Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the LGBTQ+ community in San Mateo County: a community-centered needs assessment

Ada Zhang¹ and Francisco Sapp²

**Background**

- The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted many underserved and vulnerable communities.
- To our knowledge, there hasn’t been a specific, targeted effort to look at how COVID-19 has affected LGBTQ+ community members in San Mateo County.
- Knowing this information will help guide San Mateo County to better support the LGBTQ+ community during the pandemic.

**Community partner**

The Pride Center is the first and only LGBTQ+ center in San Mateo County. The Pride Center offers a broad range of programs for LGBTQ+ community members of all ages, including direct mental health services, social events, and educational programming.

**Project description**

- Online survey assessed the impacts of COVID-19 on financial stability, housing stability, safety and access to supportive resources, mental and emotional health, and physical health.
- The survey was distributed by the Pride Center and community partners, and the survey was also made available in alternative phone and paper formats.

**Survey results**

- 532 participants
- 100+ narrative comments

| Gender-diverse participants | 21% |
| Non-heterosexual participants | 78% |

Gender-diverse participants were **2.6x more likely** than cis participants to have experienced violence or harassment.

Participants with disabilities were **7.3x more likely** than participants without disabilities to have moved into unsafe/unstable housing.

Non-white participants were **2.5x more likely** than white participants to have had trouble getting stipend checks/unemployment benefits.

**Percentages of negative impacts reported by all participants**

- **36%** Financial stability
- **18%** Housing stability
- **85%** Emotional or mental health
- **65%** Physical health
- **17%** Safety or access to supportive resources

**Lessons learned**

- COVID-19 has significantly impacted the LGBTQ+ community in San Mateo County and this survey helps to identify the magnitude of these impacts.
- Many people left narrative comments, meaning that the community really wanted to share their stories and have their voices heard!
- Important intersections of identity include but are not limited to race, income, and ability status.

**Reflections and next steps**

- There is clearly an urgent need to address the immense impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the LGBTQ+ community in San Mateo County.
- The disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on community members with multiple minority identities underscores the importance of resources, programming, and support specifically for community members who don’t benefit from specific axes of privilege.
- The Pride Center will target programs and services towards the identified areas of need.

**Acknowledgements**

First and foremost, we want to acknowledge the time, love, and energy our community members put into responding to the survey. Thank you to our partners: Pride Initiative, LGBTQ Collaboration (Pride Initiative, LGBTQ Commission, SMC Pride Center, community members), Office of Diversity and Equity, BHRS. Thank you to Frankie for being an incredible, kind, and patient mentor. Project support was provided by the Schweitzer Fellowship.

---

¹Stanford Medical School, adazhang@stanford.edu
²San Mateo County Pride Center, francisco.sapp@sanmateopride.org
• Background/Need: The identified health need and some of the pertinent epidemiology/policy history
• Community Partner: Information about your community partner (mission, program areas, how your project fits with these)
• Project Description: Description of your project, objectives, major activities and analytic approaches, if appropriate
• Outcomes: Main results and outcomes, milestones, impact(s) on the community partner/community
• Lessons Learned: A reflection on your role as a health professional in engaging with your community partner and implementing your project and project challenges
• Recommendations: Next steps for sustaining and disseminating the project, ideas for future projects to build on results and additional needs that were identified
• Acknowledgements: Recognize project mentors and funders (e.g., Medical Scholars, Funding sources)