



Breaking the silence:
**Sexual health impact
on mental well-being**

The GAMIAN-Europe survey



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The Analyses

This report gives an overview on the descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages) about the respondents' background characteristics, mental health / treatment and sexual health.

Besides, we perform some crosstab analyses in order to analyse the relationships between the background characteristics and sexual health on the one hand and mental health / treatment and sexual health on the other side. An important statistic in these crosstab analyses is χ^2 . This statistic is significant, when it has at least one * (p smaller than 0.05). This means that there is a significant relationship between the variables under examination. For instance, under the table below one can see that $\chi^2 = 9.1^{**}$. This means that there is a significant relationship between the answers on the two questions. For further details, one needs to have a look at the percentages in the table. The table below for instance shows that respondents with a sexual trauma/abuse have more often suffered sexual dysfunction (52%) as compared to those respondents who didn't experience such a trauma or abuse (33%).

Table 1 - An example of a crosstab analysis

		Have you ever suffered any kind of sexual dysfunction?		
		No	Yes	Total
Did you ever experience a traumatic sexual experience in the past or any kind of sexual abuse?	No	67%	33%	100%
	Yes	48%	52%	100%
	Total	61%	39%	100%

$\chi^2(1) = 9.1^{**}$
 *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Background Characteristics

The questionnaire has been completed by 308 respondents. In this paragraph, we describe the background characteristics of these respondents.

Table 2 - Country of the respondents

Country	No. Respondents	% Respondents
Belgium	94	30.5
Bulgaria	1	0.3
Croatia	9	2.9
Cyprus	3	1.0
Czech Republic	2	0.6
France	1	0.3
Germany	7	2.3
Greece	2	0.6
Hungary	10	3.2
Ireland	1	0.3
Israel	1	0.3
Italy	2	0.6
Malta	13	4.2
Poland	1	0.3
Portugal	52	16.9
Romania	8	2.6
Slovakia	77	25.0
South Africa	1	0.3
Spain	5	1.6
Switzerland	1	0.3
The Netherlands	3	1.0
Turkey	9	2.9
United Kingdom	5	1.6
Total	308	100%

Table 2 - displays the number of respondents for each country completing the questionnaire. Most respondents come from Belgium, Slovakia and Portugal.

What is your gender?

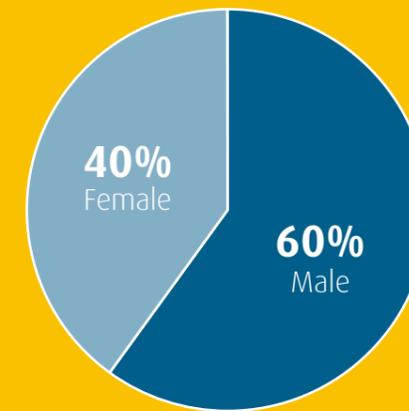


Figure 1 - What is your gender?

Among the respondents, 124 are male (40%) & 184 are female (60%).

What is your age?

Age category	No. Respondents	% Respondents
17-30y	42	14%
31-40y	76	25%
41-50y	88	29%
51-60y	73	24%
61-70y	21	7%
70+	5	2%
Total	305	100%

Table 3 - Age category of respondents

The age of most respondents (53%) is situated between 41 and 60 years. Besides, 39% of the respondents is younger than 40 years old and 9% is 61 or older.

What is your level of education?

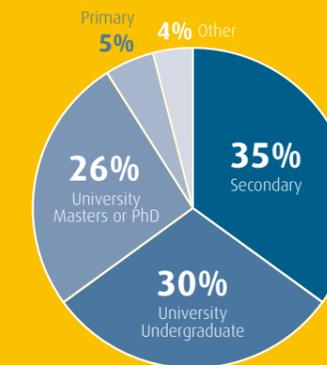


Figure 2 - What is your level of education

As regards their educational degree, 39% of the respondents has a degree of primary (4%) or secondary (35%) school, whereas 56% has a university degree (30% undergraduate; 26% masters/phd).

Do you live in a large city?

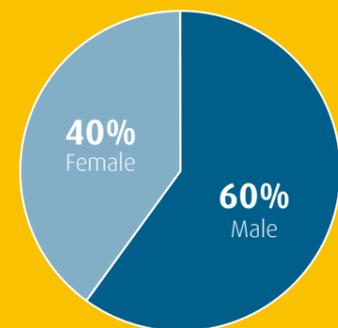


Figure 3 - Do you live in a large city?

