

Motor vehicle crashes more common among young drivers who engage in self-harm behaviors

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Drivers who engaged in self-harm were at increased risk of motor vehicle crashes, even after controlling for psychological distress and substance abuse, found a study of 18 871 Australian drivers published in CMAJ (*Canadian Medical Association Journal*).

Newly licensed [drivers](#) aged 17-24 in New South Wales, Australia, who participated in the DRIVE study conducted by The George Institute for International Health, were asked to report if they had engaged in self-harm in the year before the survey. A total of 1544 (8.2%) answered yes to the question, which fell to 871 (4.6%) for true self-harm when asked what they did. Of the 4.6% of drivers who engaged in true self-harm — cutting and burning, poisoning, self-battering, road-related harm, risk-taking and attempted suicide — 58.7% were female and 41.3% were male.

Self-harm was most common among the youngest drivers, with 51.9% of those reporting self-harm aged 17 compared with 10.9% of 20-24 year olds.

Of the 871 who reported self-harm, 88 (10.1%) had at least one crash and 84% of those who had a crash were involved in multiple-vehicle incidents. The risk associated with self-harm was significant after controlling for age, sex, average driving hours per week, previous crash, psychological distress, amount of [sleep](#) and other factors.

"Given that self-harm was found to be an independent risk factor for [motor vehicle crash](#) among young drivers who engaged in self-harm, effective interventions to address self-harm would be beneficial in this group," write Dr. Alexandra Martiniuk, The George Institute, Australia, and coauthors.

The CMAJ study has implications for the wider population as drivers who engaged in self-harm were more likely to be involved in multiple-vehicle crashes.

Source: [Canadian Medical Association Journal](#) ([news](#) : [web](#))

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