COVID-19: impact on mental health

5th February 2021

**Title:** Survey reveals the mental and physical health impacts of home working during Covid-19

Royal Society for Public Health | 4th February 2021

With working from home set to continue for millions of UK workers, research by RSPH shows that there are key health and wellbeing disparities between different groups of people who made the move to home working as a result of Covid-19.

**The polling revealed that:**

* Overall, more people felt working from home was better for their health and wellbeing (45%), compared to around one third (29%) who thought working from home was worse for their health and wellbeing
* However, people who switched to working from home as a result of Covid-19 had experienced health and wellbeing impacts, with the most common being feeling less connected to colleagues (67%), taking less exercise (46%), developing musculoskeletal problems (39%) and disturbed sleep (37%)
* Over one in four (26%) are working from home from either a sofa or a bedroom
* Nearly half (48%) of people who work from a sofa or bedroom said they had developed musculoskeletal problems and nearly two thirds (59%) said they felt more isolated from their colleagues
* Women were more likely than men to feel isolated (58% of women V 39% of men) and develop musculoskeletal problems (44% of women V 29% of men) as a result of working from home
* Home working is having an impact on people’s mental health, with 67% saying they felt less connected to their colleagues and 56% saying they found it harder to switch off. However only a third of respondents had been offered support with their mental health (34%) from their employer.
* People who live with multiple housemates were more likely to think that working from home was worse for their health and wellbeing (41%), compared to people who live on their own (29%) or with just their partner (24%)

The findings of the survey also showed that the vast majority of people didn’t want to go back to working in an office full time, with nearly three quarters of people (74%) saying that they wanted to split their time between home working and working in an office.

Further detail:  [Survey reveals the mental and physical health impacts of home working during Covid-19](https://www.rsph.org.uk/about-us/news/survey-reveals-the-mental-and-physical-health-impacts-of-home-working-during-covid-19.html#.YBwNmoIwQMM.twitter)

Full report: [Disparity Begins at Home: How home working is impacting the public’s health](https://www.rsph.org.uk/static/63790689-3678-4432-829561bdb7f6420e/Workingfromhomepolicypaper2221.pdf)

**Title:** Obstacles, Challenges, and Benefits of Online Group Psychotherapy

American Journal of Psychotherapy | 2nd February 2021

Although telepsychiatry is not new, the COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically boosted and legitimized it, especially in the field of group therapy. Group therapists have been forced to move online without enough training in leading online groups. Online groups are not the same as meeting in person and present specific obstacles and challenges that should either be compensated for or acknowledged as losses.

In this article, the author summarises these obstacles, identifying factors in group therapy, such as body-to-body interaction, that are absent online and suggesting ways to compensate for other differences, such as the therapist's reduced control over the setting.

Surprisingly, some group members may benefit from online groups more than from in-person ones, but the online format is not for everyone. Research on online therapy has already shown this format's effectiveness, and the therapeutic alliance that is positively correlated with outcome seems to be achievable online as well. However, more research is needed, especially on cohesion in online groups, which seems to develop slower online.

Further detail: [Obstacles, challenges, and benefits of online group psychotherapy](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33525914/)

**Title:** COVID’s mental-health toll: how scientists are tracking a surge in depression

Nature | 3rd February 2021

As the COVID-19 pandemic enters its second year, new fast-spreading variants have caused a surge in infections in many countries, and renewed lockdowns. The devastation of the pandemic — millions of deaths, economic strife and unprecedented curbs on social interaction — has already had a marked effect on people’s mental health.

Researchers worldwide are investigating the causes and impacts of this stress, and some fear that the deterioration in mental health could linger long after the pandemic has subsided. Ultimately, scientists hope that they can use the mountains of data being collected in studies about mental health to link the impact of particular control measures to changes in people’s well-being, and to inform the management of future pandemics.

Full detail: [COVID’s mental-health toll: how scientists are tracking a surge in depression](https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-021-00175-z)

**Title:** What helped the UK cope with the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns?

What Works Centre for Wellbeing | January 2021

Researchers of the COVID-19 Social Study examined the relationship between how we spent our time on different activities during the working week (Monday-Friday) and the impact on our mental health and wellbeing between the end of March and the end of May 2020. They analysed responses to the Office for National Statistics - Opinions and Lifestyle Survey and identified a number of strategies that were effective coping mechanisms during the first wave of the lockdown in 2020.

