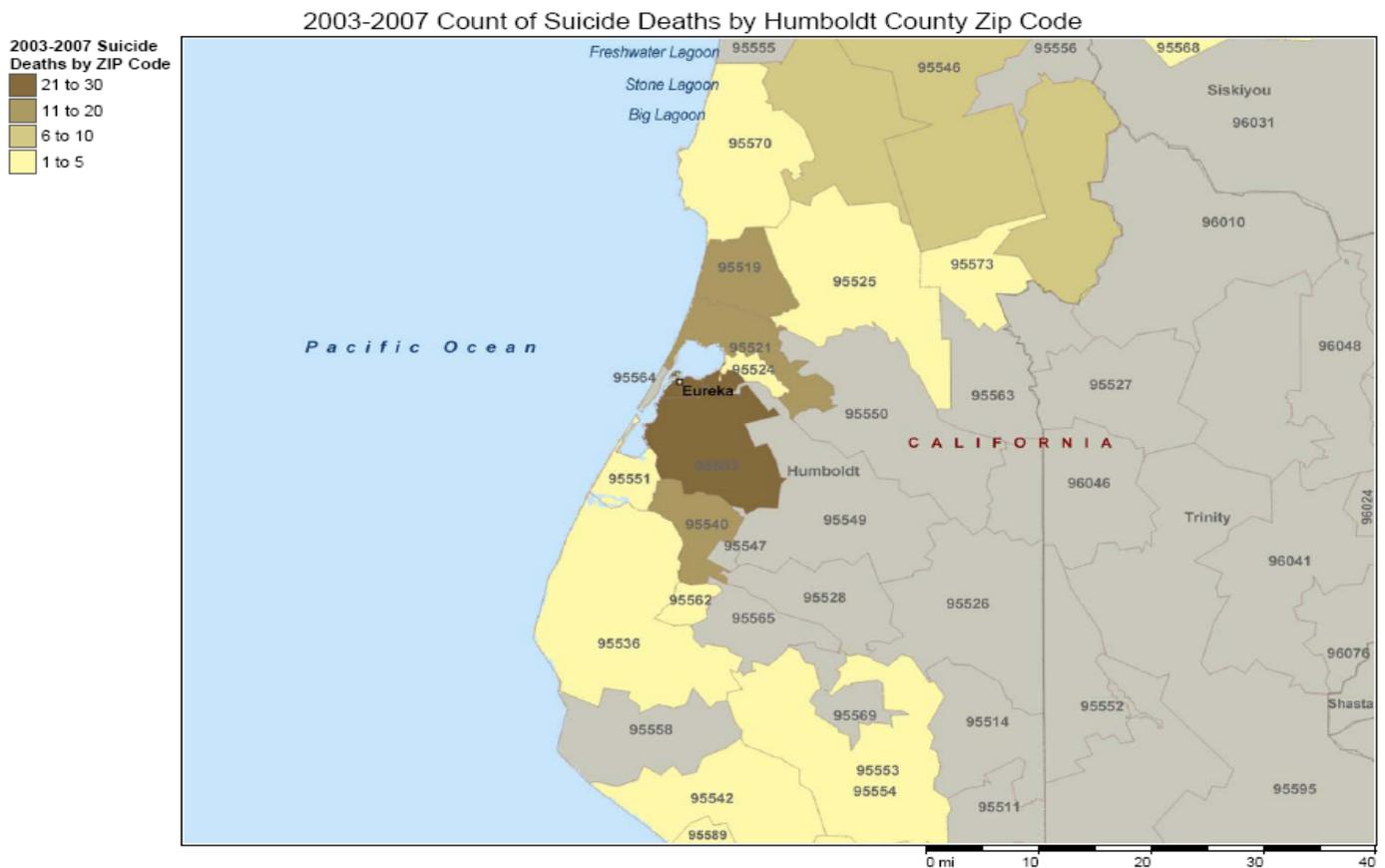
21.8 suicides per 100,000 total population during 2007<sup>8</sup>. The numbers of deaths represents Humboldt County residents only; Out-of-county residents who died as a result of intentional self-harm in Humboldt County are not included.

74 suicide attempts resulted in hospitalization in 2005.

