

SELF-HARM FACTS AND MYTHS

1. A youngster taking 10 vitamin tablets has no intention to die.

FALSE – the amount has no relation to the intent.

2. Self-harming is attention seeking behaviour.

FALSE – see Question 15.

3. Young people who self-harm want to commit suicide.

FALSE - People often think that self-harm is closely linked to suicide; however the vast majority of people who self-harm are not trying to kill themselves. It's their way of coping with difficult feelings and circumstances. (<http://www.samaritans.org>)

In a survey carried out by NHSN of 758 respondents the survey showed that only 4% of these individuals stated that it was suicidal feelings that led to any of their individual incidents of self-harm.

4. 13% of all 11&16 year-olds have harmed themselves.

TRUE – However, it is almost impossible to say how many young people are self-harming. This is because very few teenagers tell anyone what's going on, so it's incredibly difficult to keep records or have an accurate idea of scale. It is thought that around 13% of young people may try to hurt themselves on purpose at some point between the ages of 11 and 16, but the actual figure could be much higher. In 2014, figures were published suggesting a 70% increase in 10-14 year olds attending A&E for self-harm related reasons over the preceding 2 years.

(<http://selfharm.co.uk>)

A 2013-2014 study by the World Health Organisation (WHO) reported 20% prevalence rate for self-harm amongst 15-year-olds (<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/may/21/shock-figures-self-harm-england-teenagers>)

The Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC) birth cohort, England, reported that of the 4810 16-17 year-olds who completed the survey, 905 (18.8%) had ever self-harmed.

5. Some health-care professionals think that people who self-harm don't need painkillers to stitch wounds.

TRUE – Mind 2008 – However... the government says ... if you need to go to hospital, you should offered a "full" assessment of your physical, psychological and social needs, by a professional who has been trained in the treatment of people who harm themselves, in an atmosphere of respect and understanding.

6. The UK has one of the highest rates of self-harm in Europe at 400 per 100 000 population.

TURE - Child & Adolescent Self-harm in Europe (CASE) Study reported that England rates as second highest amongst the countries studied in terms of the life-time prevalence of self-harm in 14-17 year-old girls (16.7%), and as third highest for self-harm in 14-17 year old boys (4.8%).

(www.researchgate.net/...Deliberate self-harm...international...Self-harm in Europe.../09e4150aa36d4a4540000000)

7. The more serious the injury, the more serious the problem.

FALSE – same as Question 1.

8. Recent statistics show that men who self-harm now outnumber women.

FALSE – Women are more likely to self-harm than men. However, whereas women once showed two to three times the male rate, recent increases in self-harm by men have changed female to male ratio to 1:6:1 (Samaritans).

In addition, boys are more likely to engage in behaviours such as punching a wall, which isn't always recognised as self-harm or doesn't come to the attention of hospitals.

(<http://selfharm.co.uk>)

9. The UK had approximately 15 000 hospital admissions for self-harm behaviours in 2011-2012 throughout UK in one year.

FALSE - Nationally, hospitals admitted 110,960 self-harm cases in the 12 months to August 2012, a 0.4 per cent increase on the previous 12 month period (110,490).

(<http://www.hscic.gov.uk/article/2430/Self-harm-hospital-admission-rate-per-100000-population-in-North-East-almost-triple-the-rate-in-London>)

10. Hospital admissions for people who self-harm have risen 11% between 2011 and 2012.

FALSE - In 2012 the Chief Executive of the Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC), Tim Straughan, reported that: "Nationally, the number of self-harm admissions has not increased markedly on the previous year. But if we analyse patterns in admission by age, it appears there has been a fall in admissions for 15 to 19-year-olds, even though they still make up the biggest proportion of self-harm cases coming through the hospital door."

11. A young person taking 30 Paracetamol clearly has intent to die.

FALSE – same as Question 1.

12. 56% of young people admit to knowing someone who self-harms.

TRUE – Camelot Foundation, 2008.

13. Studies suggest that a third of girls aged 11-19 and 22% of the boys of the same age have tried to harm themselves.

TRUE – Camelot Foundation, 2008.

14. Young people who self-harm have mental health problems.

FALSE - Self-harm in itself is not a diagnosis. It is not a mental disorder; it is an emotional difficulty. There may be people who do have a diagnosed mental health condition or learning disability, who have associated self-harming behaviours as part of that diagnosis, but for the vast majority of young people who self-harm, self-harm is an expression of difficult or unbearable emotions (<http://selfharm.co.uk>).

15. Self-harm is often an attempt to draw the attention to underlying distress/crisis.

TRUE

16. Self-harm is due to the impact the Internet has on young people.

FALSE - Self-harm has been kicking around much longer than the Internet. People have struggled to express how they feel or come to terms with difficulties since the dawn of time, not just post-www. There are, however, unregulated websites and mainstream forums that permit that stuff to happen. Those sites fuel self-harm and make it harder for those affected to enter recovery. They create a community where people feel they belong, but the underlying message isn't one of recovery, but one of just accepting that self-harm is as good as life is going to get – THAT is the damaging message. THAT is what makes a website cross the line from helpful to dangerous. (<http://selfharm.co.uk>)

Reference list:

- <http://selfharm.co.uk>
- <http://www.nshn.co.uk/>

