

Muscle dysmorphia linked to suicidal ideation and planning in adolescents and young adults

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A new study published in the journal *Suicidal and Life-Threatening Behavior* found that muscle dysmorphia are associated with suicidal

thoughts and behaviors among adolescents and young adults in Canada.

Muscle dysmorphia is a mental health disorder characterized as the pathological pursuit of muscularity, and includes symptoms and behaviors such muscle dissatisfaction, excessive exercise, and the use of appearance- and performance-enhancing drugs and substances. These [muscle dysmorphia](#) symptoms are common among [adolescents and young adults in Canada](#), particularly boys and young men.

Among a sample of over 900 [young people](#) from the Canadian Study of Adolescent Health Behavior, the researchers found that experiencing symptoms of muscle dysmorphia was associated with increased risk of suicidal ideation and suicide planning over a one-year period.

"Muscle dysmorphia symptoms can be pervasive, highly distressing, and severely impact individual functioning," says lead author Kyle T. Ganson, Ph.D., MSW, assistant professor at the University of Toronto's Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work. "Our findings are concerning given that the onset of suicidal ideation and suicide planning occurred after a one-year period of experiencing muscle-dysmorphia symptoms."

The authors highlight the need for greater awareness of muscle dysmorphia symptoms among in the community and [health care professionals](#) to ensure proper identification and treatment occur, potentially reducing the risk of future suicidal ideation and suicide planning.

"It was evident from our findings that body and muscle dissatisfaction are major drivers of suicidal ideation and suicide planning," says Ganson. "Young people may experience such a high level of body dissatisfaction and distress that they think suicide may be the only way to end these negative thoughts and feelings."

The researchers emphasize the need to decrease media and [social pressures](#) that emphasize a muscular body ideal, particularly for boys and young men, which may reduce muscle dysmorphia symptoms and behaviors among the population.

More information: Kyle T. Ganson et al, Muscle dysmorphia symptomatology is prospectively associated with suicidal thoughts, suicidal behaviors, and non-suicidal self-injury among a sample of Canadian adolescents and young adults, *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior* (2023). [DOI: 10.1111/sltb.13008](https://doi.org/10.1111/sltb.13008)

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