60% of the respondents lives in large cities; 40% does not live in large cities.

What is your sexual orientation?

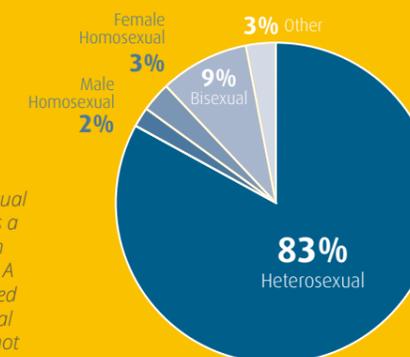


Figure 4 - What is your sexual orientation?

A large majority of the respondents is heterosexual (83%). Besides, 9% has a bisexual orientation and 5% has a homosexual orientation (male: 2%; female: 3%). A small group (3%) referred to another kind of sexual orientation (e.g. being not sure about it; pansexual).

Have you ever been discriminated because of your sexual orientation?

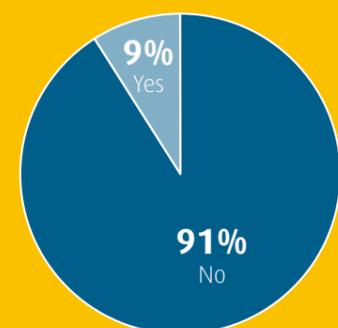


Figure 5 - Have you ever been discriminated because of your sexual orientation?

In our total sample, 9% of the people feels discriminated because of their sexual orientation. Excluding people with a heterosexual orientation from the analysis, results in 32% of the people with a non-heterosexual orientation (e.g. bisexual, homosexual, other) who have been discriminated because of their sexual orientation.



Mental Health & Treatment

In this paragraph, we explore which mental health diagnoses and treatment the respondents receive.

From which of the following mental health conditions have you been diagnosed by your doctor?

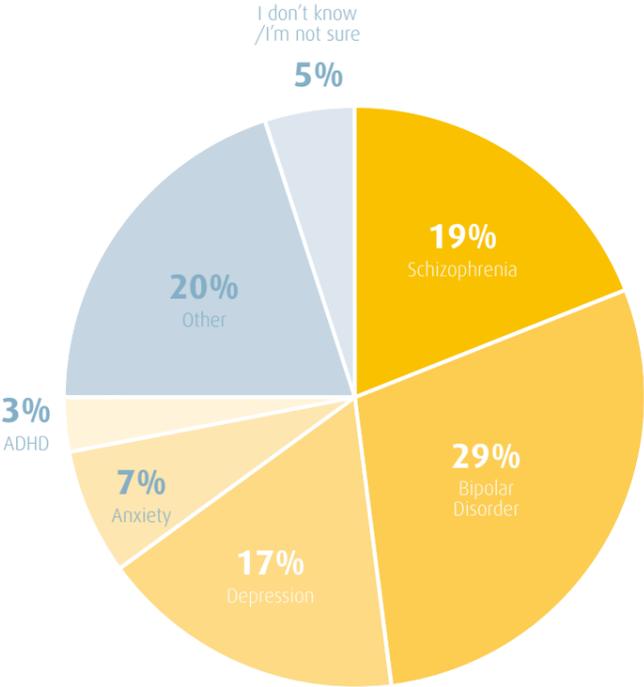


Figure 6 - From which of the following mental health conditions have you been diagnosed by your doctor?

Are you currently under any treatment?

