

Self-Reported Adult Mental Health in the Aftermath of COVID-19

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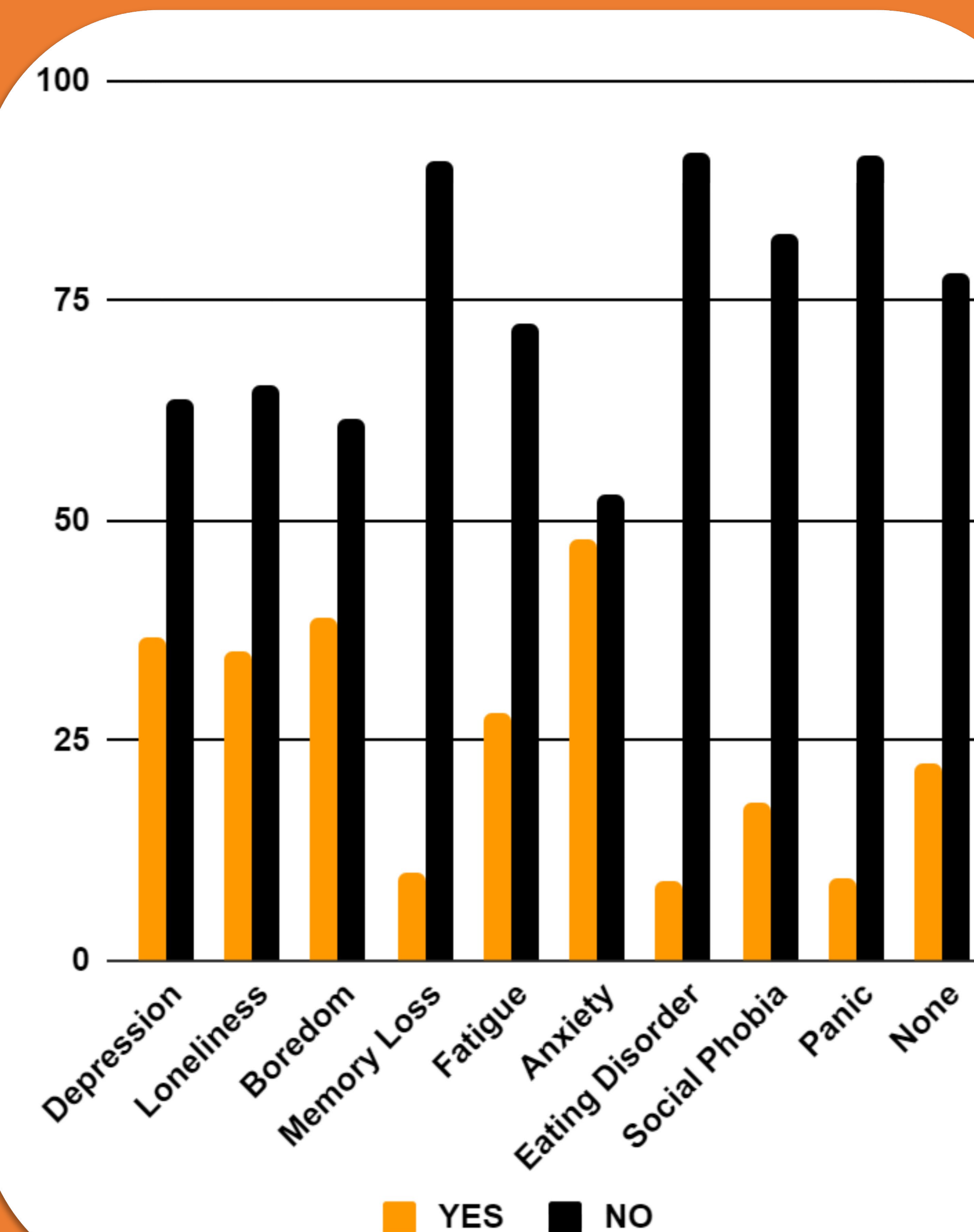
ABSTRACT & STUDY PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to examine adult mental health in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Online survey data was collected from N = 316 adults (M = 33.01 years, SD = 15.68 years) using Qualtrics. Survey respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic would contribute to their experience of future mental health conditions. Respondents indicated that over one-third anticipated encountering four primary mental health conditions in the long-term aftermath of COVID-19. In particular, respondents indicated that they expect to continue experiencing mental health challenges pertaining to anxiety (47.5%), boredom (38.6%), depression (36.4%), and loneliness (34.8%) in the future. Additional analyses were conducted to determine mean-level sex and race differences in current self-reported anxiety, boredom, depression, and loneliness. Adult women maintained significantly higher mean levels of reported depressive symptomatology, $F(1, 273) = 5.31, p < .05$, and feelings of loneliness, $F(1, 253) = 5.34, p < .05$, compared to adult men. Mean-level differences by race were not significant. Results appear to indicate that adult women will likely continue to experience greater challenges in their mental health relative to encounters of depressive symptomatology and loneliness in the aftermath of COVID-19. This has implications relative to how counselors and mental health professionals provide services and programming to offset the impact of depressive symptomatology and loneliness among adult women. Further insight into the interconnection of depression and loneliness and potential interventions to improve mental health among adult women in the aftermath of COVID-19 will be highlighted in this presentation.

