KidsData

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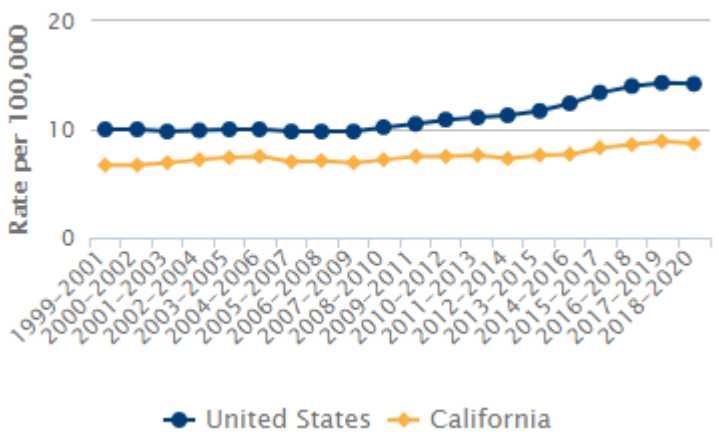
# Youth Suicide and Self-Inflicted Injury in California

### Rate of Suicide Among Youth Ages 15-24




**Definition:** Number of suicides per 100,000 youth ages 15-24 (e.g., in 2018-2020, the suicide rate among California youth was 8.7 per 100,000).
**Data Source:** California Dept. of Public Health, Death Statistical Master Files; California Dept. of Finance, Population Estimates and Projections; CDC WONDER Online Database, Underlying Cause of Death (Apr. 2022).

### Rate of Hospitalization for Self-Inflicted Injuries Among Youth Ages 5-20: 2015

| Locations | Rate per 100,000 |
|---|---|
| United States | 62.7 |
| California | 36.5 |
| Alameda County | 34.3 |
| Contra Costa County | 66.8 |
| Fresno County | 32.5 |
| Kern County | 43.2 |
| Los Angeles County | 35.6 |
| Orange County | 40.0 |
| Riverside County | 30.0 |
| Sacramento County | 38.2 |
| San Bernardino County | 22.3 |
| San Diego County | 39.0 |
| Santa Clara County | 46.0 |

**Definition:** Number of hospital discharges for non-fatal self-inflicted injuries per 100,000 children and youth ages 5-20 (e.g., in 2015, there were 36.5 hospitalizations for self-inflicted injuries per 100,000 California children and youth).
**Data Source:** California Dept. of Public Health, EpiCenter (Feb. 2020); California Dept. of Finance, Population Estimates and Projections (Jan. 2020); CDC, WISQARS (May 2020).

### Percentage of Students Who Seriously Considered Attempting Suicide in the Previous Year, by Gender: 2017-2019

## What It Is

Kidsdata.org provides the following indicators of youth suicide and self-inflicted injury:

- The estimated percentage of students in grades 9, 11, and non-traditional programs who seriously considered attempting suicide in the previous year, by grade level, gender, level of school connectedness, parent education level, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation
- The rate of suicide per 100,000 youth ages 15-24, along with the number of youth suicides by age group, gender, and race/ethnicity
- The number and rate of hospital discharges for self-inflicted injuries among children and youth ages 5-20 overall, and the number of discharges by age group

## Why This Topic Is Important

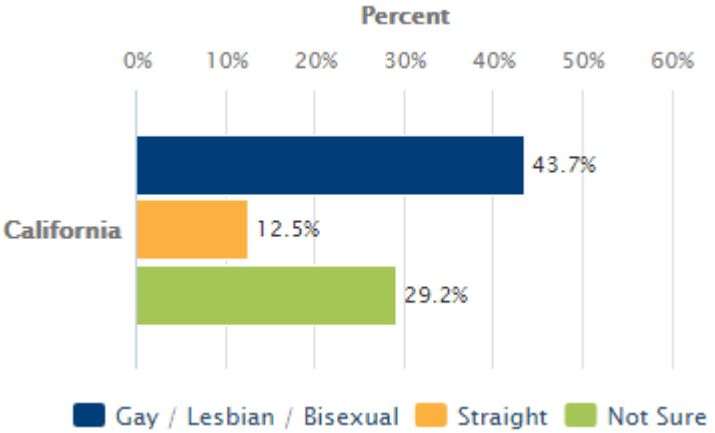
Suicide is the third leading cause of death for young people ages 15-24 statewide and nationally, behind only unintentional injuries and homicide. Rates of youth suicide and self-injury hospitalization, even among younger adolescents, have risen over the past decade. In 2018, the number of suicides among California youth ages 12-19 was 15% higher than in 2009, and incidents of youth self-harm requiring medical attention were 50% higher. While self-inflicted injuries typically are not the result of suicide attempts and do not involve intent to die, non-suicidal self-injury is a risk factor for suicide. A 2019 survey of U.S. high school students estimated that about one in five seriously considered suicide in the previous year, a figure more than 35% higher than findings from a decade earlier.

