





# Suicide Deaths Among First Responders in Massachusetts (2018-2022)



## Introduction

Suicide among first responders in Massachusetts is a public health problem. This document spotlights this issue and provides resources for first responders and their loved ones. There are an estimated 40,000 first responders in Massachusetts between the ages of 18-64 years old. They include:

 Law Enforcement Officers 20,000	 Firefighters 12,000	 EMT & Paramedics 6,000	 Emergency Telephone Operators 2,000
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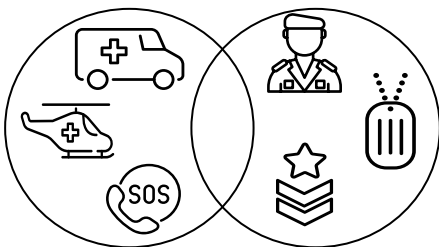
## Deaths by suicide: A closer look at the numbers

There were 40 suicides among first responders between 2018 and 2022. Of the 40 suicides, 55% were among law enforcement officers, 25% were among firefighters, 17% were among paramedics and EMTs, and 3% were among emergency telephone operators.

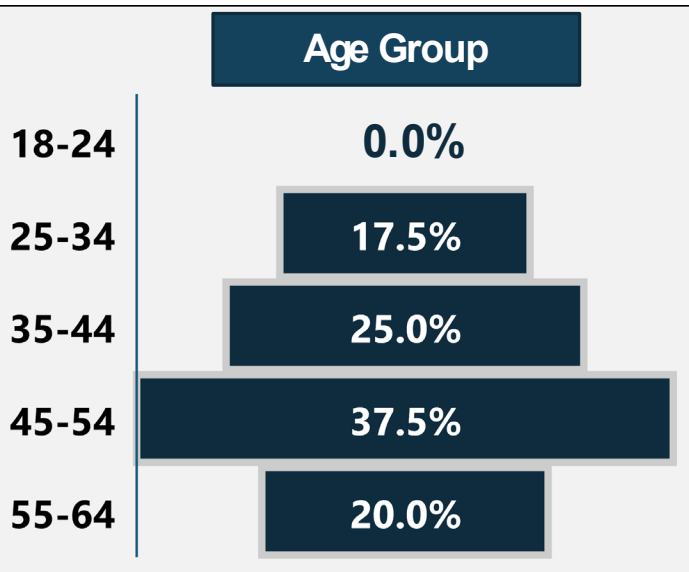
The average annual rate of suicides among first responders was **17.4 deaths** per 100,000 people.

**1.5x higher** than the overall state suicide rate among those aged 18-64.

**1 in 4** first responder suicide deaths were also current or former military personnel



First responder age 45-54 had the highest proportion of suicides.



Almost **9 in 10** of first responders who died by suicide were White, non-Hispanic

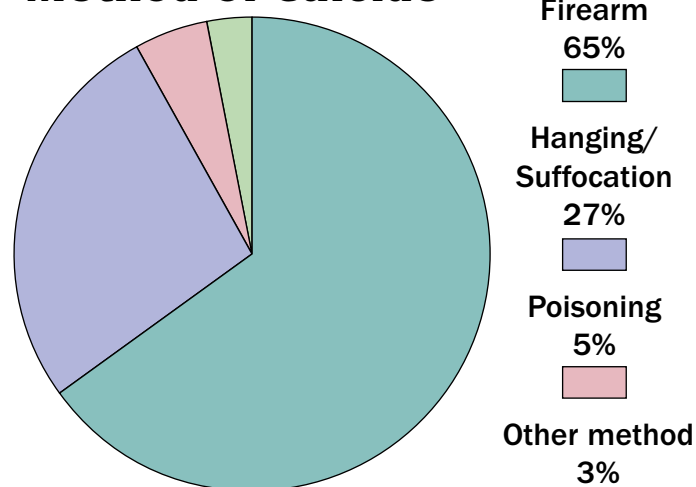
**Data Source:** Massachusetts Violent Death Reporting System (MAVDRS), Massachusetts Department of Public Health; CDC WISQARS  
**Population estimates:** U.S Census Bureau. (2022). 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year file Public Use Microdata Samples [CSV file]. Retrieved from PUMS Data (census.gov).

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## Deaths by suicide: A closer look at the numbers

### Method of suicide



**Firearm suicides among first responders were 45% higher** than the percentage of suicides by firearm in the general Massachusetts public.

Further, the method of suicide differed by occupation within the first responder group.

**8 in 10 first responder suicide deaths by firearm were among law enforcement officers.**

This is **70% higher** than the percentage of suicides by firearm in the general Massachusetts public.

### Circumstances surrounding the suicide death

**53%**

Had a known current mental health problem



**48%**

Had a history of mental health treatment



**38%**

Had current treatment for a mental health problem



**33%**

Had a known alcohol or substance use problem



**25%**

Had a known intimate partner problem



**20%**

Had a known job or financial problem



### Why is this important?

First responders face unique job challenges such as long and irregular shifts, exposure to work-related trauma and safety hazards, and potential grief and physical pain that can have lasting effects.

These work stressors can be intensified by financial and interpersonal pressures as well as experiences of discrimination because of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, and age.

When facing poor mental health or a mental health crisis, it can be difficult to seek help due to feelings of shame or letting others down. First responders are often on the front lines helping others but may not know how to reach out for help themselves.

If you're a first responder, remember that your mental well-being is just as important as the work you do.

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## Resources for first responders

### 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

If you or anyone you know show any warning signs of suicide, take it seriously. Get support and explore what help looks like. Call or text 988 to get help. You can also chat with a 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline counselor at [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org). 988 services are free, confidential, and available 24/7/365.

### Veterans and Military

Whether you're a military veteran or still on active duty, you can get help by calling the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline and pressing "1" to reach the Veteran's Crisis Line. You can also text the Veteran's Crisis Line at 838255.

### Massachusetts Behavioral Health Help Line

You are not alone. If you are not in crisis, you can call the Massachusetts Behavioral Health Help Line (BHHL) to get connected to mental health help, including therapy. This free service is for anyone in Massachusetts. Even if you're not sure what kind of help you may need, someone will guide you through your options. Chat with a trained BHHL professional at 833-773-2445 or [masshelpline.com](https://masshelpline.com).

### MassMen

The [MassMen Project](https://massmenproject.org) promotes wellness and empowers working-age men across Massachusetts to take action to feel better emotionally, physically, and spiritually. MassMen offers peer support services to help first responders address mental health challenges and build a supportive workplace culture. Learn more about [peer support](#) and additional first responder [resources](#).

