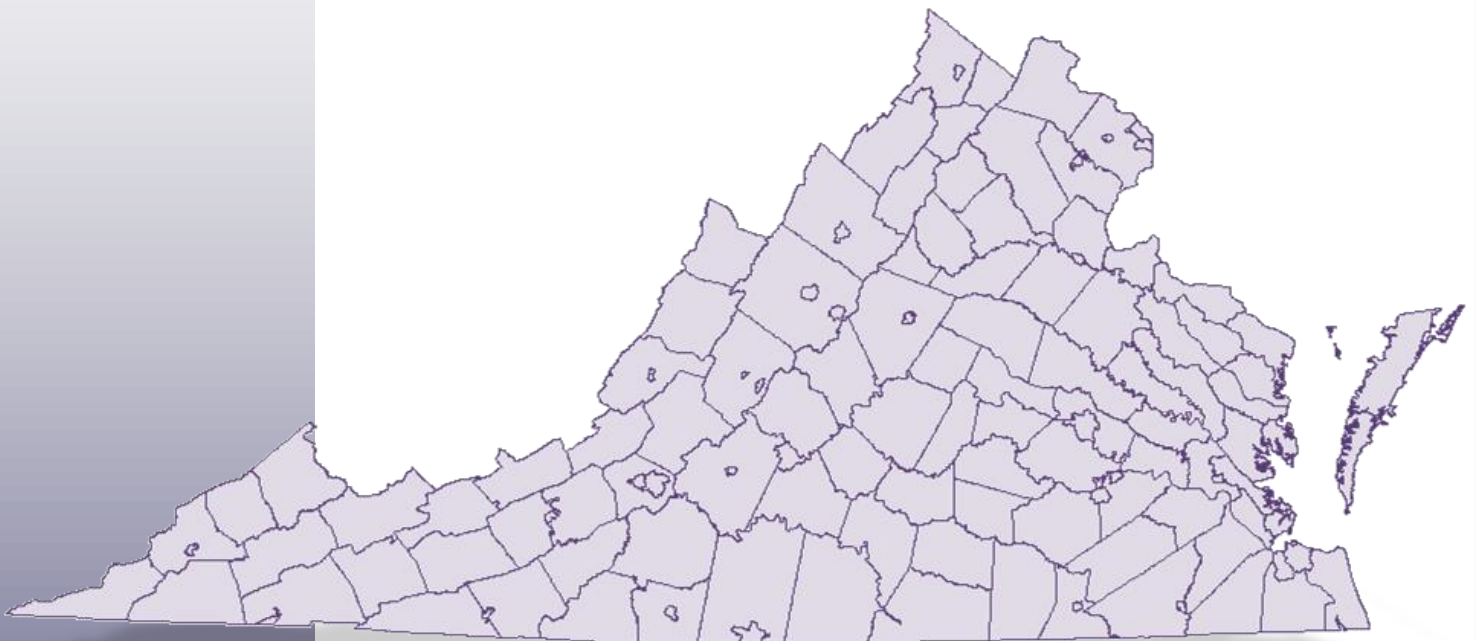


Violent Death Among Hispanics in Virginia, 2003-2014



VDH VIRGINIA
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A report from the Virginia Violent Death Reporting System

**Commonwealth of Virginia
Virginia Department of Health
Office of the Chief Medical Examiner**

September, 2017

Violent Death Among Hispanics in Virginia, 2003-2014

A Report from the Virginia Violent Death Reporting System (VVDRS)

September, 2017

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This report was created to provide information that can be used to prevent violent death in the future. Please notify Alexandra Jansson (see contact information above) if you distribute or use any portion of this report for training, education, policy decisions, or other uses.

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INTRODUCTION

This report explores homicide and suicide deaths among Hispanic individuals in Virginia. It highlights populations at risk, as well as characteristics of the fatal event and stressors prior to death. Comparative information about other Virginians is also provided to bring into focus patterns in Hispanic violent death.

This report will reveal several unique trends among Hispanic Virginians who die by suicide and homicide. A majority of Hispanic decedents were born outside of the United States (U.S.) and were younger than their counterparts. While most deaths occurred in Northern Virginia, where the majority of Virginia's Hispanic population lives, the highest risk of death was in Southwestern Virginia. Asphyxia was the most common mechanism of injury used by suicide decedents, while homicide victims were more frequently injured with firearms and sharp instruments. Suicide decedents were in large part not involved in mental health services, and their deaths were often related to problems with an intimate partner and recent crises.

KEY DEFINITIONS

Several terms will be used throughout this report. In order to make clear the intent, they are defined here.

- *Virginian(s)* refers to residents of Virginia who die in Virginia. Persons who died in Virginia but were residents of another state are captured by the VVDRS. However, these deaths are excluded from this report to allow the calculation of risk rates using population numbers for Virginia.
- *Hispanic* refers to a Virginian of Hispanic descent.
- *Asphyxia* captures three specific types of asphyxia deaths: hanging, suffocation, and strangulation.

DATA SOURCES

All data in this report come from the Virginia Violent Death Reporting System (VVDRS). The VVDRS is part of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's [National Violent Death Reporting System \(NVDRS\)](#). The NVDRS documents violent deaths within a state's borders, including homicides, suicides, deaths of undetermined intent, legal interventions, deaths due to terrorism, and accidental firearm deaths. It compiles information from death investigation sources, and links decedents to circumstances to explain a host of risk and circumstantial factors, such as the role of substance abuse and mental health in the death and why a suicide occurred. The VVDRS is the operation and reporting system of the NVDRS within Virginia, and uses the same methodology, definitions, coding schema, and database as the NVDRS.

