

Myth	Why the myth?	What's the truth?
Only teenage girls self-injure	Historically, research on self-injury included only clinical samples (in which girls are over-represented), or limited the methods of self-injury to cutting (which may be more common among girls).	People of all ages, genders, cultures, and backgrounds self-injure. Teenagers may be more emotionally reactive, and have less experience concealing their self-injury, making it more visible.
People who self-injure are attention seeking	Self-injury is a behaviour people find difficult to understand, as it contradicts the basic human instinct to avoid injury. It seems paradoxical to hurt oneself to quell emotional pain, so it is easy to jump to conclusions. Even if people do self-injure for attention, we have to ask why? A compassionate approach necessitates that we try to understand what is lacking in the person's life (e.g., a sense of connection, affection), and address this underlying need, rather than labelling the person as attention-seeking.	For most people, self-injury is a means of coping with intense or unwanted emotions, and they go to great lengths to conceal the self-injury
People who self-injure are suicidal	People who self-injure are at increased risk of suicidal thoughts and behaviours, so figuring out when a behaviour is motivated by a desire to end life and when it is not can be tricky. Plus, the language we use confuses self-injury and suicidal behaviour. The term 'deliberate self-harm' (or just self-'harm'), is defined as any self-inflicted damage to the body <u>regardless</u> of suicidal intent. This means any talk of self-harm includes both self-injury and suicidal attempts.	The relationship between self-injury and suicidal thoughts and behaviours is complex. While self-injury is usually used as a way to cope with life, rather than to end it, people who self-injure are at increased risk of suicidal thoughts and behaviours.

<p>We are in the midst of a self-injury 'epidemic'</p>	<p>It is likely that, partially as a result of self-injury being more publicly visible, more people are willing to talk about self-injury, cultivating the appearance that more people are engaging in the behaviour.</p>	<p>We don't know. To know if more people are self-injuring, we need to conduct large, epidemiological studies, with representative samples, using reliable and valid measures of self-injury, and conduct them over many years. To date, no such studies exist.</p>
<p>Social media is contributing to self-injury</p>	<p>There is often a general public perception that social media in the context of risky behaviour is 'bad.' To this end, much of the media attention concerning the impact of online self-injury communication has focused on the potential risks apart from the potential benefits.</p>	<p>Social media represents a double-edged sword when it comes to self-injury. There are several potential benefits associated with online communication about self-injury; there are also some potential risks. There is an opportunity to harness the Internet as a means to reach individuals who self-injure and who may otherwise not seek help or support elsewhere.</p>