

Coronavirus ups anxiety, depression in the LGBTQ community

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(HealthDay)—In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, anxiety and depression are striking many in the LGBTQ+ community for the first time, researchers say.

"What I was hearing at the beginning of the pandemic was that people who were already anxious were more anxious than ever, and we didn't find that," said researcher Annesa Flentje, an assistant professor in the University of California, San Francisco School of Nursing.

"In looking at averages across the LGBTQ+ population, we found the greatest changes in anxiety were among people who weren't anxious prior to the pandemic," she said in a university news release.

Sexual and gender minorities may be at risk because of fear of stigmatization. Also, they may decline care because of previous bad experiences, the researchers noted.

For the study, Flentje and her team evaluated survey responses from nearly 2,300 people in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) community.

The participants took part in the PRIDE (Population Research in Identity and Disparities for Equality) study, which focused on U.S. adults who identify as LGBTQ+. They completed the group's 2019 annual questionnaire and a COVID-19 impact survey this spring.

"On an individual level, for some people there may not have been a very big change [in anxiety and depression], and for others, there was a big change," Flentje said.

Research by the Human Rights Campaign has "found that LGBTQ Americans are more likely than the [general population](#) to live in poverty and lack access to adequate medical care, paid [medical leave](#), and basic necessities during the pandemic," said researcher Tari Hanneman, director of the health and aging program at the campaign.

"Therefore, it is not surprising to see this increase in anxiety and depression among this population," Hanneman said in the release. "This study highlights the need for [health care professionals](#) to support, affirm and provide [critical care](#) for the LGBTQ community to manage and maintain their mental health, as well as their physical health, during this pandemic."

The study authors recommend that [health care providers](#) check in with LGBTQ+ patients about stress and screen for mood and anxiety disorders.

"As time goes on, the sustained social distancing, [economic impacts](#), and personal illness, grief and loss will likely have more and different effects on mental health," Flentje said.

"It will be important to find out what happens over

time and to identify who is most at risk, so we can be sure to roll out public [health](#) interventions to support the [mental health](#) of our communities in the best and most effective ways," she added.

The report was published recently in the *Journal of General Internal Medicine*.

More information: For more on coronavirus and mental health, head to the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

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