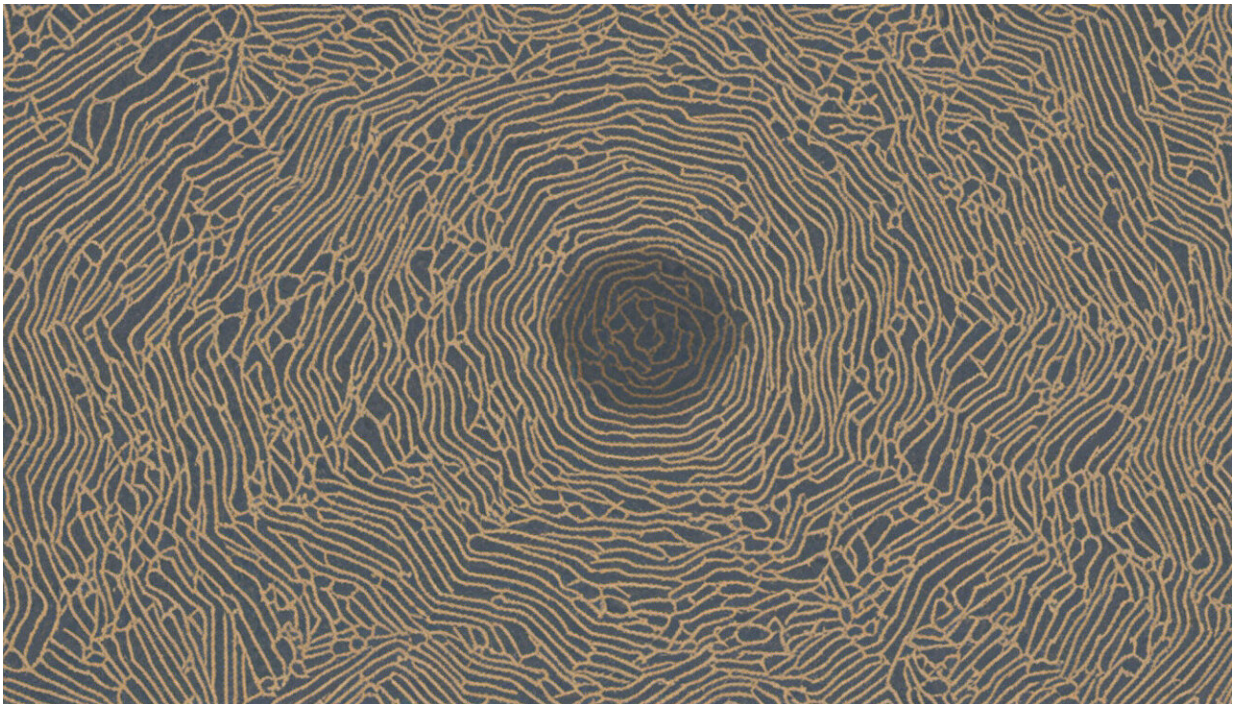


COVID's economic fallout increased risks for poor mental health, study finds

November 18 2022, by Vanessa Villafuerte



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A study published today by the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research shows that the economic effects of COVID-19 increased the risk for poor mental health among California adults.

The research, which draws data from the 2020 California Health

Interview Survey, revealed that because the pandemic disrupted many California adults' ability to pay for housing, basic necessities and child care, it increased the risk of psychological distress, which in turn severely impaired their daily functioning.

During the first year of the pandemic, 12% of the respondents reported that they had experienced serious psychological distress, and 11% reported moderate psychological distress. Those who had difficulties with finances or child care due to the pandemic were up to twice as likely to have serious or moderate psychological distress.

"In order to reduce the additional risk of psychological distress and severe impairment related to COVID-related economic hardships, policymakers need to give all Californians access to the financial and [social resources](#) that will help bridge the gap in economic insecurity," said Imelda Padilla-Frausto, a scientist at the [research center](#). "Recovery from the pandemic begins with addressing many longstanding inequities across the state."

The research revealed that marginalized racial and ethnic groups were disproportionately affected:

- 15% of Latino adults lost their jobs and 26% had their [work hours](#) reduced; for white adults, those figures were lower—11% and 22%.
- 16% of Black and African American adults said they had difficulty paying their rent or mortgage, versus 11% of Latinos, 9% of people of Asian descent and 5% of white residents.
- 15% of Black and African American adults said they had difficulty paying for other basic necessities due to the pandemic, compared with 12% of Latinos, 8% of people of Asian descent and 6% of white residents.

While the pandemic seemed to shine a light on those issues, UCLA researchers said these racial and ethnic inequities existed prior to COVID-19.

Additionally, COVID-related financial and child care struggles increased the risk of severe functional impairment—meaning difficulties carrying out day-to-day tasks such as household chores, work or school responsibilities, and issues surrounding their [social life](#) and personal relationships—for adults with serious or moderate psychological distress.

The risk for severe functional impairment among adults with serious or moderate psychological distress was significantly higher for people who had financial or child care struggles due to the pandemic.

For example, 55% of those who had serious or moderate psychological distress and who also had difficulties with child care said their [personal relationships](#) were severely impaired—and 55% of that group also said their ability to carry out [household chores](#) was severely impaired. The struggles also took a toll on people's social lives: 53% of those who had serious or moderate psychological distress and challenges with [child care](#) said their ability to manage their social life was severely impaired.

More information: Increased Risk of Poor Mental Health and Severe Mental Health-Related Impairment Among California Adults Impacted by COVID-19. [healthpolicy.ucla.edu/publicat ... tail.aspx?PubID=2347](https://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/publicat...tail.aspx?PubID=2347)

Provided by University of California, Los Angeles

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