

Suicide Prevention in Hispanic and Latinx Youth, the Impact of COVID-19 and Cultural Factors to Consider

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Changes in Trends of Suicide Deaths, Suicidal Thoughts, and Behaviors among Hispanic/Latinx Adolescents and Early Adulthood in the United States

- Rates of suicide, suicidal behaviors, and suicidal thoughts in Hispanic/Latinx adolescents and early adulthood have increased over the last decade, particularly among females, for whom rates have more than doubled. [1] Because individuals of Hispanic/Latinx backgrounds are more likely to die by suicide by age 30 compared to other ethnicities, early identification and intervention is especially critical.
- Gender differences in suicide and suicidal thoughts/behaviors between males and females are observed such that males have higher rates of suicide, whereas females have higher rates of suicidal thoughts and behaviors. [1]
- Adolescents who identify as LGBT+ are at elevated risk for suicidal thoughts and behaviors compared to peers who identify as heterosexual. [2]

Adolescents and Young Adults and Hispanic/Latinx Individuals are at Greatest Risk for Suicidal Thoughts During COVID-19 Pandemic

- Literature has reported that individuals could experience higher stress levels and more vulnerability to suffer from depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress symptoms during epidemics, pandemics, and disasters. [3]
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, early adulthood ages 18-24 years old who identified themselves as Hispanic/Latinx (18.6%) reported higher rates of suicidal ideation than the national average (10.7%). [4]
- Hispanic respondents reported a higher prevalence of symptoms of anxiety disorder, depressive disorder, COVID-19–related trauma- and stress-related disorders; they also reported having started or increased substance use to cope with emotions and stress, and seriously considered suicide than non-Hispanic whites, or non-Hispanic Asian respondents. [4]
- Guessoum et al., (2020), reported that experiencing high-stress levels is considered a risk factor linked to increased suicide rates. The data on Latinx adolescents' suicidality during epidemics or pandemics is limited.[3]



Cultural Influence and Suicide-Related Risk

- Subgroup differences within Hispanic/Latinx youth and early adulthood have been observed in the United States. For example, people of Puerto Rican descent show higher suicide-related risks than other Hispanic subgroups. [1]
- Greater acculturation or greater exposure to the mainstream United States culture is associated with greater suicide-related risks. [5]
- Cultural risk factors such as acculturative stress, minority stress, and racial/ethnic discrimination have been linked to suicide-related risks. [2]
- Cultural protective factors have been linked to lower suicide-related risks, including a strong sense of belonging to ethnic groups, familism (family-oriented values), and religiosity or spirituality. [5]
- Suicide prevention programs that integrate culturally-specific factors such as Life is Precious, Familias Unidas, and Socio-Cognitive Behavior Therapy for Suicidal Behaviors, show promise in addressing the high rates of suicidal behaviors in Latina teenagers in the United States.

Resources

- Ask Suicide-Screening Questions (ASQ) Toolkit- <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/research/research-conducted-at-nimh/asq-toolkit-materials/index.shtml>
- Zero Suicide Toolkit- zerosuicide.edc.org/toolkit
- After-a-Suicide Toolkit- www.sprc.org
- Life is Precious- <https://www.comunilifelip.org/>
- *Familias Unidas*- <http://www.familias-unidas.org>

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