



# Caribbean LGBTQ+ COVID-19 Survey

NASTASSIA RAMBARRAN

## Research Team

- Clemon George, PhD (Principal investigator)
- Nastassia Rambarran, MScPH; Joel Simpson, LL.M; Michael Rapley, BSc
- Collaborators: Kerlin Charles (Grenada), Kenita Placide (St. Lucia)

# Background

- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer plus (LGBTQ+) persons are marginalised persons; may be disproportionately impacted due to several factors tied to their vulnerability - pre-existing health disparities such as higher rates of smoking and its sequelae; higher rates of HIV and cancer, and discrimination and stigma in accessing healthcare
- Currently experience disproportionate levels of domestic and family violence, and scapegoating
- Pandemic cut off access to community centres and events that help sustain resilience
- Work in jobs affected – tourism and retail; and in frontline jobs – supermarket and healthcare

# Methodology

- Four (4) Caribbean countries – Barbados, Grenada, Guyana and St Lucia
- University of the West Indies (UWI) Cave Hill Campus
- Four LGBTQ+ organizations - Equals Inc (Barbados), GrenChap (Grenada), SASOD (Guyana) and United and Strong (St Lucia)
- Funding for parts of the research was provided by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Being LGBTI In the Caribbean (BLiC)
- Results to guide immediate programmatic activities in-country and baseline assessment as the pandemic unfolds.

## Methodology (cont'd)

- SurveyMonkey online; self administered.
- Promoted in existing social networks and also boosted by sponsoring on IG and Face Book
- Started May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020; end May 31
- First 350 participants given USD \$10 (local equivalent) as token for time
- Inclusion - self-identify as LGBTQ or other sexual and gender minorities; 18 years and older; resident in the participating site for 3 months or more; and able to complete the survey in English.

# Results

- 643 Persons (134 Barbados, 126 Grenada, 278 Guyana, 105 St Lucia)
- Average 28.6 years
- 39.9% assigned female at birth and 59.6% assigned male
- Males (51.2%), followed by Females (33.3%), Non-binary/gender fluid (4.5%), Trans woman (4%), Trans man (2.4%) and Other (1.2%).
- 34.1% Gay, 31.7% Bisexual, 17.2% Lesbian
- 65.8% Black/African, 15.9% Multiracial/Multiethnic, 11.6% Indian descent

# Socio economic disparities

- At the time of the survey, 42.4% lost their job or had their business closed because of COVID-19; 25.6% reduced hours or being temporarily laid off, leaving 33.1% still employed.
- Only 12% of persons had more than 2 months' worth of savings; 36.1% had 1 to 2 months of savings
- 23% non-healthcare essential workers
- 46.2% caring for children or other dependents

|   | Barbados<br>(%) | Grenada<br>(%) | Guyana<br>(%) | St. Lucia<br>(%) |
|---|-----------------|----------------|---------------|------------------|
| Working full-time pre-COVID-19                      | 61.5            | 52.2           | 62.1          | 61.1             |
| Unemployed pre-COVID-19                             | 6.0             | 3.5            | 8.1           | 14.8             |
| Lost job or had business closed because of COVID-19 | 35.9            | 43             | 45            | 42.7             |
| Currently employed                                  | 38.9            | 33.9           | 28.5          | 31.1             |

# General health and support services

- The state of general health: fairly good (43.1%) and very good (22.4%); neither good nor poor (21.3%), fairly poor (6.6%), very poor (3.9%).
- Most common pre-COVID services accessed – Counselling, depression/anxiety/schizophrenia, HIV treatment and care
- Support needed now: food/water (19.7%), help to cope/emotional or stress support (16.3%), someone to talk to (14.9%), a place to live or assistance with rent (11.3%), transportation (9.1%), medication/access to medication (8.3%)
- **How LGBTQ+ organizations could help:** cash for unspecified purposes, help with employment, food and sanitation supplies, assistance with rent, transportation, and counselling and support services.