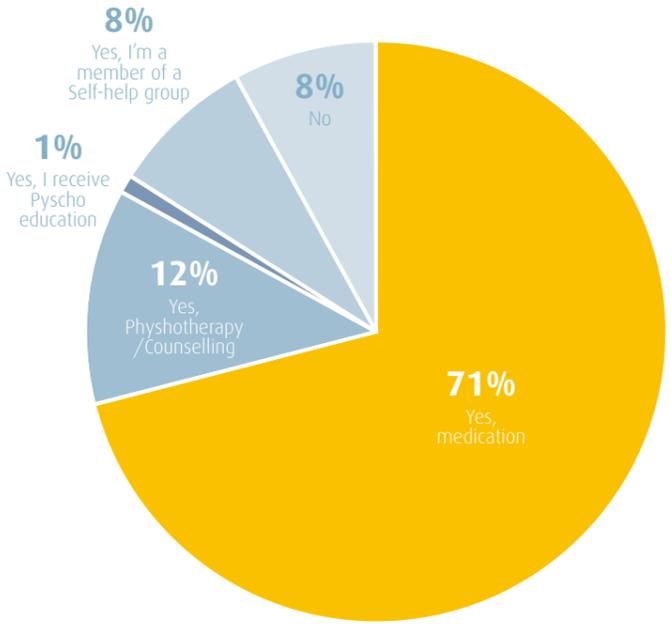


Figure 7 - Are you currently under any treatment?

Most respondents receive mainly medical treatment (71%). In addition, 12% indicates that they are in psychotherapy/counselling; 8% indicates to be a member of a self-help group and 8% has no treatment.



Sexual Health

In this section, we present the results on the questions about sexual health.

Are you satisfied with your sexual life?

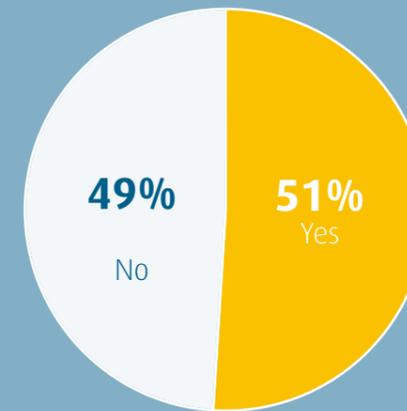


Figure 8 - Are you satisfied with your sexual life?

Do you feel free when exercising your sexuality?

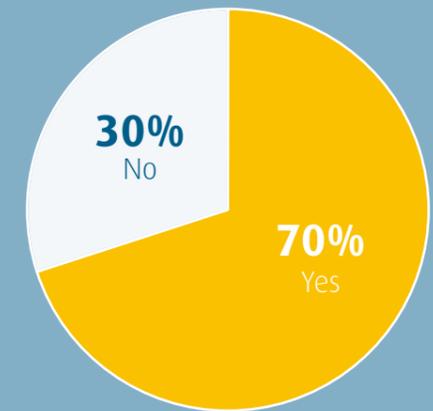


Figure 9 - Do you feel free when exercising your sexuality?

Yet, 70% of the respondents feel free during exercising their sexuality

Did you ever experience a traumatic sexual experience in the past or any kind of sexual abuse?

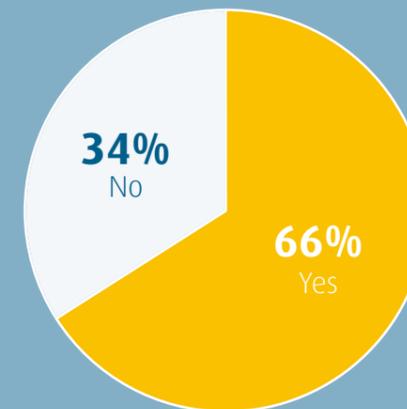


Figure 10 - Did you ever experience a traumatic sexual experience in the past or any kind of sexual abuse?

Among the respondents, 34% experienced a traumatic sexual experience or sexual abuse

Have you ever suffered any kind of sexual dysfunction?

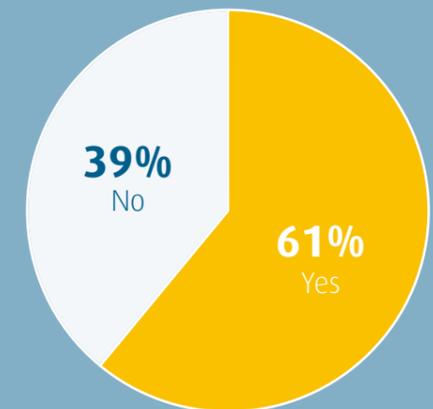


Figure 11 - Have you ever suffered any kind of sexual dysfunction?

Moreover, 39% has suffered a sexual dysfunction

Table 4 - Traumatic sexual experiences/abuse and sexual dysfunction

Of those respondents who experienced a traumatic sexual event or sexual abuse, 52% suffered a sexual dysfunction. Of those who did not experience a sexual trauma or abuse, 33% suffered from a sexual dysfunction.

