



**HIV &  
Mental Health**



European  
AIDS Treatment  
Group



## Mental health of people living with HIV and staff of organisations working in the field of HIV in the WHO European Region

Survey results presentation

## Background

- Survey is part of the EATG HIV & Mental Health project and based on the findings of a literature review, conducted between February and August 2020.
- Exploratory, cross-sectional survey targeting two groups: people living with HIV and persons working in HIV organizations at the local, regional, or international level in the WHO European Region (OW). Launched on International Mental Health day 2020 (10 October), open for 3 weeks, until November 3, 2020 and available in 7 languages (English, French, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian and Ukrainian)
- Objectives were:
  - To provide an overview of the existing landscape of mental health services available in HIV organizations in the WHO European Region and commonly reported mental health issues in the organizational context.
  - To explore self-reported mental health status, symptoms commonly associated with mental health disorders, impact of HIV in mental health and use of mental health services by people living with HIV in the WHO European Region.

## Background

- Total of 48 questions:
  - For OW - 8 questions inquiring about availability of mental health services targeted to people living with HIV, common mental health issues encountered in their daily work and services provided during COVID-19.
  - For people living with HIV - 40 questions covering:
    - Demographics, time since HIV diagnosis, treatment status and treatments missed in last month.
    - Self-assessed mental health knowledge, previous diagnosis of mental health condition or experience of symptoms before and after HIV diagnosis.
    - Current or previous use of professional mental health treatment or other mental health support services (including peer support).
    - Self-rated mental health status and report of symptoms commonly associated with depression, perceived impact of HIV and HIV stigma on one's social and emotional well-being.
    - Impact of COVID-19 on perceived mental health status, and mental health support received during COVID-19 pandemic .

## Respondents

- 359 persons working in HIV related organizations - 187 EU/EEA (mostly Italy, Portugal and Romania); 172 non-EU/EEA (mostly Russia and Ukraine)
- 646 PLHIV – 389 EU/EEA countries; 257 non-EU/EEA countries (same countries more represented)
- Responding PLHIV were:
  - Mostly cisgender men and women (57% and 37% respectively),
  - Self-identified as heterosexual (52%) or gay/lesbian (41%), and reported living mostly in capital cities (32%) or other big cities (24%)
  - Age ranges between 30-49 years old represented over 60% of the sample.
  - Most respondents had completed high school level or higher education (85.1%), most frequently University (38.1%) or College (21.2%).
  - The majority (66.9%) of respondents were employed, and either rent (34.7%) or own (45.4%) their house.

## People working in HIV organizations – key results

## Reported commonly raised issues related to HIV and mental health in work context

		Sub-region		Total	Missing
		EU/EEA	Non-EU/EEA		
Depression	N	126	139	265	12
	Sub-region %	58.6%	69.8%	64.0%	
Anxiety	N	142	142	284	11
	Sub-region %	66.0%	71.0%	68.4%	
Low self-esteem	N	101	122	223	11
	Sub-region %	47.0%	61.0%	53.7%	
Isolation/loneliness	N	128	117	245	11
	Sub-region %	59.5%	58.5%	59.0%	
Sleep problems/sleep disturbance/Insomnia	N	69	91	160	11
	Sub-region %	32.1%	45.5%	38.6%	
Harmful and regular use of drugs and/or alcohol	N	83	81	164	11
	Sub-region %	38.6%	40.5%	39.5%	
Self-harm	N	9	12	21	11
	Sub-region %	4.2%	6.0%	5.1%	
Suicidal feelings	N	30	57	87	11
	Sub-region %	14.0%	28.5%	21.0%	
Shame	N	108	105	213	11
	Sub-region %	50.2%	52.5%	51.3%	
Self-blame	N	93	99	192	11
	Sub-region %	43.3%	49.5%	46.3%	

