

State of New York
Department of Correctional Services

Building Number 2
Harriman Office Campus
Albany, New York 12226

INMATE SUICIDE REPORT

1998-2007



David A. Paterson
Governor



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Commissioner

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Total Suicides

- A total of 123 inmates committed suicide within DOCS facilities during the ten-year period of 1998 through 2007.

Suicide Rate per 100,000 Inmates

- The overall suicide rate for the inmate population for the study period was 18.4 per 100,000 per year.

Age

- Overall, the age of suicide victims generally mirrored the age of all inmates, except inmates under 25 years of age tended to pose a lower suicide risk.

Race/Ethnic Status

- White inmates are considerably more likely than inmates of other racial backgrounds to commit suicide.

Commitment Crime

- Violent felons are more likely to commit suicide and drug offenders less likely.

Region of the State

- Inmates from upstate counties without an urban center had the highest suicide rate.

Minimum and Maximum Sentences

- The longer an inmate's minimum or maximum sentence, the greater the possibility that the inmate may be a suicide victim.

Time Served

- The largest percentage of suicides occurred among inmates who had served less than one year of incarceration since their latest admission to NYS DOCS.

Time Served in Current Facility

- Among suicide deaths, there was a substantially higher concentration of offenders who had recently transferred to a new correctional facility.

Special Housing Location

- The percent of suicides who were being housed in a Special Housing Unit cell at the time of death decreased from 33% in 1998-2004 to 16% in 2005-2007.

OMH Level

- Suicide is more concentrated among inmates with a higher designated level of need for mental health services (Office of Mental Health Service Level or OMH Level).

INTRODUCTION

This report examines characteristics of 123 inmates who committed suicide in a Department of Correctional Services facility during the years 1998-2007. Selected demographic and legal history variables are profiled and comparisons are made between decedents and the end-of-year inmate under custody population for the ten year study period.

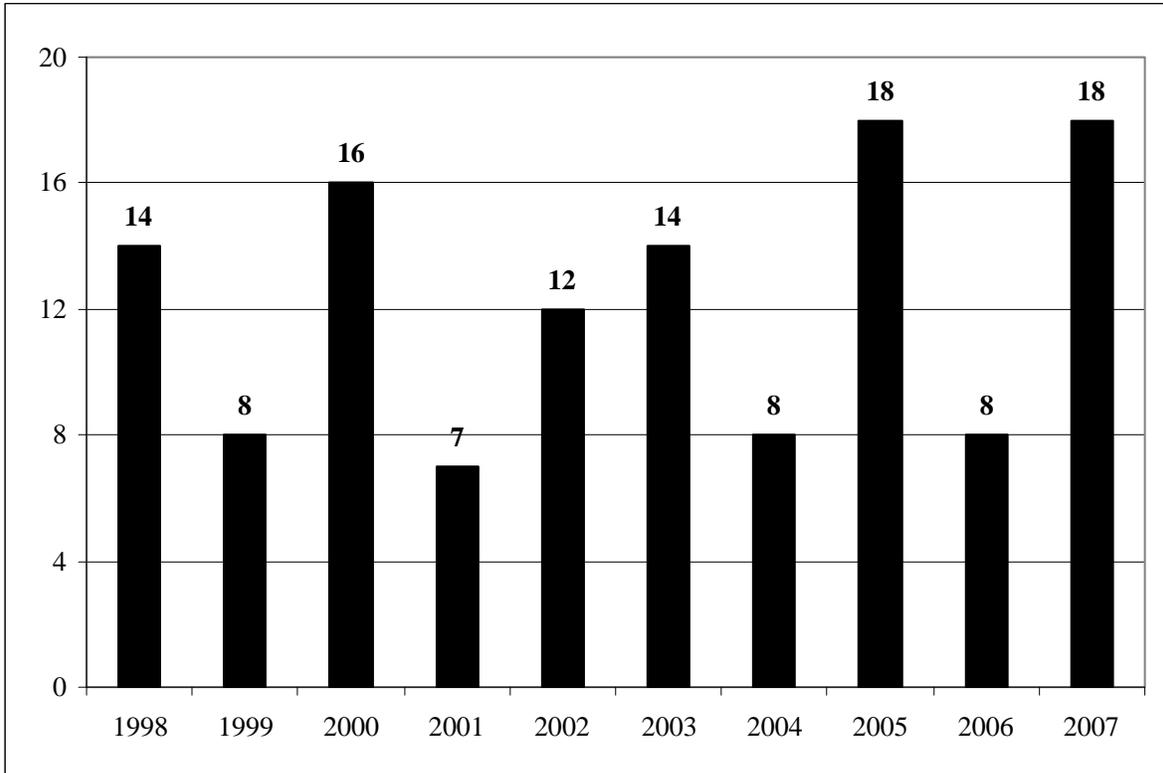
Because this report covers 10 years, the data for individual years is not reported in all of the tables. This was done for two reasons. First, the patterns seen from 1998 to 2004 were similar to each other so the reporting of data by year is not useful for examining trends. Second, in the years 2005 to 2007 some of the patterns changed and yearly data is more helpful. Grouping the data into these two time periods permits differences to be more closely examined.

Suicides of inmates while on temporary release status or while being housed in local jails due to court appearances are not included in this report. In addition, suicides of escapee, absconders and parolees at the Willard drug treatment facility jointly administered by the Division of Parole and DOCS are not included. This report focuses on suicides that occurred within DOCS facilities.

Annual Number of Suicide Deaths

There was considerable fluctuation in the number of suicides annually over the 10 years from calendar year 1998 through 2007. The number of suicide deaths ranged from a low of 7 (in 2001) to a high of 18 in 2005 and 2007.

Chart 1. Annual Number of Suicides New York State DOCS
1998 - 2007



Ten Year Annual Rate of Suicide Deaths

The rate of suicide deaths for full years ranged from a low of 10.1 per 100,000 inmates in 2001 to a high of 28.4 per 100,000 in 2005. In 2007, the rate was 28.3 per 100,000. The average number of suicides per year, over the period 1998 through 2007, was 12.3. From 1998 – 2004, there was an average of 11.3 suicides per year. From 2005 through 2007, there was an average of 14.7 suicides per year.

According to the most recently published national data¹, the suicide rate in state prisons throughout the country during 2005 was 17 deaths per 100,000 prison inmates.