METHOD

- **Procedure**
 - Qualtrics online survey
 - N = 316 (M = 33.01; SD = 15.68)
- **Measures**
 - Single-item/self-report of current and future mental health
 - 0 = No; 1 = Yes
 - Standardized
 - Loneliness (3-item UCLA Loneliness Scale; $\alpha = .84$)
 - 1 = Never; 4 = Always
 - Anxiety (General Anxiety Disorder-7; $\alpha = .91$)
 - 1 = Not at all; 4 = Nearly every day
 - Boredom (Boredom Proneness Scale; $\alpha = .88$)
 - 1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree
 - Depression (Patient Health Questionnaire-9; $\alpha = .89$)
 - 1 = Not at all; 4 = Nearly every day

FIGURE 1. SELF-REPORTED FUTURE MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS



CONCLUSION

- Over 1/3 of sample respondents reported anxiety, boredom, depression, and loneliness as continued mental health problems;
- Adult women appear to be especially vulnerable to experience depressive symptomatology and feelings of loneliness;
- Findings support recent search noting increased mental problems among adult populations in the aftermath of COVID-19
 - Females consistently report more depressive and anxiety symptoms than males ($p < .01$), net of other covariates....Women appear to be particularly sensitive to fear, worry, and threat compared to men....(Fitzpatrick et al., 2020).
 - In Ireland, females were significantly more likely to screen positive for GAD or depression and having a loved one with a suspected/confirmed case of COVID-19 was also associated with increased risk of anxiety or depression (McBride et al., 2020).

RESULTS

- **Self-Reported Mental Health** - (see Figure 1)
 - 47.5% of sample respondents reported generalized anxiety as a future mental health challenge after COVID-19.
 - 38.6% of sample respondents reported boredom as a future mental health challenge after COVID-19.
 - 36.4% of sample respondents reported depression as a future mental health challenge after COVID-19.
 - 34.8% of sample respondents reported loneliness as a future mental health challenge after COVID-19.
- **Gender Differences** - (see Table 1)
 - Adult women reported having significantly greater average score of depressive symptomatology than men $F(1, 273) = 5.31, p < .05$.
 - Adult women reported having significantly greater average score of loneliness than men $F(1, 253) = 5.34, p < .05$.

TABLE 1. GENDER DIFFERENCES

Variables	Men	Women	F
Anxiety	14.55	15.51	1.35
Boredom	101.36	98.73	.61
Depression	6.85	7.59	4.97*
Loneliness	15.81	17.74	5.34**

➤ * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

IMPLICATIONS & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Implications for counselors and mental health professionals who provide services.
- Future research should look more into the interconnection of depression and loneliness to advance potential interventions for mental health improvements.

LITERATURE & THEORETICAL SUPPORT

- **Literature**
 - COVID-19 associated stress is associated with a greatly elevated risk of emotional disorder symptomatology....the COVID-19 pandemic may result in increased demand for mental health services (Gallagher et al. 2020).
 - The COVID-19 pandemic posed a threat to population mental health due to increased and prolonged feelings of fear and uncertainty...(McBride et al., 2020).
- **Theories**
 - *Socioemotional selectivity theory and the regulation of emotion in the second half of life - motivation and emotion* (Carstensen et al, 1999).
 - *The Life Course as Developmental Theory* (Elder, G. H. 1998).

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