

College Students' Suicide Thoughts and Attempts: An Exploratory Study

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BACKGROUND

- Suicide is the second leading cause of death in persons aged 15-34 (Center for Disease and Control [CDC], 2015).
- 1 out of every 10 college students (approximately 1,100) has developed a plan for suicide (Emory University, 2016).
- Adults aged 18-25 have the highest rates of substance use.
- Harmful drinking and illegal drug use have been problematic on college campuses (Giordano, 2012).
- Predictors of hazardous behaviors and consequences could lead to self-harm. Substance abuse has been documented as an unhealthy and risky behavior (SAMHSA, 2014).

PURPOSE

1. Explore the relationship between suicide attempts and thoughts among undergraduate college students.
2. Explore the ethnic differences in suicide attempts and thoughts.
3. Discuss the influence of alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, and steroids in undergraduate students' suicide attempts and thoughts.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the rates of suicide thoughts and attempts among college students at public and private institutions? To what extent do they differ by background characteristics?
2. How does substance use (alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, steroids) relate to suicide thoughts and attempts?
3. What background characteristics, substance use, consequences, and beliefs predict suicide thoughts/attempts?

METHODS

- Quantitative, survey design
- Cross sectional study
- CORE Institute Alcohol and Drug Survey- Long Form
- College students attending four-year, public and private institutions in 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015
- Total sample size N=146,856; (male= 54,111 female= 92,745)
- Descriptive, comparative, and inferential statistical analyses (cross-tabulation, frequencies, correlation, and multiple regression)

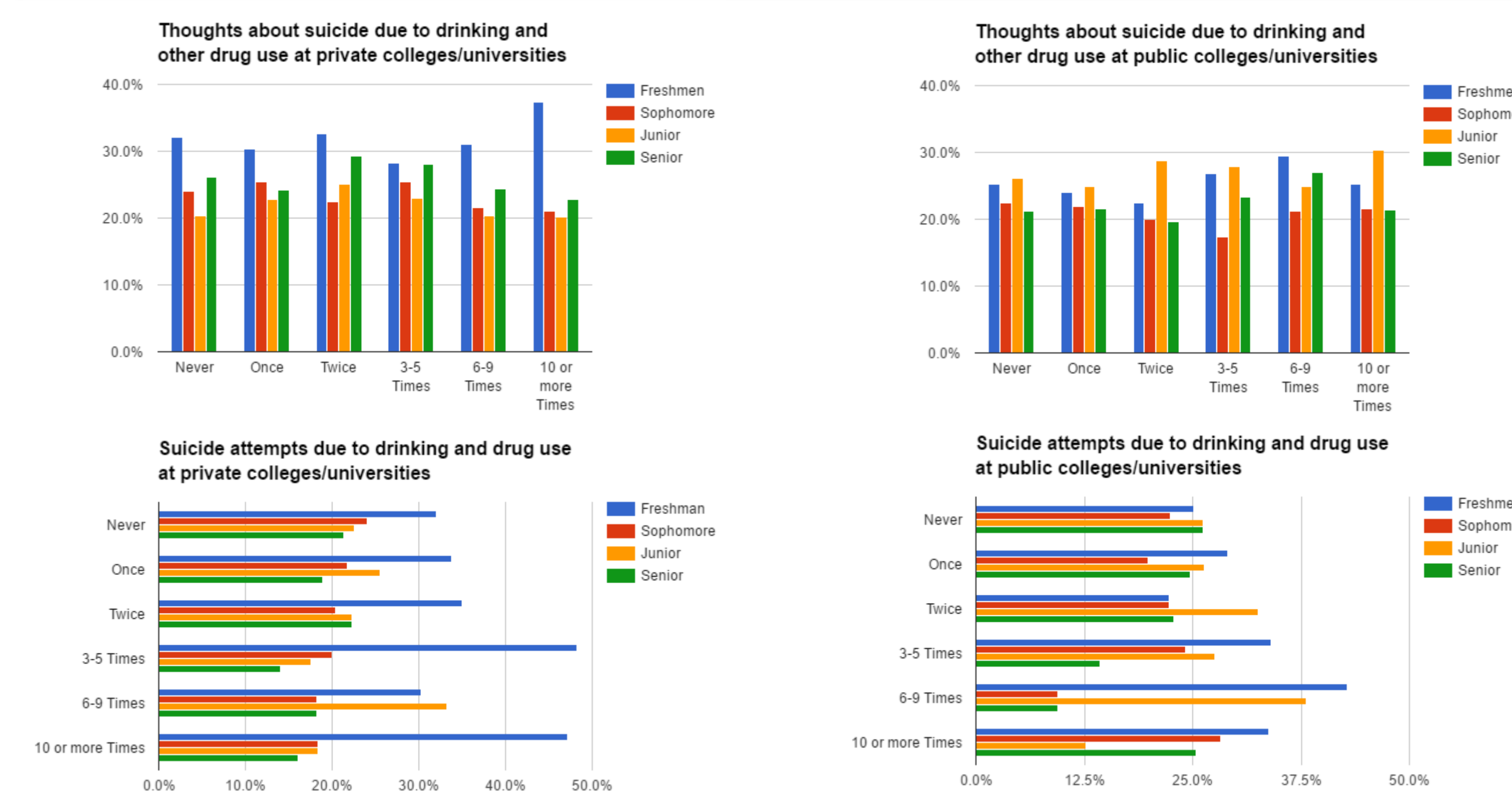
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- **Emilie Durkheim (1897).** Three types of suicide: egoistic, altruistic, and anomic.
- **Alfred Adler (1982).** Low social interest are more likely to engage in alcohol and drug abuse.
- **Travis Hirsch (1969).** Defined four bonding elements: attachment, belief, commitment, and involvement. Weaker bonding are related to delinquent behaviors (self-harm, alcohol, and other illegal substance abuse).