**Table 1. Annual Count of Inmate Suicide Incidents in Facilities
Inmate Suicides in NYSDOCS, 1998 - 2007**

Year	Average Daily Population to 2007-12-31	Suicides In Facility to 2007-12-31	Suicide Rate per 100,000	Average daily population	
				1998-2004	2005-2007
1998	69,885	14	20.0	68,455	63,408
1999	71,188	8	11.2	Total suicides	
2000	71,126	16	22.5	79	44
2001	69,157	7	10.1	Suicide rate per 100,000	
2002	67,117	12	17.9	16.5	23.1
2003	66,050	14	21.2	Average suicides per year	
2004	64,659	8	12.4	11.3	14.7
2005	63,400	18	28.4		
2006	63,318	8	12.6		
2007	63,507	18	28.3		
Average	66,941	12.3	18.4		

¹ U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Deaths in Custody Statistical Tables, Table 3. Mortality rate per 100,000 State prisoners, by cause of death, 2001-2005, by Christopher J. Mumola, BJS Policy Analyst and Margaret E. Noonan, BJS Statistician, http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/dcrp/dcrp_tables.pdf.

Correctional Facility

During the study period, 84% of the suicides occurred in maximum security facilities and 16% occurred in medium security facilities. For 2005 – 2007, these proportions were different; 77% were in maximum security and 23% were in medium security facilities.

Elmira Correctional Facility, including Reception, had the most suicides in 2005 – 2007 with 9. In the 1998 – 2004 period, Clinton Correctional Facility had the most suicides, with 11, followed by Elmira, with 9.

Table 2. Inmate Suicides by Facility by Year
Inmate Suicides in NYSDOCS, 1998 – 2007

Facility/Security	Total 1998-2004	2005	2006	2007	Total 2005-2007	Grand Total
Maximum Security						
Attica	8	2	1	1	4	12
Auburn	4	2	0	0	2	6
Bedford-F.	3	0	0	1	1	4
Clinton	9	1	2	1	4	13
Clinton Annex	0	1	0	0	1	1
Clinton ICP	2	0	0	0	0	2
Coxsackie	2	0	1	1	2	4
Downstate Reception	7	1	0	3	4	11
Eastern	2	0	0	1	1	3
Elmira	6	2	1	1	4	10
Elmira Reception	3	3	1	1	5	8
Five Points	2	0	0	0	0	2
Green Haven	0	1	0	1	2	2
Great Meadow	6	1	0	0	1	7
Sing Sing	3	0	0	0	0	3
Southport	3	1	0	0	1	4
Sullivan	3	0	0	0	0	3
Upstate SHU	1	0	0	0	0	1
Upstate Single Cell	1	0	0	0	0	1
Wende	3	1	0	1	2	5
Wende Reception	1	0	0	0	0	1
Subtotal	69	16	6	12	34	103
	87%	89%	75%	67%	77%	84%
Medium Security						
Albion-F.	1	0	1	0	1	2
Arthur Kill	1	0	0	0	0	1
Bare Hill	2	0	0	1	1	3
Collins	1	0	0	0	0	1
Chateaugay RPV	0	0	0	1	1	1
Fishkill	2	0	1	1	2	4
Midstate	0	0	0	2	2	2
Oneida	1	0	0	1	1	2
Riverview	1	0	0	0	0	1
Taconic	1	0	0	0	0	1
Woodbourne	0	2	0	0	2	2
Subtotal	10	2	2	6	10	20
	13%	11%	25%	33%	23%	16%
Total	79	18	8	18	44	123
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

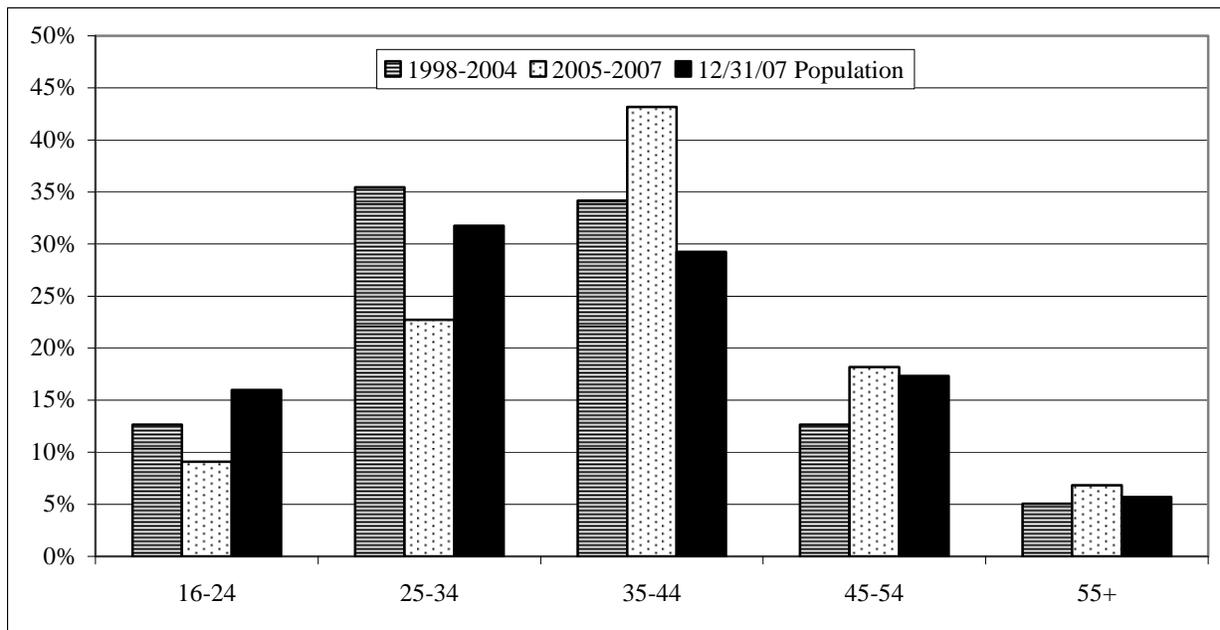
Age

The age of suicide victims generally mirrored the age of all inmates. Inmates younger than 25 years old, however, were less likely to be suicide victims, while inmates aged 35 to 44 years old tended to have a higher risk of suicide.