## Does your organization provide any specific mental health services to people living with HIV?

Service		Sub-region		Total	Missing
		EU/EEA	European Non-EU/EEA		
Peer support	N	105	130	235	67
	Sub-region %	55.0%	77.4%	65.5%	
Psychological support	N	97	120	217	
	Sub-region %	50.8%	71.4%	60.4%	
Therapy sessions	N	34	30	64	
	Sub-region %	17.8%	17.9%	17.8%	
Help groups	N	83	102	185	
	Sub-region %	43.5%	60.7%	51.5%	
Other	N	20	8	28	
	Sub-region %	10.5%	4.8%	7.8%	
None	N	22	15	37	
	Sub-region %	11.5%	8.9%	10.3%	

## Mental health resources, tools or services lacking which would be of benefit for people living with HIV?

Missing resources, tools or services					
		Sub-region		Total	Missing
		EU/EEA	European Non-EU/EEA		
Psychological support	N	70	58	128	115
	Sub-region %	42.9%	39.2%	41.2%	
Therapy sessions	N	84	101	185	115
	Sub-region %	51.5%	68.2%	59.5%	
Referral system	N	63	46	109	115
	Sub-region %	38.7%	31.1%	35.0%	
Other	N	25	20	45	115
	Sub-region %	15.3%	13.5%	14.5%	



## Have you in your work experienced an increase of mental health issues during the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown period?

		Sub-region		Total	Missin g
		EU/EE A	Non- EU/EEA		
Yes	N	99	91	190	75
	Sub-region %	53.5%	54.8%	54.1 %	
No	N	39	41	80	75
	Sub-region %	21.1%	24.7%	22.8 %	
Not sure	N	47	35	82	75
	Sub-region %	25.4%	21.1%	23.4 %	

## People living with HIV – key results



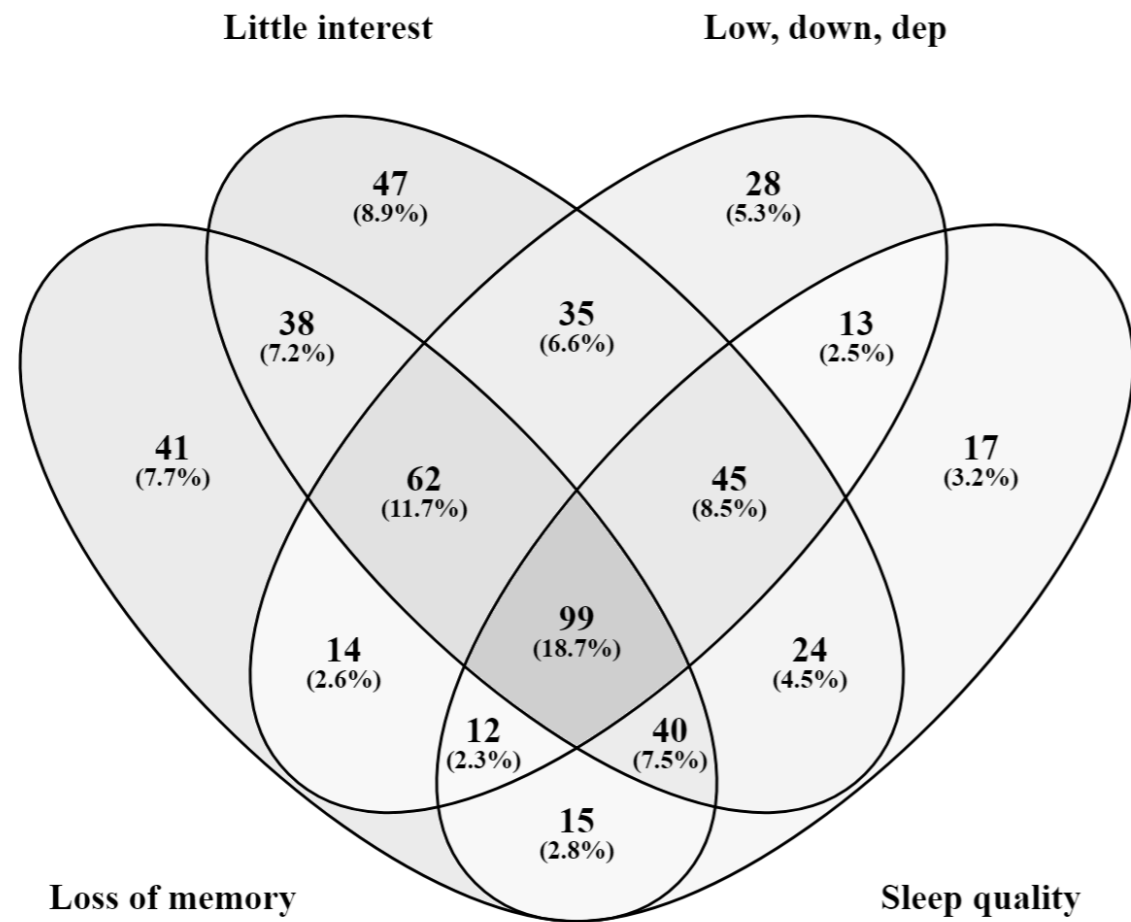
## Use of Mental Health services, help seeking and availability of Mental Health services

