

# SELF-HARM AMONG INCARCERATED LGBT+ AUSTRALIANS: STARTING THE CONVERSATION

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**Background:** Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and other sexual minority (LGBT+) Australians are twice as likely to have attempted suicide as their heterosexual peers. A LGBT+ individual's risk of self-harming further increases when they face social rejection as they "come out." This social rejection can be compounded by intersecting identities, such as age or immigration status. Incarceration has also been associated with increases in self-harm and suicide for similar reasons. In this study, we look at the rates of mental illness, self-harm, and suicide among incarcerated LGBT+ Australians.

**Methods:** A cohort of 2701 incarcerated men and women from Queensland and Western Australia were asked about their sexual orientation, mental health, history of self-harm, and suicidal ideation. Bivariate and multivariate analyses were performed.

**Results:** Five percent of the sample identified as LGBT+ (n=135). Demographically, incarcerated LGBT+ people did not differ greatly from straight-identifying inmates. Over a third of LGBT+ inmates reported they had self-harmed (33.7% v. 12.7%,  $p < 0.001$ ), and nearly half had attempted suicide (45.8% v. 19.6%,  $p < 0.001$ ). Incarcerated LGBT+ people were twice as likely to have attempted to commit suicide (OR 2.01, CI: 1.17-3.48) and two and a half times (OR 2.49, CI 1.14-4.30) as likely to have self-harmed in the past even when controlling for gender, ASTI status, education, marital status, and history of mental health diagnosis.

**Conclusion:** Incarcerated LGBT+ Australians reported higher rates of suicide and self-harm than their non-incarcerated counterparts, but have been largely ignored in relevant policy and position papers. Though comprising a small group, more research and attention should be directed towards this group, especially as they experience a secondary "coming out" process during reentry.

## Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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