Table 3. Age of Inmate by Year
Inmate Suicides in NYSDOCS, 1998 – 2007

Age	Total 1998-2004	2005	2006	2007	Total 2005-2007	Grand Total	12/31/07 Population
16-24	10	1	0	3	4	14	10,002
25-34	28	3	1	6	10	38	19,878
35-44	27	12	5	2	19	46	18,308
45-54	10	0	1	7	8	18	10,844
55+	4	2	1	0	3	7	3,567
Total	79	18	8	18	44	123	62,599
Average Age	36.4	41.3	41.1	36.7	39.4	37.5	36.7
Percent							
16-24	13%	6%	0%	17%	9%	11%	16%
25-34	35%	17%	13%	33%	23%	31%	32%
35-44	34%	67%	63%	11%	43%	37%	29%
45-54	13%	0%	13%	39%	18%	15%	17%
55+	5%	11%	13%	0%	7%	6%	6%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Figure 3. Age of Inmate at Time of Death



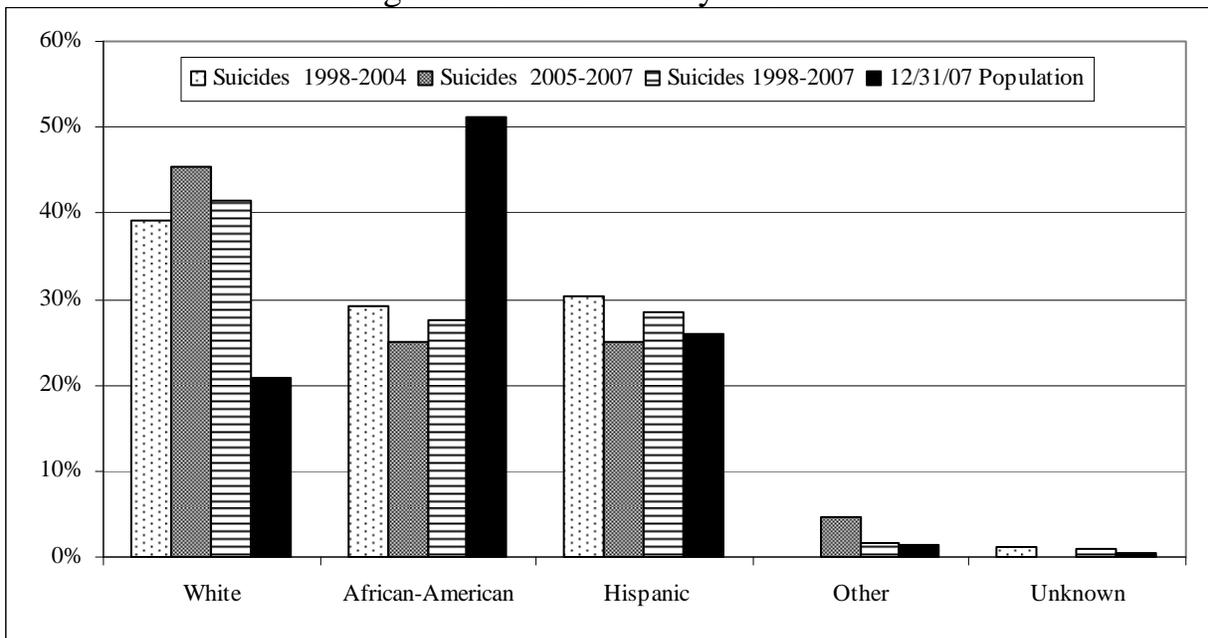
Race/Ethnic Status

White inmates are considerably more likely than inmates of other racial backgrounds to commit suicide. White inmates made up 45% of suicides from 2005 – 2007 and 39% of suicides from 1998 – 2004, but only 21% of inmates under custody at the end of 2007. For the period 2005 - 2007 African-American inmates are under-represented among suicides (25% of suicides vs. 51% of the population). For the period 2005-2007, Hispanic inmates are about the same proportion of suicides as they are of the overall inmate population (25% of suicides vs. 26% of the population).

**Table 4. Race/Ethnicity of Inmate by Year
Inmate Suicides in NYSDOCS, 1998 – 2007**

Race/Ethnic Status	Total 1998-2004	2005	2006	2007	Total 2005-2007	Grand Total	12/31/07 Population
White	31	11	3	6	20	51	13,034
African-American	23	4	0	7	11	34	32,086
Hispanic	24	2	4	5	11	35	16,303
Other	0	1	1	0	2	2	923
Unknown	1	0	0	0	0	1	253
Total	79	18	8	18	44	123	62,599
Percent							
White	39%	61%	38%	33%	45%	41%	21%
African-American	29%	22%	0%	39%	25%	28%	51%
Hispanic	30%	11%	50%	28%	25%	28%	26%
Other	0%	6%	13%	0%	5%	2%	1%
Unknown	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Figure 4. Race/Ethnicity of Inmate



Commitment Crime

Based on their representation in the overall under custody population, violent felons are more likely to commit suicide and drug offenders less likely (see Table 5).

Suicide victims were much more likely than offenders in the under custody population to be convicted of homicide, sex crimes or assault (see Table 6).

Table 5. Crime Category of Inmate by Year
Inmate Suicides in NYSDOCS, 1998 – 2007

Commitment Crime	Total 1998-2004	2005	2006	2007	Total 2005-2007	Grand Total	12/31/07 Population
Violent Felony	57	17	7	13	37	94	36,241
Other Coercive	3	0	0	2	2	5	4,888
Drug Offenses	11	0	0	0	0	11	13,427
Property and Other	8	1	1	3	5	13	8,043
Total	79	18	8	18	44	123	62,599
Percent							
Violent Felony	72%	94%	88%	72%	84%	76%	58%
Other Coercive	4%	0%	0%	11%	5%	4%	8%
Drug Offenses	14%	0%	0%	0%	0%	9%	21%
Property and Other	10%	6%	13%	17%	11%	11%	13%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Figure 5. Crime Category of Inmate

