

Motor vehicle crashes more common among young drivers who engage in self-harm behaviors

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Drivers who engaged in self-harm were at increased risk of motor vehicle crashes, even after controlling for psychological distress and substance abuse, found a study of 18 871 Australian drivers published in CMAJ (*Canadian Medical Association Journal*).

population as drivers who engaged in self-harm were more likely to be involved in multiple-vehicle crashes.

Source: [Canadian Medical Association Journal](#) ([news](#) : [web](#))

Newly licensed [drivers](#) aged 17-24 in New South Wales, Australia, who participated in the DRIVE study conducted by The George Institute for International Health, were asked to report if they had engaged in self-harm in the year before the survey. A total of 1544 (8.2%) answered yes to the question, which fell to 871 (4.6%) for true self-harm when asked what they did. Of the 4.6% of drivers who engaged in true self-harm — cutting and burning, poisoning, self-battering, road-related harm, risk-taking and attempted suicide — 58.7% were female and 41.3% were male.

Self-harm was most common among the youngest drivers, with 51.9% of those reporting self-harm aged 17 compared with 10.9% of 20-24 year olds.

Of the 871 who reported self-harm, 88 (10.1%) had at least one crash and 84% of those who had a crash were involved in multiple-vehicle incidents. The risk associated with self-harm was significant after controlling for age, sex, average driving hours per week, previous crash, psychological distress, amount of [sleep](#) and other factors.

"Given that self-harm was found to be an independent risk factor for [motor vehicle crash](#) among young drivers who engaged in self-harm, effective interventions to address self-harm would be beneficial in this group," write Dr. Alexandra Martiniuk, The George Institute, Australia, and coauthors.

The CMAJ study has implications for the wider

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