Key findings:

* Staying connected to friends and family was the most important coping mechanisms identified by people during the UK’s first lockdown.
* Gardening and exercise had the biggest association with supporting people’s wellbeing, while following Coid-19 related news had the most negative effects on our wellbeing
* Different people have different coping strategies. Some of us prefer to problem solve, while some of us try to avoid our difficulties. Others rely on emotional reframing or the social support of their friends and family.
* It is important to recognise which strategies are more helpful for our mental health and long-term wellbeing.
* Research has clearly shown that physical activity such as exercising or gardening has improved mental health and wellbeing during the pandemic.
* Some people have also used arts and cultural engagement as a way to cope.
* There may be long-term impacts on our wellbeing from negative changes to eating, drinking alcohol and gambling behaviours. This is especially the case for those who were already at-risk from these issues. A wellbeing-based recovery will depend on helping people access and choose healthier styles of coping.

Full report: [What helped the UK cope with the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns?](https://whatworkswellbeing.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/coping-strategies-Covid-19-Jan2021-WhatWorksWellbeing.pdf)

**Title:** Nurses and female health care workers most at risk of distress during Covid-19 pandemic

University of Sheffield | 5th February 2021

Researchers at the University of Sheffield have conducted the largest global review of the factors linked to psychological distress in health care workers during the Covid-19 pandemic:

* The study found nurses and females are most likely to experience psychological distress during an infectious disease outbreak
* Findings show distress for health care workers can persist for up to three years after the initial outbreak
* Health care workers who reported facing stigma during the pandemic experienced greater distress
* Social support, perceiving control, sufficient information about the outbreak and proper protection were associated with less psychological distress

Further detail: [Nurses and female health care workers most at risk of distress during Covid-19 pandemic](https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/news/nurses-and-female-health-care-workers-most-risk-distress-during-covid-19-pandemic)

Full review: [Factors associated with psychological distress in health-care workers during an infectious disease outbreak: A rapid systematic review of the evidence](https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyt.2020.589545/full)

**Title:** Psychological support to healthcare workers during COVID-19: Considerations for healthcare providers

The Manchester Briefing on COVID-19 | 22nd January 2021

Research on several disease outbreaks in recent decades has found that frontline healthcare workers show high stress levels and are more at risk of developing symptoms of depression, anxiety and burn-out in the short and long-terms.

Initial research on COVID-19 replicates those findings. Stressors that healthcare workers are confronted with can be numerous. While being exposed to the same societal and emotional stressors as the general population during the COVID-19 pandemic, health care workers are additionally exposed to stressors that are unique to their work environment, for example, from taking on new roles and responsibilities, working in Personal Protective Equipment, the risks of infection and infecting others, and moral distress.

High stress levels over prolonged periods can negatively affect the wellbeing of healthcare workers, so organisations must balance these stressors with the demands on services such as a surge in patient care over an extended period.

Considering these factors, healthcare organisations should support staff no matter what their role, seniority, or experiences. This means that healthcare organisations should provide access to support structures that workers can approach individually, while also including psychosocial support. Good leadership and psychosocial support go hand in hand to build resilience.

This briefing discusses stressors and then reports on results of a survey of healthcare personnel and the stressors they experience. It ends by suggesting how organisations can build and maintain personal resilience among their frontline workers during COVID-19.

Full detail: [The Manchester Briefing on COVID-19](https://www.alliancembs.manchester.ac.uk/media/ambs/content-assets/documents/news/the-manchester-briefing-on-covid-19-b28-wb-22nd-january-2021.pdf) (see Briefing A : Psychological support to healthcare workers during COVID-19: Considerations for healthcare providers)

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We also produce a range of subject-specific news feeds to ensure our clinical and professional teams stay up to date with developments in their work areas. Please visit our [website](http://www.trftlibraryknowledge.com/) for more information

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