The VVDRS compiles death investigation information from several agencies, primarily the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, local law enforcement entities, the Virginia Divisions of Health Statistics and Vital Records, and the Virginia Department of Forensic Science. Each relevant death record is reviewed by a Coordinator who ensures that all information required by the NVDRS are in the record, requests reports that are not already in the file, and abstracts and manually enters the relevant information into the database. Continuous quality assurance activities maintain data accuracy and consistency among Coordinators. Deaths entered into the VVDRS are reconciled with deaths reported by the Virginia Division of Health Statistics and the Virginia Office of the Chief Medical Examiner for comprehensive case identification.

PORTRAIT OF VIRGINIA’S HISPANIC POPULATION

According to the 2010 Census, Hispanic residents numbered 630,000, accounting for 8% of the total population in the state, making them the second-largest minority group in Virginia. Most Hispanics lived in Northern Virginia (63%) or other large metropolitan areas.

Approximately two-thirds of Hispanics were U.S. citizens, and the majority was native born. One-quarter of the foreign-born population became naturalized citizens after migration. The main origins for Hispanic migrants were the countries of Mexico and El Salvador, as well as the territory of Puerto Rico.¹ The majority had been in the U.S. less than 10 years. Notably, a majority were aged between 25 and 44.

SUICIDE AMONG HISPANICS COMPARED TO NON-HISPANICS

Demographics (Table 1)

- Hispanics were much less likely to complete a suicide when compared with all others.
- Hispanic suicide decedents were overwhelmingly white, male, and not married.
- Hispanic suicide decedents were significantly younger than other suicide decedents, by eleven years at age of death. Two-thirds of Hispanics were between 20 and 44 years. Suicide risk was highest among young Hispanics (7.6 for ages 20 to 24) and elder non-Hispanics (19.8 for ages 85 and older).²
- Roughly six in ten (58%) Hispanic suicide decedents were born outside of the U.S. compared to 6% of others.
- Two-thirds of Hispanic suicide decedents were employed at the time of the suicide, compared to 59% of non-Hispanics.

¹ University of Virginia Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service. “Hispanics in Virginia.” Accessed on March 16, 2017 at: http://demographics.coopercenter.org/files/2016/12/NumbersCount_HispanicsInVirginia_05_2011.pdf

² Rates are reported per 100,000 persons.

Table 1: Suicide Decedents: Demographic Characteristics Among Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Virginians, 2003-2014

	Hispanic Virginians			Non-Hispanic Virginians ¹		
	N= 288			N= 11,032		
	Num.	Percent	Rate ²	Num.	Percent	Rate
Gender						
Male	238	82.6	6.6	8,514	77.2	19.9
Female	50	17.4	1.6	2,518	22.8	5.6
Race						
White	253	87.8	-	9,572	86.8	-
Black	15	5.2	-	1,109	10.1	-
Asian	7	2.4	-	298	2.7	-
Native American	1	0.3	-	13	0.1	-
Other	0	0.0	-	6	0.1	-
Two or More Races	3	1.0	-	31	0.3	-
Unspecified	9	3.1	-	3	0.0	-
Education						
0 - 8 Grade Completed	45	15.6	-	694	6.3	-
9 - 12 Grade Completed	134	46.5	-	5,911	53.6	-
13 - 16 Years Completed	87	30.2	-	3,392	30.7	-
17+ Years Completed	16	5.6	-	889	8.1	-
Unknown	6	2.1	-	146	1.3	-
Marital Status						
Married	83	28.8	-	3,611	32.7	-
Not Married/Separated	204	70.8	-	7,389	67.0	-
<i>Never Married</i>	141	49.0	-	3,393	30.8	-
<i>Divorced</i>	33	11.5	-	2,218	20.1	-
<i>Married, but Separated</i>	27	9.4	-	1,061	9.6	-
<i>Widowed</i>	3	1.0	-	715	6.5	-
<i>Single, Not Otherwise Specified</i>	0	0.0	-	2	0.0	-
Unknown	1	0.3	-	32	0.3	-
Age						
<1	0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0
1-4	0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0
5-9	0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0
10-14	4	1.4	0.8	64	0.6	1.1
15-19	19	6.6	3.8	478	4.3	8.1
20-24	47	16.3	7.6	800	7.3	13.0

Table 1: Suicide Decedents: Demographic Characteristics Among Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Virginians, 2003-2014 (cont.)

	Hispanic Virginians			Non-Hispanic Virginians ¹		
	N= 288			N= 11,032		
	Num.	Percent	Rate ²	Num.	Percent	Rate
25-34	85	29.5	6.1	1,636	14.8	14.1
35-44	57	19.8	5.1	2,021	18.3	16.2
45-54	41	14.2	5.9	2,430	22.0	18.4
55-64	21	7.3	6.2	1,719	15.6	16.4
65-74	8	2.8	5.5	949	8.6	15.1
75-84	5	1.7	7.5	655	5.9	18.2
85+	1	0.3	4.4	280	2.5	19.8
Birthplace						
Born Outside the United States	166	57.6	-	679	6.2	-
Born in the United States	120	41.7	-	10,256	93.0	-
Unknown	2	0.7	-	97	0.9	-
TOTAL	288	100.0	4.2	11,032	100.0	12.6

¹All other Virginians captures the population of Virginia minus the Hispanic population in Virginia.