### *Deaths and Hospitalizations for Self-Inflicted Injury, Humboldt County and California*

Result of Injury	Humboldt County		California
	2007 Suicide Deaths & Hospitalizations (Humboldt Residents only)	Rate per 100,000	2002-2004 Rate per 100,000 for Deaths & Hospitalizations
Deaths	29	21.8	9.4
Hospitalizations <sup>9</sup>	74	55.3	46.5

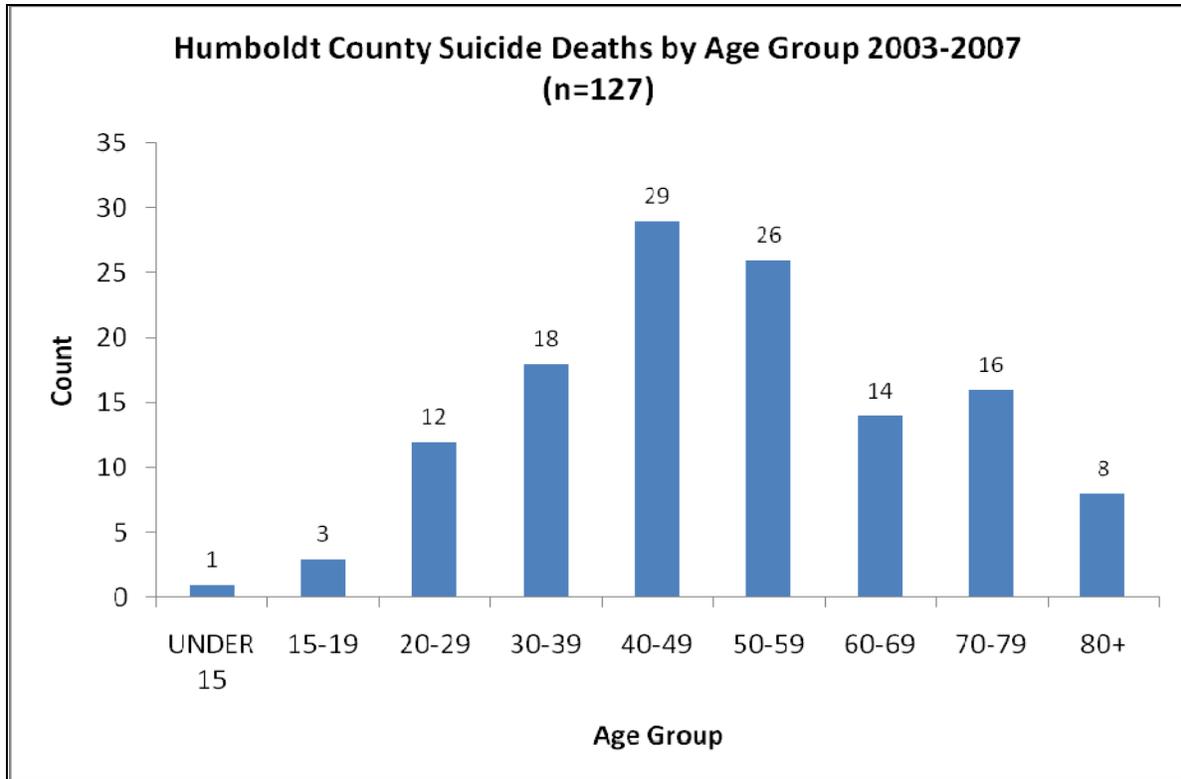
\*All Rates are age-adjusted to the 2000 US Census.



