



Inequalities in mental health, self-rated health,
and social support among LGBTQ+ young people
in the UK during the COVID-19 pandemic:
Analyses from the Millennium Cohort Study

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Background

- The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified existent social inequalities
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer (LGBQ+) young people may have been particularly harmed by the consequences of lockdown, closure of educational institutions, and social distancing measures as they are likely to:
 - have been confined in households that may not be supportive of their sexual orientation,
 - have missed on opportunities to connect to their community,
 - have difficulties accessing safe spaces.

Support for this from international studies, but findings from small convenience samples, qualitative studies, or not focused on youth.

Aims and Data

- To examine inequalities in the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the **health and mental health** among young adults who self-identify with a sexual orientation other than heterosexual/straight, compared to their heterosexual/straight peers.
- We also assess the role of social support and economic adversity and other sociodemographic factors in explaining possible unequal outcomes among sexual minority youth.
- We analysed data from singletons who participated in waves 6, 7, and the wave 1 COVID-19 survey (n=2211) of the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS).
- Models adjust for age, gender, ethnicity, region of residence, socioeconomic status of household, and social support*.

Findings

- One in four young adults self-identified with a sexual orientation or attraction other than completely heterosexual/straight.
- Findings show that LGBTQ+ young adults (compared to straight peers) had:
 - significantly lower levels of social support ($\beta=-0.38$, S.E: 0.08),
 - poorer self-rated health (O.R.: 3.91, 95% C.I.: 2.41-6.34),
 - higher levels of psychological distress ($\beta=2.26$, S.E: 0.34), anxiety ($\beta=0.40$, S.E: 0.15), and loneliness ($\beta=0.66$, S.E: 0.18).
- Adjusting for social support attenuated but did not explain inequalities in health and mental health.

Implications

- Inequalities in health and mental health across sexual orientation are a result of increased levels of social stress, including stigma, discrimination, and prejudice (Brooks, 1981).
- Implications for policy and practice include a stronger provision of safe spaces in the community and in institutions, and policies that address marginalisation and harassment.