

Why good weather did nothing to lift spirits in lockdown

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Come rain or shine, the weather did nothing to ease or worsen the mental health consequences of COVID-19—according to new research from the University of East Anglia and the University of Essex.

The first wave of the COVID-19 [pandemic](#) saw more people suffer [mental health problems](#) in the UK.

But a new study published today shows that—contrary to popular belief—daily or weekly [weather conditions](#) made no impact on people's mental [health](#) during this period.

Dr. Apostolos Davillas, from UEA's Norwich Medical School, said: "During the first wave of the COVID-19 outbreak, the first UK lockdown was announced on March 23, 2020, with a final easing of the restrictions a few months later on July 4.

"We know that lockdown restrictions, and the resulting impact on social life and the economy, are linked to at least two major negative public health consequences—a reduction in [physical exercise](#), both indoors due to the closure of gyms and outdoors due to mobility restrictions, and deterioration of mental health.

"Previous research before the pandemic hit revealed links between [weather](#) conditions and wellbeing. And our own research has shown that the first wave of the pandemic saw more people suffer mental health problems.

Dr. Ben Etheridge, from the Department of Economics, University of Essex, said: "We wanted to find out if adverse weather conditions during the first lockdown led to worse mental health and less outdoor recreational activity—not least because lockdown restrictions after a certain time designed to permit limited outdoor activity."

The research team studied data from the UK Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS), which launched a COVID-19 survey to examine the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, and Google COVID-19 Mobility Reports to explore outdoor recreational activity at different stages of the

pandemic.

They also studied location-specific weather conditions, including the temperature and amount of rainfall and sunshine, to see how the weather impacted the participants' mental health and park use.

Dr. Apostolos Davillas, from UEA's Norwich Medical School, said: "We found reduced park mobility during the initial period of the first UK lockdown. Just after the first lockdown was announced, park mobility reduced by about 50 percent in London, compared to the pre-[lockdown](#) January-February 2020 period.

"But when we looked at weather data, we found that—contrary to popular belief—daily or weekly weather conditions did not exacerbate the mental health consequences of the pandemic.

"This surprised us because we expected to see that bad weather might exacerbate poor mental health, and sunny weather might lift people's moods—particularly as it's easier to get out of the house for exercise or to see other people outside in good weather.

"We did find links between park mobility and weather over the same period. In other words, people were going out to the parks more in good weather," he added.

"Weather, mental health and mobility during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic" is co-authored by Ashley Burdett (University of Essex), Apostolos Davillas (University of East Anglia) and Ben Etheridge (University of Essex) and published in *Health Economics* on June 15, 2021.

More information: Ashley Burdett et al, Weather, mental health, and mobility during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, *Health*

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