



# The Loneliness Epidemic

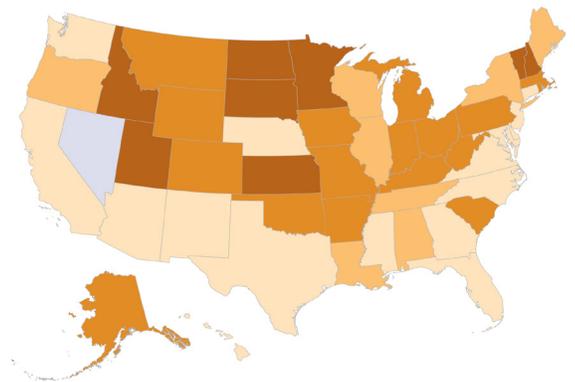
The world is full of epidemics. From starving children to obese ones, drugs, war, or even the sex slavery industry, the world seems to be falling apart around us. Utah has its own epidemics including child porn, opioids, and methamphetamines. I will be discussing a problem that causes more death than any of the other problems previously mentioned: suicide. This is a problem that has plagued many people and their communities. College students across the nation are killing themselves, and less than half of them have a known mental illness (Nutt). To aid those in crisis, or even catch them before it becomes a crisis, not only do peers need to step up, but the colleges and universities need to take a stand and stop the increase of suicide rates.

Among college-aged people (15-35), suicide is the second leading cause of death, with Utah holding the place as having the fifth highest suicide rate in the United States (Nutt). This is clearly a problem, and it will continue to be since suicide rates have only been increasing. There are many theories as to why the rates are increasing so steadily across the nation, but few

actually help us understand how to decrease them. While the causes are important to understand, the resolution is critical. Success will be seen when the suicide rates begin dropping.

**Suicide rates rose across the US, 1999-2016**

■ -1% ■ +1-20% ■ +20-30% ■ +30-40% ■ More than 40%



To lower suicide rates, one of the solutions most often given is that the afflicted just need to get help. In the article “Depression, Desperation, and Suicidal Ideation in College Students” it states that roughly 85% of students with suicidal ideations do not seek help (Garlow et al). This is likely because of how expensive it is to get help from an expert such as a therapist or psychologist. Students often have to pay copious amounts of money to the

school they are attending, leaving them with the crumbs of what they have earned.

Thankfully, Weber State University is taking a step toward helping the students who are struggling. Weber State University offers many free services to help depressed or suicidal students, including free therapy for students. There is also a page on their website for students to find resources other than counseling such as crisis hotlines, websites, and groups for the LGBT community. This is a step in the right direction because it allows broke college students to seek help. With hundreds of people killing themselves every year, this small step can have a huge impact.

If there is still disbelief in suicide being an epidemic, then maybe a personal story would be more convincing. During my three years of high school, there were five suicides and over fifty attempts, two of which were done in the school bathrooms during class periods. I know of at least a dozen people who have tried to take their lives, and unfortunately, a few have succeeded. This is all in my community, but it is not as personal as it gets. My sister has tried to kill herself and thankfully failed each time.



Unfortunately, suicidal ideation, depression, and anxiety happen to be genetic in my family. Everyone in my household has some form of mental illness, including myself. Contrary to popular belief, this is not just a problem for teenagers that people grow out of when they grow up. My sister has been suicidal since she was fourteen, and a decade later, she is still “fighting [her] own brain” (J. Lowder). She has been to therapy, tried exercising, and even tried medications, but none of it works for her, so she handles it on her own by meditating and having a support system. Of course, my family is supportive of one another, but with all of us fighting internal demons, it can be difficult to take care of each other and ourselves at the same time.

I have grown up with suicide present in my life since I was nine years old. It is an epidemic because children should not have to be trained on how to handle a suicidal friend in eighth grade. It is an epidemic because thousands of people have lost friends and family. It is an epidemic because people should not have to call an ambulance for someone they care about because of suicide. It is an epidemic, and it can be fixed, people just need to step up and fight against it. Fighting one's own brain is harder when they are alone, so it is time to come together and help save some lives.



### Works Cited

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