When did you last get your mental health examination done?		Sub-region		Total	Missing
		EU/EEA	European Non-EU/EEA		
Less than 6 months ago	Count	60	24	84	72
	% within region	16.4%	10.6%	14.2%	
More than 6 months ago	Count	134	56	190	
	% within region	36.6%	24.7%	32.0%	
<b>I have never had a mental health examination</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>319</b>	
	<b>% within region</b>	<b>47.0%</b>	<b>64.8%</b>	<b>53.8%</b>	
Total	Count	366	227	593	
	% within region	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Have you visited a specialist in the last 6 months for Psi help or support		Sub-region		Total	Missing
		EU/EEA	European Non-EU/EEA		
Private therapist	Count	51	15	66	108
	% within region	14.7%	7.1%	11.8%	
Mental health consultant at the HIV clinic	Count	22	7	29	108
	% within region	6.3%	3.3%	5.2%	
Peer consultant (through HIV community organisations)	Count	31	51	82	108
	% within region	8.9%	24.3%	14.7%	
Therapist (through HIV organisations)	Count	19	17	36	109
	% within region	5.5%	8.1%	6.5%	
Other	Count	14	14	28	108
	% within region	4.0%	6.7%	5.0%	
<b>None</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>355</b>	108
	<b>% within region</b>	<b>65.7%</b>	<b>60.5%</b>	<b>63.7%</b>	

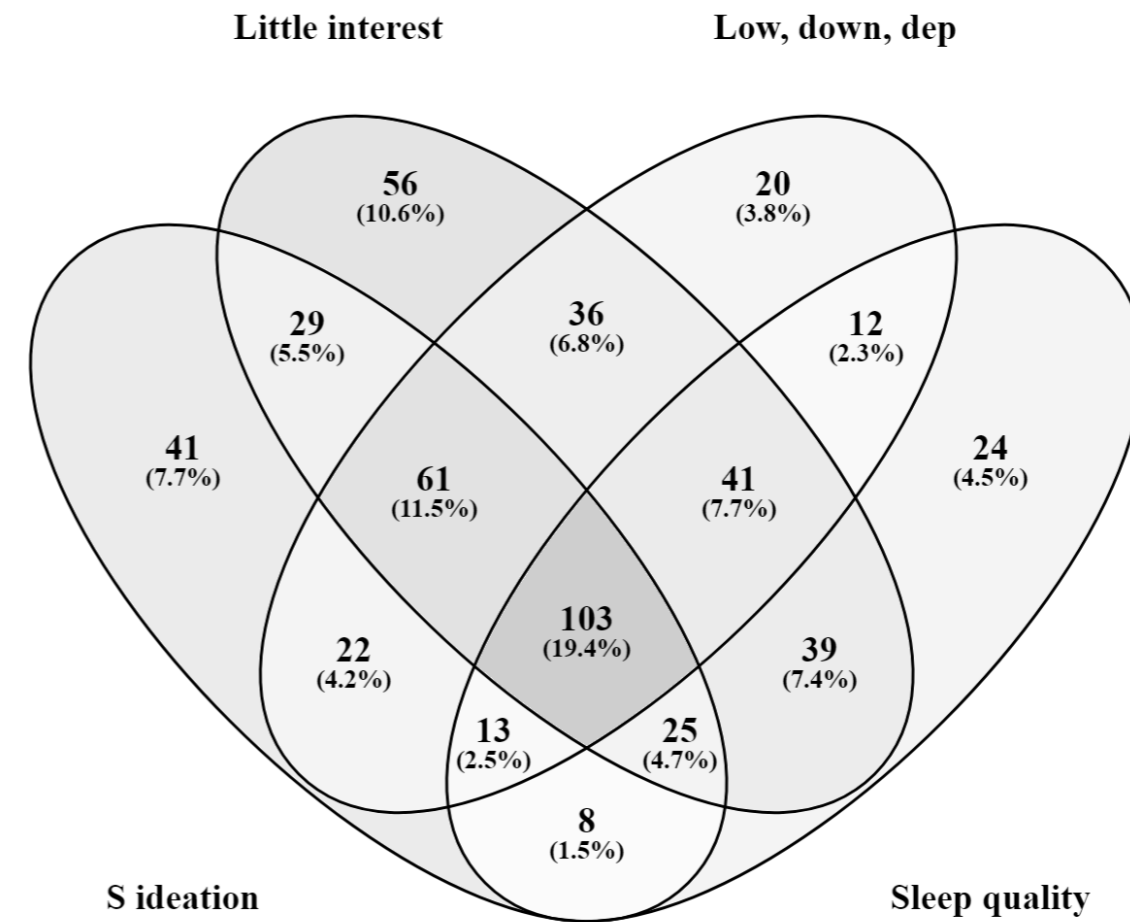
### Number and percentage of PLHIV who have been treated (medical or psychological) for mental health problems

