New UK Poll Reveals 53% of Respondents Feel There Has Not Been an Adequate Amount of Focus on the Mental Health Impact of Coronavirus Pandemic, with Disabled People Impacted the Most

Monday 30 March, 2020

LONDON (Monday, MARCH 30, 2020): As we are currently in one of the largest public health crisis in UK history, Rehab 4 Addiction ran a poll to discover how the coronavirus pandemic is affecting people's mental health and lives generally. The poll was conducted between 23rd-28th March 2020 on Facebook. 3,205 responses were collected from all UK regions.

The poll sought to discover how coronavirus is affecting people's mental health in relation to their general mental wellbeing as well as their concerns about their loved ones, finances and access to essentials such as food and medicine.

The survey also sought respondents' level of trust in official Government advice during the pandemic.

PDFs containing the full survey questions, overall results and crosstab analysis can be found here: http://rehab4addiction.co.uk/COVID_SURVEY.rar

Key findings:

General mental health implications

- 33% of respondents said coronavirus had "extremely" negatively affected their mental health. 30.5% of respondents said the virus had "moderately" affected their mental health and just 14.1% of respondents felt the virus had not affected their mental health.
- 52% of respondents said the ongoing media coverage of the pandemic was making them feel "very anxious".
- The mental health of those with children under the age of 18 has been disproportionately negatively affected by the pandemic, with 41.4% saying their mental health had been "extremely affected" by the pandemic compared to a survey average of 32.6%.
- The disabled have also been disproportionately impacted from a mental health standpoint. 56.5% of this group said their mental health had been "extremely affected" by the pandemic compared to a survey average of 32.6%.
- Those under the age of 44 said their mental health had been most negatively affected by the pandemic compared to those aged over 44. For instance, 53.4% of 18-24-year olds, 48.5% of 25-34-year olds and 46.1% of 35-44-year olds said their mental health had been "extremely" affected by the pandemic, compared to just 16.2% of 65-74-year olds and 15.3% of those aged 75 and older. This is despite the fact coronavirus is more deadly for those in the senior age categories.
- In terms of worker categories, the self-employed and the retired reported being least affected by the pandemic from a mental health standpoint. Just 19% of self-employed people and 16.9% of those retired said the pandemic had "extremely" affected their mental health, compared to 56.5% of disabled people, and 45.9% of those unemployed. It's not surprising that vulnerable people such as those with disabilities are reporting the pandemic is having a disproportionately negative impact on their mental health.
- Those suffering from an underlying health condition were only slightly more likely to have had their mental health negatively impacted by the pandemic compared to those with no such health issues. 34.6% of those suffering from an underlying health condition said their mental health had been "extremely" impacted by the pandemic, compared to 30% of those who do not suffer from an underlying health condition.

Social Media Usage

- Almost one in two of respondents (49%) said their use of social media had significantly increased during the pandemic.

Use of alcohol & recreational drugs

- Only 13% of respondents said their use of alcohol or recreational drugs had increased because of

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the pandemic, with 48% of people saying their use of drugs and alcohol had “remained the same” as it did before the pandemic began. This is a positive insight, as it means many people are not yet turning to substances to cope with the crisis.
- The unemployed (18.6%) and disabled (19%) were most likely to “significantly increase” the amount of alcohol or recreational drugs they consume because of the crisis, compared to a survey average of 12.8%.

Trust in Government advice in relation to the pandemic

- 44.4% of respondents said they found official Government advice to be “very effective”, whilst 47.7% of people said they have found Government advice to be “moderately effective”. Just 8% of respondents said they found official Government advice to be “not effective at all”.
- 58% of respondents said they placed a “fair amount” of trust in official Government advice about the pandemic, compared to 27% and 15% who said they place “a great deal” and “none at all” respectively.
- However, 53% of respondents said they did not think there had been an adequate amount of focus on the mental health impact of the crisis. Only 14% of people said they believe there had been enough focus on mental health during the pandemic.
- Respondents aged over 55 were most likely to say official Government advice had been “very” effective. 49.5% of those aged 55 to 64 said Government advice had been “very” effective, compared to just 25.2% of those aged 18 to 24. The survey reveals the older one gets, the more faith one is likely to put into official Government advice. For instance, 35.7% of those aged 75 or over said they placed a “great deal” of faith in Government advice relating to the pandemic, compared to just 18.3% of those aged 18 to 24.

Financial implications

- 42% of respondents said they were severely worried about the financial impact of coronavirus on their individual or family finances. Just 15% of respondents said they did “not worry” about the impact the pandemic would have on their finances.
- The self-employed are the most worried about the financial impact of the pandemic on their finances. 54.4% of self-employed people said they were “severely worried” about their finances against a survey average of 41.5%.
- 42.5% of those earning a household income of less than £40,000 a year said they are “severely worried” about the financial impact of the pandemic, compared to just 31.4% of those earning between £40,001-£89,999 and 34.3% of those earning over £90,000 in annual income.

Concerns for loved ones

- 94.4% of respondents said they were worried that a loved one would contract coronavirus, compared to 84% who said they were worried about themselves contracting the disease.
- Those in care of a child are more likely to report experiencing mental health concerns because of the pandemic. 41.4% of respondents who were also parents said the pandemic is “extremely” affecting their mental health compared to 30.2% of those who are not parents.
- Parents are also less likely to trust the Government when it comes to the handling of the pandemic, and also more likely to worry about the financial implications of the pandemic. Parents are also more worried about the lack of access to essential medications during the pandemic compared to non-parents.

Concerns about the lack of medications

- 48%, or almost one in two, said they were “extremely” anxious about a potential lack of essential medications for themselves or a loved one during the pandemic.
- 61.9% of disabled people were “extremely anxious” about a potential lack of medication because of the pandemic, compared to a survey average of 47.7%. This, along with other questions, signals the disabled may be disproportionally impacted by the pandemic from a mental health viewpoint.

Other insights

- 69.7% of respondents said they have “stocked up on food” because of the pandemic, whilst 40.7% and 40.2% said they have stocked up on cleaning supplies and medications respectively.
- 78.7% said they have “stayed at home instead of going to work, school or other activities” and 74.3% said they had “decided not to travel or changed travel plans” as a result of the pandemic.

Oliver Clark, admissions manager at Rehab 4 Addiction, said “The survey reveals the majority of people

feel their mental health has either been extremely or moderately affected by the coronavirus pandemic.”

“What I find most alarming is the impact this is having on the mental health of vulnerable groups such as the unemployed and the disabled.”

“Although the majority of respondents feel the Government's advice in relation to the pandemic is either "very" or "moderately" effective, only 14% of respondents said they felt ample focus was being put on mental health. There clearly is a need for more focus to be put on the mental health aspects of the pandemic given 33% of respondents said the pandemic had extremely affected their mental health".

Respondents revealed their use of alcohol and recreational drugs had not increased due to the pandemic, but the fear is that if more focus is not placed on the mental health aspect of the pandemic, more and more people could turn to drugs and alcohol as a way of self-medicating these mental health problems".

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