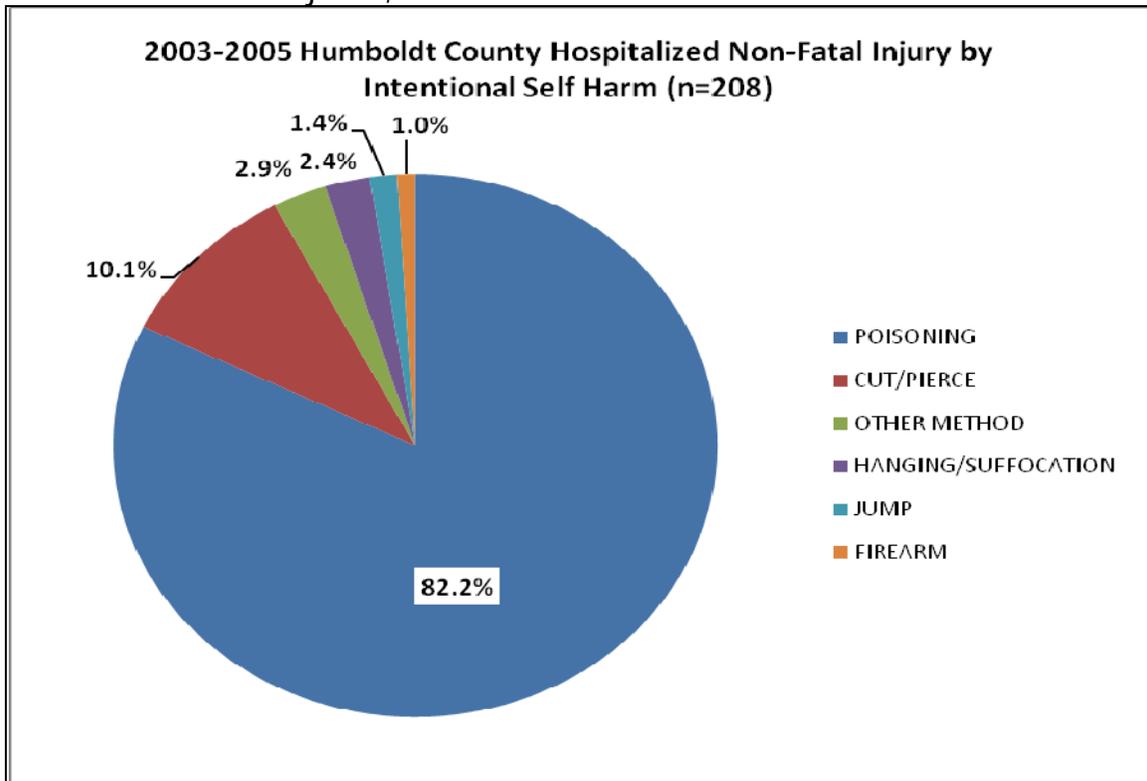
<sup>8</sup>Humboldt County Automated Vital Statistics System (AVSS)

<sup>9</sup>EPICenter-California Injury Data Online. <http://www.applications.dhs.ca.gov/epicdata/default.htm>. Accessed 3/18/2008.

2003-2007 Suicides by age group<sup>10</sup>



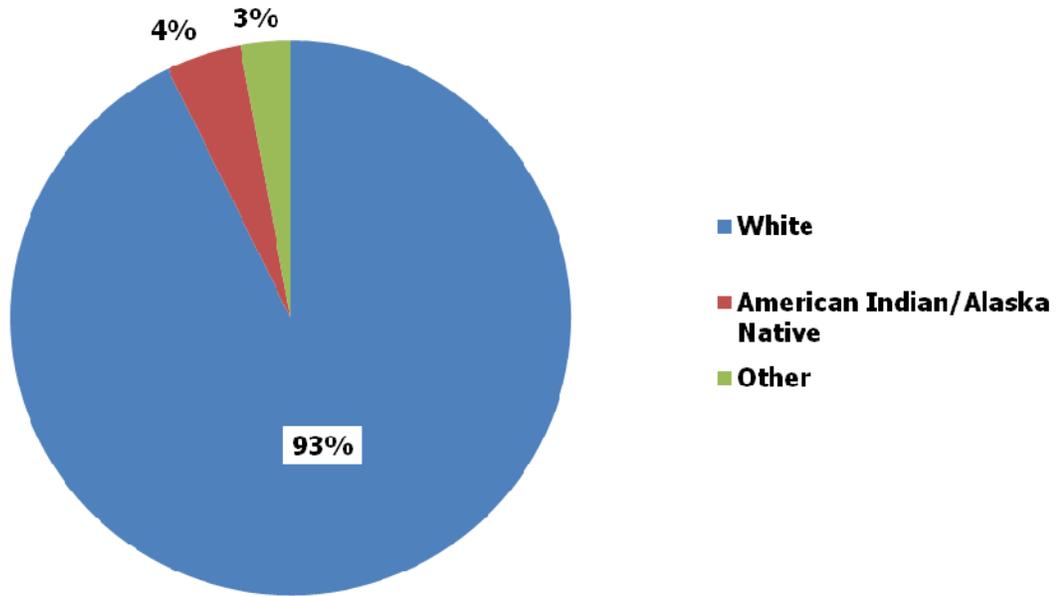
Hospitalized non-fatal suicide injuries, 2003-2005<sup>11</sup>



