Australian National University

The Role of School Environments in Influencing Self-harm and Suicidal Behaviours

Factsheet 4

Footprints in Time: **The Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children (LSIC)** has been following two cohorts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from across Australia since 2008.

This factsheet presents key findings from the Wave 14 (2021) LSIC survey about the role of schools in influencing self-harm and suicidal behaviours among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth.

In Wave 14 (2021), 936 youth and families participated in the study. The number was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Study Youth were aged between 13 and 17 years old.

The authors acknowledge that each statistic presented here represents the experiences of a person and some readers may find the topics discussed disturbing or distressing.

If you or someone you know is feeling distressed or suicidal, please contact one of the following services:

During an emergency, call: 000

13YARN: 13 92 76

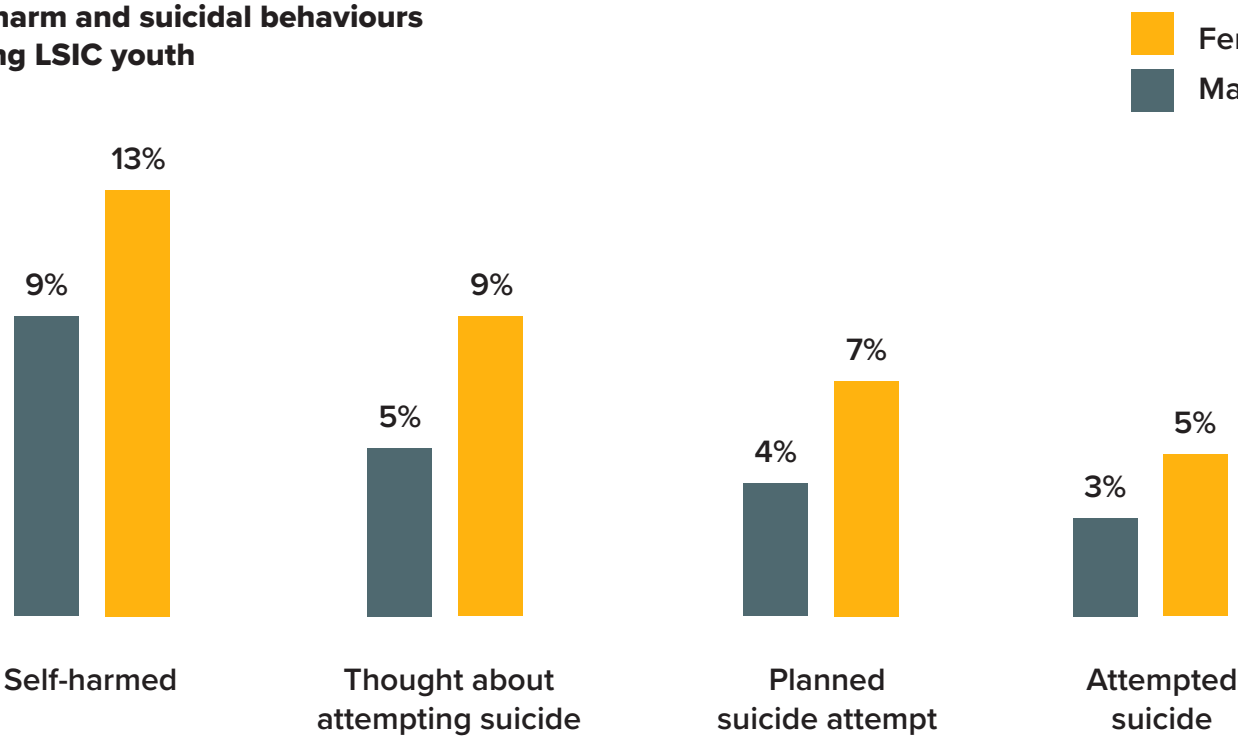
Kids Helpline: 1800 55 18 00

Lifeline: 13 11 14 or 0477 13 11 14 (SMS)

Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 65 94 67

Beyond Blue: 1300 22 46 36

Self-harm and suicidal behaviours among LSIC youth

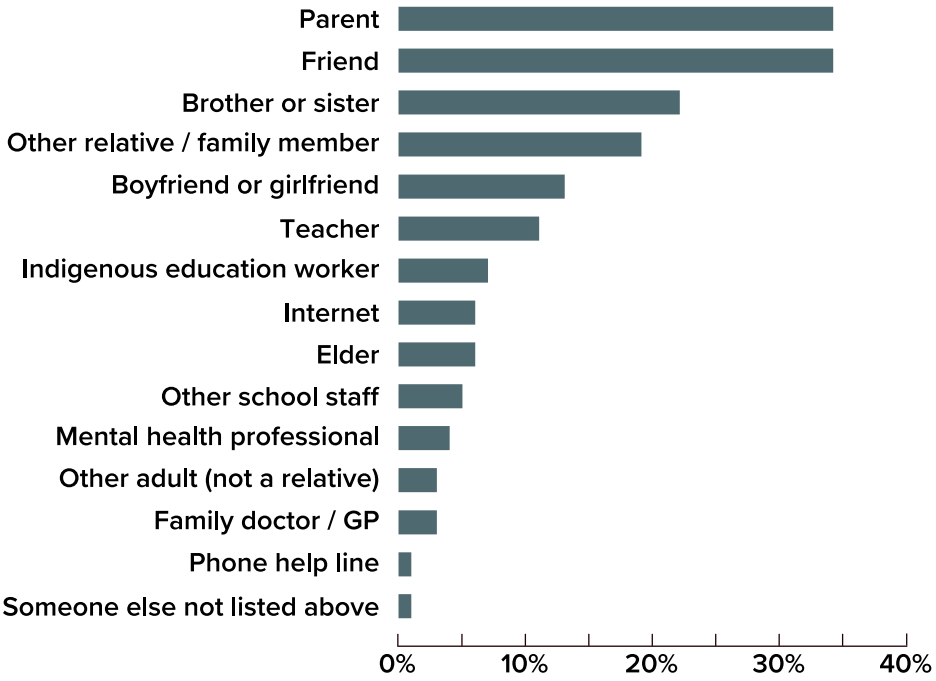


Additionally, the 2021 LSIC survey shows that, during the last 12 months:

- 15.1% Study Youth had friends who had self-harmed.
- 7.1% Study Youth had friends who had attempted suicide.

