



# Why an analysis?

The Oregon Veteran Landscape was conducted to provide a focused examination of veteran suicide prevention efforts in the state of Oregon. Recognizing the urgency of addressing this critical issue, the report assesses the existing suicide prevention landscape, identifies strengths, and proposes targeted strategies to enhance the support system for Oregon's veterans.

*“Suicide is really the bottom of the progression of violence—psychological and otherwise—towards the self.”*

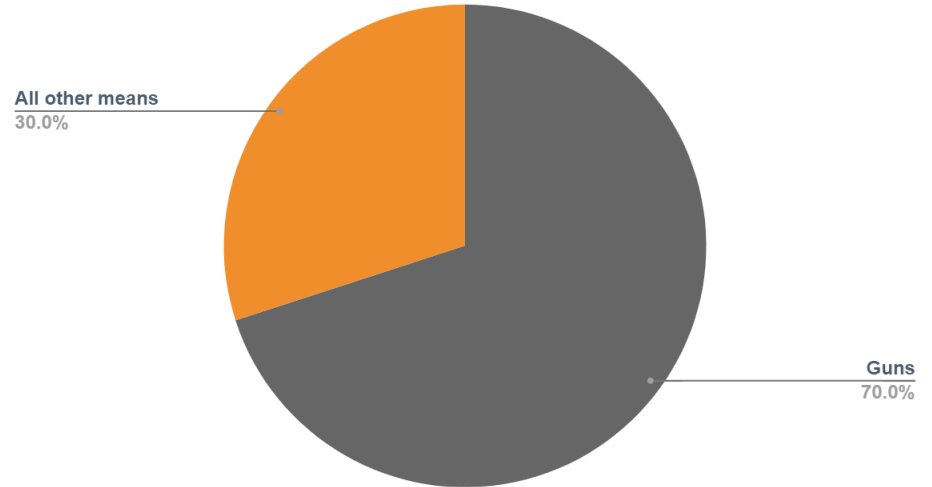
- E3 Navy

We are failing the people who served our country.

# The Need: Oregon's Veterans are suffering

Oregon's veteran suicide rate is **40% higher than the national veteran suicide rate** and double the non-veteran suicide rate.

**Veteran suicide by lethal means**



There were a total of 1727 veteran suicide deaths in Oregon between 2009 and 2018.

### Oregon, Western Region, and National Veteran Suicide Deaths and Rates by Age Group, 2021<sup>c</sup>

Age Group	Oregon Veteran Suicides	Western Region Veteran Suicides	National Veteran Suicides	Oregon Veteran Suicide Rate per 100,000	Western Region Veteran Suicide Rate per 100,000	National Veteran Suicide Rate per 100,000
18-34	16	240	894	66.7*	55.4	49.6
35-54	38	424	1,704	58.5	39.2	35.5
55-74	55	577	2,286	46.2	34.7	29.9
75+	29	400	1,467	40.3	38.3	32.1
All	139	1,654	6,392	49.6	39.2	33.9

### Oregon Veteran and Total Oregon, Western Region, and National Suicide Deaths and Rates by Age Group, 2021<sup>c</sup>

Age Group	Oregon Veteran Suicides	Oregon Total Suicides	Western Region Total Suicides	National Total Suicides	Oregon Veteran Suicide Rate per 100,000	Oregon Suicide Rate per 100,000	Western Region Suicide Rate per 100,000	National Suicide Rate per 100,000
18-34	16	241	3,733	14,230	66.7*	25.2	20.0	18.8
35-54	38	278	3,859	15,263	58.5	25.0	19.0	18.2
55-74	55	261	3,071	12,411	46.2	25.6	17.9	16.2
75+	29	92	1,229	4,508	40.3	30.8	24.9	20.3
All	139	872	11,892	46,412	49.6	25.8	19.5	18.0

<sup>c</sup> Rates calculated from suicide counts lower than 20 are considered unreliable.



# Veterans & Firearm as lethal means

- More than any other method, firearms are the main method for Veteran suicide
- The numbers are starkly different than their civilians counterparts
- Veterans need comprehensive mental and behavioral healthcare through which we can address lethal means safety

**Table 3. Method of Suicide Among Veteran and Non-Veteran Adults Who Died from Suicide, 2017**

Method	Percentage of Non-Veteran Adult Suicide Deaths	Percentage of Veteran Suicide Deaths	Percentage of Male Non-Veteran Adult Suicide Deaths	Percentage of Male Veteran Suicide Deaths	Percentage of Female Non-Veteran Adult Suicide Deaths	Percentage of Female Veteran Suicide Deaths
Firearm	48.1%	69.4%	53.5%	70.7%	31.3%	43.2%
Poisoning	14.9%	9.9%	9.2%	8.9%	32.3%	28.7%
Suffocation	28.7%	15.8%	29.3%	15.6%	26.6%	19.9%
Other	8.4%	5.0%	7.9%	4.8%	9.8%	8.1%

# Challenges: What isn't working for Oregon Veterans & Service members

1

**Access to care**

**What**

50% of eligible vets don't access VA services. Veterans, active & reserve service members face numerous hurdles to accessing care

**Challenge**

The Veterans healthcare universe is mired with pitfalls, percentages, long drives or no care at all

2

**Limited understanding of military culture**

**What**

In both VA and non-VA providers, lack of understanding of military experience or culture; Limited Veteran specific services outside of VA

**Challenge**

Veterans voice issue with many providers' ability to connect and not discriminate

3

**Inconsistent and limited lethal means counseling**

**What**

Most vets see a provider before a suicide death yet aren't receiving consistent lethal means & safety planning

**Challenge**

Across providers, VA, and non-VA, significant gap in lethal means & safety planning

4

**Inconsistent messaging on mental health**

**What**

Department of Defense does not provide consistent messaging around mental health; stigma remains

**Challenge**

Further, messaging on suicide lacks direction and support from Veterans themselves

5

**Families of affected are struggling**

**What**

Limited support for families & extended families of struggling Vets; Limited training for communities to gain language around suicide prevention & firearm surrender

**Challenge**

Families experience emotional distress, shame and helplessness

**Underlying challenge: lack of coordination**

# Priority Recommendations: opportunities

Short term

Long term

1

## Increase coordination

- Host Veteran, service member Suicide Prevention Convening
- Collaborate with existing organizations to build a statewide coalition

2

## Consistent, clear lethal means counseling within healthcare

- Establish consistent lethal means counseling, prioritizing voluntary surrender and safety planning with ERPO as last resort

3

## Increase voluntary surrender

- Create formal channels for voluntary surrender
- Guidelines for “creative” alternative
- Train families and community in messaging

4

## Increase health care access for vets & service members

- Provide free access to every Oregon Veteran & Service Member

5

## Increase Vets, service members in healthcare

- Build on, scale existing workforce development
- Create Veteran healthcare training pipeline