

Under 55's found lockdown most challenging, finds survey

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A UK wide survey of 2252 adults, carried out five weeks into the first lockdown revealed 95% of those who took part were following lockdown restrictions. Of that 95% more than 80% reported finding it challenging. Adjusting to changes in daily routines, and mental and physical health struggles were the most common challenges faced by

participants. Women and adults under the age of 55 were most likely to report experiencing challenges.

The research, 'What challenges do UK adults face when adhering to COVID-19-related instructions? Cross-sectional survey in a representative sample', was published in the journal, *Preventive Medicine* today, 2 March. It was conducted by researchers at The Manchester Centre for Health Psychology and the National Institute for Health Research Greater Manchester Patient Safety Translational Research Centre (NIHR GM PSTRC). The Centre is a partnership between The University of Manchester and Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust. .

Dr. Chris Keyworth, research fellow in the Behavioural Science sub theme at the GM PSTRC and lead for this study, said: "Our research shows that during the first UK [lockdown](#) a high proportion of the people we surveyed did stick to the government rules. Understanding the impact of this on mental health is vital when looking at how to encourage people to do this long term and into the future.

"The first step is to identify the biggest challenges people faced and for which age group and gender."

The challenge the most people reported facing was the changes in [daily routines](#), followed by the impact on mental health and then the issues around physical health.

Dr. Keyworth continued: "According to our survey more than 40% of people said they struggled with their mental health during the first lockdown. This is interesting because, in comparison, according to a 2016 study, one in six people reported experiencing a common mental health problem in a given week in England. This goes some way in quantifying the profound affect the restrictions had on the population at the time."

The research highlights the importance of tailoring public health messages to age groups, genders or those with certain characteristics. The study's findings suggest an urgent need to prioritise interventions which address the physical, psychological and social impacts of the pandemic. These may include interventions that aim to help people to change habits and support them in establishing new routines when faced with the sudden introduction of strict rules such as lockdown. Greater investment in services to improve physical and [mental health](#) that can be delivered remotely should also be a priority. Home-based interventions to promote physical health should be developed and more work put into improving access to healthcare professionals remotely.

These interventions should then be targeted at women, those under 55 and people without care commitments as they were identified as the most likely to struggle during a full lockdown.

Professor Chris Armitage, lead of the GM PSTRC's Behavioural Science sub theme, said: "The findings show that by-and-large, the British public have been adhering to government COVID-19 instructions, but following the government lockdown rules comes at a personal cost. Greater attention needs to be paid to how following the rules can be sustained with targeted support measures."

Dr. Keyworth concluded: "Lockdown is undoubtedly challenging and, to ensure any future government restrictions and guidelines are followed it is important to learn from the behaviour of the population at a time when a high number of people were following the rules. We hope that our research will help to improve patient safety by aiding understanding. It can be used to guide the design of interventions and inform public health messaging both now and into the future."

More information: Chris Keyworth et al, What challenges do UK adults face when adhering to COVID-19-related instructions? Cross-

sectional survey in a representative sample, *Preventive Medicine* (2021).
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