



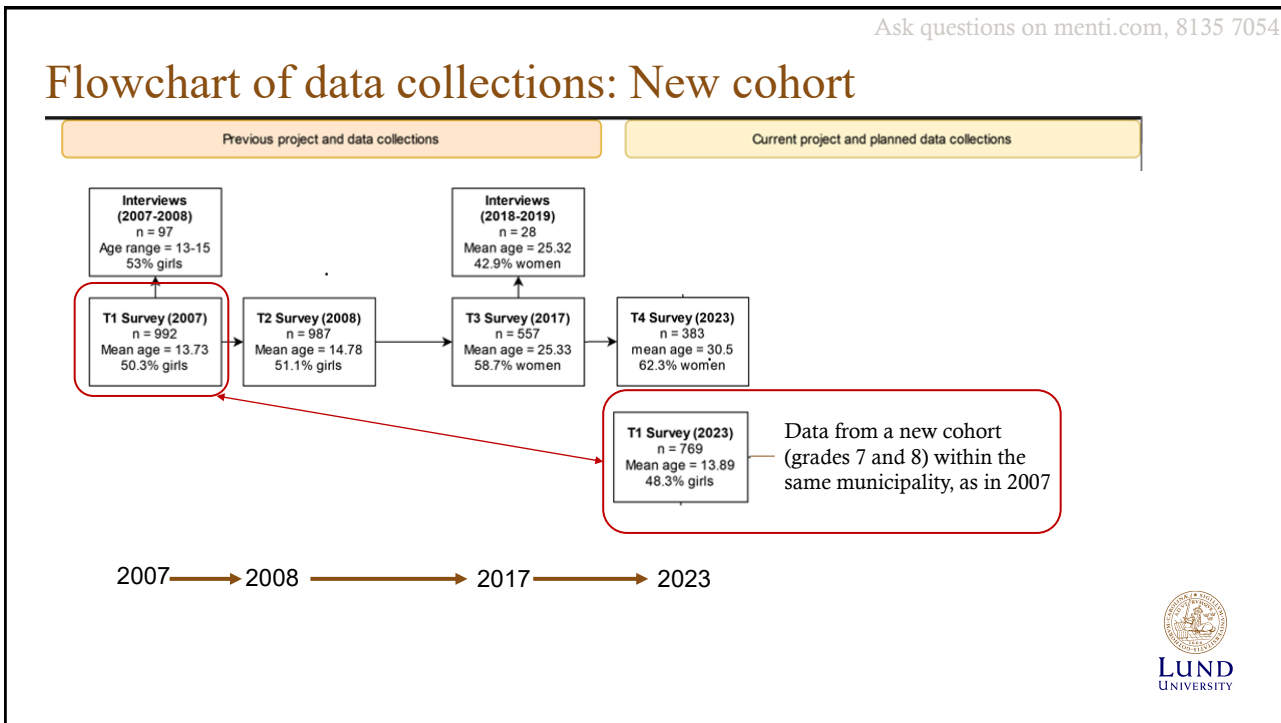
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CHANGES IN NON-SUICIDAL SELF-INJURY AMONG SWEDISH ADOLESCENTS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF NSSI PREVALENCE IN 2007 AND 2023

DAIVA DAUKANTAITĖ, JONAS BJÄREHED, BENJAMIN CLARÉUS, MARGIT WANGBY LUNDH, LARS-GUNNAR LUNDH
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY, LUND UNIVERSITY, SWEDEN



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Background

Although mass media report almost daily that stress, anxiety, depression, self-harm, and disordered eating are increasing among youth, these reports do not always have a sound scientific basis.

- **SELECTION BIAS – WHO RESPONDS TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE:**
 - ✓ Active parental consent can lead to a decrease in response rates.
 - ✓ It is challenging to assess selection bias because we often lack data on those who do not participate.
- **MEASUREMENT BIAS – DEFINING AND MEASURING NSSI:**
 - ✓ Do we use a single-item questionnaire, e.g. "Do you deliberately self-harm?" or
 - ✓ Do we employ a multi-item questionnaire that includes specific questions about various forms of self-injury, e.g. How frequently have you engaged in... **cutting your wrists, arms, or other body areas; head-punching or banging**, etc ?
- ✓ Zetterqvist et al. (2013): 17% adolescents reported NSSI on a single-item questionnaire vs. 35% adolescents reported NSSI on a multi-item questionnaire.



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SELECTION BIAS: 2007 vs 2023

- ✓ All students in grades 7-8 (mean age 2007: 13.7, 2023: 13.9) from all regular schools in the same Swedish municipality
- ✓ Passive consent from parents was requested.

Year	Response rate	N	Girls	Boys	Other
2007	92.5%	983	493 (50.2%)	439 (49.8%)	0
2023	78.3%	769	372 (48.3%)	385 (50.1%)	12 (1.6%)



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NSSI MEASUREMENT: 2007 vs. 2023

- A multi-item questionnaire - Deliberate Self-Harm Inventory-9 (Gratz, 2001; Lundh et al., 2011)
 - 9 items with a response format ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (≥ 6 times):

NSSI FORMS

Cutting wrists, arms, or other body areas

Burning with cigarette, lighter or match

Carving words, pictures, etc. into skin

Severe scratching, causing bleeding

Biting yourself, so that the skin is broken

Sticking sharp objects into the skin

Banging head, punching self, thereby causing a bruise

Preventing wounds from healing



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NSSI GROUPING: 2007 vs. 2023

- **No NSSI** = 0 reported episodes
- **Infrequent NSSI** = 1-4 reported episodes
- **Repetitive NSSI** = 5 or more reported episodes



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DIFFERENT CONTEXTS: 2007 vs 2023

- **NSSI as a phenomenon:**

- In 2007: NSSI was a relatively unknown phenomenon among adolescents and clinicians in general.
- Over the last decade: There has been a significant increase in general awareness about NSSI.

- **Data collection methods:**

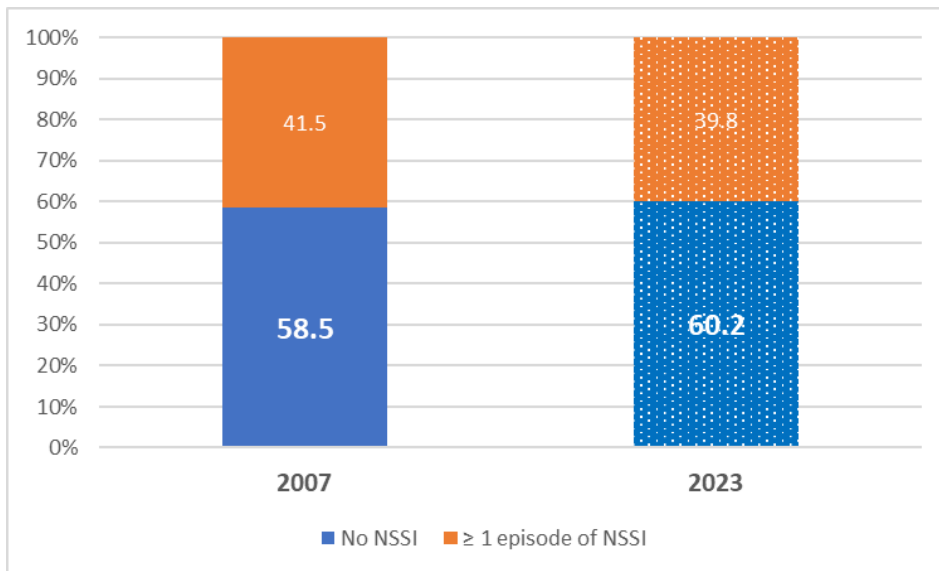
- 2007: primarily relied on paper and pen.
- 2023: have shifted to tablets.