²Rates are calculated per 100,000 persons. The symbol - is used when there is no base population from which to calculate a rate.

Regional Differences (Table 2)

- The majority of Hispanic suicides, 149 of 288, or 52%, occurred in the Northern Health Planning Region (HPR).
- Looking at rates of suicide, which indicate risk, the Southwest HPR had the highest suicide rate for both Hispanic (8.0) and non-Hispanic decedents (16.5). Hispanics living in Southwest Virginia were 2.1 times more likely to complete a suicide compared to those living in Northern Virginia.

Table 2: Suicide Decedents: Region of Residence Among Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Virginians, 2003-2014

	Hispanic Virginians			Non-Hispanic Virginians		
	N= 288			N= 11,032		
	Number	Percent	Rate ¹	Number	Percent	Rate
Health Planning Region						
1. Northwest	25	8.7	3.2	1,949	17.7	14.2
2. Northern	149	51.7	3.7	2,038	18.5	9.3
3. Southwest	26	9.0	8.0	2,582	23.4	16.5
4. Central	34	11.8	5.2	1,976	17.9	12.8
5. Eastern	54	18.8	5.3	2,465	22.3	11.9
Unknown or Out of State	0	0.0	-	22	0.2	-

Table 2: Suicide Decedents: Region of Residence Among Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Virginians, 2003-2014 (cont.)

	Hispanic Virginians			Non-Hispanic Virginians		
	N= 288			N= 11,032		
	Number	Percent	Rate ¹	Number	Percent	Rate
Medical Examiner District						
Northern	154	53.5	13.9	2,770	25.1	9.4
Central	55	19.1	1.3	3,135	28.4	14.9
Tidewater	49	17.0	5.2	2,051	18.6	11.3
Western	30	10.4	6.0	3,054	27.7	16.2
Unknown or Out of State	0	0.0	-	22	0.2	-
TOTAL	288	100.0	4.2	11,032	100.0	12.6

¹Rates are calculated per 100,000 persons. The symbol - is used when there is no base population from which to calculate a rate.

Mechanisms of Injury and Characteristics of the Fatal Event (Table 3 and Figure 1)

- The most common mechanisms were asphyxia, firearms, and poisoning. These three mechanisms accounted for 95% of Hispanic suicides, which is similar to non-Hispanic suicides.
- Hispanic decedents used asphyxia twice as often as non-Hispanics. Non-Hispanics used firearms more frequently than Hispanics.
- Among Hispanic decedents, males used firearms (39%) more commonly than females (24%) while females used poison (28%) more often than males (8%).
- When examining mechanism of injury by birthplace, foreign born Hispanics used asphyxia (51%) more often than native born Hispanics (41%).

Table 3: Suicide Decedents: Injury Characteristics Among Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Virginians, 2003-2014

	Hispanic Virginians		Non-Hispanic Virginians	
	N= 288		N= 11,032	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Where Injured				
At Home	190	66.0	8,227	74.6
At Work	6	2.1	110	1.0

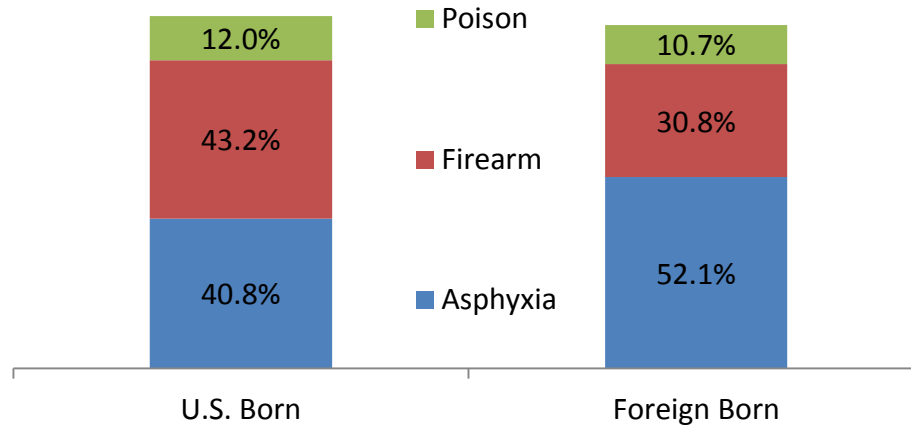
Table 3: Suicide Decedents: Injury Characteristics Among Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Virginians, 2003-2014 (cont.)

	Hispanic Virginians		Non-Hispanic Virginians	
	N= 288		N= 11,032	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Mechanism of Injury¹				
Asphyxia ²	135	46.9	2,245	20.3
Firearm	104	36.1	6,261	56.8
Poison	33	11.5	1,891	17.1
Fall	6	2.1	217	2.0
Drowning	4	1.4	157	1.4
Sharp Instrument	3	1.0	195	1.8
Motor Vehicle	3	1.0	78	0.7
Other Transport Vehicle	2	0.7	50	0.5
Fire or Burns	0	0.0	50	0.5
Intentional Neglect	0	0.0	2	0.0
Blunt Instrument	0	0.0	2	0.0
Other	0	0.0	27	0.2
Unknown	0	0.0	0	0.0
Premise				
House	198	68.8	8,335	75.6
Natural Area	25	8.7	573	5.2
Vehicle	16	5.6	768	7.0
Hotel or Motel	8	2.8	259	2.3
Jail	7	2.4	184	1.7
Park	6	2.1	105	1.0
Street or Sidewalk	3	1.0	127	1.2
Other	25	8.7	669	6.1
Unknown	0	0.0	12	0.1
TOTAL	288	100.0	11,032	100.0

¹More than one mechanism of injury may be used in a fatal incident. Totals will therefore exceed the number of victims, and percentages will total more than 100%.

