Health & Wellbeing of Same Sex Attracted Youth (SSAY)
Dr Tiffany Jones

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Approximately 10% of youth are same sex attracted

3 national surveys with SSAY (14–21)
2010, n=3134
1998, n=749
2004, n=1749

First realisations:
• 10% always knew
• 1/3 knew before puberty
• 2/3 knew by puberty

Since 1998...
• SSAY are coming out more, younger.
• They feel better about being SSA.
• Most expect same sex marriage, children, and religious affiliations.
• They are more likely to experience homophobic abuse...
61% experienced verbal homophobic abuse (44% in 1998, 46% in 2004)
- [I’ve been told] that im going to hell because im gay... that i should be shot at or killed. (Caz, 19 years)
- “your a dirty cock sucker” “god hates you” “your gay because your daddy raped you aren’t ya?” (Ray, 17 years)
- Death threats. (Brock, 14 years)

18% experienced physical homophobic abuse (14% in 1998; 16% in 2004)
- i have been beat up numerous times since coming out at 14/15 at school... i also got beat and kicked out by my dad. (Liam 20yrs)
- I had ‘fag’ cut into my back in three places then (...) held and repeatedly abused with sticks’ (Stuart, 21 years)

60% experienced other homophobic abuse

80% of abuse occurred in school

Impacts of homophobia on schooling
1/3 couldn’t concentrate at school
1/5 missed classes; missed days at school; marks dropped; hid at recess
1/8 didn’t use change rooms; dropped out of sport
1/10 didn’t use the toilets; moved schools; dropped out altogether

Of SSAY who were physically assaulted:
* 38% had attempted suicide, 64% had considered it.
* Over half self–harmed, 2/3 had considered it.
Logic of suicidal ideation

- My existence seemed to be a burden on my family growing up (...). I thought that maybe if I just went away, that things might be alright for them again. (Stefan, 19 years)

- when i get extremely depressed i think about suicide and how it would be easier to get out now (Toby, 15 years)

Abused youth are more likely to abuse drugs

What can we do?

- Support for disclosures from anyone (professionals, family, peers,) is associated with reduced self-harm and suicide rates.

- Supportive schools with protective policies
  - reduced self-harm (21% v 40%) and suicide attempts (11% v 23%)
  - reduced abuse (71% v 49%)
  - helped SSAY feel safer (86% v 46%)


  - http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15566128.2011.571935