Suicide risk is higher for some groups than for others. While girls and young women more often seriously consider, plan, and attempt suicide, males are more likely than females to die by suicide—although the gap may be narrowing. Nationally, American Indian/Alaska Native youth have the highest suicide rate among racial/ethnic groups with data. In addition, LGBTQ youth are more likely to engage in suicidal behavior than their non-LGBTQ peers. Other common risk factors for youth suicide include prolonged stress, mental illness, disability, past suicide attempts, family history of suicide or mental disorders, poor family communication, stressful life events, placement in out-of-home settings, access to

| California | Percent | |
|---|---|---|
| | Female | Male |
| Grade Level | Yes | Yes |
| Grade 9 | 21.1% | 11.2% |
| Grade 11 | 20.2% | 12.7% |
| Non-Traditional | 26.2% | 13.6% |

**Definition:** Estimated percentage of public school students in grades 9, 11, and non-traditional programs who seriously considered attempting suicide in the previous year, by gender and grade level (e.g., in 2017-2019, an estimated 21.1% of female 9th graders in California seriously considered attempting suicide in the previous year).
**Data Source:** WestEd, California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) & Biennial State CHKS. California Dept. of Education (Aug. 2020).

**Percentage of Students Who Seriously Considered Attempting Suicide in the Previous Year, by Sexual Orientation: 2017-2019**




**Definition:** Estimated percentage of public school students in grades 9, 11, and non-traditional programs who seriously considered attempting suicide in the previous year, by sexual orientation (e.g., in 2017-2019, an estimated 43.7% of gay, lesbian, and bisexual students in grades 9, 11, and non-traditional programs in California seriously considered attempting suicide in the previous year).
**Data Source:** WestEd, California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) & Biennial State CHKS. California Dept. of Education (Aug. 2020).

lethal means, and exposure to suicidal behavior of others.

## How Children Are Faring

In 2017-2019, an estimated 16% of California 9th and 11th graders and 17% of non-traditional students seriously considered attempting suicide in the previous year. At least 20% of girls in each grade level seriously considered suicide, compared with less than 13% of boys. Students with low levels of school connectedness were much more likely to have serious suicidal thoughts (32%) than their peers with medium (19%) or high (9%) connectedness. The proportion of gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth who seriously considered attempting suicide (44%) was about one and a half times the estimate for students unsure of their sexual orientation (29%) and more than three times the estimate for straight youth (13%).

The rate of hospitalization for non-fatal self-inflicted injuries among California children and youth ages 5-20 was 37 per 100,000 in 2015, down from 49 per 100,000 in 1991. While the state's rate of self-inflicted injury hospitalization has fluctuated over time, it has remained lower than the U.S. rate since 2010. Youth ages 16-20 account for the majority of discharges for self-inflicted injuries statewide: 1,949 of 3,136 in 2015 (62%).

In 2020, 174 California teens ages 15-19 and 299 young adults ages 20-24 were known to have committed suicide. Statewide, the rate of suicide among youth ages 15-24 in 2018-2020 was 8.7 per 100,000, compared with a national rate of 14.2 per 100,000. Following a decade of rising suicide rates—in which figures increased by more than 27% in California and more than 44% nationwide—neither the California nor the U.S. rate rose in 2018-2020.

Among younger children ages 5-14, there was an increase in suicides between 2019 and 2020 at both the national level and in California, where the number of suicides in this age group doubled (from 27 to 54). Statewide and nationally, many more boys and young men die by suicide than their female counterparts; in 2020, males accounted for three quarters of suicides among California youth ages 15-24.

*View references for this text and additional research on this topic:*
https://www.kidsdata.org/topic/34/youth-suicide-and-self-inflicted-injury/summary

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