

San Francisco Suicide Prevention
Online Survey Research Testing Electronic or Internet Based
Counseling Programs in the Bay Area
Funded by CalMHSA

Date: April 21, 2012

More information: Contact David Paisley at davidp@sfsuicide.org.

Methodology

San Francisco Suicide Prevention conducted an online survey between February and April 2012 to test interest in electronic and internet-based counseling programs. The target group was Bay Area residents 18 years or older. 321 participants were recruited through a link from San Francisco Suicide Prevention's website, advertising on Facebook and advertising on Craigslist, which accounted for 72% of respondents. The remainders of respondent were recruited by sending out emails to mental health agencies asking agency staff to forward to appropriate clients.

In general participants trended younger because of the recruitment method, with 48% under age 31 and 74% under age 41. 58% of participants were female. 57% of participants were white. 30% of participants considered themselves part of the LGBT community.

Summary of Results

67% participants have experienced significant depression in their lifetime. They were most likely to respond to their depression by talking to friends and family. Half indicated they attended face-to-face counseling. 8% called a hotline. 17% indicated that they did not seek help.

52% participants have experienced suicidal ideation in their lifetime. They were far less likely to reach out to friends and family about suicide, than when they felt "just" depressed. These results may indicate there is far more stigma around suicidal ideation than depression.

46% indicated they attended face-to-face counseling. 14% called a hotline. 30% indicated that they did not seek help.

In the past three years 12% of participants have called a crisis hotline for any reason. 95% of those calling a hotline found the interaction helpful.

13% of participants indicated that they have used a chat service of any kind for emotional support in their lifetime. 92% found it helpful.

Participants were asked to indicate what was their preferred method of communication with friends and family when feeling depressed and they could not see anyone face-to-face. 59% indicated telephone and 17% indicated text as their first choice. When asked about their second choice, text, chat and email were about even.




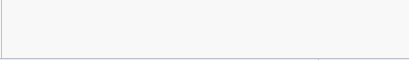
When asked about information and referral for mental health concerns, 55% of participants preferred to find information by searching and reviewing mental health websites, 52% preferred a telephone call, and 37% emailing a mental health agency (participants were allowed multiple choices). Chatting and texting did not score as well.

When participants were asked how they would prefer to receive services if they felt depressed or isolated and face-to-face counseling services were not available, calling a hotline was most preferred at 67%, followed by one-on-one chat at 35%, searching information websites at 30%, emailing a crisis counselor at 22% and texting at 20%.


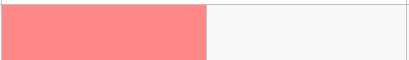

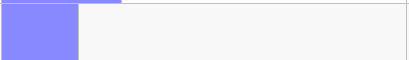
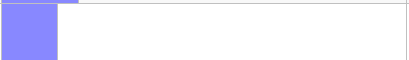
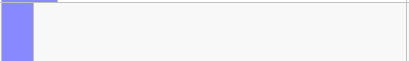
When participants were asked how they would prefer to receive services if they felt suicidal and face-to-face counseling services were not available, calling a hotline was most preferred at 75%, followed by live one-on-one chat at 31%, texting was third at 18%.

Participants were told that some crisis centers would be experimenting with one-on-one chat, text and chat room services, and the crisis centers wanted feedback. In general, participants responded best to one-on-one chat and 51% felt they might use that type of service, 30% said they might use a text service and 19% indicated they might use a chat room. Less than 10% of participants indicated that they felt offering one-on-one chat and text services were a bad idea.







What is your gender? (Respondents could only choose a single response)

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Male		40.6%	130
Female		58.4%	187
Transgender		0.6%	2
Other		0.3%	1
		Valid Responses	320








What is your age? (Respondents could only choose a single response)

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Under 18		0.0%	0
18-30		47.7%	153
31-40		25.9%	83
41-50		14.3%	46
51-60		9.3%	30
61+		2.8%	9
		Valid Responses	321

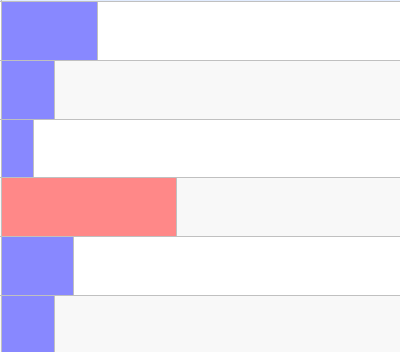
What is your ethnicity? (Respondents could only choose a single response)

