



Briefing: Mental health difficulties and suicidal behaviour among gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people in Ireland

Outcomes of research conducted in Ireland

A study by Mayock (2009) of the Mental Health and Well-being of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People comprised of an online survey by which data were obtained from 1,110 lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Ireland, and face-to-face interviews were carried out with 40 people.

Key outcomes:

- 27% had self-harm and 85% had done so more than once,
- 16 years was the average age of the first self-harming
- 40% of females and 20% of males had self-harmed
- Over one third of people aged 25 years and younger had thought seriously about ending their lives within the past year and over 50% had attempted to do so at some time.
- More than half (58%) reported homophobic bullying in their schools
- 40% were verbally threatened by school peers
- 25% were physically threatened by school peers
- 34% reported homophobic comments by teachers

The 3 most common LGBT-specific stresses were:

- Fear of rejection when considering coming out
- Negative school experiences
- Experiences of harassment and victimisation

Research conducted by the NSRF among 3,881 school-going adolescents in Ireland showed that 4.4% of boys and 9.2% of girls aged 15-17 years had a lifetime history of non-fatal self-harm (McMahon et al, 2010a).

In terms of risk factors associated with self-harm in boys, bullying, problems with schoolwork, impulsivity and anxiety were significant risk factors. Among boys who had engaged in self-harm and

who reported experiences of bullying, worries about sexual orientation and physical abuse by peers were major factors (McMahon et al, 2010b).

Outcomes of international research

A systematic review including 28 studies, showed that LGBT people were at higher risk of mental health problems, suicidal ideation, substance misuse and self-harm than heterosexual people. Lesbian and bisexual women were particularly at risk of substance dependence (both alcohol and drugs), while lifetime prevalence of self-harm was especially high in gay and bisexual men (King et al, 2008).

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4th May 2014