

## Flint Survey: At-a-Glance

The survey of Flint residents in the aftermath of the Flint Water Crisis was conducted in 2019 - 2020 by the National Mass Violence Victimization Resource Center. **This survey did not specifically address the physical impact of the Water Crisis experienced by the people of Flint (with the exception of questions about “negative health impacts”).** Rather, it focused on residents’ perceptions of exposure; the prevalence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and depression; risk and protective factors for PTSD and depression; and Flint residents’ access to and utilization of services and interactions with legal systems. However, it’s important to note that mental health impacts and physical impacts are *not* mutually exclusive; rather, they can actually be highly correlated.

The scope of exposure to unsafe tap water in Flint is considerable:

- Nearly nine out of 10 (88.2%) Flint residents live or have lived somewhere directly affected by problems with tap water quality.
- Four out of ten (40.3%) people got physically ill or experienced health problems due to the exposure to unsafe tap water.
- Over half (57.1%) know someone who they think got sick or experienced health problems due to the exposure to unsafe tap water.
- **More than four out of ten (42.1%) experienced mental or emotional problems related to concerns about the tap water.**

The people of Flint use several strategies to limit risk of exposure to unsafe water, among them:

- Nearly all (92%) used bottled water for cooking.
- More than three-fourths (78.7%) stopped drinking, bathing, and cleaning with tap water.
- Almost one-fourth (24%) replaced all their pipes and fixtures.

**Negative health impacts of exposure to unsafe tap water** were identified by many Flint residents:

- Many (46.2%) believe their own health has been affected by unsafe tap water in their homes, either a “moderate amount” (24.1%) or “a great deal” (22.1%).
- Nearly half (48.9%) believe their family’s health has been affected by unsafe tap water in their home, either a “moderate amount” (24.6%) or “a great deal” (24.3%).
- **Over two-thirds (69.9%) believe there may be long-term health effects from exposure to the unsafe tap water, either a “moderate amount” (22.1%) or “a great deal” (47.8%).**

The people of Flint lack confidence in the information provided by officials about the safety of their water supply:

- When they first learned about water quality issues in 2014, over three-fourths (78.8%) had “no confidence at all” (42.4%) or “not much confidence” (36.4%) with information provided by officials.
- When this survey was conducted in 2019 – 2020, nearly three-fourths (73.1%) had “no confidence at all” (34.4%) or “not much confidence” (38.7%) in information provided by officials.

PTSD and depression are among the significant, negative mental health impacts experienced by the people of Flint:

- Nearly one-fourth (24.4%) experienced PTSD in the past year (as compared to national PTSD prevalence of 4.7%), and 11.4% experienced PTSD in the past month.
- Twenty-two percent experienced depression in the past year, and 13.9% experienced depression in the past month.
- Approximately **one in nine** adults had current PTSD.

- Approximately **one in seven** adults had current depression.

A **significant risk factor** affecting one's mental health in the aftermath of an acute crisis is whether or not one has a prior history of physical or sexual assault. Nearly four out of ten (39.2%) Flint residents have experienced a prior physical or sexual assault:

- More than four out of ten (42.7%) who had experienced a prior assault reported past-year symptoms of PTSD, versus 12.5% with no history of prior assault.
- Over one-third (34.2%) who had experienced a prior assault reported symptoms of depression, versus only 14.3% with no history of prior assault.

A **significant protective factor** to mitigate the negative mental health impact of an acute crisis is one's degree of social support from family and friends. Over two-thirds of Flint residents (68.5%) indicate they have "**low social support:**"

- Nearly half (49.2%) of those who reported "low social support" and a history of "prior assault" were at risk for past-year PTSD, versus 27.7% who reported a level of "high social support." This is also eight times higher for those in the prior assault/low social support group than the 5.6% who had *no prior assault* and *high social support*.
- Four out of ten (40.3%) of those who reported "low social support" and a history of "prior assault" were at risk for past-year depression, versus only 21.7% who reported "high social support" and a "prior assault."

