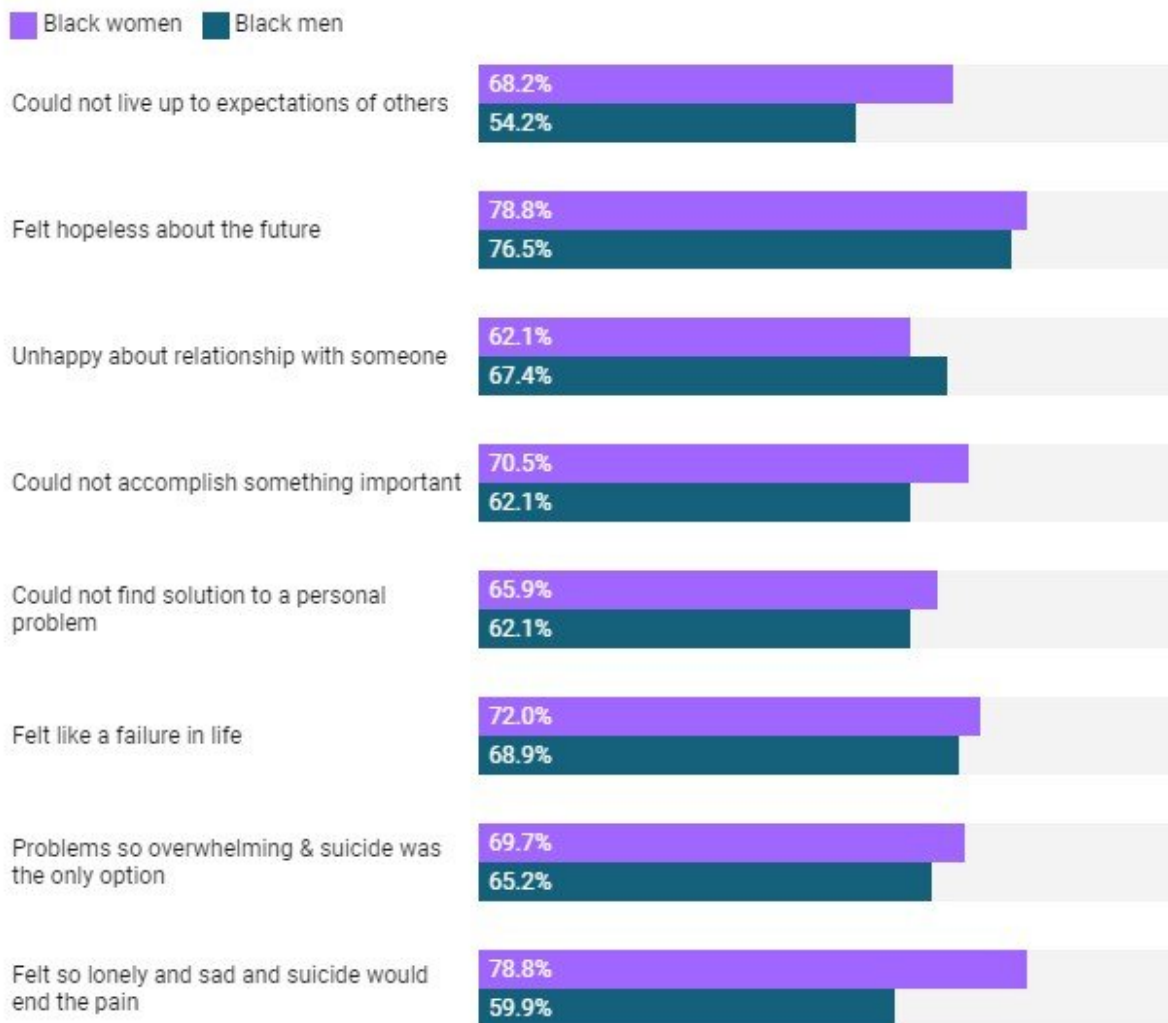


Hopelessness about the future is a key reason some Black young adults consider suicide, new study finds

April 20 2023, by Janelle R. Goodwill

Reasons for suicide in Black young people

Nearly 80% of Black women and more than 76% of Black men surveyed said they felt hopeless about their future.



Credit: The Conversation

Feeling hopeless about the future is one of the primary reasons Black young adults consider suicide. That is one of the key [findings from a new study](#) I published in the Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities. Hopelessness proved to be the most common reason that Black men considered suicide, and it was one of the most common reasons Black women consider suicide.

The Black young adult women in this study were more likely to seriously think about suicide because they could not live up to the expectations of other people and because they felt lonely and sad.

The study analyzed survey responses from 264 Black [young adults](#) between the ages of 18 and 30. I recruited participants online from across the U.S. and asked them to complete a single survey in the spring of 2020 that included a list of eight potential reasons that they may have considered suicide within the past two weeks. The data and participant responses highlighted in this article come from a larger study focusing more generally on issues of mental health in Black young adults.

My previous work has explored whether encountering [racial discrimination](#), experiencing feelings of worthlessness and adopting different strategies for coping with stress are linked to either [increases or decreases in suicidal thoughts](#). This new study, however, builds upon my earlier research by examining some of the specific reasons Black young adults consider suicide.

In my study, the primary reasons Black young adults consider suicide

could be grouped into three main categories. First, people who experienced pronounced feelings of failure, hopelessness, being overwhelmed and a lack of accomplishment made up about 59% of the study sample. The second category, which comprised nearly one-third of study participants, included those who considered suicide because they felt somewhat hopeless and other reasons not captured in this study. The final category included Black young adults who reported that although they were accomplished in life, they still felt extremely lonely and sad. Participants in this last group made up 9% of the total study sample.

Why it matters

A recent report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows a 36.6% increase in suicides among [young Black Americans ages 10 to 24](#) from 2018 to 2021. Suicide rates also increased among American Indian or Alaska Native, Hispanic and multiracial adults ages 25 to 44. Therefore, it is critically important to better understand the underlying factors that contribute to this trend.

Other national data shows that suicides increased each year for [both Black adolescent boys and girls from 2003 to 2017](#). Still, more research is needed to measure suicide risk among Black youths as they transition from adolescence to young or early adulthood.

Also, it is important to note that there is rarely one reason someone considers ending their life. Instead, several events or painful circumstances may occur over time that ultimately influence an individual's suicide risk. Loved ones who understand why Black young adults consider [suicide](#) will be better equipped to support their friends and [family members](#) who may be suicidal by directing them to [guided resources](#) and encouraging them to seek professional help for their specific mental health needs.

These findings can also be used to inform development of therapeutic interventions designed to intentionally meet the needs of Black young adults who are either actively or passively thinking about ending their lives.

What still isn't known

While the results generated from this study are helpful in confirming that hopelessness serves as a primary reason for suicidal thinking in Black young adults, researchers still need to identify the specific sources of hopelessness for this particular population.

Importantly, I collected this data using a single survey during the first phase of the global COVID-19 pandemic, and the timing of this study may have shaped participants' responses. Therefore, I will test the same survey questions with different samples of Black young adults over an extended period of time to determine whether any potential changes emerge.

More information: Janelle R. Goodwill, Reasons for Suicide in Black Young Adults: A Latent Class Analysis, *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities* (2023). [DOI: 10.1007/s40615-023-01530-8](https://doi.org/10.1007/s40615-023-01530-8)

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