²The Virginia Violent Death Reporting System captures three specific types of asphyxia deaths: hanging, suffocation, and strangulation.

Figure 1: Suicide Decedents: Top Three Mechanisms of Injury Among Hispanic Decedents by Birthplace, 2003-2014



Factors Related to Death (Table 4, Table 5, and Figure 2)

- Stressors among suicide decedents can be placed into three main categories: relationship, life, and mental health and addiction.
- Among Hispanic suicide decedents, 46% of suicides were associated with problems between intimate partners, such as a break-up or divorce, argument, or other conflicts such as jealousy or infidelity. This is more common than the 34% of suicides among other suicide decedents related to intimate partner conflict.
- Almost one-half (49%) of Hispanic suicide deaths followed a crisis within two weeks of the suicide.
- A mental health diagnosis was less common among Hispanic decedents (46%) than other decedents (57%). Among Hispanics, depression was the most common diagnosis (36%) followed by anxiety (11%) and bipolar disorder (6%). One-quarter (26%) of Hispanic suicide decedents received treatment for a mental health diagnosis within two months of the suicide compared with 41% of non-Hispanic decedents.
- While reported misuse of alcohol was similar among all suicide decedents, substance misuse was reportedly more common among non-Hispanics. Toxicological studies performed after death revealed alcohol use was slightly more common and drug use was less common at time of death among Hispanic suicide decedents compared to others.

Table 4: Suicide Decedents: Decedent and Incident Characteristics Among Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Virginians, 2003-2014

	Hispanic Virginians		Non-Hispanic Virginians	
	N= 276		N= 10,724	
	Num.	Percent ¹	Num.	Percent
Relationship Problems				
Intimate Partner Problem ²	128	46.4	3,594	33.5
Family Relationship Problem	33	12.0	749	7.0
Argument	28	10.1	611	5.7
Perpetrator of Interpersonal Violence within Past Month	24	8.7	679	6.3
Other Relationship Problem ³	16	5.8	434	4.0
Death of Family Member or Friend	9	3.3	642	6.0
Suicide of Family Member or Friend	3	1.1	147	1.4
Victim of Interpersonal Violence within Past Month	3	1.1	71	0.7
Life Stressor Characteristics				
Job Problem	43	15.6	1,418	13.2
Financial Problem	35	12.7	1,380	12.9
Recent Criminal Legal Problem	30	10.9	1,280	11.9
Physical Health Problem	24	8.7	2,096	19.5
Recent Civil Legal Problem ⁴	8	2.9	241	2.2
School Problem	6	2.2	141	1.3
Event Characteristics				
Crisis Within Two Weeks of Suicide ⁵	136	49.3	4,193	39.1
Disclosed Intent to Commit Suicide ⁶	108	39.1	4,111	38.3
Current Depressed Mood	103	37.3	4,167	38.9
Decedent Left a Suicide Note	90	32.6	3,822	35.6
History of Suicide Attempt(s)	55	19.9	2,278	21.2
Mental Health and Substance Abuse				
Mental Health Diagnosis ⁷	126	45.7	6,035	56.3
<i>Depression</i>	98	35.5	4,672	43.6
<i>Anxiety</i>	30	10.9	1,221	11.4
<i>Bipolar</i>	17	6.2	916	8.5
<i>Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder</i>	3	1.1	192	1.8
Treated for Mental Health	94	34.1	5,092	47.5
<i>Treated, within Two Months</i>	72	26.1	4,376	40.8
<i>Treated, not within Two Months</i>	22	8.0	716	6.7
Alcohol Problem	40	14.5	1,593	14.9
Substance Abuse	31	11.2	1,704	15.9

Table 4: Suicide Decedents: Decedent and Incident Characteristics Among Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Virginians, 2003-2014 (cont.)

	Hispanic Virginians		Non-Hispanic Virginians	
	N= 276		N= 10,724	
	Num.	Percent ¹	Num.	Percent

¹Percentages are based on the number of decedents with known characteristic(s). More than one characteristic may apply to a decedent. Totals will not equal the number of decedents and percentages will total more than 100%.

²Captures suicide decedents related to intimate partner conflict. This conflict can include, but is not limited to, violence between intimate partners.

³Examples include neighbors, friends, and current or former co-workers.

⁴Examples include divorce and child custody.

⁵This crisis can be related to any characteristic. It could include a recent job loss, argument with a friend or family member, or a change in mental health medication.

⁶Refers to suicide decedents who talked about wanting to self-harm with time to intervene prior to the suicide.

⁷Refers to a mental health diagnosis at the time of death.