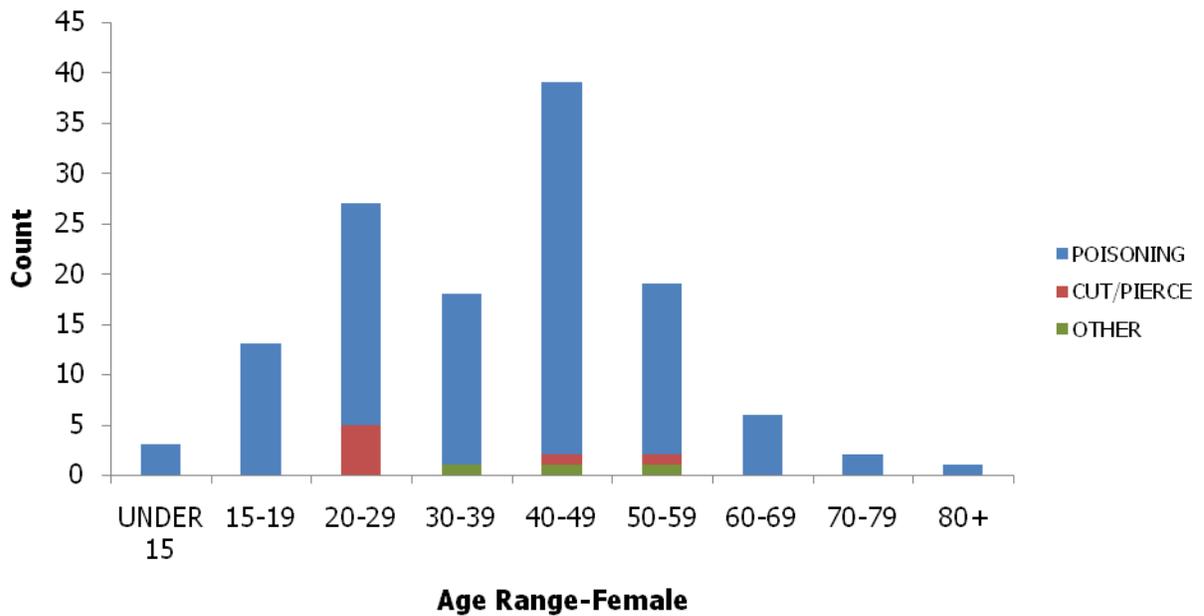
<sup>10</sup> AVSS

<sup>11</sup> EPICenter; Poisoning includes alcohol and other drug overdoses.

