

The impact of COVID-19 on older lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or trans+ (LGBT+) people in the UK

A rapid response scoping study

HIGHLIGHT FINDINGS

Sue Westwood, Trish Hafford-Letchfield and
Michael Toze



1. Headline findings

Previous research has suggested that older LGBT+ people might be more at risk of isolation and have less access to support. These are the results of a survey of 375 people living in the UK, conducted during the COVID-19 lockdown, to find out how older LGBT+ people were affected by the lockdown.

Age	Sexuality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 34% were in the 60-64 age category • 30% were in the 65-69 age category • 20% were in the 70-74 age category • 10% were in the 75-79 age category • 2% were in the 80-84 age category • < 1% of participants were in the 85-89 age category • < 1% of participants were in the 90-94 age category 	<p><u>Women:</u> of the women,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 87% were lesbian, • 5% were bisexual; • Three identified as queer (<1%), • one as heterosexual (<1%), • one as asexual (<1%), • Three women were ambivalent about their sexual identity. (<1%), <p><u>Men:</u> of the men,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 94% were gay, • 4% were bisexual, • one identified as queer (<1%), • one as heterosexual (<1%), • three men were ambivalent about their sexual identity. (<1%), <p><u>Gender non-binary:</u> the nine gender non-binary participants described their sexualities in highly individualised ways.</p>
Living arrangements	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 51% lived alone • 49% lived with other people (spouse, partner, adult children, parents, other family members, housemates/lodgers. 	
Gender	Gender Identity
<p>45% of participants were women, 53% were men,</p> <p>2% did not identify with the gender binary</p> <p>One person identified as queer (for both gender and sexuality). (<1%)</p>	<p>93% of participants identified with the gender they were assigned at birth</p> <p>7% did not.</p>

Table 1 Overview of survey participant sample (n=375)

Emergency contact

- 90% of respondents had someone who they could call in an emergency. People who lived alone were more likely not to have anyone to contact in an emergency.

Impact of COVID on physical and mental health:

- 30% of respondents thought their physical health had worsened during lockdown, and 26% thought it had got better.
- 49% of respondents thought their mental health had worsened during lockdown and 9% thought it had got better.

Key concerns:

- Respondents raised many different concerns about the impact of COVID-19, but the most commonly raised concerns were fear of themselves or family getting ill, and concerns about social isolation and loneliness.
- The extent to which participants were affected by the COVID-19 lockdown was shaped by their social contexts. Some participants gave responses that suggested that identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or trans+ had had a big effect on their experiences of COVID-19, for example fears of discrimination or access to gender-affirming care for trans people. Many participants did not mention identifying as L/G/B/T+ in relation to COVID-19. A small number of participants thought that identifying as L/G/B/T+ did not make any difference.
- Older LGBT+ people in this survey had a wide range of social networks.
 - Some people had large, diverse networks that included many different types of people, such as friends, social clubs, partners and family, and a range of social activities. They missed seeing some of their contacts face-to-face, but had often found other ways of staying in touch, such as online or phone contact.
 - Others had networks that were closely focused on their partner/spouse, and were worried about what might happen if their partner got ill.
 - Some people had limited social networks, and were worried that relationships that had lost touch during lockdown might not recover.
 - Some respondents had been very isolated prior to the COVID-19 lockdown, and remained isolated.

© Sue Westwood, Trish Hafford-Letchfield, Michael Toze 2021

Contact:

Dr Sue Westwood

York Law School

University of York

LMB/258, Law and Management Building

Freboys Lane, York, YO10 5GD, UK.