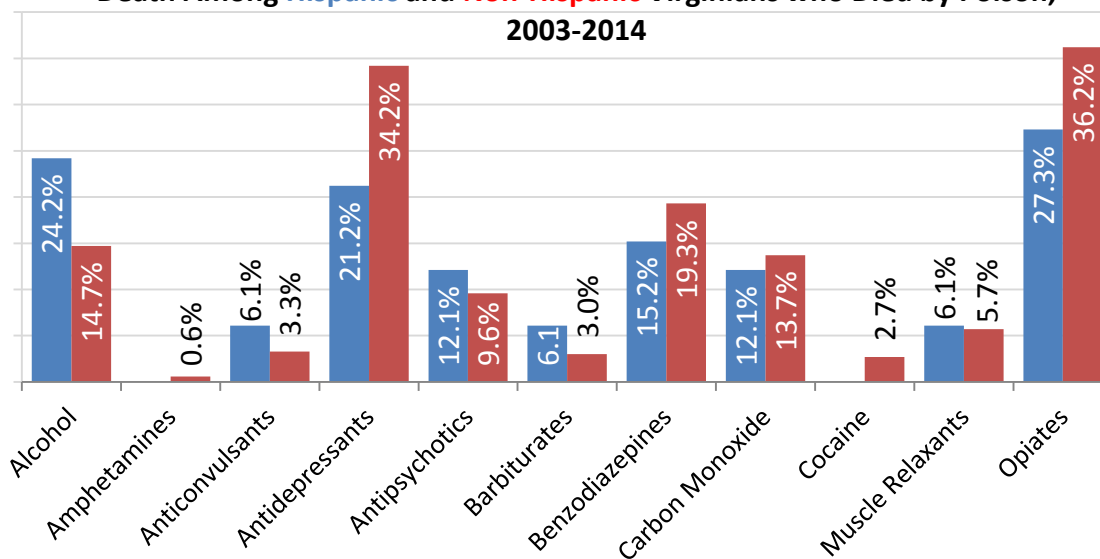
Table 5: Suicide Decedents: Presence of Alcohol and Drugs at Time of Death Among Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Virginians, 2003-2014

Drug Category	Hispanic Virginians		Non-Hispanic Virginians	
	Number Tested	Percent Positive ¹	Number Tested	Percent Positive
Alcohol	254	39.0	9,584	33.6
<i>BAC <0.08</i> ²	254	10.2	9,584	10.3
<i>BAC ≥0.08</i>	254	28.0	9,584	23.0
Amphetamines	99	1.0	3,036	1.5
Anticonvulsants	3	100.0	107	86.0
Antidepressants	33	39.4	1,666	62.5
Antipsychotics	15	6.7	524	22.9
Barbiturates	17	11.8	759	9.1
Benzodiazepines	21	47.6	934	52.5
Carbon Monoxide	2	100.0	110	100.0
Cocaine	129	6.2	4,016	6.1
Marijuana	17	11.8	658	16.7
Muscle Relaxants	7	28.6	527	19.5
Opiates	129	11.6	4,090	25.2

¹Percentages are based on the number of persons tested. Not every person is tested for every substance.

²BAC refers to Blood Alcohol Concentration. BAC is reported only when the tested sample fluid is blood.

Figure 2: Suicide Decedents: Percentage of Alcohol and Drugs Causing Death Among Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Virginians who Died by Poison, 2003-2014



HOMICIDE AMONG HISPANICS COMPARED TO NON-HISPANICS

Demographic Characteristics (Table 6)

- Homicide death rates were similar among Hispanics (4.2) and non-Hispanics (4.9).
- Among both Hispanics and non-Hispanics, homicide victims were typically males between ages 20 and 44 who were never married. Male risk was at least three times that of females.
- By mean age at death, Hispanic homicide victims were six years younger than non-Hispanic homicide victims. The risk of death by homicide was highest between ages 20 and 24.
- Homicide victims completed fewer years of education. Two in five Hispanic victims completed 8 grades or fewer (40%).
- Nearly two-thirds (65%) Hispanic homicide victims were born outside of the U.S. compared to only 5% of non-Hispanics.
- More than four in five (81%) of Hispanic homicide victims had a job at the time of their death, compared to 64% of non-Hispanic victims, though only 2% were fatally injured at their workplace.

Table 6: Homicide Victims: Demographic Characteristics Among Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Virginians, 2003-2014

	Hispanic Virginians			Non-Hispanic Virginians ¹		
	N= 283			N= 4,316		
	Number	Percent	Rate ²	Number	Percent	Rate
Gender						
Male	224	79.2	6.3	3,284	76.1	7.7
Female	59	20.8	1.8	1,032	23.9	2.3
Race						
White	218	77.0	-	1,463	33.9	-
Black	19	6.7	-	2,716	62.9	-
Asian	2	0.7	-	97	2.2	-
Native American	0	0.0	-	4	0.1	-
Other	0	0.0	-	7	0.2	-
Two or More Races	4	1.4	-	28	0.6	-
Unspecified	40	14.1	-	1	0.0	-
Education						
0 - 8 Grade Completed	117	41.3	-	473	11.0	-
9 - 12 Grade Completed	126	44.5	-	2,932	67.9	-
13 - 16 Years Completed	28	9.9	-	737	17.1	-
17+ Years Completed	3	1.1	-	93	2.2	-
Unknown	9	3.2	-	81	1.9	-
Marital Status						
Married	68	24.0	-	882	20.4	-
Not Married/Separated	212	74.9	-	3,416	79.1	-
<i>Never Married</i>	189	66.8	-	2,659	61.6	-
<i>Divorced</i>	9	3.2	-	519	12.0	-
<i>Married, but Separated</i>	8	2.8	-	134	3.1	-
<i>Widowed</i>	5	1.8	-	102	2.4	-
<i>Single, Not Otherwise Specified</i>	1	0.4	-	2	0.0	-
Unknown	3	1.1	-	18	0.4	-
Age						
<1	14	4.9	8.8	97	2.2	9.0
1-4	5	1.8	0.8	93	2.2	2.2
5-9	1	0.4	0.2	29	0.7	0.5
10-14	4	1.4	0.8	46	1.1	0.8
15-19	28	9.9	5.6	432	10.0	7.3
20-24	67	23.7	10.9	839	19.4	13.6
25-34	95	33.6	6.8	988	22.9	8.5
35-44	46	16.3	4.2	718	16.6	5.8
45-54	12	4.2	1.7	558	12.9	4.2

