



## Studies: Suicide attempts high among transgender teens, increasing among black teens

by Melissa Jenco, News Content Editor

Two new studies on suicide found an increase in suicide attempts by black teens and higher rates of attempts among transgender teens than their peers.

Teen suicide has been on the rise and is the second leading cause of death for this age group. Researchers from both studies set out to look more closely at risk factors to inform prevention efforts.

### Race and gender trends

Researchers explored trends in suicidal ideation and attempts by race and gender from 1991-2017 using data on nearly 200,000 high school students from the nationally representative Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

The data showed 19% of teens had seriously considered suicide, 15% had made a plan to commit suicide, 8% had attempted suicide and 2.5% had been injured by a suicide attempt.

"Despite increased attention given to the creation of campaigns to reduce youth suicide in the US over the last decade, these findings suggest that continued concern and attention regarding suicidal behaviors among high school-aged youth is warranted," authors wrote in "Trends of Suicidal Behaviors among High School Students in the United States: 1991-2017," (Lindsey MA, et al. *Pediatrics*. Oct. 14, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2019-1187>).

Rates of suicidal ideation and suicide planning decreased for all races. However, suicide attempts increased among black males and females and injury from suicide attempts increased among black males.

Authors said black teens may not be getting the mental health treatment they need and may be dealing with racial discrimination or adverse childhood experiences.

In a video abstract, lead author Michael A. Lindsey called the findings "surprising and alarming" and said research is needed on suicide risk factors and prevention.

"It is critical to develop and test suicide intervention and prevention programs tailored for the black community, reducing the stigma related to mental illness and increasing help-seeking behaviors in clinical and non-clinical settings," said Dr. Lindsey, executive director of the New York University McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research.

### Transgender suicide rates

In another study, University of Pittsburgh researchers analyzed data from an online survey of 2,020 14- to 18-year-olds to explore rates of suicidal ideation and attempts by transgender teens.

They found transgender adolescents (TGAs) had higher rates of suicidal ideation, plans, attempts and attempts requiring medical care compared to cisgender teens. They also had higher rates of non-suicidal self-injury, according to "Suicidality Disparities between Transgender and Cisgender Adolescents," (Thoma BC, et al. *Pediatrics*. Oct. 14, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2019-1183>).

Their study also delved into subgroups of adolescent gender identity. Among the findings were that cisgender



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females, transgender males and nonbinary adolescents assigned female at birth had higher rates in all suicide-related categories compared to cisgender males.

"TGAs should be prioritized in future research examining adolescent suicidality, including explicating mechanisms of suicidality among TGAs to inform future intervention and prevention strategies designed to reduce suicidality within this vulnerable population," authors wrote.

## Resources

- [Related commentary "Increases in Rates of Suicide and Suicide Attempts Among Black Adolescents"](#)
- [AAP-endorsed "Guidelines for Adolescent Depression in Primary Care \(GLAD-PC\): Part I. Practice Preparation, Identification, Assessment and Initial Management"](#)
- [AAP-endorsed "Guidelines for Adolescent Depression in Primary Care \(GLAD-PC\): Part II. Treatment and Ongoing Management"](#)
- [Information for parents from HealthyChildren.org on preventing suicide](#)
- [AAP clinical report "Suicide and Suicide Attempts in Adolescents"](#)