**2003-2005 Humboldt County Hospitalized Non-Fatal Injury by Intentional Self-Harm by Race/Ethnicity (n=208)**

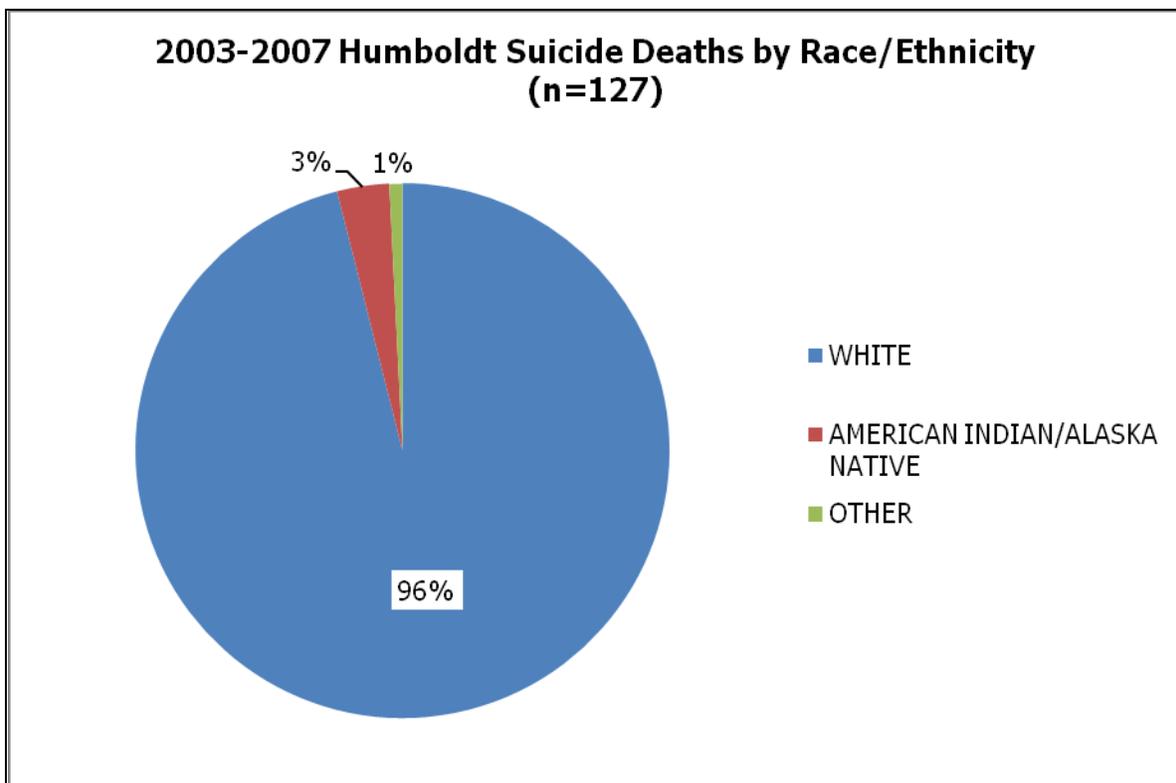
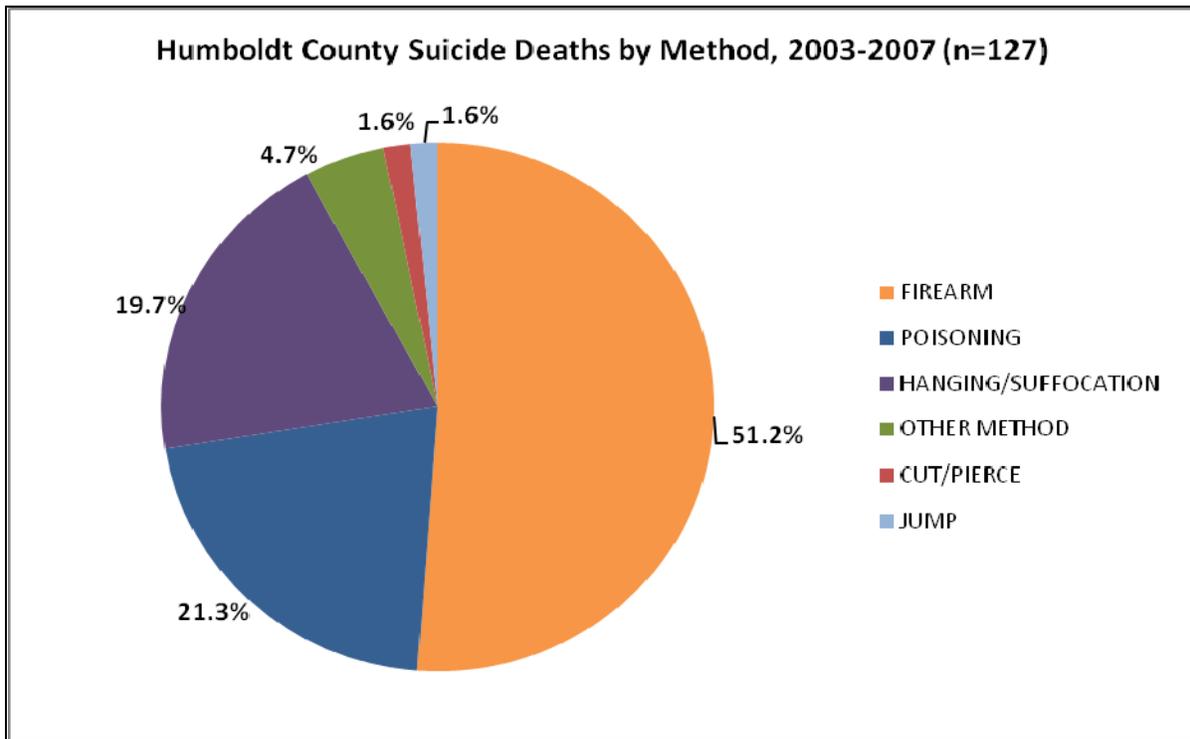


**2003-2005 Humboldt Hospitalized Non-Fatal Injury by Intentional Self Harm, Females (n=128)**





Suicide deaths by method and race<sup>12</sup>:



<sup>12</sup> AVSS