Table 6: Homicide Victims: Demographic Characteristics Among Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Virginians, 2003-2014 (cont.)

	Hispanic Virginians			Non-Hispanic Virginians		
	N= 283			N= 4,316		
	Num.	Percent	Rate	Num.	Percent	Rate
55-64	4	1.4	1.2	293	6.8	2.8
65-74	5	1.8	3.4	109	2.5	1.7
75-84	1	0.4	1.5	87	2.0	2.4
85+	1	0.4	4.4	24	0.6	1.7
Unknown	0	0.0	-	3	0.1	-
Birthplace						
Born Outside the United States	185	65.4	-	208	4.8	-
Born in the United States	95	33.6	-	4,061	94.1	-
Unknown	3	1.1	-	47	1.1	-
TOTAL	283	100.0	4.2	4,316	100.0	4.9

¹All other Virginians captures the population of Virginia minus the Hispanic population in Virginia.

²Rates are calculated per 100,000 persons. The symbol - is used when there is no base population from which to calculate a rate.

Regional Disparities (Table 7)

- The largest number of Hispanic homicides occurred in the Northern HPR (113, 40%). In contrast, the largest number of non-Hispanic homicides occurred in the Eastern HPR (1,564, 36%).
- While the Northern HPR had the highest number of Hispanic homicide victims, the highest homicide rate was in the Southwest HPR (8.9). Hispanics living in Southwestern Virginia were 3.2 times as likely to be the victim of a homicide compared to those living in Northern Virginia.

Table 7: Homicide Victims: Region of Residence Among Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Virginians, 2003-2014

	Hispanic Virginians			Non-Hispanic Virginians		
	N= 283			N= 4,316		
	Number	Percent	Rate ¹	Number	Percent	Rate
Health Planning Region						
1. Northwest	18	6.4	2.3	358	8.3	2.6
2. Northern	113	39.9	2.8	311	7.2	1.4
3. Southwest	29	10.2	8.9	723	16.8	4.6
4. Central	51	18.0	7.8	1,318	30.5	8.6
5. Eastern	65	23.0	6.4	1,564	36.2	7.6
Unknown or Out of State	7	2.5	-	42	1.0	-

Table 7: Homicide Victims: Region of Residence Among Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Virginians, 2003-2014 (cont.)

	Hispanic Virginians			Non-Hispanic Virginians		
	N= 283			N= 4,316		
	Number	Percent	Rate ¹	Number	Percent	Rate
Medical Examiner District						
Northern	118	41.7	10.7	415	9.6	1.4
Central	64	22.6	1.5	1,560	36.1	7.4
Tidewater	63	22.3	6.7	1,496	34.7	8.2
Western	31	11.0	6.2	803	18.6	4.3
Unknown or Out of State	7	2.5	-	42	1.0	-
TOTAL	283	100.0	4.2	4,316	100.0	4.9

¹Rates are calculated per 100,000 persons. The symbol - is used when there is no base population from which to calculate a rate.

Mechanisms of Injury (Table 8, Table 9, and Figure 3)

- Most homicide victims knew their assailant, and for both groups, it was typically an intimate partner. Among Hispanic victims, 77% of females were fatally assaulted by an intimate partner compared to 18% of males.
- Accordingly, Hispanic male victims were assaulted most frequently in non-familial conflicts with friends or acquaintances (46%) compared to 10% of females.
- Hispanic females were also more commonly killed by an intimate partner (77%) versus a family member (12%) compared to non-Hispanic females (65% killed by intimate partner, 18% by a family member).
- Among all homicide victims, more than 90% were killed with a firearm, sharp instrument, or blunt instrument. Non-Hispanics were killed with firearms (72%) more often than their counterparts (58%). Hispanic victims were killed by sharp instruments such as knives or machetes (27%) more than twice as often as non-Hispanics (13%).
- Notably, foreign born Hispanics were killed twice as frequently with sharp instruments (31%) than U.S. born Hispanics (16%).

Table 8: Homicide Victims: Victim-Perpetrator Relationship Among Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Virginians, 2003-2014

	Hispanic Virginians		Non-Hispanic Virginians	
	N= 283		N= 4,316	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Victim's Relationship to Perpetrator(s)				
Known to Victim	139	49.1	2,083	48.3
Intimate Partner, current or former	61	21.6	921	21.3
Family	21	7.4	389	9.0
Friends, Acquaintances, Other Persons Known	57	20.1	773	17.9
Stranger	16	5.7	128	3.0
Suspect was Law Enforcement	7	2.5	173	4.0
Unknown Relationship ¹	121	42.8	1,932	44.8

¹A relationship may be unknown either because no relationship is known or because there was no perpetrator information.