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
White / Caucasian		57.0%	183
Black / African American		4.7%	15
Latino / a / Hispanic		10.0%	32
Asian / Pacific Islander		15.9%	51
Native American		0.3%	1
Mixed ethnicity		9.0%	29
Other		3.1%	10
		Valid Responses	321





Please check any community you identify with. (Check all that apply)
 (Respondents were allowed to choose multiple responses)

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Heterosexual / Straight Male or Female		70.4%	224
Lesbian or Bisexual Female		8.8%	28
Gay or Bisexual Man		16.0%	51
Transgender or Intersex		1.6%	5
Questioning your sexuality		1.9%	6
Other		5.0%	16
Prefer not to respond		2.5%	8
		Valid Participants	318








In what county do you live? (Respondents could only choose a single response)

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Alameda		20.6%	66
Contra Costa		9.7%	31
Marin		4.0%	13
San Francisco		41.4%	133
Santa Clara		14.6%	47
San Mateo		9.7%	31
		Valid Responses	321





In the last five years, have you ever felt so depressed that it had a negative impact on your life, relationships, school or work? (Respondents could only choose a single response)

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Yes		67.3%	216
No		20.6%	66
Not Sure / Maybe		11.5%	37
Prefer not to answer		0.6%	2
		Valid Responses	321









How did you respond to your depression? (Check all that apply)
(Respondents were allowed to choose multiple responses)

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
I attended face-to-face counseling or received professional help		50.7%	108
I called a hotline		8.0%	17
I visited friends, family or a partner in person to get support		58.2%	124
I talked about it with friends, family or a partner on the phone to get support		56.8%	121
I emailed or texted a friend, family or partner to get support		35.2%	75
I did not seek help		16.9%	36
I responded in a way that is not listed		25.4%	54
Prefer not to answer		0.0%	0
		Valid Participants	213




Have you ever felt suicidal in your lifetime? (Respondents could only choose a single response)

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Yes		52.2%	166
Maybe		11.9%	38
No		33.0%	105
Prefer not to answer		2.8%	9
		Valid Responses	318
		Total Responses	318




How did you respond to your suicidal thoughts? (Check all that apply)
(Respondents were allowed to choose multiple responses)

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
I attended face-to-face counseling or received professional help		46.1%	76
I called a hotline		13.9%	23
I visited friends, family or a partner in person to get help		35.2%	58
I talked about it with friends, family or a partner on the phone to get help		37.6%	62
I emailed or texted a friend, family member or partner to get help		16.4%	27
I did not seek help		29.7%	49
I responded in a way that is not listed		30.3%	50
Prefer not to answer		1.2%	2
		Valid Participants	165

10. In the last three years, have you ever called any crisis telephone line or emotional support line for any reason? (Respondents could only choose a single response)

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Yes		11.9%	38
No		87.4%	278
Prefer not to answer		0.6%	2
		Valid Responses	318

You indicated that you called a telephone line or emotional support line. Was your interaction with the call line helpful? (Respondents could only choose a single response)

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Significant Help		42.1%	16
Some Help		52.6%	20
No Help		5.3%	2
Don't Know		0.0%	0
		Valid Responses	38

Lets pretend you are feeling upset or depressed and you are not able to talk to someone face-to-face.



What is your first preferred method of communicating with friends and family when you are feeling upset or depressed. (Please check one)
 (Respondents could only choose a single response)

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Phone Call		59.2%	184
Text		17.4%	54
Chat (with one person)		12.9%	40
Email		6.4%	20
Chatroom (with multiple people)		0.0%	0
Other		3.9%	12
Prefer not to answer		0.3%	1
		Valid Responses	311





What is your second most preferred method of communicating with friends and family when you are feeling upset or depressed. (Please check one)
 (Respondents could only choose a single response)

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Phone Call		24.8%	77
Text		28.0%	87
Chat (with one person)		17.7%	55
Email		20.3%	63
Chatroom (with multiple people)		0.6%	2
Other		8.0%	25
Prefer not to answer		0.6%	2
		Valid Responses	311



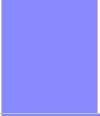





In the last week, did you use a chatroom for any non-work related reason?
 (Respondents could only choose a single response)

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Yes		14.4%	45
No		85.6%	267
Prefer not to answer		0.0%	0
		Valid Responses	312




How many hours did you spend in chatrooms over the past week?
 (Respondents could only choose a single response)

