

Lockdown lifestyle link to poor mental health in Scotland

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A rise in negative health behaviors—such as lack of sleep, exercise and an unhealthy diet—is connected to poorer mental health during the tightest restrictions of Scotland's COVID-19 lockdown, a new study has

confirmed.

Research conducted on 20 May 2020 and led by University of the West of Scotland (UWS), in partnership with Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU), has concluded that these changes contributed to a higher negative [mood](#) and that maintaining, or even improving, [health](#) behaviors in a lockdown situation is key to sustaining positive mental health.

The study, funded by the Chief Scientist Office (CSO), also found a link between increased [alcohol consumption](#) when living with children, and a poorer diet if the person's working status had been affected by COVID-19.

Dr. Joanne Ingram, Lecturer in the School of Education and Social Sciences at UWS, said: "When the Scottish Government instigated the initial societal lockdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many subsequently experienced significant lifestyle changes, alongside the stresses of potentially catching the virus or experiencing bereavement. We know that stressful situations and poorer health behaviors, such as higher alcohol consumption, [unhealthy diet](#), poorer sleep quality and physical inactivity are frequently linked to poor mental health; however, our objective was to examine changes in health behaviors and their relationship with negative mood during the COVID-19 lockdown."

The study found that:

- Increased alcohol consumption was linked to living with children, but not to negative mood.
- Poorer diet was linked to more-negative mood, and to changes to working status. Those who had changed their work status due to the COVID-19 pandemic reported that their diet had become unhealthier.
- Poorer sleep quality was linked with more-negative mood, and

with 'shielding' from the virus. Shielding was the only COVID-19-related factor which was associated with changes in sleep quality.

- Being less physically active was related to more-negative mood and student status, with those studying [full-time](#) seeing a greater reduction in their physical activity.
- Being more physically active was linked to having or suspecting COVID-19 infection within the household. Households where COVID-19 had been experienced or suspected were associated with increasing their physical activity.

Dr. Joanne Ingram added: "This study adds to reports on poor mental health during lockdown and identifies lifestyle restrictions and changes to health behaviors which may be responsible for higher negative mood. Our data suggests that it is advisable to maintain or improve health behaviors during pandemic-associated restrictions, which is important to highlight whilst restrictions are on-going."

Dr. Christopher Hand from the Department of Psychology at Glasgow Caledonian University, said: "While we found a relationship between negative change in health behaviors and higher negative mood, our results weren't all doom-and-gloom. We saw that large numbers of people were able to make healthy changes during [lockdown](#), and these positive changes were associated with better mental health outcomes."

More information: Joanne Ingram et al. Changes in Diet, Sleep, and Physical Activity Are Associated With Differences in Negative Mood During COVID-19 Lockdown, *Frontiers in Psychology* (2020). [DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.588604](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.588604)

Provided by University of the West of Scotland

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