Figure 3: Mechanism of Injury Among Hispanic Homicide Victims by Birthplace, 2003-2014

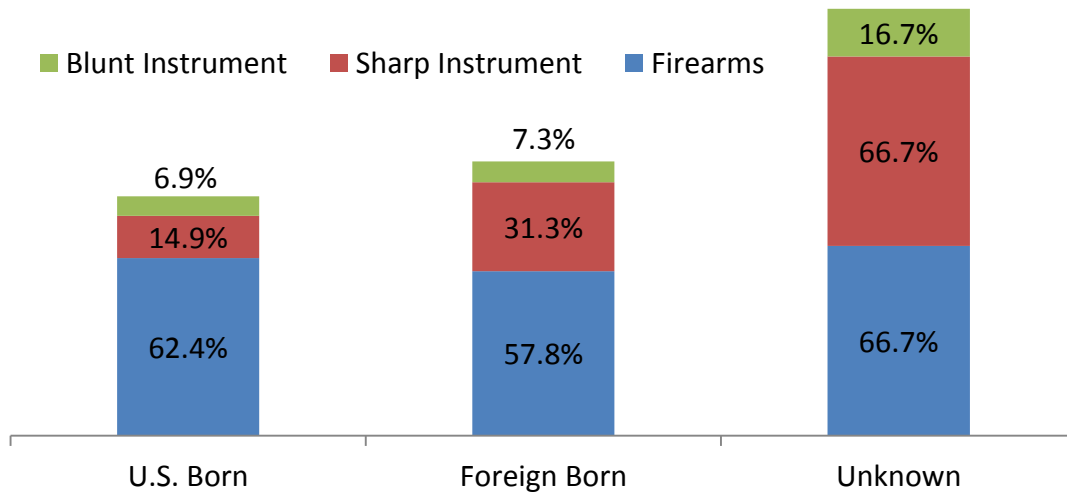


Table 9: Homicide Victims: Injury Characteristics Among Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Virginians, 2003-2014

	Hispanic Virginians		Non-Hispanic Virginians	
	N= 283		N= 4,316	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Where Injured				
At Home	116	41.0	1,663	38.5
At Work	5	1.8	176	4.1
Mechanism of Injury¹				
Firearm	165	58.3	3,115	72.2
Sharp Instrument	75	26.5	542	12.6
Blunt Instrument	20	7.1	295	6.8
Asphxia ²	13	4.6	173	4.0
Personal Weapons	7	2.5	143	3.3
Shaking	6	2.1	58	1.3
Fire or Burns	2	0.7	31	0.7
Poison	2	0.7	27	0.6
Drowning	2	0.7	10	0.2
Motor Vehicle	1	0.4	27	0.6
Other	1	0.4	34	0.8
Unknown	4	1.4	36	0.8
Premise of Injury				
House	150	53.0	2,333	54.1
Street or Sidewalk	38	13.4	762	17.7
Parking Lot	32	11.3	272	6.3
Vehicle	21	7.4	402	9.3
Natural Area	12	4.2	85	2.0
Commercial Store	5	1.8	104	2.4
Hotel or Motel	3	1.1	50	1.2
Other	15	5.3	252	5.8
Unknown	7	2.5	56	1.3
TOTAL	283	100.0	4,316	100.0

¹More than one mechanism of injury may be used in a fatal incident. Totals will therefore exceed the number of victims, and percentages will total more than 100%.

²The Virginia Violent Death Reporting System captures three specific types of asphyxia deaths: hanging, suffocation, and strangulation.

Factors Related to Death (Table 10 and Table 11)

- Characteristics of homicide deaths of Hispanics were most often related to two categories: gang activity³ and interpersonal problems.⁴
- Approximately 25% of all Virginian homicides were related to intimate partner violence. Female homicides, both Hispanic (75%) and non-Hispanic (62%), were most often related to intimate partner violence. An argument preceded 43% of Hispanic homicides.
- Hispanic homicides were related to gang activity (11%) more frequently than homicides of non-Hispanics (5%). Gang related Hispanic homicide victims were typically male and born outside of the U.S.
- Toxicological studies performed after death revealed that among Hispanic homicide victims drug use was a rare event, while alcohol use was more common. One in three Hispanic homicide victims had a BAC above the legal limit, compared to 22% of non-Hispanic homicide victims.

Table 10: Homicide Victims: Decedent and Incident Characteristics Among Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Virginians, 2003-2014

	Hispanic Virginians		Non-Hispanic Virginians	
	N=219		N=3,249	
	Number	Percent ¹	Number	Percent
Interpersonal Problems				
Argument	94	42.9	1,291	39.7
Intimate Partner Violence ²	54	24.7	851	26.2
Physical Fight Between Two Persons	8	3.7	108	3.3
Other Relationship Problem ³	5	2.3	60	1.8
Perpetrator of Interpersonal Violence within Past Month	3	1.4	112	3.4
Victim of Interpersonal Violence within Past Month	3	1.4	68	2.1
Family Relationship Problem	2	0.9	58	1.8
Crime Related Characteristics				
Precipitated by Another Crime	55	25.1	958	29.5
<i>Robbery</i>	31	14.2	474	14.6
<i>Assault or Homicide</i>	17	7.8	341	10.5
<i>Burglary</i>	7	3.2	125	3.8
<i>Drug Trade</i>	6	2.7	64	2.0
<i>Rape</i>	3	1.4	28	0.9

³ Gang activity includes homicides motivated by gangs or organized crime and where the victim or suspect is a suspected gang member.