# Mental health

- Patient Health Questionnaire-4 (PHQ-4) which is an ultra-brief screener for anxiety and depression
- Median anxiety score 2 (n = 608, mean = 2.7, SD = 2), with 45.1% screening positive for anxiety
- Median depression score 2 (n = 612, mean = 2.6, SD = 1.9), with 43% screening positive for depression
- Total score averaged 5 (n = 612, mean = 5.3, SD = 3.6) which correlates to mild levels of psychological distress

|                         | Barbados<br>(mean) | Grenada<br>(mean) | Guyana<br>(mean) | St. Lucia<br>(mean) |
|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Median anxiety score    | 2 (2.5)            | 2 (2.3)           | 3 (3.1)          | 2 (2.6)             |
| Median depression score | 2 (2.1)            | 2 (2.4)           | 2 (3)            | 2 (2.4)             |
| Median overall score    | 4 (4.7)            | 4 (4.8)           | 6 (6.1)          | 5 (5.1)             |

# COVID-related practices and beliefs

- Almost everyone wore facemask (98.2%), washed hands more frequently (98%), avoided crowded areas (95.6%)
- The most frequently reported source of COVID-19 information was social media (72%), followed by official government websites (58.1%) and newspapers/magazines (43.2%)
- Believes that it's likely the new coronavirus is a bio-weapon developed by a government or terrorist organization: 60.1%

|                              | Barbados<br>N (%) | Grenada<br>N (%) | Guyana<br>N (%) | St. Lucia<br>N (%) |
|------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Gargled with salt water      | 28 (22.4)         | 25 (20.8)        | 90 (36.1)       | 30 (30.3)          |
| Bathed in the sea            | 21 (16.9)         | 43 (44.9)        | 22 (8.9)        | 38 (38.4)          |
| Drank herbal/ginger/bush tea | 58 (46.4)         | 89 (74.8)        | 195 (77.4)      | 79 (79.8)          |

## Sexual activity and substance use

- Most unable to meet people who did not live with them for sex (74.9%)
- In the 3 months prior to lockdown highest percentage (30.9%) used alcohol occasionally (less than once a month); most (66.7%) never used marijuana (or stopped more than 3 months ago); most (86.4%) never used (or stopped more than 3 months ago) other drugs
- During the last 2 weeks of the lockdown/curfew period, most users of all substances reported they did not use the substance more than usual

# Reports of violence

- Specific violence situations during the past 2 weeks

|  | Yes<br>N (%) | No<br>N (%) | Total<br>N (%) |
|--|--------------|-------------|----------------|
| Touched, kissed or hugged in a sexual way that was unwanted                                  | 26 (6.2)     | 394 (93.8)  | 420 (100)      |
| Forced into something sexual that found degrading or humiliating                             | 12 (2.9)     | 404 (97.1)  | 416 (100)      |
| Forced into sexual intercourse (oral, anal, vaginal)   | 11 (2.7)     | 403 (97.3)  | 414 (100)      |
| Shouted, belittled, made feel bad, threatened to hurt you or loved ones                      | 89 (21.5)    | 325 (78.5)  | 414 (100)      |
| Slapped, threw something, pushed or shoved, pulled hair, hit with a fist, kick, drag or beat | 29 (7.1)     | 382 (92.9)  | 411 (100)      |

- For the most commonly reported violence - verbal – the perpetrator was mother/sister (29.2%), followed by other family members (23.6%) and husband/boyfriend (16.9%); perpetrators in forced sexual activity husband/boyfriend (45.4%)
- Most did not call anyone (50.5%); others called family or friends not living in the household (15.2%), their mother (12.9%), or the police (9.4%).

# RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide the support services most needed – food/water, mental health support and counselling; increase employment opportunities
- Actively fight COVID-19 misinformation
- Optimally utilize social media to disseminate information
- Increase awareness of recourse options for persons in violent situations
- Repeat this survey/aspects of, later in 2020.

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