MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Comparing COVID-19-related mental health among LGBTQ+ and heterosexual individuals.

METHODS

On April 5, 2020 we launched a longitudinal study of COVID-19 and Wellbeing, with the primary intent to examine mental health and relationships. Recruitment was conducted via social media, listservs, social networks, and a research match website. Participants (N=3,358) were 18 or older and represented every US state and more than 50 countries in the world. We additionally have 2-week follow-up data from 1,448 participants in the first cohort of respondents. Measures included the Center for Epidemiologic Studied Depression Scale (CES-D), the Beck Hopelessness Scale, the Radimer Hunger Scale, the Suicidal Ideation Attributes Scale, and a modified version of the Impact of Events Scale. Data presented below are from the baseline survey, conducted the week of April 5, 2020 and all analyses are between anyone who identified as LGBTQ+ compared to those who identify as heterosexual.

JOBS & MONEY

LGBTQ+ individuals were significantly more likely to have lost their job (8% versus 5%), to have lost a job opportunity (19% versus 12%), and to have applied for unemployment (10% versus 7%). LGBTQ+ people were also significantly more likely to be worried about money, their jobs, their futures, andaffording healthcare if they were to get sick
FOOD INSECURITY

LGBTQ+ people were significantly more likely to worry about running out of food (23% versus 15%), to worry about being able to afford to feed their children the way they should (24% versus 11%), and to report that their nutrition is currently poor (10% versus 6%).

COVID-19 SYMPTOMS

LGBTQ+ individuals were significantly more likely than heterosexual individuals to report one or more symptoms of COVID at the time of the survey (25% versus 19%).

MENTAL HEALTH

In terms of depression, LGBTQ+ people were significantly more likely to have a probable diagnosis of depression (67% versus 47%), to report feeling anxious most or all of the time (47% versus 30%), and report higher levels of acute stress. Three quarters of LGBTQ+ people report feeling helpless compared to 64% of heterosexual individuals. LGBTQ+ people are also significantly more likely to be at risk of suicide (11% versus 4%).

SUBSTANCE USE

LGBTQ+ people were significantly more likely to report that their use of marijuana has increased since the start of the pandemic (11% versus 6%), but no more likely to report an increase in use of alcohol or other drugs. They were also significantly more likely to report using drugs and alcohol to cope (52% versus 46%).

SLEEP

LGBTQ+ people were significantly more likely to report difficulties with falling asleep, staying asleep, and disrupted sleep.