

# CONNECTICUT HEALTH I-TEAM

Veterans' Health Environmental Health Women's Health Disparities Fines & Sanctions

I-Team In-Depth News Ticker Data Mine Students' Work Podcast Health Q&A

## GENERATION HEALTH

# Study: Pandemic Took Toll On LGBTQ+ Mental Health

By Alison Cross June 21, 2021

RECOMMEND TWEET EMAIL PRINT MORE

Isolated from friends and the LGBTQ community, University of Connecticut senior Megan Graham at times found herself questioning her queer identity during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I felt a bit more insecure about my identity being away from my friends who are within the community," Graham said. "I didn't have the same outlet as I did to be myself without judgment. I questioned myself more and wished I had more people to talk to about it."

At UConn, Graham is the president of the Queer Collective, an LGBTQ discussion-based support organization that is run through the Rainbow Center, the heart of UConn's LGBTQ community. Graham said that some of her self-doubts stemmed from losing these LGBTQ affirming spaces as the pandemic shut down campus and moved classes online.

Like Graham, many young adults in the LGBTQ community lost their outlets and safe spaces during the pandemic. A new survey by the Trevor Project, a nonprofit that works to prevent LGBTQ suicide, found that in 2020, a majority of LGBTQ youth ages 13-24 suffered from poor mental health in homes that did not support their sexual orientation or gender identity.

According to the study, 69% of 18- to 24-year-olds described symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder; 40% reported symptoms of major depressive disorder; 87% said that COVID-19 negatively impacted their mental health; and 67% said their mental health was "poor" most of the time or always during COVID-19. Only 34% of respondents said their home was LGBTQ-affirming.

The survey reported that 9% of LGBTQ 18- to 24-year-olds attempted suicide and 34% seriously considered suicide. In contrast to the general population, 25.5% of 18- to 24-year-olds considered suicide, according to a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study conducted during the pandemic.

"The reason we have such disproportionate rates of depression, anxiety, and other mental illnesses is because people have to carry the weight of an identity that either isn't accepted by others around them, or they have to hide who they are, leading them to live their lives never fully satisfied with who they present themselves as," Graham said.

The data also revealed vast racial disparities. Native/Indigenous LGBTQ youth ages 13-24 reported the highest rates of suicidal thoughts and attempts at 52% and 31%, respectively, followed by Black respondents with rates of 47% and 21% and Latinx respondents at 43% and 18%. White and Asian/Pacific Islanders experienced the lowest rates. 39% of white respondents considered suicide and 12% attempted suicide. Asian/Pacific Islanders had rates of 38% and 12%. Respondents of more than one race/ethnicity considered suicide at a rate of 48% and attempted suicide at a rate of 21%.

Graham said that she believes supportive and affirming LGBTQ spaces, such as clubs, discussion groups and organizations, alleviate stress, depression and anxiety.

"When people within the community are welcomed into spaces like this, they are allowed to relieve this weight, find friends who are like them and give them access to resources and information they may not have had before. Overall, they get to feel less alone and feel validated in who they are," Graham said.

The data supports Graham's perspective. According to the Trevor Project, suicide attempts were reduced by 6% when schools were LGBTQ affirming and reduced by 5% when the home was LGBTQ affirming.

Now, Graham works to rebuild membership at the Queer Collective after the pandemic caused attendance to plummet. Graham notes that while the pandemic allowed some to express their sexuality and gender more freely out of public view, others felt trapped in homes that did not respect their identity.

"I can't speak for the entire community—every person experienced this pandemic differently," Graham said. "I'm sure some felt more empowered while others felt extinguished."

Alison Cross, a senior at the University of Connecticut, writes about the most pressing health, wellness and safety issues affecting people ages 18-40. To reach her, email alison.cross@uconn.edu.

## SUPPORT OUR WORK

The Conn. Health I-Team is dedicated to producing original, responsible, in-depth journalism on key issues of health and safety that affect our readers, and helping them make informed health care choices. As a nonprofit, we rely on donations to help fund our work.

Donate Now

Subscribe to our monthly newsletter! Get in-depth health news and stories from the Connecticut Health Investigative Team in your inbox. Email Sign Up! Constant Contact

## RELATED STORIES



### UPDATED: Coronavirus In Connecticut

Residents testing positive for COVID-19 totaled 722,377 up 423 since yesterday; the positivity rate is 2.55%, the state Department of Public Health (DPH) reported. The state reported 14,986,436 COVID tests completed, up 16,591.

## MORE FROM C-HIT

ctwatchdog.com

Seniors Could Face Challenges Obtaining At-Home COVID Tests

Disparities Surging Behavioral Health Care Needs For Children Put Strain On School Social Workers

Environmental Health Wet Summer Raises Risk Of Mosquito-Borne Illnesses In October

Fines & Sanctions UPDATED: Coronavirus In Connecticut

Generation Health Poll: 21% Of Generation Z Self-Identify As LGBTQ+

Leave a Reply Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked \* Comment Name \* Email \* Website Post Comment

CONNECTICUT HEALTH I-TEAM The Connecticut Health I-Team Sponsors Contributors Contact

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT Women Of Color Overrepresented In Domestic Violence Arrests, Data Show Black and Hispanic women make up about 25% of the state's female population but represent about 53% of domestic violence arrest cases for adult females in 2020, Judicial Branch data show. Deep Roots Drive Newhallville Stakeholders To Advance Neighborhood Equality At the corner of Shelton Avenue and Hazel Street in Newhallville sits a green space, the Learning Corridor—a hub for educating young children and connecting families to healthy living.

FOLLOW US Like Us on Facebook Follow Us on Twitter Follow Us on Instagram Subscribe via RSS