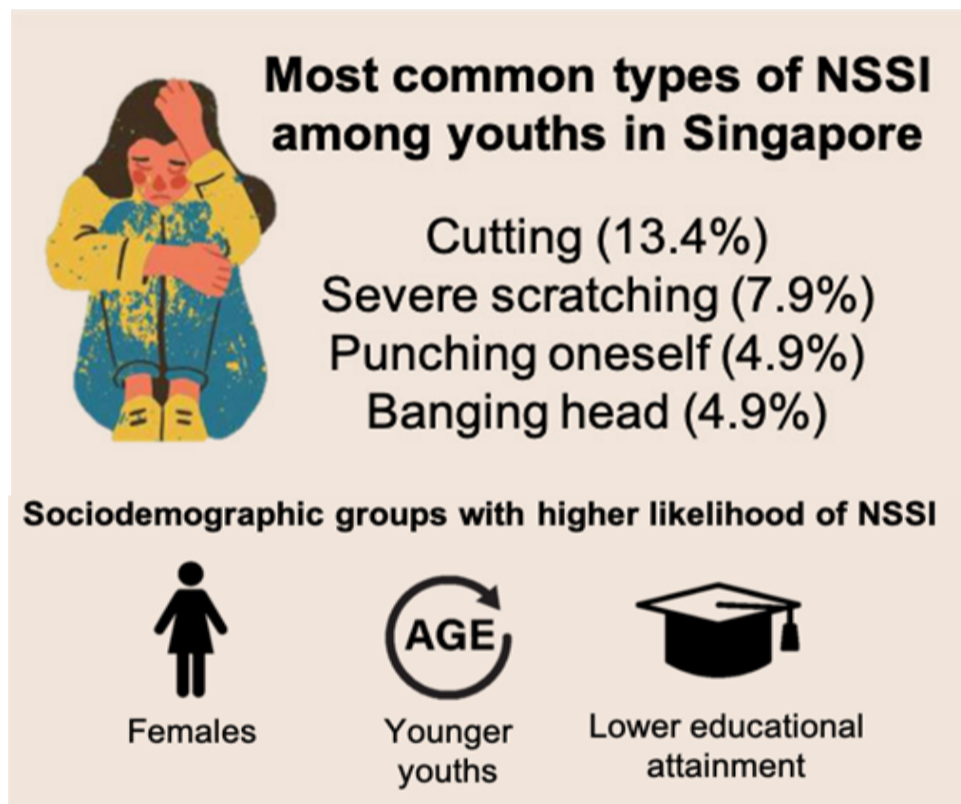


## Shedding Light on a Quiet Youth Struggle

### The Case of Non-suicidal Self-injury Among Youths in Singapore

Non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) refers to the deliberate destruction of one's own body tissue, without the intention to cause death. Very often NSSI remains hidden as youths struggle with the shame and stigma associated with self-harm. Using data from a nationwide survey of youths aged 15-35, a study was conducted to understand NSSI behaviours in the Singapore youth population.



### How common is NSSI among youths in Singapore?

Findings from the study by IMH Research Division found that 1 in 4 youths reported engaging in NSSI act at least once in their life, and around 1 in 10 youths had repeatedly injured themselves on five or more occasions.

### What behaviours and life experiences are linked with NSSI?

The study found that having severe and extremely severe symptoms of depression and anxiety was significantly associated with lifetime NSSI behaviours. Youths with body shape dissatisfaction, youths who smoke daily, and youths who drink alcohol in hazardous amounts were more likely to have self-injured themselves. Greater use of avoidance coping strategy was linked with greater odds of lifetime NSSI, while having more resilience was associated with lower likelihood of lifetime NSSI.

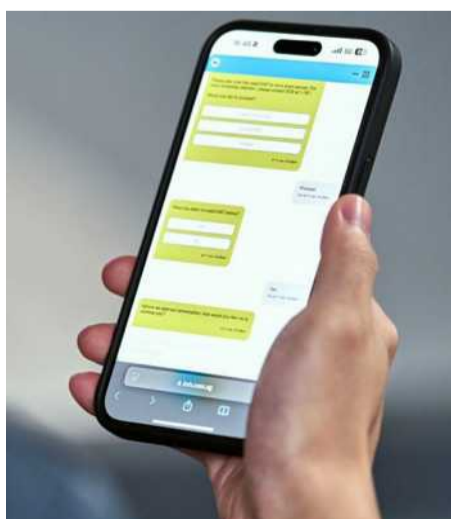
### Why do these findings matter?

The phenomenon of self-injurious behaviours among youths is more widespread than it seems. Early screening amongst school-aged youths and imparting adaptive emotional regulation or coping strategies could potentially contribute to reducing NSSI thoughts and behaviours. Educators and youth workers are well-positioned to offer support to youths who may be struggling in silent, particularly in inculcating resilience and intro-ducing healthy coping strategies.

More details of the study can be found in this publication: Chang S, Vaingankar JA, Tan B, Tan YWB, Samari E, Archana S, Chua YC, Lee YP, Tang C, Verma S, Subramaniam M. Prevalence and correlates of nonsuicidal self-injury among youths in Singapore: findings from the National Youth Mental Health Study. Child Adolesc Psychiatry Ment Health. 2025 Mar 21;19(1):27. doi: 10.1186/s13034-025-00885-6. PMID: 40119451; PMCID: PMC11929177.

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## Click. Connect. Chat: Understanding Youths' First Steps Towards Mental Health Support



**Mental health conditions often begin in young adulthood, yet many young people remain reluctant to seek help. Stigma, privacy concerns, cost, and discomfort with in-person interactions can delay or prevent help-seeking. To address these barriers, CHAT – the Centre of Excellence for Youth Mental Health – launched webCHAT in 2017: a free, text-based, one-on-one mental health assessment platform for youths aged 16 to 30.**

This qualitative study analysed 169 anonymised chat transcripts from webCHAT users to better understand their motivations, hesitations, and experiences with the platform. Four key themes emerged:

- Reasons for reaching out: Users sought information about mental health services, reassurance about their own experiences, or support for ongoing mental health difficulties.
- Barriers to follow-up support: Many expressed discomfort with face-to-face sessions, fear of being judged, concerns about confidentiality, cost, and past negative experiences with mental health professionals.
- Facilitators to seeking further help: A desire to feel better, coupled with self-awareness of their struggles, motivated some users to consider in-person support after their chat session.
- Session outcomes: Case managers provided emotional support, signposting to relevant services, and, where appropriate, coordinated referrals to follow-up care.

Findings suggest that webCHAT serves as a vital early intervention tool, especially for youths hesitant to engage with conventional services. Its anonymity, accessibility, and immediacy make it an appealing first step towards support.

This research would not have been possible without the invaluable guidance and support from the IMH Research Department. Their partnership has been key in deepening our understanding of digital mental health engagement among young people. As we continue to build on these insights, plans are underway to explore how webCHAT might evolve to offer e-therapy—extending timely, youth-friendly mental health support even further.

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