

## **Suicide in Casper**

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Despite having the smallest population in the United States, Wyoming has led the nation since 2018 in having the highest suicide rate until very recently. More alarmingly, the city of Casper holds the number one spot for the city with the highest suicide rate. The stark contrast between the smallest population in the nation holding the highest suicide rate really raises the question as to why. The small tight-knit communities contribute to the continually increasing suicide rates in Wyoming. Along with the population, the lack of resources and support offered does not aid in a reduction in suicides.

While Wyoming and Casper's population is isolated geographically, their small communities are still very close-knit. The unique dynamics of such small and emotionally connected communities intensifies each suicide. Suicide has "lasting impacts on individuals, families, and communities. Surviving the loss of a loved one to suicide is a risk factor for suicide. Suicide survivors are deeply impacted by each suicide and experience a range of complex grief reactions" (Suicide in Wyoming, 2019). The tight social networks, while they aid in giving a sense of togetherness, they also amplify the shockwaves of each tragedy. These kinds of communal experiences of loss can contribute to a heightened susceptibility to suicide contagion, where one tragedy may trigger others.

Another major factor is Casper's high suicide rate is the scarcity of mental health resources. "While the state's total is just a fraction of those suicide deaths in the West, Wyoming's veteran suicide rate of 84.1 deaths per 100,000 people is more than double the regional average and nearly triple the national average" (Suicide in Wyoming, 2019). With rates being so high, especially among more vulnerable groups such as veterans, or those in sexual identity disparity categories, one would think measures would be taken seriously to come up with solutions to

accommodate people and those groups in general. Surprisingly, “the state got its first in-state hotline in 2020. Before then, calls were routed out of state” (Hannon, 2023). Even though suicide has been a major problem in Wyoming and Casper specifically for a long time, it was only until more recently that the state is now beginning to take action in the fight against mental health and suicide.

Of all the local issues in Casper Wyoming, the suicide rates are most alarming. Despite having such a small population compared to the rest of the nation, Casper has the highest suicide rates. These deaths have such a deep impact on so many more people due to the tight-knit communities here. Despite having so many cases of suicide, there are so few resources made available in order to combat it. These increasing suicide rates have been a problem nation wide, but they have become a prominent issue in Casper Wyoming.

## References

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