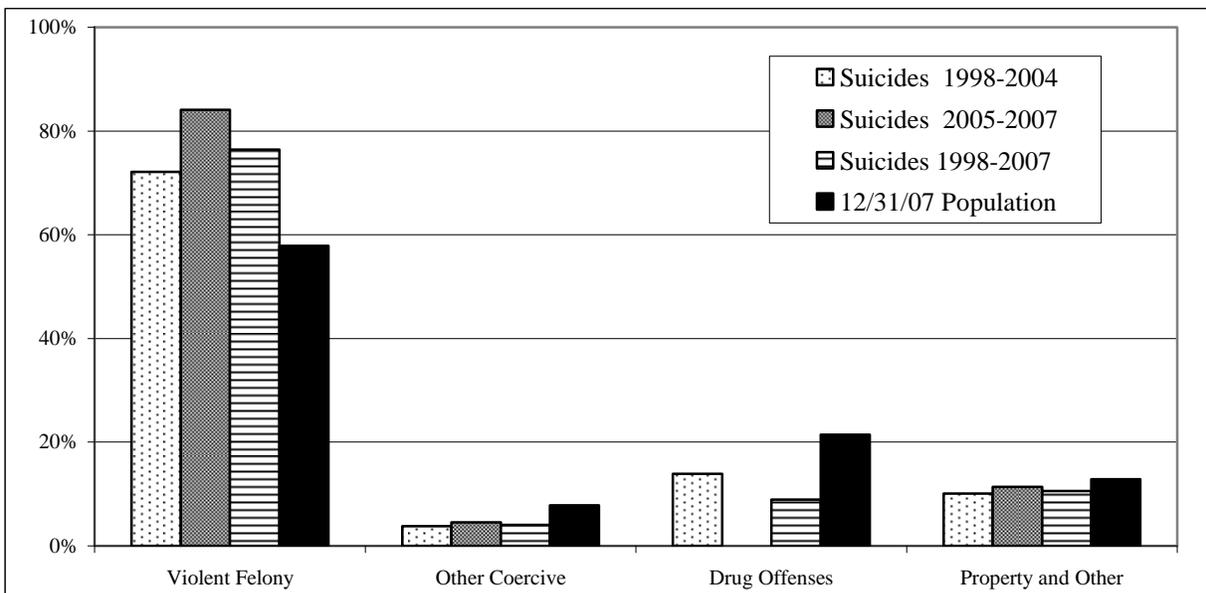
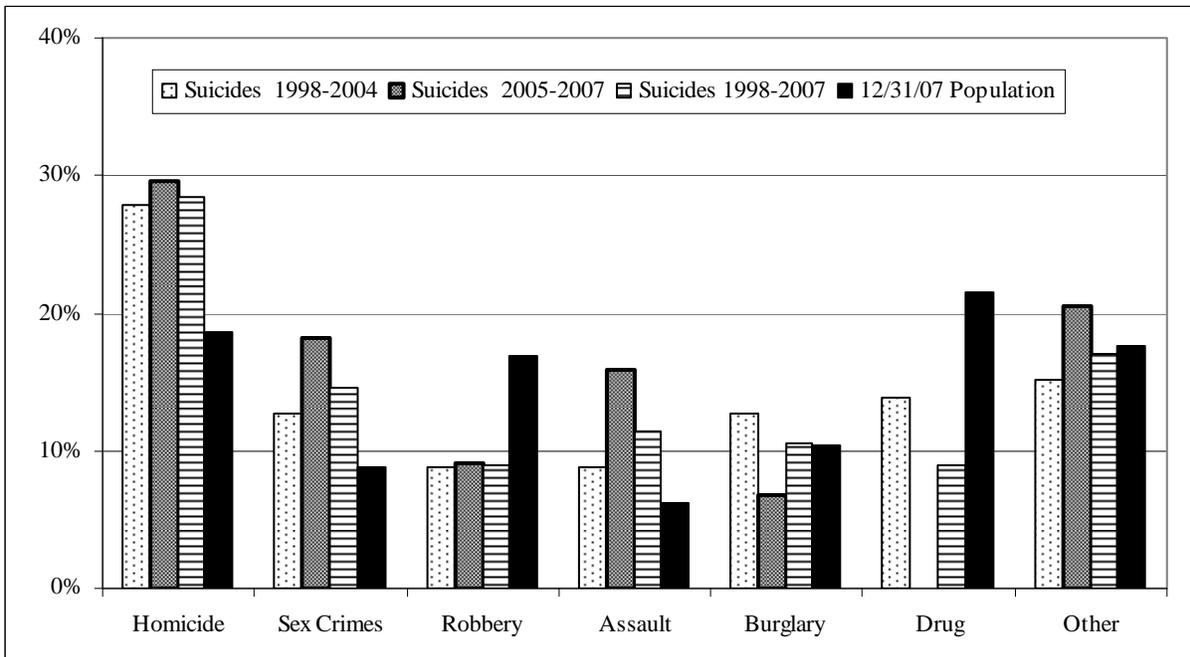


Table 6. Commitment Crime of Inmate by Year
 Inmate Suicides in NYSDOCS, 1998 – 2007

Crime	Total 1998-2004	2005	2006	2007	Total 2005-2007	Grand Total	12/31/07 Population
Homicide	22	7	2	4	13	35	11,618
Sex Crimes	10	4	1	3	8	18	5,486
Robbery	7	3	1	0	4	11	10,614
Assault	7	2	2	3	7	14	3,922
Burglary	10	0	1	2	3	13	6,472
Drug	11	0	0	0	0	11	13,426
Other	12	2	1	6	9	21	11,061
Total	79	18	8	18	44	123	62,599
Percent							
Homicide	28%	39%	25%	22%	30%	28%	19%
Sex Crimes	13%	22%	13%	17%	18%	15%	9%
Robbery	9%	17%	13%	0%	9%	9%	17%
Assault	9%	11%	25%	17%	16%	11%	6%
Burglary	13%	0%	13%	11%	7%	11%	10%
Drug	14%	0%	0%	0%	0%	9%	21%
Other	15%	11%	13%	33%	20%	17%	18%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Figure 6. Commitment Crime of Inmate



