

Department of Defense (DoD) Quarterly Suicide Report (QSR) 2nd Quarter, CY 2020

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The estimated cost of this report or study for the Department of Defense is approximately \$6,770 for the 2020 Fiscal Year. This includes \$3,940 in expenses and \$2,830 in DoD labor.



**DEFENSE SUICIDE
PREVENTION OFFICE**

Introduction

The Department of Defense (DoD) is fully committed to preventing suicides in our military community – every death by suicide is a tragedy. The DoD recognizes the potential impact of COVID-19 on the well-being of our Service members and families. We are closely monitoring potential impacts and proactive steps to mitigate those potential impacts from COVID-19. During this time, we remain dedicated in our efforts to educate the force, support the force, and emphasize social connectedness.

At this time, it is too early to determine whether suicide rates will increase or decrease for Calendar Year 2020. The DoD will need to collect the full year of data and allow appropriate latitude to investigate individual cases to make such a determination, and to then conduct the necessary statistical analyses to understand trends over time.

To help determine the impact of suicide on the Total Force, the Defense Suicide Prevention Office (DSPO) routinely collects and reports surveillance data on suicide mortality across the Department. The most up-to-date counts of suicide deaths are reported in the Quarterly Suicide Report (QSR).¹ The QSR complies with Objective 11.1 of the DoD Defense Strategy for Suicide Prevention (DSSP) by providing timely and accurate suicide data to guide suicide prevention efforts across the Department.

DSPO collects suicide data via a collaborative effort with the Office of the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System (AFMES) and the Suicide Prevention Program Offices of the Military Services (i.e., Army, Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force). AFMES is the official DoD entity responsible for verifying and reporting deaths by suicide for the Active Component and, to the extent available, the Reserve Component, to DSPO.^{2,3} These numbers are reconciled with the Military Services to ensure the most accurate information is reported.

Quarters are based upon the Calendar Year (CY) and defined as:

- Quarter 1 (Q1): January 1st – March 31st
- Quarter 2 (Q2): April 1st – June 30th
- Quarter 3 (Q3): July 1st – September 30th
- Quarter 4 (Q4): October 1st – December 31st

The current report presents data from Q2 of CY 2020. Data include all known or suspected suicides (both confirmed and pending) as of June 30, 2020, for both the Active and Reserve Components. Hence, the numbers presented in this report are preliminary and subject to change in future quarterly reports as previously unknown suicide cases are reported.⁴ In addition, caution

¹ Absolute counts do not account for changes in population size. Consequently, caution should be used when making comparisons across groups and/or interpreting changes in suicide counts across time.

² Active Component: Full-time members of the U.S. Armed Forces and Cadets/Midshipmen at the designated military academies.

³ Reserve Component: Limited to members of the Selected Reserves (SELRES). SELRES are drilling and training members of the National Guard and Reserves, Individual Mobilization Augmentees, and full-time support Active Guard and Reservists. This excludes members of the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) and Inactive National Guard (ING).

⁴ Official annual suicide counts and unadjusted rates are published in the DoD Annual Suicide Report. The most recent report is for CY 2019 Available at: <https://www.dspo.mil/ASR/>.

should be used when interpreting seeming trends over time, as true trends require statistical analysis. This includes incorporating potential population shifts within a given Service to understand whether a seeming increase or decrease is a true trend across time.

Caution should be used when making comparisons across groups and/or interpreting changes in suicide counts across time because counts do not account for changes in population size. Rates account for differences in population sizes; and, as such, provide a more standardized way to make comparisons over time or across groups.⁵ For the most recent DoD annual suicide rates and trends/changes over time, please see the CY 2019 DoD Annual Suicide Report (available at: <https://www.dspo.mil/ASR/>).

QSR Data

Attachment A details the number of suicide deaths by Service and Component. For Q2 of CY 2020, the Military Services reported the following:

- 82 in the **Active Component**
- 26 in the **Reserve**
- 23 in the **National Guard**

Comparisons of suicide counts between Q2 CY 2019 and Q2 CY 2020 are provided below.⁶

