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Hawai'i Department of Health survey shows pandemic is affecting mental health of Hawai'i residents

Young adults and households that earn less are most vulnerable

HONOLULU - The virus that causes COVID-19 is affecting the mental health of all Hawai'i residents, but especially for young adults and those whose household income is less than \$50,000.

A recent survey commissioned by the Hawai'i Department of Health showed a solid majority, or 82% of those who participated in the survey, have experienced a mental health condition at some point over the last six months. Slightly more than half, or 52%, of those say their symptoms began during the pandemic.

Of those who experienced a mental health condition before the pandemic, 35% felt that their symptoms became worse during the pandemic. In this same group, 65% found help in talking to a friend or family member.

The survey, which was conducted by Anthology Research from Dec. 30, 2020 to Jan. 11, 2021, included 445 adult Hawai'i full-time residents statewide. Anthology has been tracking resident attitudes and behaviors relating to the pandemic on a regular basis since April 2020.

"We're all being affected by the pandemic," said Amy Curtis, chief administrator of the Hawai'i Department of Health's Adult Mental Health Division. "This is a real issue that calls attention to the need to be vigilant about meeting the needs of our neighbors, friends, co-workers and others in the community. We encourage everyone to continue to confide in family or friends, seek support from a therapist or to call the Department of Health's Hawai'i CARES hotline."

The survey asked respondents about specific mental health experiences such as anxiety, loneliness, depression, and panic attacks. The results showed 68%

experienced feelings of anxiety over the past six months, 61% have felt loneliness, 57% have felt depressed at some point, and 33% have suffered a panic attack.

Total household income is another factor affecting mental health. Among those who live in households that earn less than \$50,000, 91% have experienced one or more of the mental health issues over the last six months. By contrast, 75% of those who live in households with combined incomes exceeding \$100,000 are affected by mental health issues.

Age also makes a difference when it comes to mental health. Among young adults under the age of 35, 93% have experienced a mental health condition in the last six months, while 65% of seniors had the same experience.

Other key findings on mental health:

- Those who live with a child under 18 in their home were also more likely to have experienced mental health issues over the last six months than were those who do not live with a minor.
- Those who view the pandemic more in terms of its financial impact were more likely to have experienced overall mental stress and depression over the last six months.
- The pandemic is having a greater impact on men in terms of mental health. Of those surveyed, 58% of men who have experienced a mental health condition indicated it is a new issue for them that they had not experienced it prior to the pandemic. Over the course of the last six months, however, women were more likely to have experienced anxiety and panic attacks.
- The survey also showed Japanese residents are hit particularly hard, with 68% who are currently experiencing mental health issues indicating they did not experience this prior to the pandemic.

Consistent with these findings, Hawai'i CARES (formerly the Crisis Line of Hawai'i) received its highest annual volume of calls in 2020 compared to the prior seven years of operation. September 2020 experienced the highest call volume with 16,158 calls in a month. Visit the BHHSURG Dashboard for more about call volume:

<https://health.hawaii.gov/bhhsurg/all-dashboards/>.

If you or a loved one needs support, call Hawai'i CARES at (800) 753-6879 or text 'ALOHA' to 741741. Caring, qualified professionals are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. To learn more about Hawai'i CARES, visit <https://hicares.hawaii.gov>. For more about the survey, view the [survey report](#).

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