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### **Social Interactions and Mental Health Impact during the COVID-19 Pandemic: An Analysis of the COVID-19 Impact Survey**

**Rationale:** Mental health disorders consequent to the COVID-19 pandemic has shown itself to be a growing public health issue. Understanding the impact of social distancing and quarantine policies on mental health is particularly crucial. Our study evaluated the pandemic's psychological impact on the U.S. population during the peak of the pandemic when social isolation was paramount. **Methods:** This cross-sectional study used April 2020 data from the COVID-19 Impact Survey, a public adult population-based survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center. Social interaction was measured by the level of contact with neighbors (from “not at all” to “daily”) over the past month. The outcome was a reported feeling of anxiousness/nervousness over the past week. Preliminary chi-squared and logistic regression analyses were performed to determine the association between these two variables, with the latter analysis adjusting for age, gender, and race/ethnicity. **Results:** A total of 7,491 participants were included, the majority of which were ages 55 to 64 years old (20.7%), female (55.7%), and white (71.9%). Our logistic model showed that compared to participants who reported no interactions with neighbors, a lower odds of anxiousness/nervousness was found among those who interacted with neighbors daily (OR= 0.815, 95% CI=0.667,0.994), more than once weekly (OR= 0.827, 95% CI=0.707,0.968), and more than once monthly (OR= 0.830, 95% CI=0.709,0.972). Higher levels of anxiousness were also associated with being young, female, and white non-Hispanic (all with  $P < .05$ ). **Discussion:** Our adjusted analysis found that the level of interaction with neighbors correlated with experiences of anxiousness/nervousness. Future studies are necessary to explore the change in this association over time and with other covariates. Public health interventions are needed to mitigate the impact of social isolation, such as creating virtual spaces that will allow people to remain connected.

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