- For Q2 CY 2020, the number of **Active Component** suicide deaths increased by 10 compared to Q2 CY 2019 (82 versus 72 suicide deaths)
 - Army Active Component suicide deaths increased by 6
 - Marine Corps Active Component suicide deaths increased by 4
 - Navy Active Component suicide deaths decreased by 3
 - Air Force Active Component suicide deaths increased by 3
- For Q2 CY 2020, the number of **Reserve** suicide deaths increased by 10 compared to Q2 CY 2019 (26 versus 16 suicide deaths)
 - Army Reserve suicide deaths increased by 8
 - Marine Corps Reserve suicide deaths increased by 1
 - Navy Reserve suicide deaths increased by 1
 - Air Force Reserve suicide deaths stayed the same
- For Q2 CY 2020, the number of **National Guard** suicide deaths decreased by 4 compared to Q2 CY 2019 (23 versus 27 suicide deaths)
 - Army National Guard suicide deaths decreased by 7
 - Air National Guard suicide deaths increased by 3

⁵ Rates are defined as the total number of suicides divided by the population for a given time period.

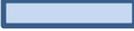
⁶ Research on the seasonal effects of suicide death has shown mixed results (e.g., Gutzwiller, 2011; McCleary, 1994; Postalache, 2012; Rossler, 2010). Comparisons made above are solely for descriptive purposes and may not reflect true statistical increases or decreases in suicide.

Attachment A

DoD Component and Service	CY 2013	CY 2014				Total 2014	CY 2015				Total 2015	CY 2016				Total 2016
	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Active Component	256	72	72	59	73	276	60	71	72	63	266	62	56	83	79	280
Army	121	26	33	32	35	126	33	28	32	27	120	31	20	42	37	130
Marine Corps	46	11	9	6	8	34	3	12	13	11	39	12	11	8	6	37
Navy	41	16	19	8	11	54	10	14	11	8	43	9	10	19	14	52
Air Force	48	19	11	13	19	62	14	17	16	17	64	10	15	14	22	61
Reserve Component	220	46	34	48	42	170	42	54	72	46	214	56	51	45	50	202
Reserve	86	24	14	20	21	79	13	21	37	18	89	18	24	18	20	80
Army Reserve	59	13	4	15	10	42	9	17	21	8	55	6	13	11	11	41
Marine Corps Reserve	11	4	5	1	2	12	1	1	8	1	11	4	6	5	4	19
Navy Reserve	5	5	4	1	5	15	2	2	5	5	14	3	3	1	3	10
Air Force Reserve	11	2	1	3	4	10	1	1	3	4	9	5	2	1	2	10
National Guard	134	22	20	28	21	91	29	33	35	28	125	38	27	27	30	122
Army National Guard	120	16	18	24	19	77	21	28	30	25	104	33	22	26	27	108
Air National Guard	14	6	2	4	2	14	8	5	5	3	21	5	5	1	3	14

DoD Component and Service	CY 2017					CY 2018					CY 2019					CY 2020		Total 2020
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total 2017	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total 2018	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total 2019	Q1	Q2	
Active Component	74	58	71	84	287	81	78	78	89	326	91	72	86	100	349	88	82	170
Army	32	24	27	33	116	36	31	40	34	141	30	37	35	43	145	38	43	81
Marine Corps	7	9	15	12	43	13	13	15	16	57	14	6	11	16	47	14	10	24
Navy	16	13	15	21	65	23	15	11	19	68	22	14	19	18	73	17	11	28
Air Force	19	12	14	18	63	9	19	12	20	60	25	15	21	23	84	19	18	37
Reserve Component	53	68	65	40	226	49	44	62	62	217	45	43	42	24	154	41	49	90
Reserve	21	29	27	16	93	22	16	19	24	81	21	16	17	11	65	18	26	44
Army Reserve	12	20	17	14	63	15	11	13	9	48	10	8	11	7	36	9	16	25
Marine Corps Reserve	5	3	2	0	10	4	1	4	10	19	5	1	1	2	9	2	2	4
Navy Reserve	2	2	3	2	9	3	3	2	3	11	2	2	3	0	7	5	3	8
Air Force Reserve	2	4	5	0	11	0	1	0	2	3	4	5	2	2	13	2	5	7
National Guard	32	39	38	24	133	27	28	43	38	136	24	27	25	13	89	23	23	46
Army National Guard	30	35	35	21	121	24	26	36	33	119	19	24	22	10	75	20	17	37
Air National Guard	2	4	3	3	12	3	2	7	5	17	5	3	3	3	14	3	6	9

Note: All figures above may be subject to change in future publications as updated information becomes available. Suicide counts (both confirmed and pending) are current as of 30 June 2020.

 Indicates a change from the previous QSR based on updated information.
 Highlighted for comparison