

# Romantic relationships and self-harm among adolescents in Denmark

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## STUDY OBJECTIVES

The overall study objective is to examine the prevalence of suicidal behaviour such as self-harm among adolescents aged 13-19 years in Denmark and to identify factors that decrease or increase the risk of a suicidal behaviour.

This specific study objective is to illuminate if romantic teenage relationships have an impact on self-harm among adolescents.

The Ministry for Children and Social Affairs financially supports the project.

## METHOD AND MATERIAL

Data is collected through a questionnaire administered to schools in Denmark as part of the Youth Barometer. The questionnaire is web-based and includes 57 questions in 2018. Regarding romantic relationships, calculations are done by multiple regression analysis to control for gender, age and household differences.

	Percentage in survey	Self-harm	OR
Currently has a partner	22 %	23 %	2.2*
Previously had a partner	35 %	19 %	2.4*
Never had a partner	45 %	10 %	1

Table 1: Romantic relationships and self-harm

\*p<0.05, adjusted for gender/age/household differences

## RESULTS

In total, 2,930 adolescents aged 13-19 years from 26 different schools completed the questionnaire.

As displayed in table 1, less than 45% of the adolescents never had a romantic relationship, while 22% had a partner at the time of the study and 35% had a partner previous.

Among those who never had a romantic relationship, 10% had self-harmed. Among those who previously had a partner, 19% had self-harmed while nearly 23% had self-harmed among those who had a romantic relationship at the time of the study.

OR-calculations show that adolescents who are in a relationship have a 2.2 times higher risk of self-harm compared with those who never had a relationship and a 2.4 times higher risk of self-harm for those who previously had a relationship compared with those who never had a relationship.

## CONCLUSION

Romantic relationships seem to be a risk factor for self-harm among adolescents, which can be due to difficulties in dealing with all the emotions a relationship brings. Grown-ups should pay extra attention when adolescents experience breakups with their partner.

