

Facts about Youth Suicide

- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students and the third leading cause of death among all youth 15–24 years old. In the U.S., only accidents and homicides claim more young lives.
- Nearly 4,000 people aged 15–24 die by suicide each year in the United States.
- Between the mid-1950s and the late 1970s, the suicide rate among U.S. males aged 15–24 more than tripled (from 6.3 per 100,000 in 1955 to 21.3 in 1977). Among females aged 15–24, the rate more than doubled during this period (from 2.0 to 5.2). The youth suicide rate generally leveled off during the 1980s and early 1990s and since the mid-1990s, it has been steadily decreasing.
- Among young people aged 15–24, males die by suicide almost six times more frequently than females. In 2001 (the latest year for which national rates are available) the suicide rate among young men was 16.5 per 100,000, and the rate among young women was 2.9.
- Youth suicide rates vary widely among different racial and ethnic groups. In 2001, white youth had a suicide rate of 11.5 per 100,000, compared to rates of 7.3 for African Americans, 6.1 for Hispanics youth, 6.4 for Asian Americans and 18.8 for American Indians and Alaskan Natives.
- Twenty percent of American high school students report having seriously considered suicide during the previous 12 months. Eight percent of high school students make a suicide attempt.
- Seventy percent of youth who make a suicide attempt are frequent users of alcohol and/or other drugs. In states where the minimum drinking age was raised from 18 to 21, the suicide rate for 18-to-20 year olds decreased.
- Over 90 percent of youth who die by suicide had at least one psychiatric illness at the time of death; in about half such cases, the psychiatric illness was present, although often unrecognized, for two years or more. The most common diagnoses among youth are depression, substance abuse and conduct disorders.