

What factors are associated with suicide in Texas high school students?

February 22 2023, by Rae Lynn Mitchell



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In recent years, suicide has become one of the leading causes of death for adolescents and young adults nationally. Texas is no exception to this

trend, with a significant increase in suicide deaths over the past decade. Depression, which affects millions of American adolescents, has long been associated with a higher risk for suicide. However, there are other factors that may be linked to suicidal thoughts and actions that could serve as predictors to alert caregivers, clinicians and others when an intervention might be needed.

A new [study](#) published in the journal *Cogent Psychology* attempts to identify factors that could be used as predictors of suicidal behavior in Texas high school students. The study conducted by the Center for Health Equity & Evaluation Research at the Texas A&M University School of Public Health used nationally representative data of [high school students](#) from 2017 and 2019 to explore potential predictors and factors associated with suicide in adolescents in Texas.

The dataset used in this study, the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey, measures [health](#)-risk behaviors in a sample of students in grades 9-12. The survey includes data on race and ethnicity, gender and [sexual identity](#), the presence of school-based violence or violence-related behavior, [sexual practices](#), substance use, and mental health and well-being. The survey asked students whether they felt sad or hopeless enough to stop usual activities, whether they had seriously considered suicide, and whether they made a plan to attempt or attempted suicide in the past 12 months.

Health Behavior doctoral [student](#) Morgan J. Grant and Tamika Gilreath, Ph.D., professor in the Department of Health Behavior at the School of Public Health, and colleagues from Texas A&M found that more than one-third of survey respondents reported feeling so sad or helpless for two or more weeks in a row that they stopped their usual activities. The vast majority of students in the sample stated they had not considered, planned or attempted suicide, with nearly 90 percent reporting no attempts over the previous 12 months. However, their analysis found

notable differences among different groups of students.

The researchers found that female students were twice as likely to report [suicidal thoughts](#) or actions, and LGBTQ students and those unsure of their sexuality were almost twice as likely. They also found that carrying a weapon on school property, feeling unsafe at school or being in a fight increased the odds of suicidal thoughts or actions. Bullying at school or electronically or experiencing unwanted sexual interactions were also associated with higher risks. The analysis also found that substance use was associated with greater suicidality risk.

The findings of this study highlight the risk that LGBTQ students in Texas face and the need for suicide prevention and mental health interventions that are tailored for female and LGBTQ students. The study also points to a need for further research into adolescents experiencing bullying and violence and those engaging in [substance use](#). Additional study would help develop tailored mental health interventions for these different vulnerable populations.

The researchers note a few limitations with their analysis, specifically the self-reported nature of the data and inability to further explore underlying causes of suicidal thoughts and actions. Future research should delve into the psychological and personality characteristics of adolescents in different at-risk groups.

This study sheds light on some of the factors involved in suicidal thoughts and actions among Texas adolescents. With these findings and knowledge from future research, public health practitioners will be able to design and implement [mental health](#) and [suicide prevention](#) efforts to counteract the growing risk adolescents are facing.

More information: Morgan James Grant et al, Predictors of suicide and associated factors in Texas high school adolescents, *Cogent*

Psychology (2022). [DOI: 10.1080/23311908.2022.2149291](https://doi.org/10.1080/23311908.2022.2149291)

Provided by Texas A&M University

Citation: What factors are associated with suicide in Texas high school students? (2023, February 22) retrieved 20 March 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-02-factors-suicide-texas-high-school.html>

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