Did you ever experience a traumatic sexual experience in the past or any kind of sexual abuse?

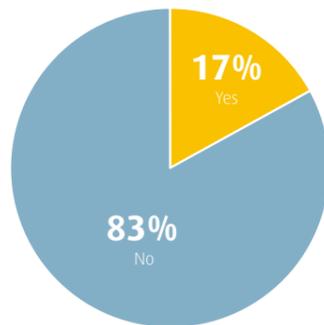
	Have you ever suffered any kind of sexual dysfunction?		
	No	Yes	Total
No	67%	33%	100%
Yes	48%	52%	100%
Total	61%	39%	100%

$\chi^2(1) = 9.1^{**}$

Do you believe to have a sexual addiction?

Figure 12 - Do you believe to have a sexual addiction?

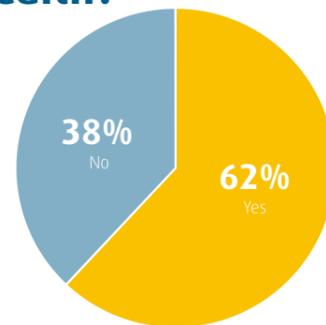
Among the participants in the sample, 17% indicates to have a sexual addiction.



Do you feel comfortable talking about sexual health?

Figure 13 - Do you feel comfortable talking about sexual health?

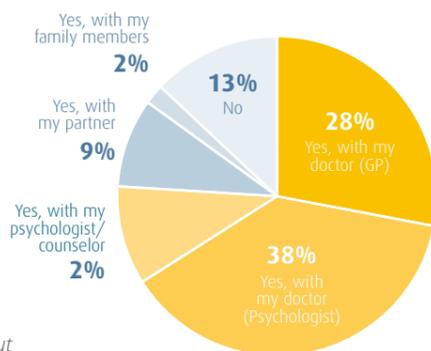
A large majority (62%) feels comfortable talking about sexual health.



Do you have the opportunity to discuss sexuality issues with someone?

Figure 14 - Do you have the opportunity to discuss sexuality issues with someone?

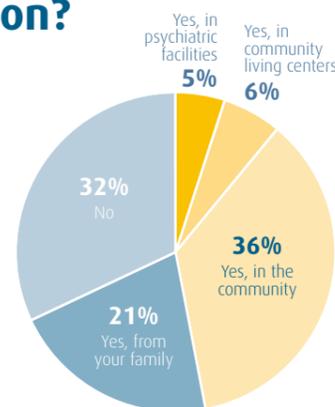
About 64% of the respondents have the opportunity to discuss sexuality issues with their doctor (GP: 28%; psychiatrist: 38%); about 10% can talk about this with their psychologist/counselor or with their partner/family; 13% can not talk about it.



Did you ever receive sexuality and reproduction related information and/or education?

Figure 15 - Did you ever receive sexuality and reproduction related information and/or education?

32% never received sexuality and reproduction related information or education; 36% received this information/education in the community whereas 21% got the information from their family. 5% received the information in psychiatric facilities and 6% in community living centers.



Do you believe this information was correct?

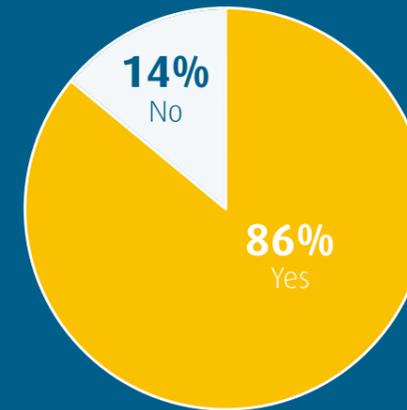


Figure 16 - Do you believe this information was correct?

Of those respondents who received the information/education, 86% considered this information as correct.

Do you believe to have enough information available concerning sexual transmitted infections (STIs)?

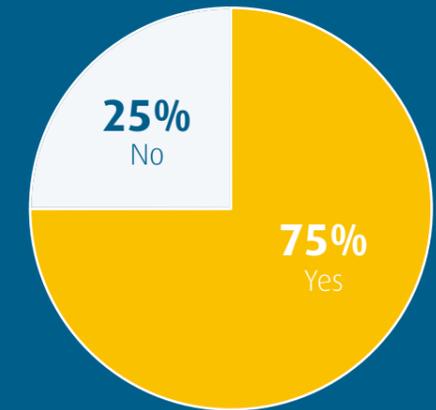


Figure 17 - Do you believe to have enough information available concerning STIs?

Three out of four respondents agreed to have enough information concerning sexual transmitted infections (STIs).

Do you believe you have enough access and information about contraceptives?

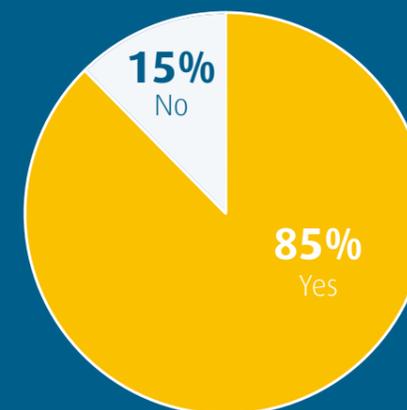


Figure 18 - Do you believe you have enough access and information about contraceptives?

Somewhat more respondents (85%) indicate to have enough access and information about contraceptives.

In case of pregnancy do you have access to medical services?

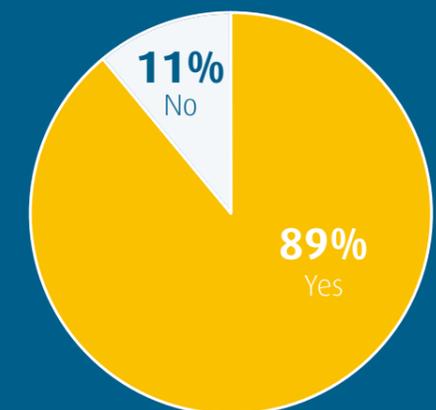


Figure 19 - In case of pregnancy do you have access to medical services?

In our total sample, 89% of the respondents indicated they had access to medical services in case of pregnancy. Among the female respondents, 94% indicated they had access to medical services in case of pregnancy.

Background Characteristics & Sexual Health

Gender & sexual health

Table 5 - Percentage of male and female respondents answering 'yes' on questions about sexual health

	Male	Female	Total	X ² (1)
Do you feel free when exercising your sexuality? (Yes)	78%	65%	70%	5.6*
Did you ever experience a traumatic sexual experience in the past or any kind of sexual abuse? (Yes)	22%	42%	34%	12**
Have you ever suffered any kind of sexual dysfunction? (Yes)	47%	33%	39%	5.3*
Do you believe to have a sexual addiction? (Yes)	30%	8%	17%	23.2***
Do you believe you have enough access and information about contraceptives? (Yes)	79%	89%	85%	4.9*

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

Among the respondents, men (78%) indicate more often to feel free when exercising their sexuality as compared to women (65%). Furthermore, women (42%) experienced more often a sexual trauma or abuse than men (22%). On their turn, men (47%) more often have suffered a kind of sexual dysfunction than women (33%). Moreover, men (30%) also more often indicate to have a sexual addiction than women (8%). Women (89%) believe more often than men (79%) to have enough information and access to contraceptives. All of these results are significant.

Education & sexual health

Table 6 - Percentage of respondents with a primary/secondary or university degree answering 'yes' on questions about sexual health

	Primary or secondary school	University (undergraduate, master or PhD)	Total	X ² (1)
Do you believe to have enough information available concerning STIs? (Yes)	67%	81%	75%	6.5*
In case of pregnancy do you have access to medical services? (Yes)(female)	88%	97%	94%	5.3*

*p<.05

Respondents with a university degree more often state that they have enough information concerning STIs. Among the female respondents, those with a university degree have more access to medical services in case of pregnancy.



Age & sexual health

Table 7 - The average age of people experiencing a sexual dysfunction or not

Have you ever suffered any kind of sexual dysfunction?
Average age

Yes	No
47y	43y

Living in a large city & sexual health

Table 8 - Percentage of respondents living or not in a large city answering 'yes' on questions about sexual health

Do you believe you have enough access and information about contraceptives? (Yes)

Not living in a large city	Living in a large city	Total	$\chi^2(1)$
91%	81%	85%	5.2*

In case of pregnancy do you have access to medical services? (Yes) (female)

Not living in a large city	Living in a large city	Total	$\chi^2(1)$
99%	91%	94%	4.5*

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

People not living in large cities significantly more often indicate to have enough access and information about contraceptives and to have access to medical services in case of pregnancy.

Sexual orientation & sexual health

Table 9 - Percentage of respondents with a heterosexual or other sexual orientation answering 'yes' on questions about sexual health

Did you ever experience a traumatic sexual experience in the past or any kind of sexual abuse? (Yes)

Heterosexual	Other	Total	$\chi^2(1)$
29%	57%	34%	12.5***

Have you ever suffered any kind of sexual dysfunction? (Yes)

Heterosexual	Other	Total	$\chi^2(1)$
36%	54%	39%	5.5*

Do you believe you have enough access and information about contraceptives? (Yes)

Heterosexual	Other	Total	$\chi^2(1)$
82%	96%	85%	5.0*

Did you ever asked your doctor to change your medication because of side effects that affected your sexual health?

Heterosexual	Other	Total	$\chi^2(1)$
19%	35%	21%	4.5*

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

People with a non-heterosexual orientation experienced more often a sexual trauma or abuse and suffered more often of sexual dysfunction as compared to heterosexuals. Besides, they believe more often to have access and information about contraceptives and asked their doctor more frequently to change their medication because of side effects that affected their sexual health.

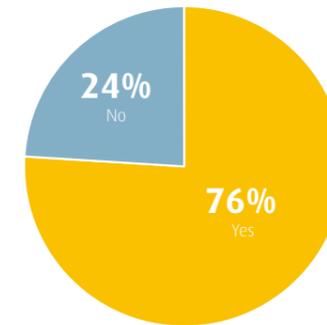
Mental Health, Treatment & Sexual Health

Questions about the relationship between mental health, treatment and sexual health

Do you believe your mental condition impact your sexual life?

Figure 20 - Do you believe your mental condition impact your sexual life?

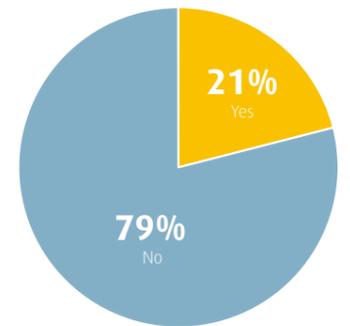
More than 3 out of 4 respondents is convinced that their mental condition influences their sexual life.



Did you ever ask your doctor to change your medication because of side effects that affected your sexual health?

Figure 22 - Did you ever ask your doctor to change your medication because of side effects that affected your sexual health?

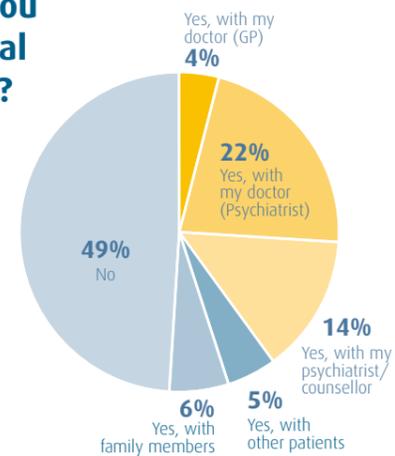
Almost 4 out of 5 respondents did never ask their doctor to change medication because of side effects affecting their sexual health.



Have you discussed any changes in your sexual behaviour after you started any mental health treatment?

Figure 21 - Have you discussed any changes in your sexual behaviour after you started any mental health treatment?

A large majority (62%) feels comfortable talking about sexual health.



Diagnoses and sexual health

Table 10 - Percentage of respondents with a particular diagnosis answering 'yes' on questions about sexual health

	Schizophrenia	Bipolar disorder	Depression	Other/don't know	Total	$\chi^2(3)$
Do you feel free when exercising your sexuality? (Yes)	65%	80%	75%	61%	70%	8.5*
Have you ever suffered any kind of sexual dysfunction? (Yes)	25%	35%	44%	51%	39%	10.7*
Do you believe to have enough information available concerning sexual transmitted infections (STIs)? (Yes)	55%	80%	77%	83%	75%	16.4***
Do you believe to have enough access and information about contraceptives? (Yes)	70%	88%	88%	90%	85%	12.6**
Have you discussed any changes in your sexual behavior after you started any mental health treatment? (Yes)	35%	63%	55%	48%	51%	12.7*

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

While people who have been diagnosed with bipolar disorder, feel most free in exercising their sexuality, people diagnosed with schizophrenia (1) experienced less sexual dysfunctioning, (2) received less information on STIs and contraceptives and (3) did not discuss changes in their sexual behavior after starting mental health treatment.

