

How did Covid-19 affect young people's mental health?

What is this study about?

For many young people in the UK, the Covid-19 pandemic affected lives both at home and at school through social restrictions, school closures, and disruptions to both schoolwork and exams. This situation has even been more difficult for youngsters from low-income households or marginalised communities. There were a lot of unexpected changes for young people. But what was the impact on their mental health?

Read this summary and you can find out:

- To what extent young people's mental health was affected by Covid-19
- What other factors contributed to their mental distress during the pandemic



How did we do the study?

Using data from the Resilience, Ethnicity, and AdolesCent Mental Health (REACH) study, the researchers looked to examine the impacts of the first period of social and economic restrictions in the UK on the mental health of young people from diverse backgrounds. Participants in the study were secondary school students from two socially and ethnically diverse inner-city London boroughs, Southwark and Lambeth, with more than 80% from minority ethnic groups.

What did we find?

Social Impact of Covid-19 and mental distress - Young people expressed multiple concerns:

- Problems at home, especially for youngsters from low-income households and minority ethnic groups
- Issues with exams, grades, and schoolwork,
- Not seeing friends

Impact of Challenging Circumstances - There was strong evidence of increased mental stress among:

- Those living in challenging circumstances due to financial hardships and poor housing conditions
- Those directly affected due to worse family relationships, isolation, and unstable routines
- Those expressing multiple concerns related to impacts of the pandemic

Why is this important?

Understanding the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on young people's mental health is important in developing appropriate responses to mitigate these in the most affected groups. Accordingly, addressing these mental health challenges requires social and economic policy changes, public health strategies, and community-based and school-wide interventions.

What can I do with this?

I am a student: You can use this summary to understand what you and your friends have experienced and ask for appropriate help from teachers, parents and carers

I am a school teacher: You can use this study to help students identify mental health implications from Covid-19 and provide necessary support

I am a parent / guardian / carer: You can use this summary if you have witnessed young people under your care having difficulties from Covid-19 restrictions and help them understand the implications of these issues on their mental health

I am a researcher: You can use this study as a reference to promote or start new research to address the lack of data and insights about the impact of Covid-19 on young people's mental health

I am a policy-maker: You can use this study to identify needs, consult with relevant stakeholders and draft policies that will support young people influenced by Covid-19

I want to know more!

You can reach out to gemma.knowles@kcl.ac.uk or craig.morgan@kcl.ac.uk for further information or visit: www.thereachstudy.com. Read the primary paper [here](#) or look up the citation below.

Knowles, G., Gayer Anderson, C., Turner, A., Dorn, L., Lam, J., Davis, S., Blakey, R., Lowis, K., Schools Working Group, Young Persons Advisory Group and Pinfold, V., 2022. Covid 19, social restrictions, and mental distress among young people: a UK longitudinal, population based study. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*