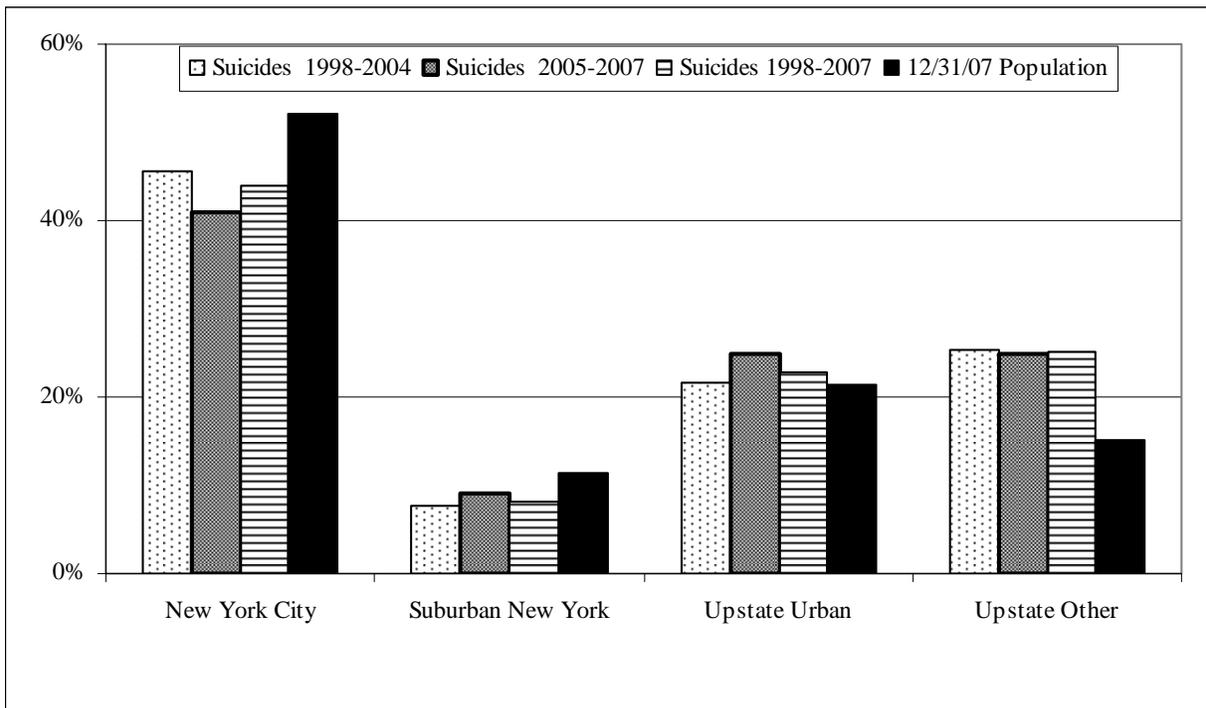
Region of the State

Inmates from the upstate counties, especially from counties without a population center of 50,000 or more people (“upstate other” category in Table 7), are more likely to be found among suicide victims. Upstate inmates made up 50% of suicides in 2005 – 2007 but only 36% of the under custody population at end of year 2007.

Table 7. Region of Commitment Crime of Inmate by Year
Inmate Suicides in NYSDOCS, 1998 – 2007

Region	Total 1998-2004	2005	2006	2007	Total 2005-2007	Grand Total	12/31/07 Population
New York City	36	6	4	8	18	54	32,629
Suburban New York	6	2	0	2	4	10	7,133
Upstate Urban	17	4	3	4	11	28	13,429
Upstate Other	20	6	1	4	11	31	9,407
Total	79	18	8	18	44	123	62,598
Percent							
New York City	46%	33%	50%	44%	41%	44%	52%
Suburban New York	8%	11%	0%	11%	9%	8%	11%
Upstate Urban	22%	22%	38%	22%	25%	23%	21%
Upstate Other	25%	33%	13%	22%	25%	25%	15%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Figure 7. Region of Commitment Crime



Aggregate Minimum and Maximum Sentences

The longer an inmate's minimum or maximum sentence, the greater the probability that the inmate may be a suicide victim. Among 2005 – 2007 suicides, 48% were serving an aggregate minimum sentence of ten years or longer compared with only 30% of inmates under custody at end of year 2007. Among the inmates who committed suicide between 1998 and 2007, 31% were serving maximum sentences of life, compared with only 18% of the under custody population (see Table 9).

Table 8. Minimum Sentence of Inmate by Year
Inmate Suicides in NYSDOCS, 1998 – 2007

Minimum Sentence	Total 1998-2004	2005	2006	2007	Total 2005-2007	Grand Total	12/31/07 Population
Less than 3 years	21	0	2	6	8	29	18,250
3 thru 5 years	15	3	2	3	8	23	15,643
6 thru 9 years	14	4	1	2	7	21	9,994
10 thru 19 years	12	6	3	3	12	24	10,044
20 years thru life	17	5	0	4	9	26	8,649
Total	79	18	8	18	44	123	62,580
Percent							
Less than 3 years	27%	0%	25%	33%	18%	24%	29%
3 thru 5 years	19%	17%	25%	17%	18%	19%	25%
6 thru 9 years	18%	22%	13%	11%	16%	17%	16%
10 thru 19 years	15%	33%	38%	17%	27%	20%	16%
20 years thru life	22%	28%	0%	22%	20%	21%	14%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Figure 8. Minimum Sentence of Inmate

