988

https://988lifeline.org/

WHAT IS IT?

- Suicide & Crisis Lifeline for people facing mental health struggles, emotional distress, alcohol or drug use concerns or just needing someone to talk to

- Call 988, text 988 or chat online at https://988lifeline.org/

WHY IT EXISTS ~ *130 deaths a day*

- **Simple Access:** Similar to 911 for physical emergencies, 988 serves as a universally accessible number for mental health, emotional distress, or substance misuse crises.
- **Reduced Law Enforcement Role:** The goal is to minimize police intervention in mental health crises by providing specialized counselor support and, in some areas, connecting callers to mobile crisis teams rather than emergency rooms. (different from 911)
- **Improved Safety**: provide immediate, "least restrictive" care to callers in crisis.
- **Specialized Support:** 988 includes dedicated, trained counselors for specific populations, including veterans and natives, and provides bilingual and interpreter services.
- **Federal Mandate:** Authorized by the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020, it was formally created to strengthen and expand existing crisis services.

WHO CAN USE IT?

- 988 is active **across the United States** (includes Hawaii and Alaska). The new, shorter phone number is designed to make it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services.
- ****The majority of interviewed follow-up clients reported that the intervention stopped them from killing themselves (79.6%) and kept them safe (90.6%).
- *Of note, the previous 1-800-273-TALK (8255) number will continue to function indefinitely.*

NATIVE AND STRONG LIFELINE

- In 2020, non-Hispanic American Indian and Alaska Native people in Washington had a 34 percent higher suicide rate than the rest of the population. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated the barriers to care that Native communities face. As a result, during the pandemic, American Indians experienced higher suicide and overdose attempt rates—at least two times higher than that of non-Natives.
- **To reach the Native and Strong Lifeline, call "988" and press 4 or text N8V to 988.**
- Calls are answered by Native crisis counselors who are Tribal citizens and descendants closely tied to their communities. They are fully trained in crisis intervention and support, with special emphasis on cultural and traditional practices related to healing. **The Native and Strong Lifeline is confidential, free, and available 24/7.**

SUICIDES per 100,000

- White **17.2**
- Black **8.7**
- Hispanic **8.0**
- Asian or Pacific Islander **6.7**
- American Indian or Alaskan Native **22.5**

PBS NEWS HOUR
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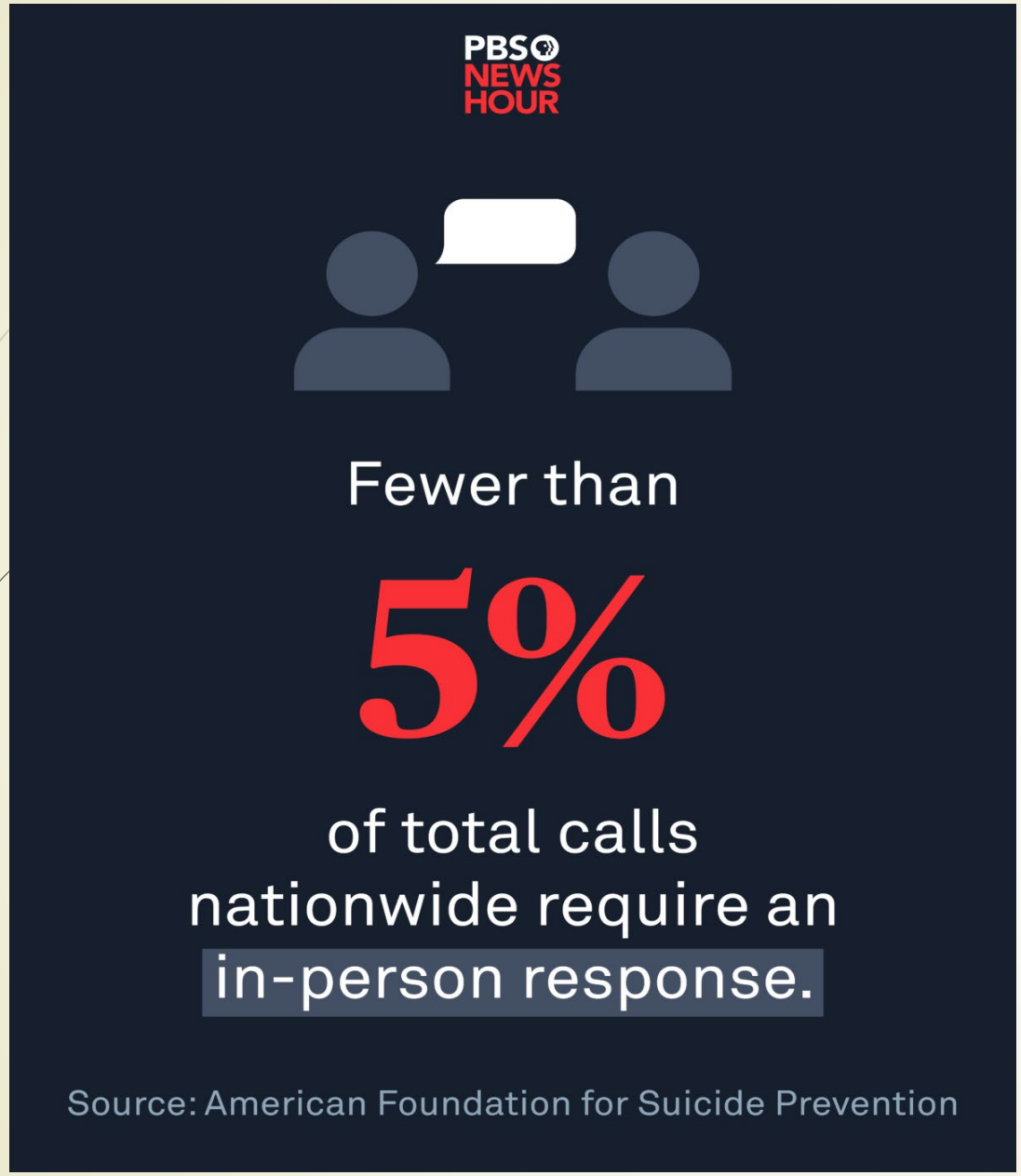
3 in 4
Americans do not know what the 988 mental health crisis hotline is.
Source: American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

PBS NEWS HOUR
The national average wait time is
41
seconds.
Source: Vibrant Mental Health



Common misconceptions contributing to fear of calling:

"The police will come if I call or say anything"

"I don't want to go to the hospital"

WHAT'S NEXT?

- Spread the word (to everyone, not to just those in counseling)
  - Promotional materials
  - Presentations
  - Community events to raise awareness and funds for 988 e.g. training of staff (988 primarily funded by SAMHSA and Vibrant Mental Health)

REFERENCES

- https://988lifeline.org/
- https://www.samishtribe.nsn.us/departments/health/native-and-strong-lifeline
- https://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/988-hotline-helped-millions-in-its-first-year-heres-how-advocates-say-it-could-reach-more