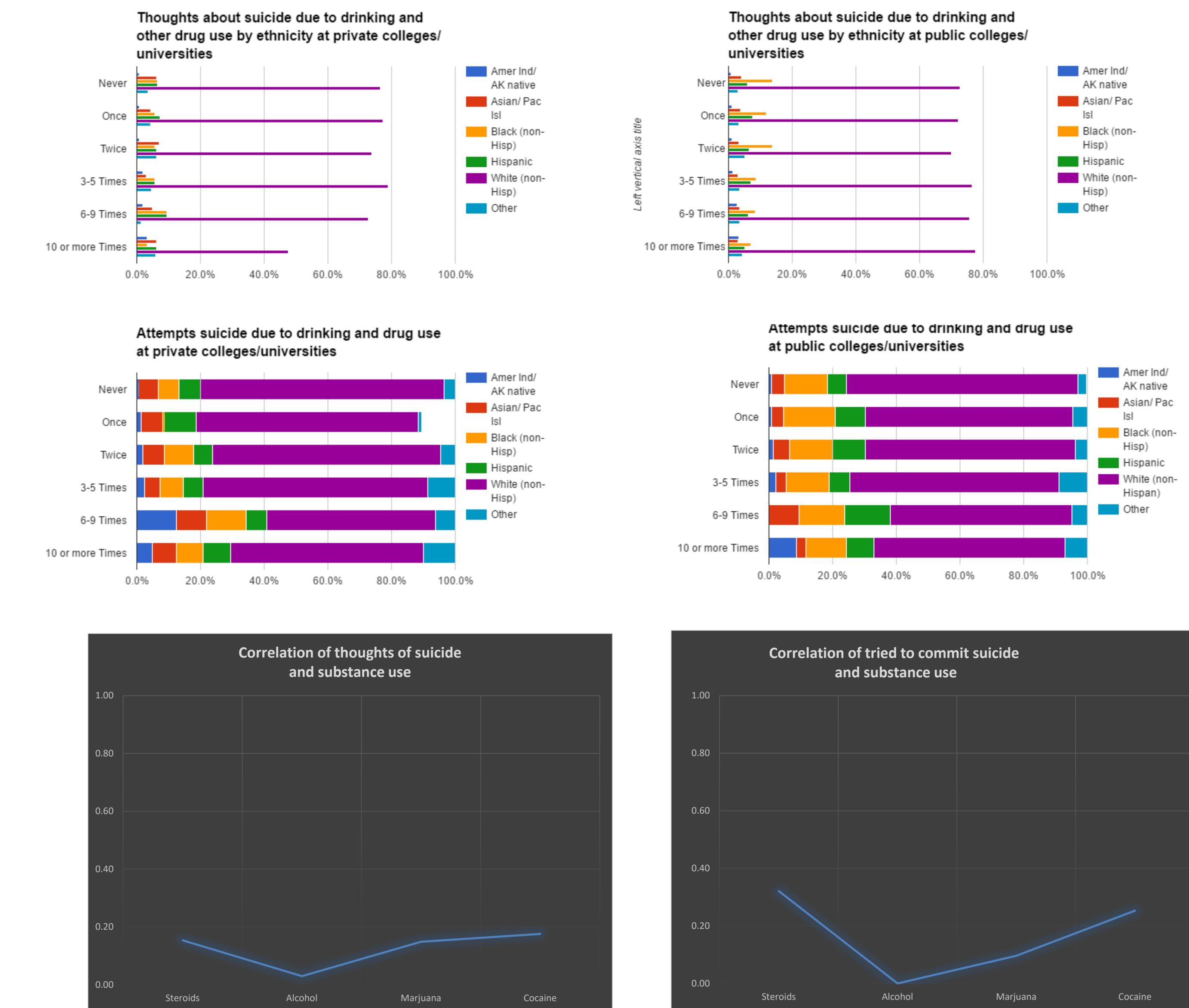
BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS

Ethnic Origin	Amer Ind/AK native	993	0.7
	Hispanic	9116	6.2
	Asian/Pac Isl	7345	5.0
	White (non-Hisp)	107632	73.3
	Black (non-Hisp)	14840	10.1
	Other	4742	3.2
Classification	Freshman	41889	28.5
	Sophomore	34055	23.2
	Junior	35925	24.5
	Senior	34987	23.8
Institution	Public	76203	51.9
	Private	70653	48.1
Residence	On campus	81766	55.7
	Off campus	58769	40.0
Living Arrangements	House/Apartment		46.5
	Residence Hall		48.8
	Approved Housing		1.2
	Fraternity/Sorority		1.9
	Other		0.9

RESULTS



RESULTS



CONCLUSION

- Rates of suicide thoughts and attempts are similar in private and public institutions.
- There is weak correlation between substance use and suicide thoughts and/or attempts.
- This is a timely and important topic as postsecondary institutions have experienced increasing challenges with counseling centers at full capacity.
- Increase the awareness and demystify the stigma of suicide.

IMPLICATIONS

- Increase representation of diverse student population.
- Increase awareness and engage students in more research to further understand the complex relationships.
- Revisit mental health policies related to students with the objective to protect and advocate well-being of students.
- Implement more prevention and intervention plans.

SELECTED REFERENCES

- Adler, A. (1982). The Fundamental views of individual psychology. *The Journal of Adlerian Theory, Research & Practice*, 38(1), p. 3.
- Hirsch, T. (1969). *Causes of Delinquency*. University of California Press Berkeley. Los Angeles: CA.