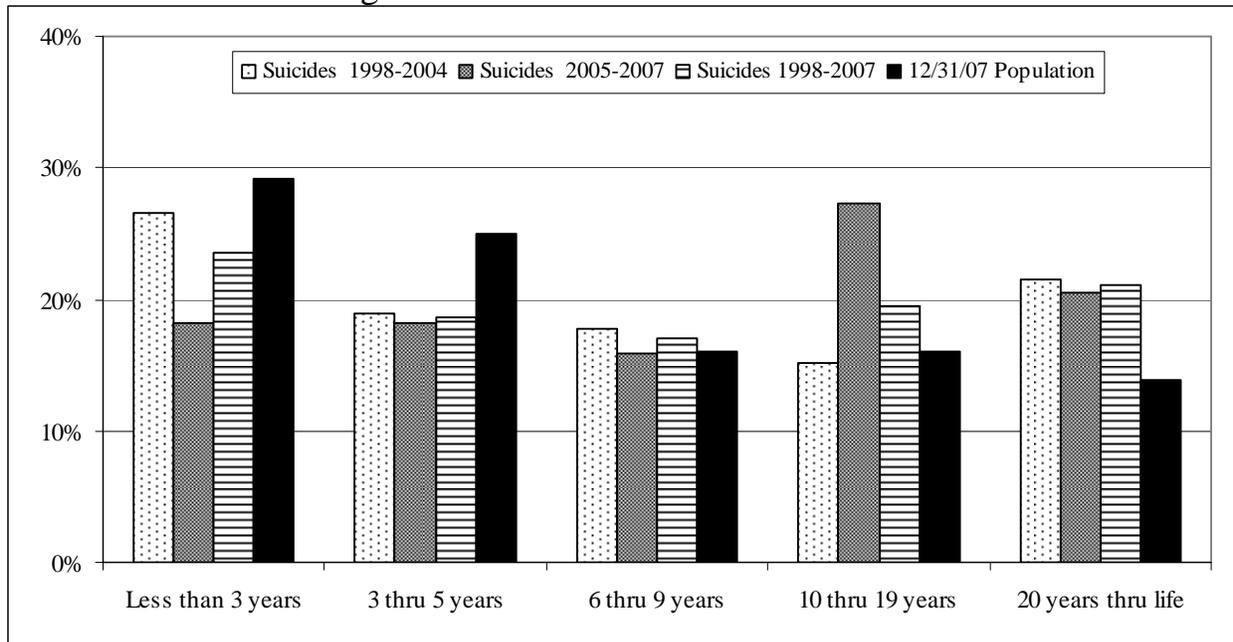
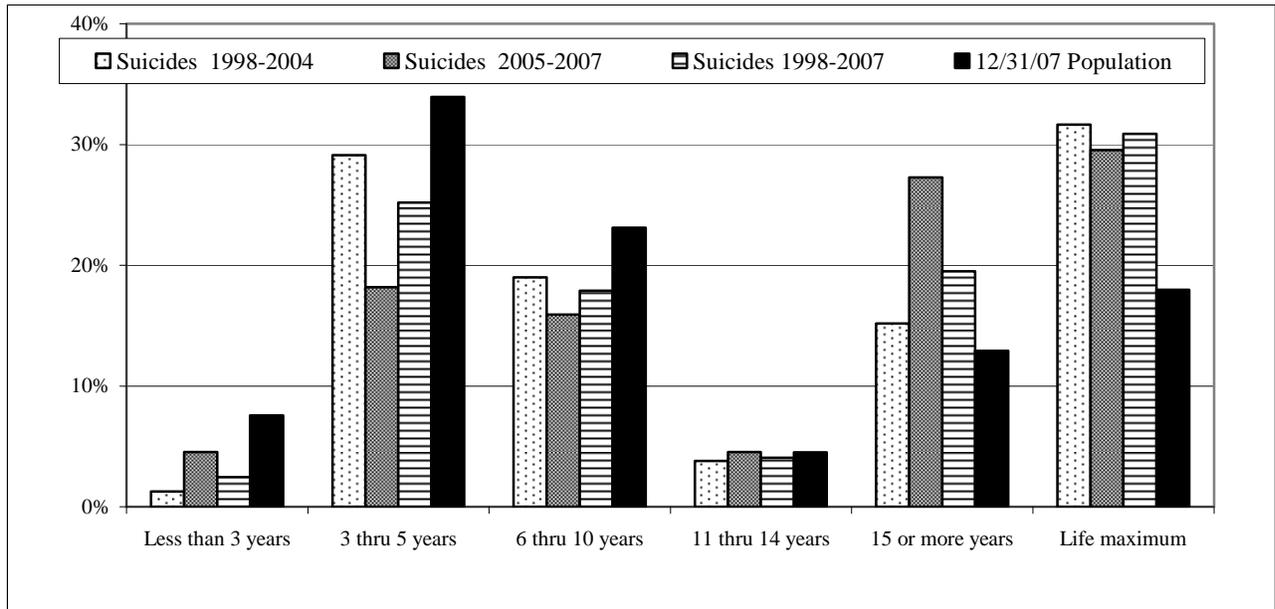


Table 9. Maximum Sentence of Inmate by Year
 Inmate Suicides in NYSDOCS, 1998 – 2007

Sentence Length	Total 1998-2004	2005	2006	2007	Total 2005-2007	Grand Total	12/31/07 Population
Less than 3 years	1	0	1	1	2	3	4,730
3 thru 5 years	23	2	2	4	8	31	21,246
6 thru 10 years	15	2	1	4	7	22	14,456
11 thru 14 years	3	1	0	1	2	5	2,818
15 or more years	12	5	4	3	12	24	8,086
Life maximum	25	8	0	5	13	38	11,241
Total	79	18	8	18	44	123	62,577
Percent							
Less than 3 years	1%	0%	13%	6%	5%	2%	8%
3 thru 5 years	29%	11%	25%	22%	18%	25%	34%
6 thru 10 years	19%	11%	13%	22%	16%	18%	23%
11 thru 14 years	4%	6%	0%	6%	5%	4%	5%
15 or more years	15%	28%	50%	17%	27%	20%	13%
Life maximum	32%	44%	0%	28%	30%	31%	18%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Figure 9. Maximum Sentence of Inmate



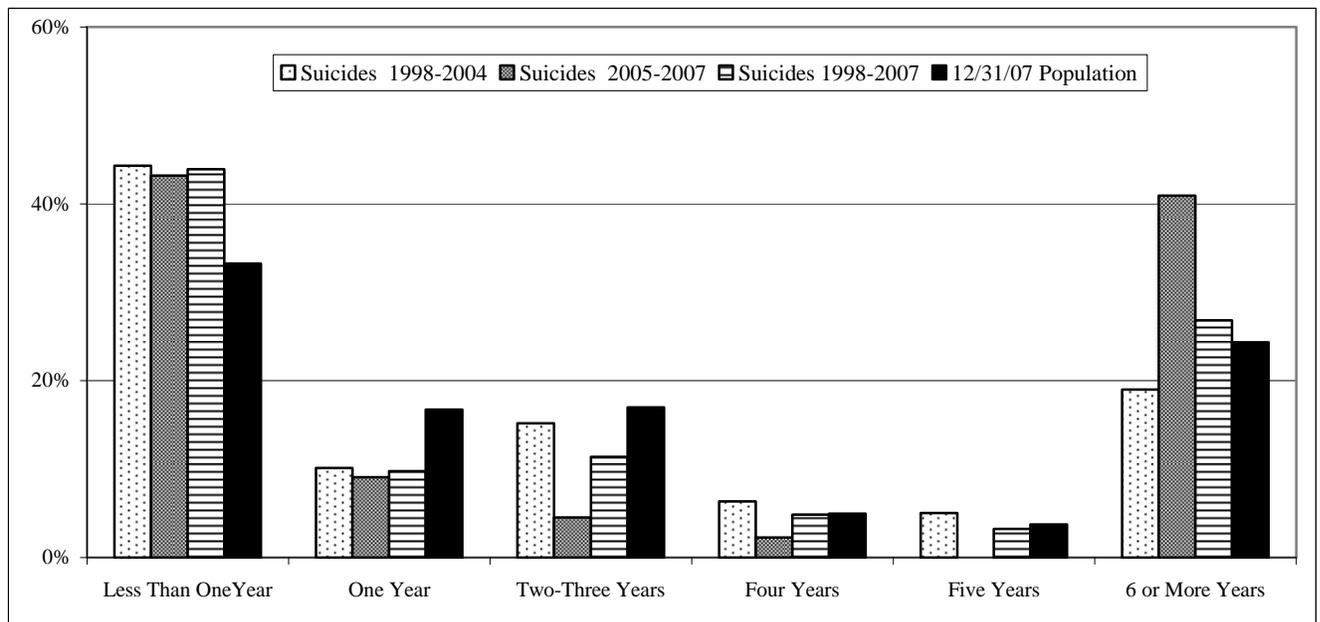
Time Served in DOCS Custody

Suicides in 2005 – 2007 were concentrated in two groups. The first group were those who had served less than a year in prison (43%) and the second group were those who had served 6 or more consecutive years in prison (41%). The 41% of suicides in 2005 – 2007 that served 6 or more consecutive years or longer was much higher than the 19% for suicides in 1998 – 2004.

