The Most Important Health Concerns of Black LGBTQ Americans

A survey of LGBTQ African Americans finds HIV, depression, COVID-19 and body weight to be among their main health concerns.

February 3, 2021 By Trent Straube

A survey of LGBTQ African Americans offers an array of insights into this community, ranging from relationship status and education to discrimination and acceptance. A section on health concerns, for example, found that depression and anxiety, HIV/AIDS, a healthy body weight, COVID-19 and high blood pressure were cited as the main issues of concern along with the "physical and/or mental health effects resulting from racial discrimination." The results varied slightly by age and sexual and gender identity.

Released to coincide with Black History Month, observed each February, the Black LGBTQ Community Survey 2020–2021 was spearheaded by the Center for Black Equity (CBE) and Community Marketing & Insights (CMI), an LGBTQ market research firm. According to a press release on the findings, 1,815 LGBTQ African Americans took the survey between September 21 and October 30, 2020.

In a summary of findings regarding health concerns, the authors write:

> The survey asked a broad question about 18 potential health concerns. Health concerns are gender- and age-specific. What was striking about the results was the high level of mental health concern, especially among younger participants and transgender and nonbinary participants. Physical and/or mental health effects resulting from racial discrimination was also a consistent concern for all demographic groups. Preventing or treating HIV/AIDS was a major concern for all the men in the survey. Getting to a healthy body weight was a concern across many demographic groups, especially for women in the survey. For transgender participants, getting gender confirmation surgery and starting, maintaining, or access to gender confirmation hormones were important health concerns.

Regarding the impact of COVID-19, here are a few of the findings regarding all survey respondents:

- 60% said COVID-19 has negatively impacted their social health or made them more socially

isolated

- 44% said COVID-19 has negatively impacted their mental health
- 25% said a close friend or family member has died of COVID-19
- 22% said COVID-19 has negatively impacted their employment status
- 15% said COVID-19 has negatively impacted their physical health or well-being.

Community Marketing & Insights@LGBTQinsights

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The Center for Black Equity (CBE) and Community Marketing & Insights (CMI) have released the Black LGBTQ Community Survey results, to commemorate Black History Month, February 2021.

pic.twitter.com/B5n9l4yVEy

— Community Marketing & Insights (@LGBTQinsights) January 23, 2021

An overview of the key findings not related directly to health include:

- 92% of survey participants felt pride in being an LGBTQ person. But only 49% definitely agreed that they can be themselves at school and work, and 47% definitely agreed they can be themselves in their neighborhood.

- 70% of all participants said their city or town was supportive of its local LGBTQ community. Fewer (55%) indicated that their city or town was supportive of its local Black community.

- 78% of participants felt at least somewhat accepted by their parents as an LGBTQ person. However, only 42% felt entirely accepted by their parents.

- 75% of all Black LGBTQ study participants had been involved in some type of Black Lives Matter protest or engagement.

- 48% of participants had a bachelor's degree or greater. Importantly, 84% of participants pursued education after high school, either through graduating from college, currently in school, obtaining an associate's degree, starting college but not graduating or obtaining vocational training.

- 11% of all Black LGBTQ participants reported having no debt. Unpaid credit card debt was the most common form of debt.

- 32% of the study participants said they were doing better economically than last year, 41% about the same and 27% worse.

- 40% of the cisgender women reported being married or living with a partner, compared with 30% of cisgender men and 31% of transgender and nonbinary participants.

- 76% of Black LGBTQ participants indicated having experienced at least one form of discrimination in the past three years. Discrimination during consumer interactions and workplace discrimination were the most common. Black transgender and nonbinary participants reported the highest levels of racial, gender and gender identity discrimination across all related questions in the survey.

- 28% of all participants indicated being a parent.

- 88% of Black LGBTQ participants considered themselves spiritual, but only 35% considered themselves religious. Most (76%) grew up in a religious family.

You can read more about these findings and download the 77-page report on the CMI website here.

“The Center for Black Equity initiated the new research in order to better understand the hopes and needs of the Black LGBTQ community for the upcoming years,” said Earl D. Fowlkes Jr., president/CEO of the Center for Black Equity, in the press release. “This survey is an important first step, so data can help inform progress in developing solutions to health, economic, and social issues impacting communities of color.”

“Data is a powerful tool for advocacy, and this data will help drive our advocacy focused on Black LGBTQ people,” added Alphonso David, president of LGBTQ advocacy group the Human Rights Campaign in explaining how survey results can inform the work of nonprofits and corporations alike. “Anyone who pursues justice knows that it is not enough to say ‘Black Lives Matter.’ We must learn more about the Black lives that we often speak of in slogans and use that information to address long-standing inequities with well-informed creative solutions.”

In related news, HRC recently received a grant from pharma giant Gilead Sciences to launch a health initiative for Black, Latino and transgender communities. For more, see “Behind a New $3.2M Partnership to Transform Black and Brown HIV Efforts.” To learn more about HIV in the African-American, Latino and transgender communities, see POZ.com’s HIV Basics section on HIV in specific populations.

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