



Suicide Deaths in Youths During First Year of COVID-19 Pandemic

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Although conventional wisdom suggests that many have moved on from the COVID-19 pandemic, a study by Bridge et al being released this month in *Pediatrics* is a reminder that the COVID-19 pandemic's toll is significant and is still being felt ([10.1542/peds.2022-058375](https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2022-058375)). For example, we've recently witnessed a historic shift with suicide surpassing homicide as the second-leading cause of death for youth ages 10-14.¹

In this cross-sectional analysis of youth ages 5-24 from the Center for Disease Control's Wide-ranging Online Data for Epidemiologic Research (WONDER) online national database, authors found that there was an increase in deaths from suicide during the last 10 months of 2020 as compared to the 5 years prior, resulting in an estimated 212 excess youth suicide deaths associated with the COVID-19 pandemic during that year. Certain subgroups had a significant increase including males, youth who are Black, children 5-12 and 18-24 years, and those who used firearms. An increase in use of more lethal (e.g. firearms) methods was paradoxically observed among females. Additionally, the largest observed-to-expected ratio of suicides was detected among females who are of the Asian/Pacific (A/PI) Islander community which notably occurred during a significant [increase in physical assaults against people of the A/PI community](#).

Although this is quite a sobering read, the authors make recommendations that can hopefully stem the tide of suicide among youth. The authors correctly admonish and remind us to screen our patients for suicide during patient encounters. They also encourage expanding family-based and school-based mental health services. Given the nationwide proliferation of firearms and the increased use of firearms among the population studied, implementing long-overdue common-sense gun laws is a priority.

Reference:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) [online]. Available from www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars

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