

Study reveals impact of lockdown on violence in a UK capital city

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The first UK COVID-19 lockdown saw a "rapid and sustained" fall in violence outside the home in the Welsh capital city, a new study led by Cardiff University has shown.

Researchers from Cardiff University's Crime and Security Research

Institute (CSRI) and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention studied data from Cardiff's sole emergency department (ED) from March to June 2020 and compared it to weekly data from January 2019 onwards.

They found there were almost 60% fewer attendances per week for violent injury outside the home in the first lockdown during which time going outside was allowed only for limited reasons like medical need, exercise or food shopping. The researchers also found a significant reduction in the use of weapons and in violence-related ED visits by males of all ages. Contrary to expectation, the analysis found no significant increase in visits resulting from violence inside the home. The findings—the first analysis of violence from this perspective during the COVID-19 pandemic—are published today in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Lead author Professor Jonathan Shepherd, from the CSRI, said: "This sudden fall in violent injury is the largest any of us has ever seen. It's likely to reflect closure of city centre pubs and clubs in and around which most violence takes place, and widespread compliance with lockdown restrictions."

The researchers investigated the association between COVID-19 lockdown and ED visits for violence-related injuries using detailed violence screening first implemented in Cardiff two decades ago. They studied violence time, whether it took place inside or outside the home, weapon use, perpetrator type and the age and sex of the injured.

They examined visits at Cardiff's only emergency department—at the University Hospital of Wales—for violence-related injury from 1 January 2019 to 9 June 2020. The pre-lockdown period studied was 63 weeks and the lockdown period, 12 weeks.

They used a "difference-in-difference" regression model to identify statistically significant changes during lockdown. This model accounted for [seasonal changes](#) in the number of attendances.

For violence outside the home, they found significant decreases in ED visits during the lockdown of 92% among females under the age of 18 and 65% in males of all ages, and a significant decrease (92%) in those injured with a weapon. While people injured by strangers decreased significantly (65%), numbers of those injured by family members did not change significantly.

Regarding violence in the home, no significant change was found in any category.

"The lack of evidence of increase in violence in the home during the first UK [lockdown](#) is reassuring," said Professor Shepherd.

"The massive decrease outside the home but no increase in the home reflects the nature of the two environments. The night-time economy (pubs and clubs and the streets where they are situated) is an environment which facilitates violence and violent injury.

"On the other hand, in our study, the home environment is much less conducive to violence and [violent injury](#). People who would have been injured in violence in the night-time economy are not injured in violence when they stay at home."

The researchers found that during these first months of the COVID-19 epidemic ED visits for all reasons dropped by 43% relative to the previous year. They said that while fears about catching COVID-19 may have affected the number of violence related ED visits, it is unlikely this affected the overall findings.

Cardiff University is due to release an England and Wales analysis of [violence](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic next month.

More information: Association between COVID-19 lockdown measures and emergency department visits for violence-related injuries in Cardiff, Wales, March-June 2020, *Journal of the American Medical Association* (2021). [DOI: 10.1001/jama.2020.25511](https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2020.25511)

Provided by Cardiff University

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