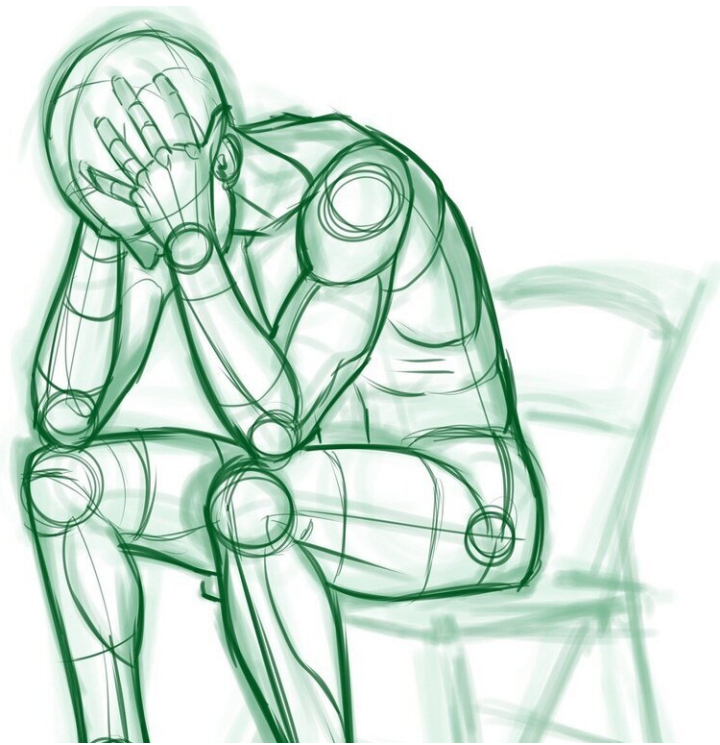


3 in 5 adults who thought about suicide received no mental health support in lockdown

July 15 2020, by Jake Hawkes



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

During the first month of lockdown nearly a fifth of people reported having thoughts of self-harm or suicide, but only 42% of those thinking about self-harming or suicide and 57% of people who self-harmed had

accessed mental health services.

This is according to a new analysis of the UCL Covid-19 Social Study published in the *British Journal of Psychiatry*.

The researchers found that from 21 March to 20 April, 8,000 out of 44,000 people reported thoughts of [self-harm](#) or suicide, and 5% of those (2,174 people) deliberately harmed themselves at least once since the start of the UK's lockdown.

Overall, 9% (4,121) experienced psychological or physical abuse. Around half of those respondents had thoughts of suicide or self-harm, while a quarter had engaged in self-harm behaviors during the past week.

Lead author, Dr Daisy Fancourt (UCL Epidemiology & Health Care) said: "It is crucial that we understand how people are being affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and in particular who is most at risk for adverse experiences. The COVID-19 Social Study is highlighting that substantial numbers of people have been experiencing serious mental [health](#) difficulties during lockdown without access to vital support."

The Royal College of Psychiatrists has warned of an increase in mental health referrals as a result of the lockdown. Psychiatrists were concerned about patients staying away from [mental health services](#) up until reaching a crisis point during the lockdown.

Dr Adrian James, president of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, said: "The pandemic has had a serious negative impact on mental health. We are concerned by the number of people who were not able to get support during [lockdown](#). This could lead to a deterioration in people's mental health and an increase in demand for services. To meet this anticipated demand we need to see [urgent action](#) from the government to deliver significant and sustained investment. Without it, services will struggle to

cope and we will continue to see many people with mental illness unable to access the help they need."

The researchers analyzed data from the UCL COVID-19 Social Study on the psychological and social experiences of adults in the UK during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants in the study completed online questionnaires on a weekly basis. The 44,000 people who filled in the questionnaire might not be representative of the overall population, as although it was weighted to population proportions, participants were not recruited randomly. Recruitment involved partnership work with charities representing [vulnerable people](#) who may have therefore been more likely to report self-harm or abuse.

More information: Eleonora Iob et al. Abuse, self-harm and suicidal ideation in the UK during the COVID-19 pandemic, *The British Journal of Psychiatry* (2020). [DOI: 10.1192/bjp.2020.130](https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.2020.130)

Provided by University College London

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