Have you taken or are you currently taking any treatment or getting psychological support for mental health problems?		sub-region		Total	Missing
		EU/EEA	European Non-EU/EEA		
Yes	Count	120	57	177	40
	% within region	31.7%	23.2%	28.3%	
No	Count	249	184	433	
	% within region	65.7%	74.8%	69.3%	
Not relevant	Count	10	5	15	
	% within region	2.6%	2.0%	2.4%	
Total	Count	379	246	625	
	% within region	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

**Overlaps among selected self-reported symptoms associated with depression**



**Inclusion of loss of memory**



**Inclusion of Suicidal ideation/self-harm**

50.9% of respondents (using the 4 factors on the left diagram, which do not include suicidal ideation/self harm) and 53.26% of respondents (using the 4 factors on the right diagram, which include suicidal ideation/self harm) would benefit from a more thorough mental health assessment.

## Self reported sources of support

Who do you ask for help?		Sub-region		Total	Missing
		EU/EEA	European Non-EU/EEA		
<b>Family/relatives</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>190</b>	80
	<b>% within region</b>	<b>27.1%</b>	<b>41.1%</b>	<b>32.5%</b>	
<b>Friends</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>299</b>	
	<b>% within region</b>	<b>57.3%</b>	<b>41.1%</b>	<b>51.1%</b>	
HIV organisations	Count	47	36	83	
	% within region	13.0%	16.1%	14.2%	
General practitioner	Count	43	7	50	
	% within region	11.9%	3.1%	8.5%	
HIV clinician/Nurse at the HIV clinic	Count	44	21	65	
	% within region	12.2%	9.4%	11.1%	
<b>Social worker / Pscyhologist</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>131</b>	
	<b>% within region</b>	<b>22.7%</b>	<b>21.9%</b>	<b>22.4%</b>	
Other	Count	60	43	103	
	% within region	16.6%	19.2%	17.6%	

**Number and percentage of PLHIV experiencing difficulties accessing treatment for mental health conditions, according to self report of undergoing psychological treatment and region.**

	Reported to be or have been in treatment/therapy					Reported not to be or have been in treatment/therapy				
	Sub-region				Total	Sub-region				Total
	EU/EEA	%	European Non-EU/EEA	%		EU/EEA	%	European Non-EU/EEA	%	
<b>Yes</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>19.49%</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>32.73%</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>8.50%</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>20.00%</b>	<b>57</b>
No	86	72.88%	33	60.00%	119	132	53.44%	119	66.11%	251
Not relevant	9	7.63%	4	7.27%	13	<b>94</b>	<b>38.06%</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>13.89%</b>	<b>119</b>
Total	118	100.00%	55	100.00%	173	247	100.00%	180	100.00%	427



