

Suicide rates have risen steadily for black girls and women

December 8 2023, by Ernie Mundell



Suicide rates for Black women and girls ages 15 to 24 have more than

doubled over the past two decades, a new report finds.

"Suicides are rapidly increasing among young, Black females in the U.S.," said study first author [Victoria Joseph](#), an analyst in the department of epidemiology at Columbia Mailman School of Public Health in New York City.

Her team published their findings recently in the [American Journal of Psychiatry](#).

Suicide has been on the rise generally across the United States for many years. Data [released in late November](#) by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that almost 49,500 people lost their lives to suicide in 2022. That's a 3% rise from the nearly 48,200 deaths recorded in 2021.

Joseph's team found that young Black females are no exception to this trend. They looked at 1999-2020 data from the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics database, which tracked causes of deaths for Americans.

In 1999, 289 Black females aged 15 to 84 died by suicide; by 2020 that number had risen to 652. The year 2010, especially, seemed to be "an inflection point for subsequent increases in suicide deaths," Joseph noted.

There was also a "clear age effect," the researchers said, with [suicide rates](#) rising higher among younger Black females.

The overall rate of suicide among Black females rose from 2 percent in 1999 to 3.4 percent in 2020. However, the uptick was much more dramatic among Black females ages 15 to 24—from 1.9 per 100,000 in 1999 to 4.9 per 100,000 in 2020, a more than a doubling of the death toll

within this age group.

What's driving this grim trend?

"While the reasons why remain under investigation, it could be that cyberbullying and online racial attacks toward Black female youth may be on the rise in particular, and therefore interventions targeting certain stressors are particularly critical for young Black women," senior study author [Katherine Keyes](#), a professor of epidemiology at Columbia, said in a university news release.

For her part, Joseph added that "[intimate partner violence](#), neighborhood violence and lack of investment into federal and state support systems also contribute to poor mental health outcomes and limited treatment access" for Black females facing a mental health crisis.

If you or someone you love is showing signs of suicidal thoughts, help is at hand by calling or texting [988](#).

More information: Find out more on how you can help save the lives of people in mental health crisis at the [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#).

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