⁴ Intimate partner violence includes conflict or violence between current or former intimate partners.

Table 10: Homicide Victims: Decedent and Incident Characteristics Among Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Virginians, 2003-2014 (cont.)

	Hispanic Virginians		Non-Hispanic Virginians	
	N=219		N=3,249	
	Number	Percent ¹	Number	Percent
Crime In Progress At Time of Homicide	53	24.2	907	27.9
Gang-related ⁴	24	11.0	150	4.6
Mental Health and Substance Abuse				
Substance Abuse	24	11.0	462	14.2
Alcohol Problem	6	2.7	72	2.2
Mental Health Diagnosis ⁵	5	2.3	129	4.0
<i>Depression</i>	4	1.8	52	1.6
<i>Anxiety</i>	2	0.9	35	1.1
<i>Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder</i>	1	0.5	1	0.0
<i>Bipolar</i>	0	0.0	17	0.5
Treated for Mental Health	5	2.3	114	3.5
<i>Treated, within Two Months of Death</i>	5	2.3	90	2.8
<i>Treated, Not within Two Months of Death</i>	0	0.0	24	0.7

¹Percentages are based on the number of decedents with known characteristic(s). More than one characteristic may apply to a decedent. Totals will not equal the number of decedents, and percentages will exceed 100%.

²Refers to homicides related to violence between intimate partners.

³Examples include neighbors, friends, or current or former co-workers.

⁴Includes homicides noted to be related to any gang activities.

⁵Refers to a diagnosed mental health condition at the time of death.

Table 11: Homicide Victims: Presence of Alcohol and Drugs at Time of Death Among Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Virginians, 2003-2014

	Hispanic Virginians		Non-Hispanic Virginians	
	Number Tested	Percent Positive ¹	Number Tested	Percent Positive
Alcohol	276	42.4	4,123	36.6
<i>BAC <0.08</i> ²	276	11.6	4,123	14.6
<i>BAC ≥0.08</i>	276	30.1	4,123	21.7
Amphetamines	163	1.2	2,508	1.3
Anticonvulsants	1	0.0	12	58.3
Antidepressants	21	9.5	245	11.8
Antipsychotics	4	0.0	66	1.5
Barbiturates	16	0.0	374	1.9
Benzodiazepines	16	0.0	383	10.7
Carbon Monoxide	1	100.0	26	69.2

Table 11: Homicide Victims: Presence of Alcohol and Drugs at Time of Death Among Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Virginians, 2003-2014 (cont.)

	Hispanic Virginians		Non-Hispanic Virginians	
	Number Tested	Percent Positive ¹	Number Tested	Percent Positive
Cocaine	265	10.2	3,896	13.7
Marijuana	24	20.8	467	21.8
Muscle Relaxants	12	0.0	353	0.8
Opiates	263	1.9	3,883	7.1

¹Percentages are based on the number of persons tested. Not every person is tested for every substance.

²BAC refers to Blood Alcohol Concentration. BAC is reported only when the tested sample fluid is blood.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Hispanic violent deaths are relatively rare in Virginia. However, these homicide and suicide deaths do provide information about intervention opportunities. The majority of Hispanics who died by either homicide or suicide are born outside of the U.S. and were younger than non-Hispanics. Conflicts with an intimate partner or exposure to gang activity were primary contributors to Hispanic homicides. Suicide deaths frequently occurred in conjunction with underutilization of mental health treatment, conflict with an intimate partner or family member, and within two weeks of a crisis.

Hispanic homicide victims were younger, most frequent in Northern Virginia, and their deaths most often related to intimate partner conflict and gang activity. Gang reduction is a major area to focus on reducing Hispanic homicides. Efforts to identify high risk areas and provide information on community resources exist across the state, notably in [Northern Virginia](#) and [Newport News](#). The [Attorney General](#) provides more information on available statewide and regional resources. These regional taskforces and continued support for community outreach and interventions is a key component in reducing gang-related homicides. One common theme is that interventions should be targeted at school-aged youths, when they are recruited for gangs. The Department of Justice (DOJ) suggests [guidelines](#) to engage younger children at risk for joining gangs. The overarching message of gang prevention is collaboration across stakeholder groups such as police, schools, and families; awareness of gang activity in communities; creation of strong ties between children and the community through community development programs; and promotion of a safe environment in schools and neighborhoods.

Particularly among Hispanic suicide decedents, mental health services were not commonly utilized, due to a lack of mental health services. This shortage of available mental health services, coupled with the more frequently present conflict between family members, could lead to an increase in suicide according to a [Suicide Prevention Resource Center \(SPRC\)](#) brief on

[Hispanic suicide](#). A [needs assessment](#) to combat this risk conducted jointly by the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) and the City of Richmond suggests access to and availability of bilingual mental health and substance abuse services should be increased and assistance provided to parents to manage the stress of acculturation.

From these suggestions, next steps are clear. Community leaders and legislators must focus on gang reduction in Virginia. By incorporating the DOJ guidelines into community programs and initiatives, Virginians can move toward more positive outcomes for these youths. For suicide decedents, it is imperative to increase the availability of mental health resources – through an increase in available services in targeted areas, as well as ensuring treatment providers are bilingual and culturally competent.

While Hispanic violent deaths are a rare event, the Hispanic population is growing. With this growth, we must focus on decreasing the number of violent deaths among Hispanics in Virginia.