Reviewer's report

Title: Mental Illness in Metropolitan, Urban and Rural Georgia Populations

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Reviewer: Tonelle Handley

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting and important paper exploring mental illness across metropolitan, urban and rural Georgia.

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
While initially the research question appears well-defined, it is at times unclear whether the key question of interest relates to mental illness across geographical areas, or to mental illness in people with CFS-like symptoms. The relevance of functional somatic symptoms is initially referred to only briefly in the introduction, yet is a key part of the study design and sampling strategy (discretionary revision)

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
Methods appear appropriate, and for the most part are well described. However, some aspects would benefit from clarification. For example, the section describing the process of weighting the data does not give a clear picture of how the data were weighted, or by which factors.

3. Are the data sound?
Yes, the data appear to be sound and obtained through a well-designed study.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
A substantial amount of data is reported in the results section. The inclusion of 12 tables may be excessive, especially considering that many of these tables are referred to only in passing in the results section, and are not discussed in terms of their relevance to the research question. In several cases it would enhance the overall readability of the manuscript if these results were presented in a more concise form. For example, the information in Tables 7 and 12 may be more clearly communicated by reporting the significant findings in-text, rather than presenting entire (almost identical) tables with very few significant differences between groups. For the data presented in Table 4, the test statistics, not just p-values, should be reported. In the case of results which are not reflected on in the discussion, the authors may like to reconsider whether their inclusion is adding to the overall aims of the paper.
5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

Yes, the discussion is based on findings from the present analysis, and does not draw conclusions beyond the scope of the data. However, the discussion and conclusions focus only on a subset of the analyses conducted; many of the results are not discussed or elaborated on in any way.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
Yes, limitations are discussed.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
Yes, the authors refer multiple times to the BRFSS, both in the introduction and when discussing the implications and applicability of results. The introduction is backed up by appropriate referencing of previous research.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
The abstract is well written and provides a good summary of the key findings presented in the manuscript. The title may be more appropriate if it gave some reference CFS-related aspects of the paper (discretionary revision).

9. Is the writing acceptable?
Yes, the manuscript is well written.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**
I declare that I have no competing interests