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 2017-2019, there were 8.9 suicides per 100,000 California youth).

What It Is

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

- The 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 second leading cause of death among young people ages 10-19 in the U.S., and rates of youth suicide and self-injury hospitalization are on the rise, especially among younger adolescents. A 2019 survey estimated that about 1 in 5 high school students nationwide seriously considered suicide in the previous year, a figure more than 35% higher than findings from a decade earlier. Between 2007 and 2015, suicide rates rose 130% for U.S. children ages 10-14 and 46% for youth ages 15-19. Similar to suicide trends, from 2001 to 2015 self-injury hospitalization rates increased by more than 130% for ages 10-14 and by 47% for ages 15-19. While self-inflicted injuries typically are not the result of suicide attempts and do not involve intent to die, non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) is a risk factor for suicide. Data from a 2015 national survey show that 18% of high school students had engaged in NSSI at least once in the previous year, and 6% had engaged in NSSI six or more times.

Suicide risk is higher for some groups than for others. While female youth more often attempt suicide, males are more likely than females to die by suicide—although the gap is narrowing. Nationally, American Indian/Alaska Native youth have the highest suicide rate among racial/ethnic groups with data. In addition, sexual and gender minority youth are more likely to engage in suicidal behavior than their non-LGBTQ peers. Other common risk factors for youth suicide include mental illness, past suicide attempts, a family history of suicide or mental disorders, poor family communication,
Suicide in the Previous Year, by Gender: 2017-2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 9</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 11</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Traditional</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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).


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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Gay / Lesbian / Bisexual</th>
<th>Straight</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43.7%</td>
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</table>

California

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>12.5%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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).


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. Across counties with data in 2015, hospitalization rates for self-injury ranged from 22 per 100,000 young people (San Bernardino) to 68 per 100,000 (San Mateo). Youth ages 16-20 account for the majority of discharges for self-inflicted injuries statewide: 1,949 of 3,136 in 2015 (62%).

In 2019, 157 California teens ages 15-19 and 341 young adults ages 20-24 were known to have committed suicide. The rate of suicide among youth ages 15-24 in 2017-2019 was 8.9 per 100,000, up from 6.7 per 100,000 in 1999-2001. Over this period California’s youth suicide rate was consistently lower than the U.S. rate, which rose from 10 suicides per 100,000 to 14.3 per 100,000. Statewide and nationally, many more male than female youth die by suicide; in 2019, males accounted for more than 80% of youth suicides in California (402 of 498).

View references for this text and additional research on this topic: