

Study finds substantial increases in psychological distress during the initial COVID-19 wave in the UK

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New research published in *Economic Inquiry* reports substantial increases in psychological distress in the UK during the first wave of the

COVID-19 pandemic.

Mental health effects were more pronounced for females; younger individuals; Black, Asian, and minority ethnic communities; and migrants. Also, people who had financial worries, loneliness, or were living in overcrowded dwellings experienced significantly worse mental health deterioration during the first wave.

The study used data from the UKHLS, also known as Understanding Society, which is a household panel dataset that captures, among other things, information from adults about their economic and [social circumstances](#), lifestyle, employment, [family relationships](#), and mental health.

"We found that the average [mental health](#) deterioration from the first wave was significantly larger than that associated with some distressing events such as divorce and widowhood, and it was also a sizable fraction of the mental fallout associated with unemployment. We also found significant variation in impacts across people with different life circumstances," said corresponding author Gaston Yalonetzky, Ph.D., of Leeds University Business School, in the UK. "We hope these findings will help inform policy responses to future pandemics whose recurrence cannot be ruled out, sadly."

More information: Locked down in distress: a quasi-experimental estimation of the mental-health fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, *Economic Inquiry* (2023). [DOI: 10.1111/ecin.13181](https://doi.org/10.1111/ecin.13181) , onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ecin.13181

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