

# Teen Suicides Fall After Same Sex Marriage is Legalised

By David Knuckey

**An American study has found legalising same-sex marriage leads to a drop in teenage suicide rates. ‘The impact is seen not only on those who identify as LGBTQ, but all teenagers alike’.**

The study investigated how same-sex marriage laws in 32 US states affected the suicide rate of 760,000 students between 1999 and 2015 – when the US Supreme Court struck down same-sex marriage bans.

This data was then compared to the 15 states that had not legalised it.

Researchers found teen suicide fell by 7% among all students and 14% among gay students.

“These are high school students, so they aren’t getting married anytime soon, for the most part. Still, permitting same-sex marriage reduces structural stigma associated with sexual orientation. There may be something about having equal rights – even if they have no immediate plans to take advantage of them – that makes students feel less stigmatized and more hopeful for the future.”

Suicide is currently the second leading cause of death for people aged 10-24 in the US and gay students are staggeringly overrepresented:

- 29% of LGBTQ students report attempting suicide in the last year
- 6% of heterosexual teens report attempting suicide in the last year.

“It is thought that the negative attitudes towards LGBTQ people are the driving force behind this, putting teenagers identifying as LGBTQ at an increased risk of violence compared to straight teenagers.”

The researchers are unclear whether the decline in suicide rates was a direct result of the policy itself, or the accompanying media campaigns, which may have helped teens see that they are not alone.

In 2004 same-sex marriage was legal in just one US state. By 2015, this had spread across all 50 states and on June 26, 2015, the US Supreme Court struck down individual state bans, bringing marriage equality.

Same-sex marriage became legal in Australia on December 9, 2017. ■

*\*As a report on an American study, the LGBTQ acronym, used in the source material, is used in this article.*

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