

# Intersecting Pandemics:

## Impacts of COVID-19 on HIV Prevention, Sexual and Reproductive Health, Mental Health and Substance Use among Racialized Sexual and Gender Minority People in the Greater Toronto Area (*#SafeHandsSafeHearts*)



SAFE  
HANDS  
SAFE  
HEARTS

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# Background

- Owing to ongoing marginalization, racialized sexual and gender minority populations experience adverse social determinants of health and health disparities that increase vulnerability amid the COVID-19 pandemic
- Nevertheless, pandemic response preparedness and public health responses typically operate from Eurocentric, hetero- and cis-normative perspectives that fail to account for marginalization
- We assessed impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on HIV prevention/sexual and reproductive health, mental health, and substance use among racialized LGBTQ+ individuals in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA)





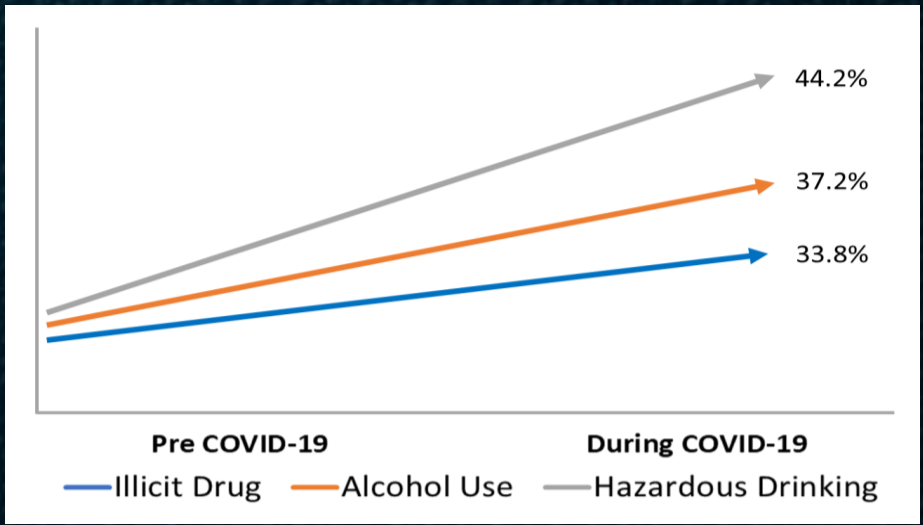
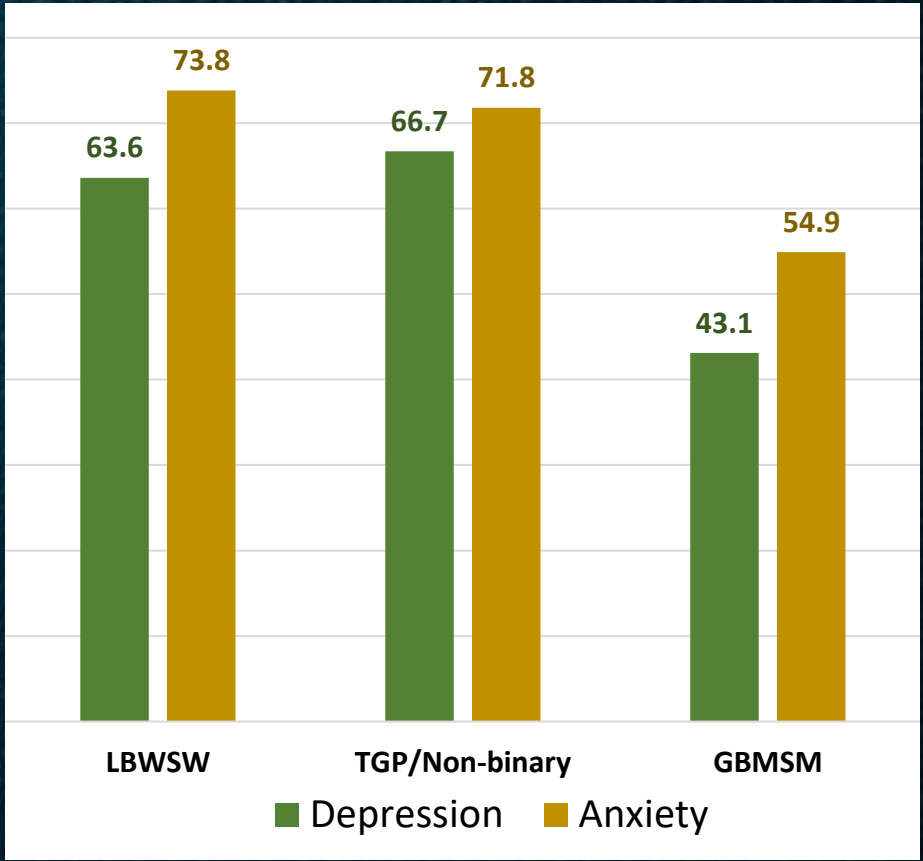
# Methods

- March – November 2021
- Sexual and gender minority, predominantly racialized participants
- ≥18 years
- Recruited online through CBO and health-centre listservs and LGBTQ+ media
- 60-minute, mobile-optimized online survey assessed:
  - COVID-19 pandemic impacts on HIV prevention and sexual and reproductive healthcare access
  - Mental health (depression [PHQ-2], anxiety [GAD-2])
  - Alcohol (AUDIT) and substance use

Participant Demographics (n = 202)	
Age	$\bar{x}$ : 27 [IQR: 23-32]
Ethnicity	%
African/Caribbean/Black	29.5
South/East/S.E. Asian	27.5
Latinx/Hispanic	9.0
White	20.3
Other	13.7
Gender	
Cisgender lesbian, bisexual, WSW (LBWSW)	54.3
Cisgender gay, bisexual, MSM (GBMSM)	25.9
Transgender/Gender non-binary (TGP/GNB)	19.8

Decreased access to...	%
HIV testing	30.3
STI testing	38.8
PrEP	20.0
Condoms	25.7
Other reproductive health (RH) products (TGP/GBMSM)	30.3*
Other RH products (LBWSW) (*p < .05)	40.7*
Gender-affirming Hormones (TGP)	15.4

# Results





# Conclusions

- Tailored community-based outreach and interventions are needed for gender minority, sexual minority, and racialized people amid the COVID-19 pandemic
  - Address high rates of psychological distress
  - Respond to exacerbation of alcohol and substance use issues
  - Develop and implement innovations (i.e., telehealth, eHealth, HIV self-testing) to increase access to HIV and broader sexual and reproductive health services amid the COVID-19 pandemic in the GTHA



Newman, P. A., Chakrapani, V., Williams, C., Massaquoi, N., Tepjan, S., Rongprakhon, S., et al., (2021). An eHealth intervention for promoting COVID-19 knowledge and protective behaviors and reducing pandemic distress among sexual and gender minorities: Protocol for randomized controlled trial (#SafeHandsSafeHearts). *JMIR Research Protocols*, 10(12):e34381.