Treatment and sexual health

Table 11 - With who did you discuss changes in your sexual behaviour after you started any mental health treatment (in relationship with the diagnosis)?

	Professionals (GP, psychiatrist, psychologist/ counsellor)	Others (patients, family)	Nobody	Total
Schizophrenia	25%	10%	65%	100%
Bipolar disorder	52%	11%	37%	100%
Depression	43%	11%	45%	100%
Other/don't know	38%	10%	52%	100%
Total	41%	11%	49%	100%

$\chi^2(6) = 12.7^*$

People who have been diagnosed with schizophrenia, are less inclined to talk to their professional about changes in their sexual behaviour in comparison with people with the diagnosis of for instance bipolar disorder.

Table 12 - With who did you discuss changes in your sexual behaviour after you started any mental health treatment (in relationship with the type of treatment)?

	Professionals (GP, psychiatrist, psychologist/ counsellor)	Others (patients, family)	Nobody	Total
Medication	42%	11%	47%	100%
Psychotherapy/counselling	59%	13%	28%	100%
Psycho education	33%	0%	67%	100%
Member of a self help group	32%	18%	50%	100%
No treatment	14%	0%	86%	100%
Total	41%	11%	49%	100%

$\chi^2(8) = 20.7^{**}$

People who did not get any treatment are less inclined to discuss changes in their sexual behaviour with others, including professionals. People receiving psychotherapy (59%) or medication (42%) are most inclined to discuss these changes with professionals.

Conclusion

In this report, we give an overview of the results of the GAMIAN-Europe survey on mental and sexual health. In general about 76% of the respondents believe that their mental condition impacts their sexual health. We conclude that at least people perceive that mental health influences sexual health.

Firstly, we described the background characteristics of the respondents. The sample is overrepresented by respondents from Belgium, Slovakia and Portugal. To interpret all results, we have to take this finding into account. There were also somewhat more female than male respondents. Most respondents are heterosexual.

Secondly, as regards the mental health diagnosis of the respondents, there are three main categories: bipolar disorder (29%), schizophrenia (19%) and depression (17%). Besides 20% of the respondents report 'other', often referring to multiple diagnoses. People with a bipolar disorder report more often to feel free when exercising their sexuality as compared to the other respondents. They also more often discuss changes in their sexual behaviour with professionals. People diagnosed with schizophrenia report to have received less information about STIs and contraceptives and did discuss less often changes in their sexual behavior after they started mental health treatment as compared to the other respondents.

Thirdly, regarding their mental health treatment, most respondents receive medical treatment. Respondents on medication most often didn't discuss changes in their sexual behavior with anyone after starting mental health treatment whereas people following psychotherapy or counselling most often talk with professionals about these changes. Furthermore, almost 4 out of 5 respondents did never ask their doctor to change medication because of side effects affecting their sexual health.

Fourthly, only 51% of the respondents is satisfied with their sexual life whereas 70% feels free in exercising their sexuality. A lot of respondents (34%) -mostly female respondents and non-heterosexual respondents- have experienced a traumatic sexual experience or sexual abuse in the past. Even more respondents (39%) have suffered a sexual dysfunction, especially older participants. Among those respondents who experienced a sexual trauma in the past, 52% reported to have suffered a kind of sexual dysfunctioning, as compared to 33% of those who didn't experience a traumatic sexual event. Another remarkable finding is that 17% indicates to have a sexual addiction. Mainly male respondents report to have a sexual addiction in comparison with female respondents.

Finally, most respondents feel comfortable talking about sexual health. Most of them talk about sexuality issues with their doctor. Yet, 13% do not discuss this with anyone. A large majority of respondents received enough information concerning sexual transmitted infections or contraceptives. People who followed university studies (undergraduate of master/PhD) have more information available concerning STIs or have more access to medical services in case of pregnancy. People living in a large city report to have less access and information about contraceptives or access to medical services in case of pregnancy as compared those who do not live in a large city.



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