Study: Youth Who Self-Identify as Gay Are at Higher Risk of Suicide

February 11, 2010

Teens who self-identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual are more likely to experience suicidal thoughts and attempt suicide as well as develop other mental health problems, according to research results published in the *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, reported by ScienceDaily. Similarly, youths who were unsure of their sexual identity were also more at risk of suicide.

In addition, the study showed that young people who had same-sex attractions or experiences but identified as heterosexual faced no greater risk of suicide than the larger population.

In other words, it is the self-identification not the sex act itself that is linked to mental health issues.

Researchers drew their conclusions from the results of an anonymous questionnaire given to 1,900 high school students in 14 Montreal-area schools.

“It’s important to realize that a large proportion of people who have sex with or are attracted to people of the same sex do not identify themselves as gay, lesbian or bisexual. They consider themselves heterosexual,” said psychiatrist Richard Montoro, MD, co-director of the McGill University Sexual Identity Centre (MUSIC), the study’s co-author. “Those students are not at all at risk of worst mental health outcomes.”

“What this all means is that clinicians need to look not just at individuals and their sexuality. They really need to assess the environment [the patients] are coming from and how they see themselves within it,” said psychiatrist Karine J. Igartua, MD, another MUSIC co-director and study co-author.

MUSIC is Canada’s first gay and lesbian mental health center.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/article/selfidentity-youth-gay-18011-4331