

LGB students at higher risk of self-harm

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University students who are Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) are at higher risk of self-harm and attempting suicide than their heterosexual counterparts, finds new research.

The study also shows that low [self-esteem](#) may explain the increased risk of [self-harm](#) in LGB students. Low self-esteem may result in LGB students who have faced discrimination or have struggled to accept or share their sexuality with others.

The study was carried out by a team at The University of Manchester, Leeds Beckett University, Lancaster University and Edith Cowan University in Australia, and is published in Archives of Suicide Research today.

Of the LGB students who completed an online questionnaire, 65% had carried out non suicidal self-harm over their lifetime compared to 41% of heterosexual students.

Self-harm typically includes behaviour such as cutting, hair pulling, scratching, burning or non-lethal overdoses.

And 35% of LGB students had attempted [suicide](#) in

their lifetime compared to 14% of non-LGB students.

The study was completed by of 707 students with an average age of 23 from two English Universities of which 119 self-identified as LGB.

The study does not tell us, however, whether being at University increased the risk of self-harm in LGB people.

And it is not possible to compare the [student](#) sample with prevalence rates for non-suicidal self-injury and suicide attempts across the population as a whole.

Dr. Taylor said: "Surprisingly, there is little data on the psychological mechanisms that might explain the association between being lesbian, gay or bisexual, and self-harm in UK students. This data highlights how [low self-esteem](#) may leave some LGB students more at risk.

"Interestingly, anxiety and depressive symptoms did not appear to be important once self-esteem was taken into account.

He added: "So prevention and intervention efforts directed at these psychological mediators by Universities may help to reduce risks in this population.

"Universities are already doing a lot of good things in this area such as counselling and psychological support which is targeted at LGB people.

"And tackling discrimination and improving acceptance of LGB people through public policy and media campaigns may be helpful in reducing any impact on self-esteem."

Dr. Elizabeth McDermott of Lancaster University said: "Young people's mental health is a national concern and this study confirms that lesbian, gay or bisexual young people have elevated rates of suicidality and self-harm compared with

heterosexual youth. We know much less about how
LGB young people seek help for their [mental health
problems](#), or what type of support would be
effective."

The paper Psychological correlates of self-harm
within gay, lesbian and bisexual UK University
students, is published in *Archives of Suicide
Research*.

Provided by University of Manchester

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