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wellbeing surveillance report: Spotlight - age groups Published 8 September 2020 This Spotlight is part of a <u>series</u> within the <u>COVID-19</u>: <u>mental health and</u> Contents wellbeing surveillance report. The report is about population mental health and Graphs tracking age inequality in the wellbeing in England during the COVID-19 pandemic. It includes up to date population information to inform policy, planning and commissioning in health and social 2. Young adults are care. It is designed to assist stakeholders at national and local level, in both

COVID-19: mental health and

reporting worse mental

Research and analysis

inequalities?

England

- adults 6. In summary

- government and non-government sectors. health and wellbeing 3. Comparison with pre-The report is regularly updated with the most recent information available. It COVID-19 trends currently reflects information up to week 30 of 2020. The report follows a 4. Is COVID-19 leading to standard structure, to enable regular and easy use. greater differences in mental health by age, or The spotlight series describes variation and inequality in the population. reflecting pre-existing This spotlight presents intelligence on potential inequalities by age. Evidence 5. Experience of older of different mental health and wellbeing experiences are presented for people

children and young people.

It is important to note that:

document

population

 scales on graphs are not the same surveys may not be representative (see <u>Caveats</u>) the basis for the intelligence included is presented in the Methodology

aged 18 and over. A separate chapter of the report describes the experiences of

1. Graphs tracking age inequality in the

Younger adults tend to report worse mental health and wellbeing during the pandemic. These differences may have narrowed over the weeks since

lockdown.

provided by UCL and used with permission.

Lockdown 23 March

MAJOR STRESS – Covid-19 (% reporting)

10

5

0

- **ANXIETY** (GAD-7 score, >5=mild, >10=moderate) UCL Covid-19 Social Study. Panel of over 70,000 adults weighted to national population. Data provided
 - by UCL and used with permission. Latest week Lockdown easing Lockdown 23 March 10 5

10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30

10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30

— 18-29 — 30-59 — 60+

calendar week

calendar week

Latest week

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calendar week

Latest week

Latest week

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calendar week

- 18-29 - - 30-59 - 60+

- 18-29 --- 30-59 --- 60+

— 18-29 **—** 30-59 **—** 60+

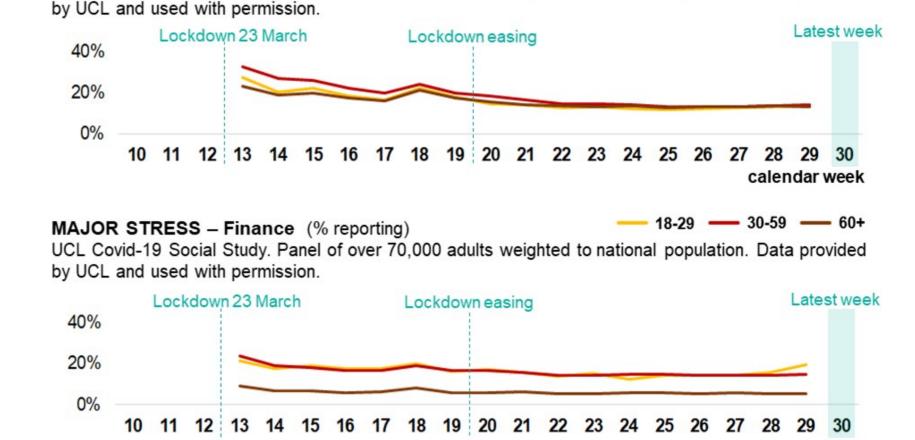
— 18-29 — 30-59 — 60+ DEPRESSION (PHQ-9 score, >5=mild, >10=moderate) UCL Covid-19 Social Study. Panel of over 70,000 adults weighted to national population. Data provided by UCL and used with permission. Latest week Lockdown easing Lockdown 23 March 10 5 0



UCL Covid-19 Social Study. Panel of over 70,000 adults weighted to national population. Data

Lockdown easing

10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30



UCL Covid-19 Social Study. Panel of over 70,000 adults weighted to national population. Data provided

Lockdown easing

11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27

SELF REPORTED SELF-HARM (% reporting self-harming or deliberately hurting themselves).