**PLHIV self reported mental health services provided by local/regional organizations and self report of services provided by HOW's organizations**

PLHIV: Are MH services provided to PLHIV by your local/regional organization		Sub-region			Missing	HOW: services provided by organization		region			Missing
		EU/EEA	European Non-EU/EEA	Total				EU/EEA	European Non-EU/EEA	Total	
Psychological support	Count	88	86	174	78	Psychological support	Count	169	101	270	146
	% within region	24.4%	37.9%	29.6%			% within region	53.5%	49.8%	52.0%	
Therapy	Count	32	23	55		Therapy sessions	Count	158	117	275	
	% within region	8.9%	10.1%	9.4%			% within region	50.0%	57.6%	53.0%	
Peer support	Count	95	105	200		A referral system	Count	91	50	141	
	% within region	26.4%	46.3%	34.1%			% within region	28.8%	24.6%	27.2%	
Help groups	Count	91	91	182		Help groups	Count	123	85	208	
	% within region	25.3%	40.1%	31.0%			% within region	38.9%	41.9%	40.1%	
None	Count	25	16	41		Other	Count	27	14	41	
	% within region	6.9%	7.0%	7.0%			% within region	8.5%	6.9%	7.9%	
I do not know	Count	180	76	256							
	% within region	50.0%	33.5%	43.6%							

## Impact of HIV in specific dimensions of daily life

			Sub-region		Total	Missing
			EU/EEA	European Non-EU/EEA		
Do you feel bad about yourself or your HIV status or that you are a failure or have let yourself or your family down?	Yes	Count	201	113	314	55
		% within region	53.9%	47.7%	51.5%	
Do you think your HIV status has had a negative impact on your ability to engage in relationships and social activities?	Yes	Count	242	100	342	53
		% within region	64.5%	42.2%	55.9%	
	I do not know	Count	34	28	62	
		% within region	9.1%	11.8%	10.1%	
Do you think your HIV status has had an impact on your sexual life?	Yes	Count	215	128	343	53
		% within region	57.3%	54.0%	56.0%	
	I do not know	Count	27	8	35	
		% within region	7.2%	3.4%	5.7%	
Do you think that HIV stigma and discrimination has played a negative role on your mental well-being?	Yes	Count	251	133	384	59
		% within region	67.7%	56.6%	63.4%	

## Overall recommendations

1. Raise awareness regarding mental health issues among people living with / affected by HIV, due to both the increased impact of chronic conditions in mental health, as well as to the burden of stigma and discrimination among people living with / affected by HIV, particularly those from marginalised or criminalised populations.
2. Foster and improve coordination between mental health services/responses and other HIV services.
3. Ensure referral from HIV care services to mental health support services where mental health support services in HIV care is not possible.
4. Enhance dialogue between HIV specialists and mental health specialists to increase knowledge of existing needs, services and links from both sides.
5. Mental health care response should entail options responding to different levels of demand (including self-help groups; peer support; group support; MH professionals) and as well as empowerment of patients in self-management of their mental health issues, when possible.
6. Policies and guidelines should be updated to reflect diverse needs, including possibilities for de-medicalized services.
7. Include mentions to the need to differentiate cases where support requires pharmacological interventions and those where it does not.
8. Support research to generate evidence, define programmatic requirements and formally acknowledge trained peer work in the field of mental health.

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# Thank you!

Full survey report: <https://www.eatg.org/publications/survey-report-16-mental-health-of-people-living-with-hiv-and-staff-of-organisations-working-in-the-field-of-hiv-in-the-who-european-region/>

Short survey report: <https://www.eatg.org/publications/short-report-mental-health-of-people-living-with-hiv-and-staff-of-organisations-working-in-the-field-of-hiv-in-the-who-european-region/>