

First study on the health conditions of adults one month into COVID-19 lockdown

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A new study provides some of the earliest pieces of evidence that the COVID-19 outbreak affected people mentally as well as physically.

The preliminary results reveal adults in locations more affected by COVID-19 had distress, and lower physical and mental health, and life [satisfaction](#).

Researchers from the University of Adelaide, Tongji University and University of Sydney surveyed 369 adults living in 64 cities in China after they had lived under one-month of confinement measures in February this year.

Led by Dr. Stephen Zhang from the University of Adelaide, the study identifies adults with existing health conditions and those who stopped working as most at risk of worse mental and [physical health](#).

"As many parts of the world are only just beginning to go into lockdown, we examined the impact of the one-month long lockdown on people's health, distress and life satisfaction," said Dr. Zhang.

"The study offers somewhat of a '[crystal ball](#)' into the [mental health](#) of Australian residents once they have been in the lockdown for one month."

More than a quarter of the participants worked at the office during the lockdown period while 38 percent worked from home and 25 percent stopped work due to the outbreak.

Published in Psychiatry Research, the study suggests adults living in locations more affected by COVID-19 reported negative life satisfaction only among adults with chronic medical issues but not for those without existing health issues.

Co-author on the study, Professor Andreas Rauch from the University of Sydney said; "We weren't surprised that adults who stopped working reported worse mental and physical [health conditions](#) as well as distress.

Work can provide people with a sense of purpose and routine, which is particularly important during this global pandemic."

Study participants who exercised for more than 2.5 hours per day reported worse life satisfaction in more affected locations while those who exercised for half an hour or less during the lockdown reported positive [life satisfaction](#).

"We were really surprised by the findings around exercising hours because it appears to be counter-intuitive," said lead author Dr. Zhang.

"It's possible adults who exercised less could better justify or rationalise their inactive lifestyles in more severely affected cities. More research is needed but these early findings suggest we need to pay attention to more physically active individuals, who might be more frustrated by the restrictions."

More information: Stephen X Zhang et al, Unprecedented disruption of lives and work: Health, distress and life satisfaction of working adults in China one month into the COVID-19 outbreak, *Psychiatry Research* (2020). [DOI: 10.1016/j.psychres.2020.112958](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2020.112958)

Provided by University of Sydney

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