

# Two-thirds of Canadians who had ever attempted suicide were completely free of any suicidal thoughts in the past year

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A new nationally representative study reports that approximately two-thirds (69%) of Canadians who had ever attempted suicide were

completely free of any suicidal thoughts in the past year.

"Even among those who had attempted suicide three or more times, one-half (51%) had been free of any desire to take their own life in the past 12 months, suggesting that recovery is in reach even for those who have had a long struggle with suicidality" said Esme Fuller-Thomson, lead author of the study and Sandra Rotman Endowed Chair and Director of the Institute for Life Course and Aging at the University of Toronto.

"Recovery was much higher among those who had at least one close confidant who provided them with a sense of emotional security and well-being. This finding underlines the critical buffering role that social support plays, and the need to identify and facilitate access to interventions that promote social connectedness for the most vulnerable."

"Our findings indicate that those most vulnerable to tenacious suicidality were those with a history of childhood abuse." reported Keri J. West, doctoral student at the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work at the University of Toronto. "Primary prevention and treatment for childhood abuse survivors is essential in order to curtail the pernicious effects of childhood maltreatment."

"We were encouraged to learn that Canadians whose previous suicide attempt had received [medical attention](#) were more likely to be free of [suicidal thoughts](#) in our study. We believe this may indicate that effective mental health treatment was provided in addition to medical treatment for their injuries. Unfortunately, a major limitation of the study is that the survey did not ask what kinds of mental health care, if any, were received" stated Philip Baiden, Assistant Professor of Social Work University of Texas at Arlington

Those most likely to have remitted from [suicidal ideation](#) in the past year also tended to be older, women, wealthy, and free of insomnia and past

year [mental illness](#) (i.e., [bipolar disorder](#), major depressive episode, generalized anxiety disorder).

The researchers examined a nationally [representative sample](#) of 769 community-dwelling Canadians who had attempted suicide at some point in their lives. The data were drawn from Statistics Canada's 2012 Canadian Community Health Survey-Mental Health. This research was published online this month in the journal *Psychiatry Research*.

"These findings provide an encouraging message. Although people who are in the midst of a suicidal episode often have trouble believing things will ever get better, there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Recovery from suicidal thoughts is the norm, not an exception" concludes Fuller-Thomson.

**More information:** Esme Fuller-Thomson et al, The Tide Does Turn: Predictors of remission from suicidal ideation and suicide attempt among formerly suicidal Canadians, *Psychiatry Research* (2019). [DOI: 10.1016/j.psychres.2019.02.030](#)

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