COVID-19: impact on mental health

30th October 2020

**Title:** Mental health and wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic: longitudinal analyses of adults in the UK COVID-19 Mental Health & Wellbeing study

The British Journal of Psychiatry | 21st October 2020

Rates of suicidal thoughts have increased during lockdown, especially among young adults, a longitudinal study has found.

Research published in the *British Journal of Psychiatry* found that women, young adults, socially disadvantaged people, and people with pre-existing mental health problems reported the worst mental health outcomes in the initial six week period of national lockdown.

The study—funded by the Samaritans, the Scottish Association for Mental Health, and the Mindstep Foundation—claims to be the most detailed examination to date of the mental health of UK adults in the weeks after they were instructed to stay at home, on 23 March 2020. Researchers surveyed a national sample of 3077 adults three times from 31 March to 11 May. Participants have been followed up throughout the pandemic, and further results will be published in the coming months.

The study found that the proportion of respondents reporting that on at least one day in the previous week they had wanted to end their life increased from 8.2% to 9.2% and then to 9.8%, over the three waves of the study. These rates were highest in young adults (aged 18-29), rising from 12.5% to 14.4% throughout the three waves. The authors note that direct comparisons cannot be made but that this past week rate is higher than an 11% past year suicidal ideation rate reported by young adults in another pre-covid-19 study.

Full document: [Mental health and wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic: longitudinal analyses of adults in the UK COVID-19 Mental Health & Wellbeing study](https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/F7321CBF45C749C788256CFE6964B00C/S0007125020002123a.pdf/mental_health_and_wellbeing_during_the_covid19_pandemic_longitudinal_analyses_of_adults_in_the_uk_covid19_mental_health_wellbeing_study.pdf)

See also: [Suicidal thoughts increased in young adults during lockdown, UK study finds](https://www.bmj.com/content/371/bmj.m4095) | BMJ

**Title:** The Impact Of Covid-19 To Date On Older People’s Mental And Physical Health

Age UK | 9th October 2020

This research finds that some older people are coping with the pandemic, but a sizeable minority are finding life incredibly tough. Those who are not very well and have long term health conditions were particularly likely to report that this is an extremely challenging time for them.

The research was made up of a survey of older people, their friends, families, and loved ones (promoted across the Age UK social media channels for two weeks in August 2020 and completed by 569 people) and representative online polling of 1,364 people over the age of 60, conducted by Kantar Polling in September 2020.

Full report: [The Impact of Covid-19 to date on Older People’s Mental and Physical Health](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/health--wellbeing/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-older-people_age-uk.pdf)

**Title:** NHS strengthens mental health support for staff

NHS England | 20th October 2020

NHS staff will get rapid access to expanded mental health services that are being rolled out across the country as part of efforts to deal with the second wave of coronavirus.

NHS England and NHS Improvement will invest an extra £15 million to strengthen mental health support for nurses, paramedics, therapists, pharmacists, and support staff.

Staff referred by themselves or colleagues will be rapidly assessed and treated by local expert mental health specialists. Those with the most severe needs will be referred to a specialist centre of excellence.

The investment will fund outreach work among those deemed most as risk such as critical care staff.

Full detail: [NHS strengthens mental health support for staff](https://www.england.nhs.uk/2020/10/strengthening-mental-health-support-for-staff/)

**Title:** Two fifths of doctors say pandemic has worsened their mental health

BMJ | 2020; 371:m4148 | 27th October 2020

More than two fifths of doctors in the UK say that their mental health is now worse than before the pandemic, a BMA survey has found.

The association received responses from 6610 doctors working across England to a snapshot survey it conducted in October. Of the 6550 doctors who responded to a question about their mental wellbeing, 43% said that they were currently experiencing work related depression, anxiety, stress, burnout, emotional distress, or other mental health condition and that it was worse than it had been before the pandemic started.

Of 6559 doctors who responded to a follow-up question, a third (32%) said that their health and wellbeing were slightly worse than it had been during the first wave of the pandemic and 10% said it was much worse. More than a third (37%) said it was the same, while 21% said it was better.

Full detail: [Two fifths of doctors say pandemic has worsened their mental health](https://www.bmj.com/content/371/bmj.m4148)

**Title:** Pre-pandemic psychiatric disorders and risk of COVID-19

 The Lancet Healthy Longevity | 26th October 2020

Psychiatric morbidities have been associated with a risk of severe infections through compromised immunity, health behaviours, or both. However, data are scarce on the association between multiple types of pre-pandemic psychiatric disorders and COVID-19. This study aimed to assess the association between pre-pandemic psychiatric disorders and the subsequent risk of COVID-19 using UK Biobank.

The findings suggest that pre-existing psychiatric disorders are associated with an increased risk of COVID-19. These findings underscore the need for surveillance of and care for populations with pre-existing psychiatric disorders during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Full paper: [Pre-pandemic psychiatric disorders and risk of COVID-19: a UK Biobank cohort analysis](https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S2666-7568%2820%2930013-1)

**Title:** Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2020

NHS Digital | 22nd October 2020

This is the first in a series of follow up reports to the Mental Health and Young People Survey (MHCYP) 2017, exploring the mental health of children and young people in July 2020, during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and changes since 2017. Experiences of family life, education and services, and worries and anxieties during the COVID-19 pandemic are also examined.

The sample for the Mental Health Survey for Children and Young People, 2020 (MHCYP 2020), wave 1 follow up was based on 3,570 children and young people who took part in the MHCYP 2017 survey, with both surveys also drawing on information collected from parents. Cross-sectional analyses are presented, addressing two primary aims:

Aim 1: Comparing mental health between 2017 and 2020 – the likelihood of a mental disorder has been assessed against completion of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) in both years in Topic 1 by various demographics.

Aim 2: Describing life during the COVID-19 pandemic - the report examines the circumstances and experiences of children and young people in July 2020 and the preceding months.

Full detail: [Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2020: Wave 1 follow up to the 2017 survey](https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-of-children-and-young-people-in-england/2020-wave-1-follow-up)

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