RESULTS

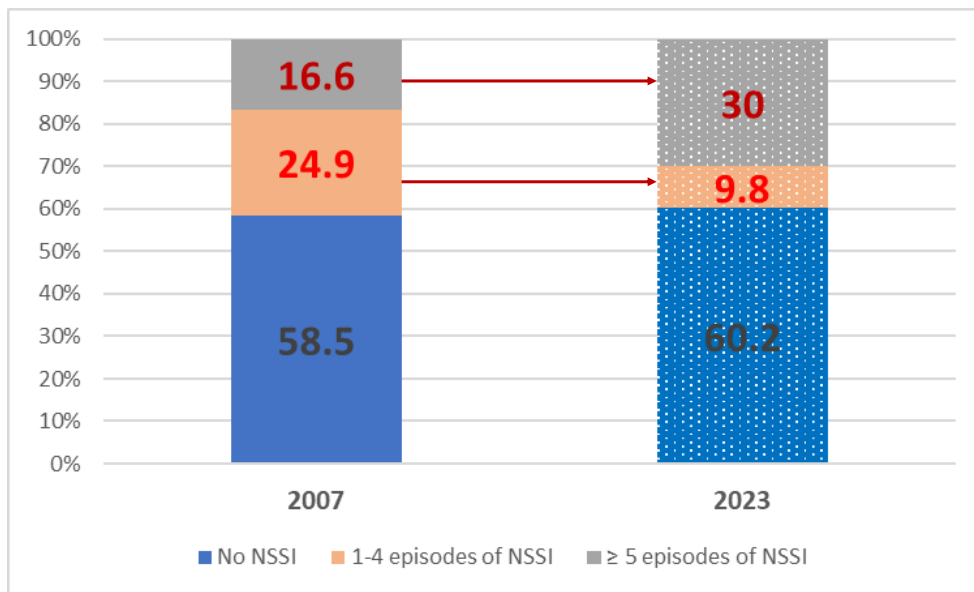


No NSSI vs ≥ 1 reported episodes of NSSI



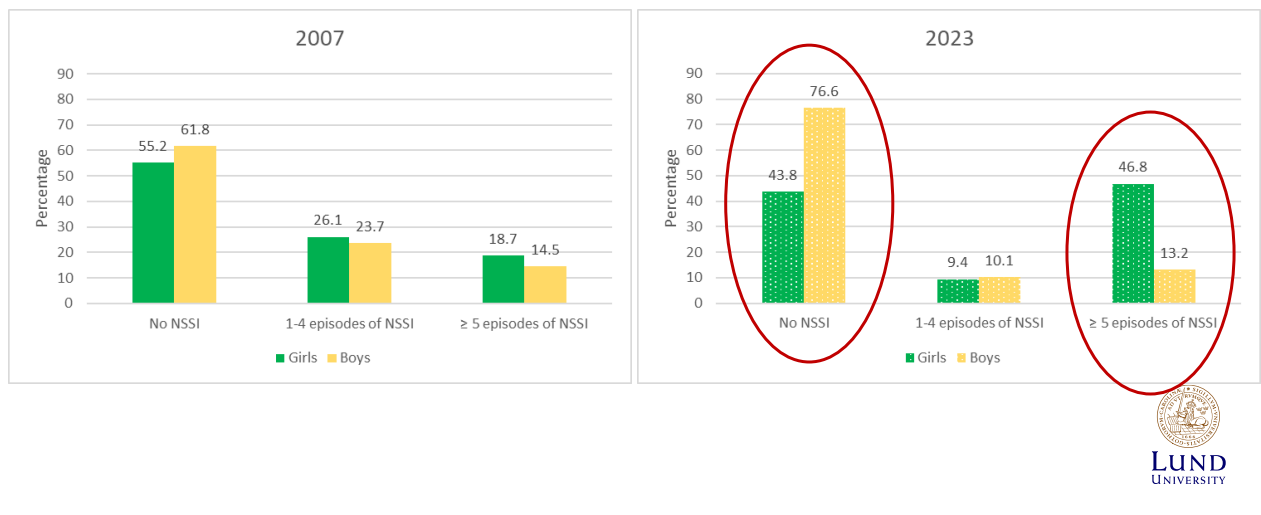
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No NSSI - 1-4 NSSI episodes - ≥ 5 NSSI episodes



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Gender comparison



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Regarding forms of NSSI

NSSI FORMS

Cutting wrists, arms, or body areas

Burning with cigarette, lighter or match

Carving words, pictures, etc. into skin

Severe scratching, causing bleeding

Biting yourself, so that the skin is broken

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Banging head, punching self, thereby causing a bruise

Preventing wounds from healing

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Reported ≥ 5 of a certain NSSI form 2007 vs. 2023

NSSI FORMS	GIRLS		BOYS	
	2007	2023	2007	2023
Cutting wrists, arms, or body areas	8.6%	19.8%	2.7%	1.6%
Burning with cigarette, lighter or match	8.0%	6.7%	2.9%	1.3%
Carving words, pictures, etc. into skin	2.8%	10.2%	1.9%	1.0%
Severe scratching , causing bleeding	5.2%	17.7%	2.9%	2.1%
Biting yourself , so that the skin is broken	5.9%	9.9%	2.7%	1.3%
Sticking sharp objects into the skin	2.6%	11.5%	1.2%	0.5%
Banging head , punching self, thereby causing a bruise	4.2%	16.7%	3.5%	4.9%
Preventing wounds from healing	6.5%	16.7%	3.9%	3.6%



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Summary

- **Beyond Dichotomous Measures** - relying solely on dichotomous measures of NSSI might not fully capture the nuanced and complex changes in adolescent NSSI behaviors over time.
- **Indications of alarming trend**
 - ✓ Gender-specific time trends
 - ✓ More girls report repetitive NSSI (i.e., ≥ 5 occasions) in 2023 compared to 2007, **representing a substantial increase of 142%**.
- **Caveats to Consider:**
 - ✓ Demographic changes
 - ✓ Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.



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A big THANK YOU to all the students
who took part in our surveys!

We sincerely appreciate the cooperation of
all the school personnel in helping us
collect the data!

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THANK YOU!

Contact information:

Daiva.Daukantaite@psy.lu.se

Jonas.Bjarehed@psy.lu.se

Benjamin.Clareus@psy.lu.se

Department of Psychology
Lund University
Sweden

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