

Childhood report reveals one in four 14-year-old girls self-harm

August 29 2018, by Shelley Hughes



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Nearly a quarter of girls aged 14 (22 percent) said they had self-harmed in the last year according to a new report by the University of York and The Children's Society.

The latest Good Childhood report has found that one in six (16 percent) of more than 11,000 [children](#) surveyed reported self-harming at the age of 14, including nearly one in 10 boys (9 percent).

The Good Childhood report, which examines the state of children's well-being in the UK, looks at the reasons behind the unhappiness which increases the risk of children self-harming.

Based on these figures, the researchers estimate that nearly 110,000 children aged 14 may have self-harmed across the UK during the same 12-month period, including 76,000 girls and 33,000 boys.

Almost half of 14-year-olds who said they had been attracted to people of the same gender or both genders said they had self-harmed (46 percent). Four in ten of these children had shown signs of depression (39 percent) and three in ten had low well-being (30 percent) - both compared with 11 per cent of all children.

Children's views

Gwyther Rees, Honorary Research Fellow at the University of York's Social Policy Research Unit, said: "Children's well-being and mental health are significant issues in the UK at the moment. The Children's Society's latest Good Childhood Report highlights once again the importance of understanding children's views on these issues. Only by doing this can we identify how we can improve child well-being."

A new Good Childhood survey of 10-17-year-old children and their parents across 2,000 households, which is also part of the report, found children were least happy with school-life and their appearance.

When asked about their experiences of school, nearly a quarter (24 percent) said they heard jokes or comments about other people's bodies

or looks all of the time, while more than a fifth (22 percent) of those in secondary school said jokes or comments were often made about people's sexual activity.

Pressure

Both made girls feel much worse about their appearance and less happy with their life as a whole, but this pattern did not apply to boys.

The research also suggests both boys and girls can be harmed by gender stereotypes and pressure to live up to these expectations.

Children felt under pressure from friends to be good looking but those who felt boys should be tough and girls should have nice clothes were least happy with life.

The report suggests that happiness with family relationships could be the best protection for children because it has the biggest positive influence on their overall well-being.

Support

Matthew Reed, Chief Executive at The Children's Society, said: "It's vital that children's well-being is taken more seriously and that much more is done to tackle the root causes of their unhappiness and support their mental health.

"Schools can play an important part in this and that is why we want the Government to make it a requirement for all secondary schools to offer access to a counsellor, regularly monitor children's well-being and have their mental health provision assessed as part of Ofsted inspections.

"Issues like appearance, gender stereotypes and sexuality should be included in the new Relationships and Sex Education curriculum.

"However, early support for vulnerable children and families in the community, which can help prevent [mental health](#) problems from developing, is also vital, and ministers must urgently address the £2bn funding shortfall facing council children's services departments by 2020."

This research was carried out by Gwyther Rees from the Department of Social Policy and Social Work in collaboration with the Children's Society.

Provided by University of York

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