



News Articles, Adolescent Health/Medicine

Study looks at which transgender teens are at risk of attempting suicide

by Melissa Jenco, News Content Editor

Just over half of female-to-male transgender adolescents attempted suicide, a survey found.

The findings come as the Academy prepares to publish new guidance on caring for transgender children.

Previous studies have shown transgender teens attempt suicide more than their peers, but researchers aimed to look more closely at which transgender teens are most at risk.

They used data from the Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors survey of more than 120,000 adolescents ages 11-19 years. Less than 1% were transgender, according to "Transgender Adolescent Suicide Behavior" (Toomey RB, et al. *Pediatrics*. Sept. 11, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2017-4218>).

About 51% of female-to-male transgender adolescents said they had attempted suicide, followed by 42% of teens who did not exclusively identify as male or female, 30% of male-to-female transgender teens and 28% of those who were questioning their gender identity. Authors said transgender males may experience more discrimination than transgender females, citing research on adults.

The rates are significantly higher than among non-transgender teens - 18% of females and 10% of males attempted suicide.

Teens who were transgender and were not heterosexual were at greater risk than those who were heterosexual. However, that finding did not hold true for the adolescents who did not exclusively identify as male or female.

Having highly educated parents didn't lower the risks for transgender teens the way it did for their peers, while being a racial minority didn't increase their risk, according to the study.

The results were limited by reliance on self-reports, data collection that ended in 2015 and underrepresentation of Hispanic and black adolescents, but authors said they add to the growing data on transgender youths.

"These results should be used to inform suicide prevention and intervention policy and programs that are aimed at reducing ongoing gender identity-related disparities in suicide behavior as well as ongoing research in which authors seek to better understand for whom and why suicide behavior risk exists," authors wrote.

On Sept. 17, the Academy will release new guidance in the policy statement *Ensuring Comprehensive Care and Support for Transgender and Gender-Diverse Children and Adolescents*.

Resources

- [AAP policy "Office-Based Care for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Youth"](#)
- [AAP Section on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Health and Wellness](#)
- [Information for parents from HealthyChildren.org on transgender children](#)
- [Information for parents from HealthyChildren.org on suicide](#)