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Less than an hour		51.1%	23
1-2 hours		33.3%	15
3-5 hours		8.9%	4
6 or more hours		6.7%	3
Prefer not to answer		0.0%	0
		Valid Responses	45




If you were seeking counseling or mental health services for yourself or for someone else, which of the following methods would you prefer to use to get information or a referral? (Check all that apply). (Respondents were allowed to choose multiple responses)

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Phone call to a crisis counselor at a hotline		51.9%	160
Email to a mental health service agency		37.3%	115
Text communication to a mental health service agency		17.2%	53
Live chat (one-on-one) to a mental health service agency		32.8%	101
Searching and finding information on a mental health website		54.9%	169
Calling an information line, for example 411 or 211		16.2%	50
Other		10.7%	33
Prefer not to answer		0.6%	2
		Valid Participants	308

18. Do you have medical insurance of any kind?
 (Respondents could only choose a single response)









Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Yes		83.6%	260
No		15.4%	48
Other		0.3%	1
Prefer not to answer		0.6%	2
		Valid Responses	311

Does your health insurance cover mental health appointments?
 (Respondents could only choose a single response)

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Yes		62.9%	163
No		8.1%	21
I do not know		29.0%	75
		Valid Responses	259









If you had a strong feeling of depression or isolation, how would you prefer to get help if a face-to-face counseling service was not available? (Check all that apply)

(Respondents were allowed to choose multiple responses)

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Phone call to a hotline and speaking with a crisis counselor		66.7%	202
Email to a crisis counselor		22.1%	67
Text communication to a crisis counselor		19.8%	60
Live chat (one-on-one) on the computer with a crisis counselor		35.3%	107
Chat forum (multiple people) facilitated by crisis counselors		9.9%	30
Searching and looking on a website for information		29.7%	90
Prefer not to answer		1.0%	3
Other		7.9%	24
		Valid Participants	303




If you felt suicidal how would you prefer to get help if a face-to-face counseling service was not available? (Check all that apply)

(Respondents were allowed to choose multiple responses)

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Phone call to a hotline and speaking with a crisis counselor		75.2%	228
Email to a crisis counselor		15.5%	47
Text communication to a crisis counselor		17.8%	54
Live chat (one-on-one) on the computer with a crisis counselor		31.4%	95
Chat forum (multiple people) facilitated by crisis counselors		6.3%	19
Searching and looking on a website for information		14.2%	43
Prefer not to answer		1.7%	5
Other		5.0%	15
		Valid Participants	303




Have you ever chatted online with a counselor or used instant messaging for emotional support for any reason?

(Respondents could only choose a single response)

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Yes		12.8%	39
No		86.6%	264
Prefer not to answer		0.7%	2
		Valid Responses	305







You indicated that you have chatted online or used instant messaging for crisis or emotional support. Was your interaction helpful?

(Respondents could only choose a single response)







Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
Significant Help		44.7%	17
Some Help		47.4%	18
No Help		7.9%	3
Don't Know		0.0%	0
		Valid Responses	38

Some crisis centers are thinking about offering crisis services by internet or text.

What do you think of the idea of offering crisis counseling services by text? (Check all that apply) (Respondents were allowed to choose multiple responses)

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
It's a good idea, I would use the service		30.2%	91
It's a good idea, but I probably would not use the service		51.8%	156
I think it is a bad idea		9.3%	28
I do not use text		5.0%	15
I don't think many people would use this service		12.3%	37
Prefer not to answer		1.3%	4
		Valid Participants	301

What do you think of the idea of offering crisis counseling services by chatting one-on-one on a computer? (Check all that apply) (Respondents were allowed to choose multiple responses)

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
It's a good idea, I would use the service		50.8%	153
It's a good idea, but I probably would not use the service		43.9%	132
I think it is a bad idea		2.7%	8
I do not use one-on-one chat services		5.3%	16
I don't think many people would use this service		4.3%	13
Prefer not to answer		0.7%	2

	Valid Participants	301
--	--------------------	-----

What do you think of the idea of offering crisis counseling services on an on-line chat room with multiple users and a crisis counselor to moderate? (Check all that apply)
 (Respondents were allowed to choose multiple responses)

Response	Chart	Frequency	Count
It's a good idea, I would use the service		18.6%	56
It's a good idea, but I probably would not use the service		41.2%	124
I think it is a bad idea		24.3%	73
I do not use chat rooms		17.3%	52
I don't think many people would use this service		7.6%	23
Prefer not to answer		3.7%	11
		Valid Participants	301