

PSYCHIATRY

Greater suicide in LGBT youth

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Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to suicidal ideation and research from within lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) organizations and studies of bullying in schools suggests that suicidal behaviour may be more common in LGBT youth, due to elevated exposure to stigma, threat and isolation.

A study by Ester di Giacomo, of the University of Milano-Bicocca, and colleagues, presents a large-scale systematic review to quantify the risk of attempted suicide among LGBT youth in the broader population. The review identified 35 suitable academic studies related to sexual orientation, age and self-harm, with a combined sample of 2,378,987 heterosexual and 113,468 sexual minority participants aged between 12 and 20 years, from 10 countries. A meta-analysis found that LGBT youth had a higher risk of suicide attempts (odds ratio (OR) 3.50) compared with their heterosexual peers. Looking at each group separately, transgender youth showed the highest risk of suicide attempts (OR 5.87) compared with homosexuals (OR 3.71) and bisexuals (OR 3.69). There was some variability in the size of risks depending on the year of the original study, the country and the age of participants.

This study highlights the need for understanding and support of LGBT adolescents. Identifying as LGBT has and is becoming more socially acceptable in parts of the world. It will be important to see from future research whether this has resulted in better mental health outcomes for sexual minority groups.

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