UCL Covid-19 Social Study. Panel of over 70,000 adults weighted to national population. Data provided

Lockdown easing

11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27

THOUGHTS OF DEATH / SELF-HARM (% reporting these thoughts).

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by UCL and used with permission.

Lockdown 23 March

40%

20%

0%

10%

5%

0%

Lockdown 23 March

UCL Covid-19 Social Study. Panel of over 70,000 adults weighted to national population. Data provided



The first indications that the mental health and wellbeing effect of the

depression, anxiety, stress and trauma to be higher than pre-pandemic

third cohort study established in late March 2020.³

decreased with age⁵

trends

women and 9.1% in men). 9

before the pandemic.

adults 10

 $(1.6)^{11}$

last 5 years. 14

6. In summary

3. CSS Descriptive Reports ←

2020. Pre-release publication. ←

those aged 50 to 64^{12}

pandemic may be particularly adverse for younger adults were from 2 cohort

studies established in April 2020. They found mean self-reported scores for

population norms, and that younger respondents were more likely to report

Since then, further studies have supported these findings and added detail:

studies, found young adults had higher risks of general psychiatric disorders

and loneliness $\frac{4}{2}$, and that probable depression, anxiety and low wellbeing

restrictions has remained high - almost double the pre-pandemic levels 6

that young adults, already at higher risk of experiencing loneliness before

• 2 studies, using April 2020 data from pre-existing longitudinal cohort

worse symptoms. 12 This was supported by initial descriptive statistics from a

the pandemic, were now at even higher risk and that being a university student may also be a risk factor 1 • that younger adults were more likely than older adults to report increasing rather than decreasing loneliness between late March and early May 2020^8

3. Comparison with pre-COVID-19

that the prevalence of anxiety in young adults after easing COVID-19

as those aged 65 and over (10% 65 to 74, 8% 75 and over). 9 Between the 2007 and 2014 APMS surveys, increases in CMD were evident among late midlife men and women (aged 55 to 64), and approached

symptoms between young men and women increased. In 1993, 16 to 24 year

have symptoms of CMD. By 2014 this had increased to almost 3 times (26% in

Differences by age and gender in the population's mental health were present

differences in mental health by age, or

reflecting pre-existing inequalities?

There is now evidence that between March and June 2020 young adults

experienced worsening mental health and wellbeing compared to older age

groups. This increase is likely to be as a result of COVID-19 and the national

old women (19.2%) were twice as likely as 16 to 24 year old men (8.4%) to

significance in young women (aged 16 to 24). The gap in rates of CMD

4. Is COVID-19 leading to greater

It is important to view recent evidence in the context of background changes in

mental health and wellbeing by age. For instance, the 2014 Adult Psychiatric

Morbidity Survey (APMS) found that people aged 16 to 64 (17% to 18%) were

around twice as likely to report symptoms of common mental disorders (CMD)

response. Multiple studies, using data from the same cohort of people surveyed before and during the pandemic, help to provide this evidence. These studies found that: • while there was an overall decline in mental well-being after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, this decline was larger for younger adults than older

• the increase of average population GHQ-12 scores (used to measure mental

Increases were greatest in 18 to 24 year olds (2.7) and 25 to 34 year olds

increased from 23.3% in 2017 to 2019 to 36.8% in April 2020, but the rise

was 8.6 percentage points greater among those aged 18 to 34 compared to

although psychological distress substantially increased one month into the

• the percentage of participants classified as experiencing CMD overall

distress) between 2018 to 2019 and April 2020 was 0.5 points higher than

expected, after accounting for prior upward trends between 2013 and 2019.