Most Study Youth (~90%) who had experienced emotional or personal challenges had sought help from others.

Common source of help for LSIC Study Youth with emotional or personal challenges



The three most common sources of help for Study Youth who:

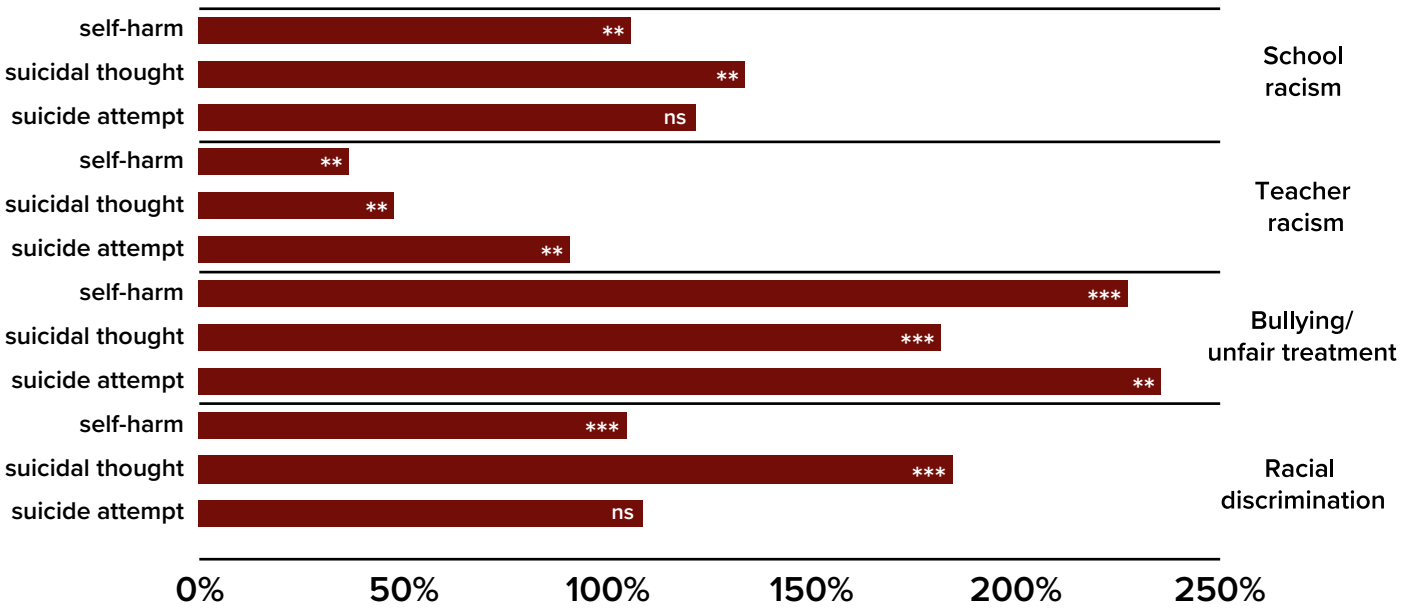
- **Self-harmed**
  1. Friends (51%)
  2. Parents (39%)
  3. boyfriends or girlfriends (32%);
- **Experienced suicidal thoughts**
  1. Friends (51%)
  2. Parents (35%)
  3. Boyfriends or girlfriends (29%)
- **Attempted suicide**
  1. Friends (52%)
  2. Parents (43%)
  3. Boyfriends or girlfriends (43%)

Factors which decrease the odds of suicidal outcomes ('protective factors')

Note: Positive school climate was classified to include, e.g., feeling proud of school and being respected by teachers etc. For details please see the Research Report.

**** Statistically significant at the 1% level; ** significant at the 5% level; 'ns' - not statistically significant. Given the scaling is different across the predictor variables, percentage changes in the odds ratio are not directly comparable. See Section Five of the Research Report for variable definitions.*

Factors which increase the odds of suicidal outcomes ('risk factors')



*Note: *** Statistically significant at the 1% level; ** significant at the 5% level; 'ns' - not statistically significant. Given the scaling is different across the predictor variables, percentage changes in the odds ratio are not directly comparable. See Section Five of the Research Report for variable definitions.*

What roles can schools play to reduce self-harm and suicide risks among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth?

While self-harm and suicidal behaviours among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are influenced by a range of factors, including the ongoing effects of colonisation, these findings highlight that schools can play a vital role in reducing self-harm and suicide risks. Schools must:

- promote positive student-teacher and student-peer relationships,
- improve processes for eliminating bullying and racism, and
- build teacher cultural responsiveness.

Summarised from:

Helping Spirits Stay Strong Research Report (doi.org/10.25911/6KGK-RG76) Summary Report (doi.org/10.25911/AWN1-YZ78) This fact sheet was published in 2024. DOI: doi.org/10.25911/DGFG-MQ94

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