

Bisexual people up to six times more likely to self-injure

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Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

Bisexual people are up to six times more likely to engage in non-suicidal self-injury compared to other sexual orientations, according to University of Manchester researchers.

The study of [self-injury](#)—a common problem that can include cutting, hitting, burning or scratching yourself—used data from 24 independent studies, and is published in the *Journal of Affective Disorders*.

It found that bisexual people had:

- 6.07 times greater odds of self-injury compared to heterosexual people in the past 12 months.
- 4.57 times greater odds of self-injury than heterosexual people over their lifetime.
- 4.37 times greater odds of self-injury than gay men over their lifetime.
- 2.13 times greater odds of self-injury than gay men and lesbian women over their lifetime.

Symptoms of anxiety and depression were often associated with self-injury in bisexual people, as were problems such as [physical assault](#), bullying and feeling of not belonging, though a small number of studies looked at these associations so more research is needed say the researchers.

With a team of psychologists, trainee [clinical psychologist](#) and lead author Brendan Dunlop is currently running an online study investigating the relationship between bisexuality and non-suicidal self-injury called Self injury in young bisexual people: a longitudinal investigation (SIBL)

SIBL is asking young bisexual people, aged 16-25, to record their experiences each week for six weeks. The team are hoping to investigate whether difficult experiences like biphobia and [psychological factors](#), such as how people think and feel, are related to self-injury for young bisexual people.

He said: "Self-injury can occur across all sections of society, cultures, genders, ages and sexualities. However, [mental health outcomes](#) for bisexual people, appear to be consistently worse than other sexual orientations.

"Self-injury often shows an individual is in distress or struggling with overwhelming emotions. But it can also have physical consequences, such as infection and scarring, and increase the risk of other high-risk behavior, including suicide.

"it's important we understand why this behavior occurs, so we can identify ways of better supporting those who struggle with self-injury."

He added: "This review paper highlights the need for early identification and prevention of self-injury in bisexual people.

"We do recognize, however, that bisexual people may not always attend groups or services because of difficulties of biphobia or difficulties with feelings of belonging within the LGBTQ+ community.

"So alternative means may be necessary to reach them, such as links to mental health support on online, posters aimed at bisexual people displayed in LGBTQ+ venues and support services engaging directly with the bisexual community.

"Educational and voluntary organizations could play a role in supporting [bisexual people](#) who may present with these difficulties.

Provided by University of Manchester

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