Table 10. Time Served in DOCS by Inmate by Year
Inmate Suicides in NYSDOCS, 1998 – 2007

Time Served	Total 1998-2004	2005	2006	2007	Total 2005-2007	Grand Total	12/31/07 Population
Less Than One Year	35	7	4	8	19	54	20,816
One Year	8	0	1	3	4	12	10,470
Two-Three Years	12	1	0	1	2	14	10,631
Four Years	5	0	0	1	1	6	3,117
Five Years	4	0	0	0	0	4	2,337
6 or More Years	15	10	3	5	18	33	15,228
Total	79	18	8	18	44	123	62,599
Percent							
Less Than One Year	44%	39%	50%	44%	43%	44%	33%
One Year	10%	0%	13%	17%	9%	10%	17%
Two-Three Years	15%	6%	0%	6%	5%	11%	17%
Four Years	6%	0%	0%	6%	2%	5%	5%
Five Years	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	4%
6 or More Years	19%	56%	38%	28%	41%	27%	24%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Figure 10. Time Served in DOCS by Inmate at Time of Death



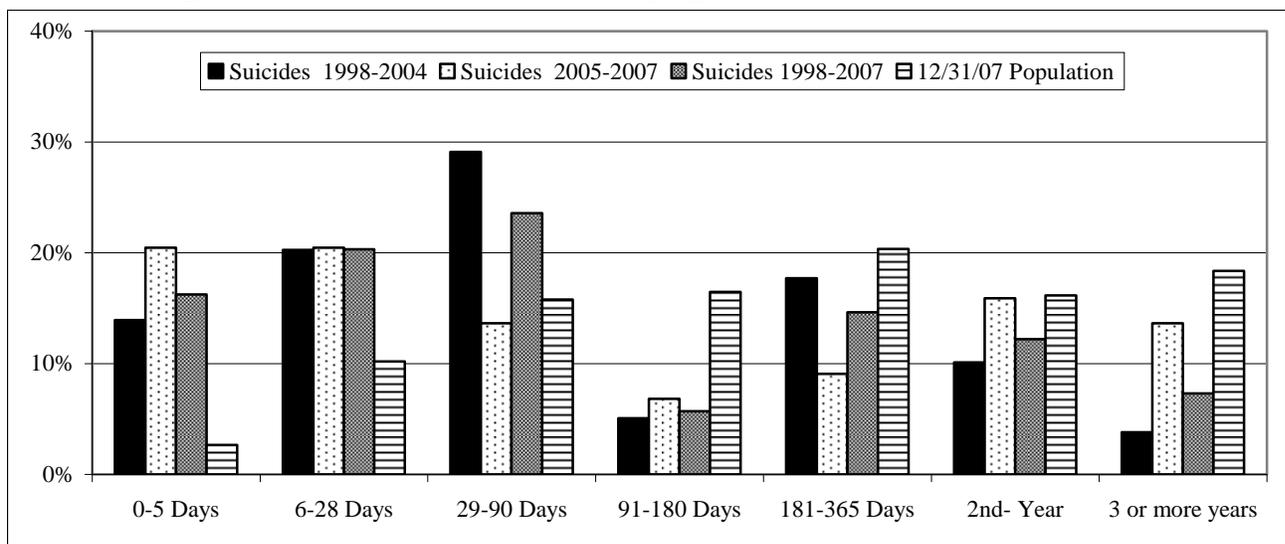
Time Served in Current Facility

Among suicide deaths, there was a substantially higher concentration of offenders who had recently transferred to a new correctional facility. Among suicides in 2005-2007, 20% had been housed at their current facility for five days or less compared to only 3% of the overall under custody population. Among suicides in 2005-2007, 54% had been housed at their current facility for 90 days or less compared to 28% of the under custody population at the end of 2007.

Table 11. Time Served in Facility by Inmate by Year
Inmate Suicides in NYSDOCS, 1998 – 2007

Time Served in Facility	Total 1998-2004	2005	2006	2007	Total 2005-2007	Grand Total	12/31/07 Population
0-5 Days	11	5	1	3	9	20	1,672
6-28 Days	16	3	2	4	9	25	6,376
29-90 Days	23	2	2	2	6	29	9,884
91-180 Days	4	2	0	1	3	7	10,319
181-365 Days	14	1	2	1	4	18	12,729
2nd- Year	8	2	1	4	7	15	10,119
3 or more years	3	3	0	3	6	9	11,493
Total	79	18	8	18	44	123	62,592
Percent							
0-5 Days	14%	28%	13%	17%	20%	16%	3%
6-28 Days	20%	17%	25%	22%	20%	20%	10%
29-90 Days	29%	11%	25%	11%	14%	24%	16%
91-180 Days	5%	11%	0%	6%	7%	6%	16%
181-365 Days	18%	6%	25%	6%	9%	15%	20%
2nd- Year	10%	11%	13%	22%	16%	12%	16%
3 or more years	4%	17%	0%	17%	14%	7%	18%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Figure 11. Time Served in Facility by Inmate at Time of Death