**Those with a history of prior assault and low social support are 16.6 times more likely to have current PTSD compared to those who have no prior assault history and high social support.**

Flint residents who **reported becoming physically ill or experiencing health problems**, or who had a close family member become physically ill or experience health problems related to exposure to unsafe tap water, reported **high levels of PTSD and depression:**

- Over one-third (33.6%) of people who got physically ill or experienced health problems, and nearly one out of three (29.6%) people with a family member who became physically ill or experienced health problems due to unsafe tap water, had PTSD in the past year.
- Over one-third (33.6%) of people who got physically ill or experienced health problems, and one out of three (28.9%) people with a family member who became physically ill or experienced health problems due to unsafe tap water, had depression in the past year.

Many Flint residents were offered **the most basic services** relevant to their water use:

- Over seven out of ten (71.9%) were offered testing in their home to make sure the water was safe; and two-thirds (63.6%) received this service.
- Two-thirds (65.2%) were offered financial support to buy bottled water or be provided with bottled water; and 59.5% received this service.

**However, less than half of Flint residents received any offers of critical help related to medical testing, legal assistance, financial support to repair unsafe plumbing or for relocation, and/or mental health services:**

- Only 49.3% were offered medical testing to determine levels of lead or other toxins in their blood; and 39.5% received it.
- Less than four out of ten (36.2%) were offered legal assistance; and 28.6% received it.
- One-third (35.3%) were offered medical treatment for health or illness problems related to unsafe water; and 27.5% received it.
- One-third (34.6%) were offered financial support to repair unsafe household plumbing; and 27.6% received it.
- Only 31.4% were offered financial support to relocate to a residence with safe water; and one-fourth (25.1%) received it.

- Slightly over one-third (34.7%) were offered mental health services for stress or other problems; and 27.2% received it.

It is notable that when Flint residents were offered important services in the aftermath of the Water Crisis, most of them sought and actually received assistance.

Of those who reported symptoms of PTSD in the past year, less than one-third (31.2%) were offered mental health services, and 26.4% received such services.

Of those who reported symptoms of depression in the past year, less than one-fourth (23.4%) were offered mental health services, and 19.2% received such services.

Flint residents whose lives were profoundly and detrimentally affected by the Water Crisis **had extremely limited interactions with legal systems** that should help protect their interests and livelihoods:

- Less than one-fourth (21.7%) were involved in civil or class action lawsuits.
- Only 3.1% received official notice about arrests or criminal charges related to the case.
- Only 3.9% were notified about charges being dropped, prior to the announcement on June 13, 2019.

This lack of participation in criminal justice processes is evidenced by the **very low levels of satisfaction with the criminal justice system** expressed by Flint residents:

- Nearly eight out of ten (79.6%) were “very dissatisfied” (54.4%) or “somewhat dissatisfied” (25.2%) with their ability to have input and/or consult with prosecutors.
- Over three-fourths (77.6%) were “very dissatisfied” (60.5%) or “somewhat dissatisfied” (17.1%) with efforts to hold someone responsible for the Water Crisis.
- Three-fourths (75.3%) were “very dissatisfied” (54.1%) or “somewhat dissatisfied” (21.2%) with efforts to keep families informed of case progress.
- Eight out of ten (79.1%) were “very dissatisfied” (55.4%) or “somewhat dissatisfied” (23.7%) with the thoroughness of case preparation.

**Of note is that nearly seven out of ten Flint residents (68%) were “very dissatisfied” (44.2%) or “somewhat dissatisfied” (23.8%) with support services available for victims and their families.**

Flint survey respondents reported a **degree of low social support (68.5%) that was higher than survey respondents from three other communities that experienced a mass violence incident:** El Paso, TX (66%); Parkland, FL (55.1%); and Pittsburgh, PA (51%).

Flint residents reported higher levels of current and past-year PTSD and depression than community members in Parkland and Pittsburgh.