COVID-19: impact on mental health

 3rd September 2021

**Title:** Why we need to make space for grief

BMJ | 2021; 374: n2144 | 2nd September 2021

The past 18 months have seen more than their share of human tragedy. Some four million people have died as a result of the covid-19 pandemic, and over 35 million have been bereaved. Grief is the natural and inevitable response, writes Lucy Selman, but for many it has been aggravated by the wider effects of the pandemic: poor experiences at the end of life, limited contact in the days before death, being unable to say goodbye in person, social isolation and loneliness, and the disruption to funerals and collective mourning.

Full detail: [Why we need to make space for grief](https://www.bmj.com/content/374/bmj.n2144)

**Title:** One in seven children may still have symptoms 15 weeks after infection, data show

BMJ | 2021; 374: n2157 | 1st September 2021

A large study of children and young people who caught SARS-CoV-2 has found that as many as one in seven (14%) may still have symptoms 15 weeks later. However, this figure is lower than in some studies that have reported a prevalence of long covid as high as 51% in children and young people.

The researchers found that 15 weeks after their PCR test 66.5% of people who had tested positive and 53.3% of those who had tested negative had one or more symptoms. About 30% of those who had tested positive for covid-19 had three or more symptoms, compared with 16% of those who tested negative. This enabled the researchers to conclude that 14% of people who test positive for covid have persistent symptoms. The most common symptoms reported were headaches and tiredness.

Further detail: [One in seven children may still have symptoms 15 weeks after infection, data show](https://www.bmj.com/content/374/bmj.n2157)

Full research: [Long covid—the physical and mental health of children and non-hospitalised young people 3 months after SARS-CoV-2 infection; a national matched cohort study (The CLoCk) Study](https://assets.researchsquare.com/files/rs-798316/v1/8322114d-03ed-42ad-8fdb-883a05a64643.pdf?c=1628633145)

**Title:** Deaths from suicide that occurred in England and Wales: April to July 2020

Office for National Statistics | 2nd September 2021

* This is the first assessment of suicides in England and Wales, based on official death registrations, that occurred during the early months of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, until now not feasible because of death registration delays.
* 1,603 suicides occurred between April and July 2020 in England and Wales, the most complete period because of the late registration of deaths, equivalent to an age-standardised mortality rate of 9.2 deaths per 100,000 people; this rate is statistically significantly lower than rates for the same period in the previous three years, however, is statistically similar to the rate in 2016.
* The lower suicide rate was primarily driven by a decrease for males; the male suicide rate (13.9 deaths per 100,000 males) was statistically significantly lower than rates in the same period between 2017 and 2019, whereas the female rate (4.7 deaths per 100,000 females) showed no statistically significant change with earlier years.
* Between April and July 2020, age-specific suicide rates in England and Wales statistically significantly decreased for those aged 10 to 24 years and 25 to 44 years, when compared with the same period in 2019
* These statistics are consistent with other research including real-time suicide surveillance in England and international research studies during the pandemic.
* Deaths caused by suicide in England and Wales are investigated by coroners, resulting in registration delays; while these provisional data for 2020 suicides will be underestimates, late registrations for suicides between April and July 2020 are unlikely to fully explain the decrease, as most suicides for this period will now be registered even when allowing for disruption to coroners’ inquests caused by the pandemic.

Full detail: [Deaths from suicide that occurred in England and Wales: April to July 2020](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/articles/deathsfromsuicidethatoccurredinenglandandwales/aprilandjuly2020)

**Title:** Effects of COVID-19 lockdown on eating disorders and obesity: A systematic review and meta-analysis

European Eating Disorders Review | 30th August 2021

This systematic review and meta-analysis aimed to examine: the pooled prevalence of symptomatic behaviours and mental health deterioration amongst individuals with eating disorders (EDs) and obesity during the COVID-19 confinement. Moreover, we examined changes in EDs and distress before and during the confinement, and the association between psychosocial factors and EDs symptoms.

The majority of individuals with EDs and obesity reported symptomatic worsening during the lockdown. However, further longitudinal studies are needed to identify vulnerable groups, as well as the long-term consequences of COVID-19.

Full paper: [Effects of COVID-19 lockdown on eating disorders and obesity: A systematic review and meta-analysis](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/erv.2861)

**Title:** Mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and youth – a systematic review

Child & Adolescent Mental Health | 28th August 2021

Key messages

* Children and adolescents are at crucial phases of development, making them more susceptible to negative mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and response measures.
* In this review, children and adolescents were found to experience more depressive and anxious symptoms than reported prepandemic rates, specifically with high levels of fear and concern regarding the impact of COVID-19 on their lives.
* Factors associated with worse COVID-19 mental health outcomes were older adolescent age, female gender, neurodiversity, and the presence of chronic physical conditions.
* While this review captures emerging data, study designs that utilize validated measures and undertake longitudinal data capture will greatly improve understanding of impacts.
* Pandemic-associated negative impacts on child and adolescent mental health are clear and must be monitored and addressed as societal restrictions are lifted to mitigate short- and long-term impacts.

Full paper: [Mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and youth – a systematic review](https://acamh.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/camh.12501)

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