Special Housing Location

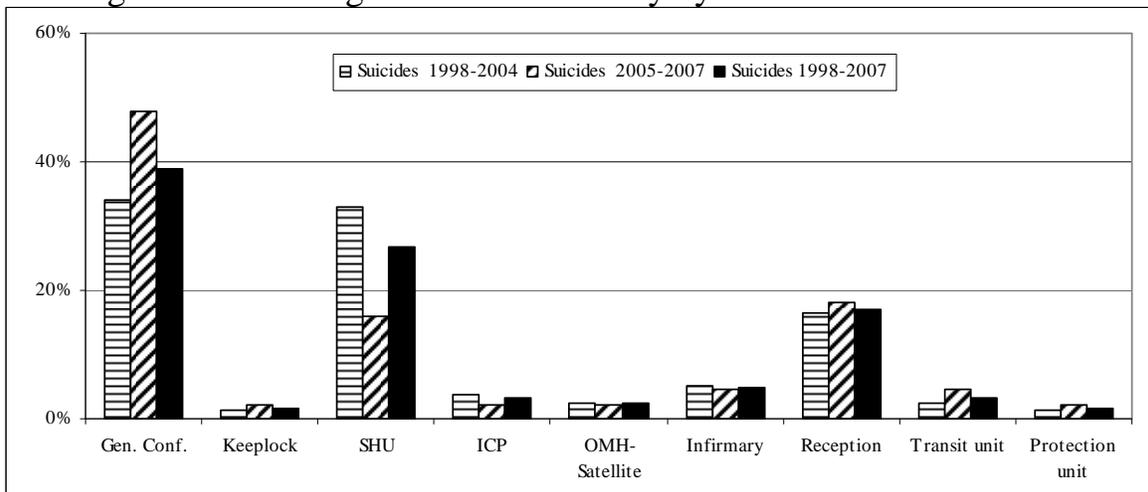
From 1998 – 2004, 34% of suicides were in general confinement housing and from 2005 – 2007, 48% were in general confinement housing. Other housing designations referenced in Table 12 include the Intermediate Care Program (ICP) which provides a structured program for inmates who are not actively psychotic or dangerous due to mental illness and the Office of Mental Health Satellite Unit which cares for inmates who are actively psychotic or pose a danger because of their mental illness.

The percent of suicides who were being housed in a Special Housing Unit (SHU) cell at the time of death decreased from 33% in 1998-2004 to 16% in 2005 - 2007.

Table 12. Housing Location for Suicides, 1998 - 2007

Housing Location	Total 1998-2004	2005	2006	2007	Total 2005-2007	Grand Total
Gen. Conf.	27	8	6	7	21	48
Keeplock	1	1	0	0	1	2
SHU	26	2	1	4	7	33
ICP	3	0	0	1	1	4
OMH-Satellite	2	0	0	1	1	3
Infirmary	4	1	0	1	2	6
Reception	13	3	1	4	8	21
Transit unit	2	2	0	0	2	4
Protection unit	1	1	0	0	1	2
Total	79	18	8	18	44	123
Percent						
Gen. Conf.	34%	44%	75%	39%	48%	39%
Keeplock	1%	6%	0%	0%	2%	2%
SHU	33%	11%	13%	22%	16%	27%
ICP	4%	0%	0%	6%	2%	3%
OMH-Satellite	3%	0%	0%	6%	2%	2%
Infirmary	5%	6%	0%	6%	5%	5%
Reception	16%	17%	13%	22%	18%	17%
Transit unit	3%	11%	0%	0%	5%	3%
Protection unit	1%	6%	0%	0%	2%	2%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Figure 12. Housing Location in Facility by Inmate at Time of Death



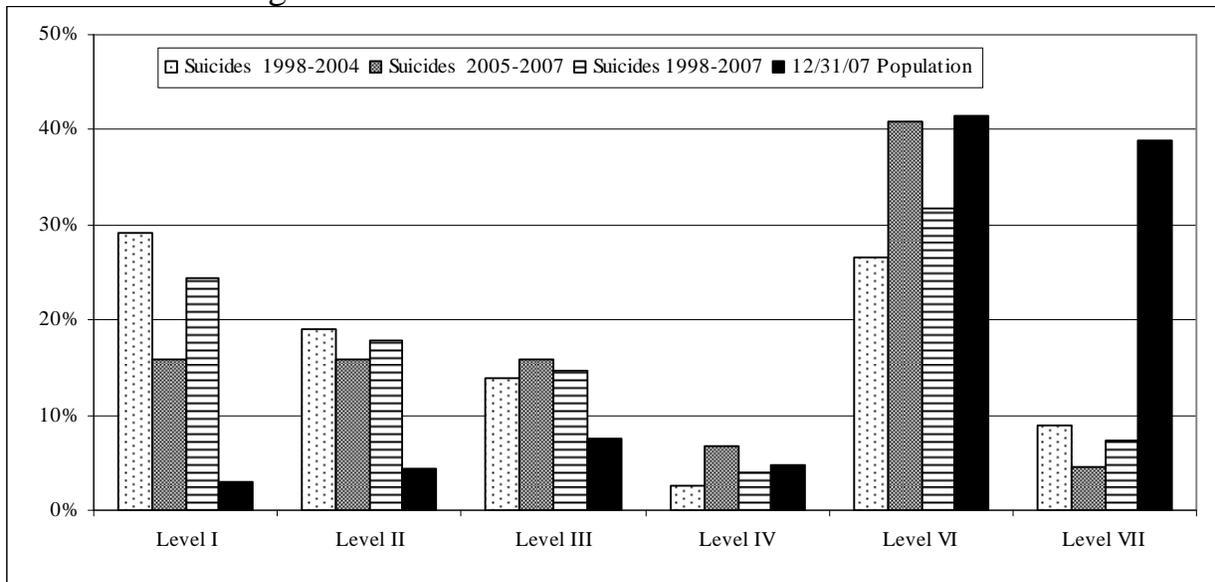
Need for Mental Health Services

Suicide is more concentrated among inmates with a higher designated level of need for mental health services (Office of Mental Health Service Level or OMH Level). Fifty-seven percent (57%) of suicide victims were designated as OMH Level 1, 2, or 3 compared to 15% of the overall DOCS population at end of year 2007 (see Table 13).

**Table 13. OMH Level of Inmate by Inmate by Year
Inmate Suicides in NYSDOCS, 1998 – 2007**

OMH Level	Total 1998-2004	2005	2006	2007	Total 2005-2007	Grand Total	12/31/07 Population
Level I	23	3	1	3	7	30	1,828
Level II	15	1	2	4	7	22	2,728
Level III	11	4	1	2	7	18	4,743
Level IV	2	2	0	1	3	5	2,953
Level VI	21	8	4	6	18	39	25,820
Level VII	7	0	0	2	2	9	24,207
Total	79	18	8	18	44	123	62,279
Percent							
Level I	29%	17%	13%	17%	16%	24%	3%
Level II	19%	6%	25%	22%	16%	18%	4%
Level III	14%	22%	13%	11%	16%	15%	8%
Level IV	3%	11%	0%	6%	7%	4%	5%
Level VI	27%	44%	50%	33%	41%	32%	41%
Level VII	9%	0%	0%	11%	5%	7%	39%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Figure 13. OMH Level of Inmate at Time of Death



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