COVID-19 lockdown for all (prevalence rising from 19% in 2017 to 2019 to 30% in April 2020), the increase was most pronounced in people aged under 45¹³ • younger people have reported higher overall levels of loneliness, and that there has been an increase in the proportion of young people feeling lonely $\frac{13}{13}$

One pre-existing cohort study (with a convenience sample) that focuses on

loneliness and decreases in physical activity. However, overall levels are lower

than those reported by younger adults and have been consistently low for the

This is broadly supported by data from the Understanding Society cohort. Data

from the April 2020 wave suggests that, among people aged 55 and over there

older adults (aged 50+) found slight increases in average self-reported

depression and anxiety symptoms and that these were associated with

5. Experience of older adults

However, one study, when considering data from April and May 2020 identified that between 20% and 25% of older respondents presented as new potential cases of CMD in April (which is higher than anticipated), although this returned to expected levels in May (10%), compared to 40% to 50% of younger

8. Feifei Bu, Andrew Steptoe, Daisy Fancourt. Loneliness during lockdown:

publication. ←

Household Longitudinal Study. 2020. Pre-release publication. ← 13. Claire L Niedzwiedz and others. Mental health and health behaviours before and during the COVID-19 lockdown: Longitudinal analyses of the UK

in the UK. 2020. Pre-release publication. ←

- 15. Tarani Chandola, Meena Kumari, Cara L Booker, Michaela J Benzeval. The mental health impact of COVID-19 and pandemic related stressors among adults in the UK. 2020. Pre-release publication. ←
- **Coronavirus (COVID-19)** The UK has left the EU

was no evidence of a change in mental health and wellbeing due to COVID-19 11 . respondents in April, and 20% in May 15 .

For adults there appears to be an underlying relationship between age and the

reporting both worse symptoms and a larger deterioration in mental health. On

1. Mark Shevlin and others. Anxiety, Depression, Traumatic Stress, and COVID-

19 Related Anxiety in the UK General Population During the COVID-19

2. Ru Jia and others. Mental health in the UK during the COVID-19 pandemic:

4. Lambert Zixin Li and Senhu Wang. Prevalence and predictors of general

5. Alex Siu Fung Kwong and others. Mental health during the COVID-19

pandemic in 2 longitudinal UK population cohorts. 2020. Pre-release

psychiatric disorders and loneliness during COVID-19 in the United Kingdom.

impact of COVID-19 on mental health and wellbeing. Younger adults are

average, older age groups appear to have been less affected so far.

Pandemic. 2020. Pre-release publication. ←

early observations. 2020. Pre-release publication.

6. Alex S. F. Kwong. Longitudinal Evidence for Persistent Anxiety in Young Adults Through COVID-19 Restrictions. 2020. Pre-release publication ← 7. Feifei Bu, Andrew Steptoe, Daisy Fancourt. Who is lonely in lockdown? Cross-cohort analyses of predictors of loneliness before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. 2020. Pre-release publication. ←

trajectories and predictors during the COVID-19 pandemic in 35,712 adults

9. Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey: Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing,

10. Ben Etheridge and Lisa Spantig. The gender gap in mental well-being during

11. Matthias Pierce and others. Mental Health Before and During the COVID-19

Pandemic: A Longitudinal Probability Sample Survey of the UK Population.

England, 2014 [Internet]. NHS Digital. [cited 2020 Aug 28] ← ←2

the COVID-19 outbreak: evidence from the UK. 2020. Pre-release

12. Michael Daly, Angelina Sutin and Eric Robinson. Longitudinal changes in mental health and the COVID-19 pandemic; evidence from the UK

2020. Pre-release publication. \leftarrow \leftarrow $\stackrel{2}{\leftarrow}$ 2

publication. ←

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activity and mental health during COVID-19: a longitudinal analysis of depression and anxiety between 2015 and 2020. 2020. Pre-release publication. ←

Household Longitudinal Study. 2020. Pre-release publication. $\leftarrow 2$

14. Byron Creese, Zunera Khan, William Henley and others. Loneliness, physical

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