

Providing the Irish community with information, resources, and opportunities to talk about mental health.

Self-Harm

What is Self-Harm?

Self-harm is when a person deliberately hurts themselves. While the most common method of self-harm is cutting, any instance in which a person intentionally hurts themselves is classified as self-harm.

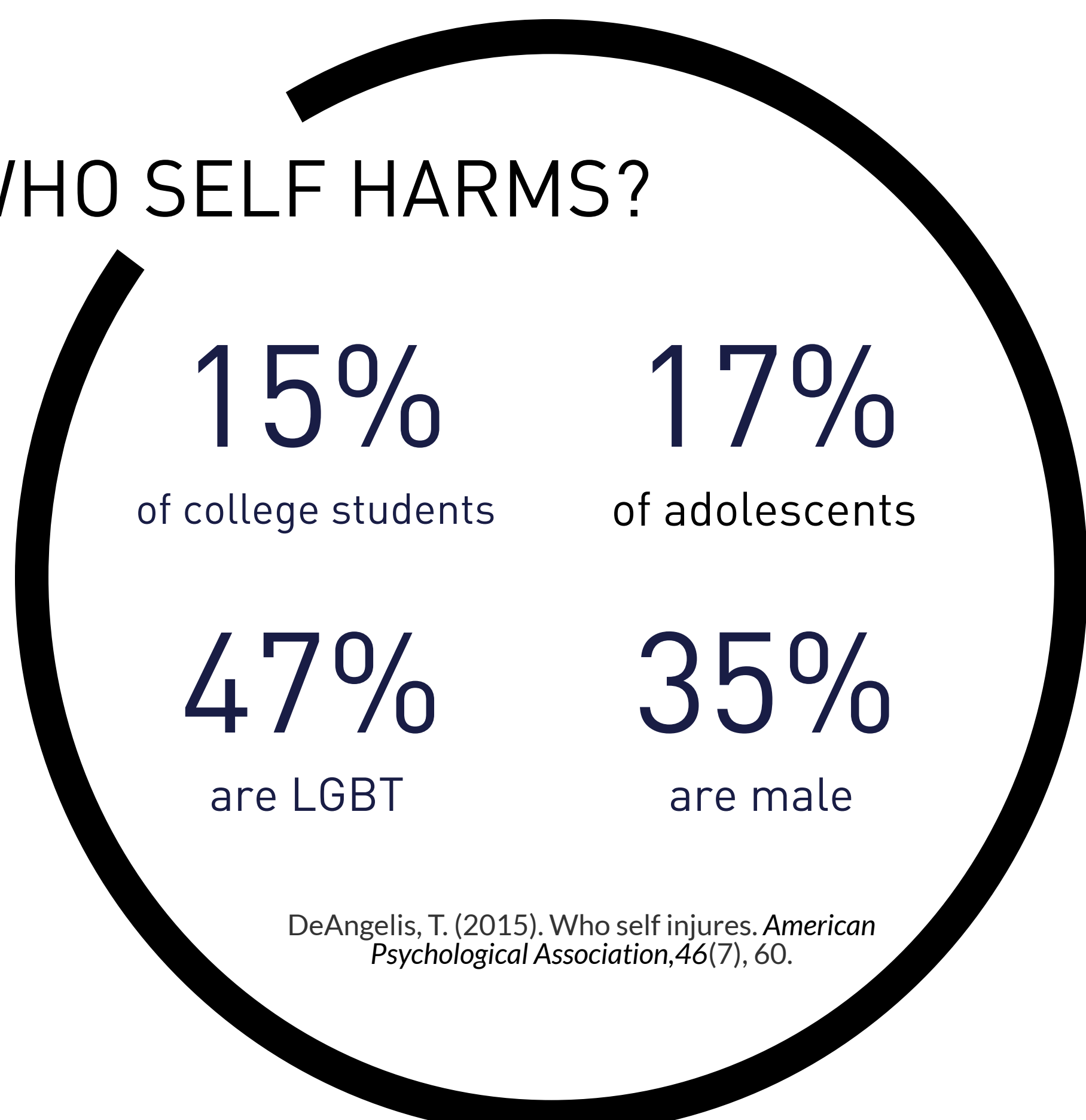
Why do people self-harm?

Self-harm is caused by a combination of severe emotional distress and a lack of coping skills. It is most often experienced during the teenage and young adult years, though it can occur at any age. Individuals most likely to self-harm have experienced trauma or abuse or are suffering from depression, eating disorders, anxiety, or borderline personality disorder.

Emotional signs that may put an individual at risk for self-harm are overwhelming anger and frustration. These feelings, paired with an inability to deal with emotions, can result in self-harm.

On occasion, self-harm temporarily improves a person's mood by stimulating endorphins and pain-killing hormones. This may feel like a 'release' to those who self-harm. In other cases, someone may hurt themselves to "feel something" and to supplement their own emotional numbness.

WHO SELF HARMS?



Consequences

As a result of self-harm, a person often experiences intense feelings of shame and guilt. These negative feelings may cause that person to hurt themselves again and set off a dangerous and addictive cycle of continuing self-harm.

Drug and alcohol abuse is often associated with self-harm, and increases risk of more severe injury.

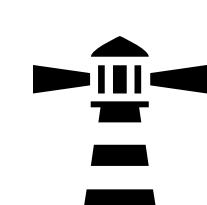
Physical marks caused by cutting and burning can be permanent and cause those who self-harm to avoid social situations to prevent friends and family from seeing their scars. Hiding one's self-harm from loved ones becomes an additional emotional burden.

Treatment

There are effective treatments that address the underlying emotional issues that cause self-harm.

The first action one can take is to confide in a trusted friend or family member who can access medical and/or psychiatric care. Treatment will be individualized based on the patient's specific emotional issues and any related mental health conditions they might have. Specialized treatment plans may include psychotherapy, medication, lifestyle and home remedies, and support groups.

Though treating self-harm can take time, with hard work and a desire to recover patients can heal and lead fulfilling lives.



Get Help Today

If you or someone you know is self-harming and you're not sure where to turn, call S.A.F.E. Alternatives at 1-800-366-8228 for referrals and support.
www.selfinjury.com