

COVID-19 school closures take toll on mental health of older children

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(HealthDay)—Older children, Black and Hispanic children, and children

from families with lower income who attended school remotely during the pandemic in 2020 experienced disproportionate mental health difficulties, according to a study published online Sept. 3 in *JAMA Network Open*.

Matt Hawrilenko, Ph.D., from the University of Washington in Seattle, and colleagues estimated the association between school closures and child [mental health outcomes](#) across sociodemographic characteristics. The analysis included survey responses collected between Dec. 2 and Dec. 21, 2020, from 2,324 U.S. adults with at least one school-aged child living in their household.

The researchers found that children attending school in person had higher household incomes (mean difference, \$9,719) and were more likely to be White than children attending remotely (65.8 versus 44.5 percent). More mental health difficulties were seen in [older children](#) in remote schooling than those attending in-person schooling (standardized effect size, 0.23 per year older), yielding small effect sizes favoring in-person schooling for older children and very small effect sizes favoring remote schooling for younger children. There was a larger benefit from attending schools in person for children from families with a higher income versus peers from families with a [lower income](#).

"These findings suggest that allocating funding to support safe in-person instruction may reduce mental health inequities associated with race/ethnicity and income," the authors write.

More information: [Abstract/Full Text](#)

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