The COVID-19 Social Study

Findings from the UK's largest study on the psychological and social impact of the pandemic

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UK Research and Innovation

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COVID-19 Social Study

Nuffield Foundation

COVID-19 Social Study

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70,000
participants

1.2m
surveys over 105 weeks

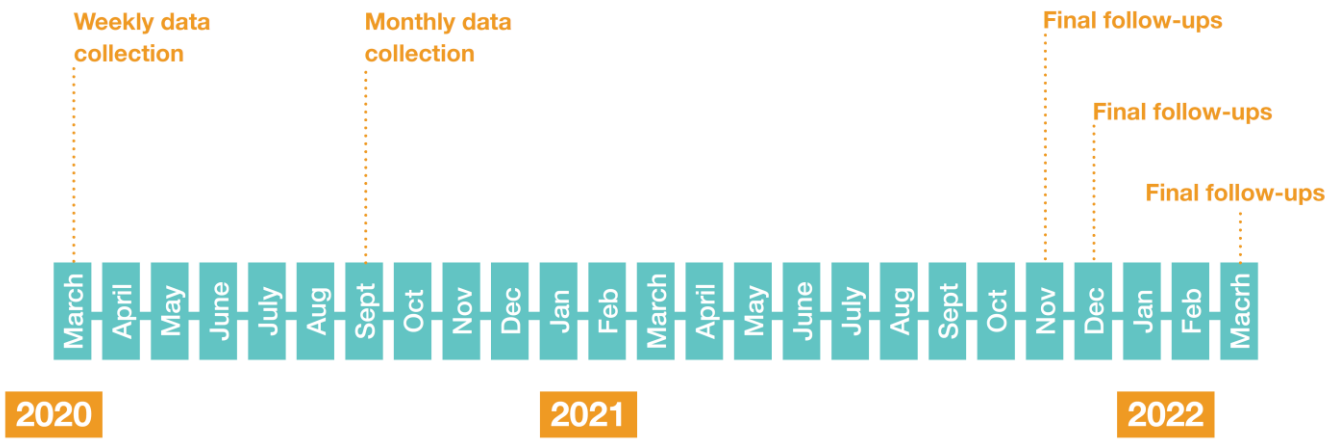
400
interviews

100
papers

40+
reports

24+
keynotes

1,000
media pieces



Topics in the study

Repeated questions

- **Diagnosis/experience of Covid-19**
- **Covid-19 attitudes** (understanding of Covid-19, understanding of rules, adherence, confidence in government, confidence in health service / other services, attitudes to vaccination)
- **Mental health** (wellbeing, depression, anxiety, stressors, abuse, self-harm, use of mental health services)
- **Adverse experiences** (bereavement, job loss, financial issues, issues with access to essentials)
- **Social behaviours** (isolation, loneliness, social support, self-isolation, time spent outdoors, face-to-face contact, video contact, life differences)
- **Health behaviours** (sleep, smoking, alcohol, food consumption, diet, exercise)
- **Time use** (contact, leisure, work, home-schooling)

Modules

- **Additional time use** (volunteering, arts engagement, faith and religion)
- **Psychological factors** (control, frustrations and expectations, coping styles, fear of COVID-19, resilience, optimism, locus of control, empathy, mental health diagnoses, personality)
- **Further adverse experiences** (life events, use of financial support, life changes, discrimination, challenges in accessing healthcare during Covid-19)
- **Further behaviours** (weight change, gambling behaviours)
- **Further social factors** (neighbourhood, relationships)

+ Rich demographic data

DOWNLOAD
WEEKLY REPORTS

Real-time data analysis & reporting

WEEKLY ANALYSED DATA PROVIDED TO:

Cabinet Office

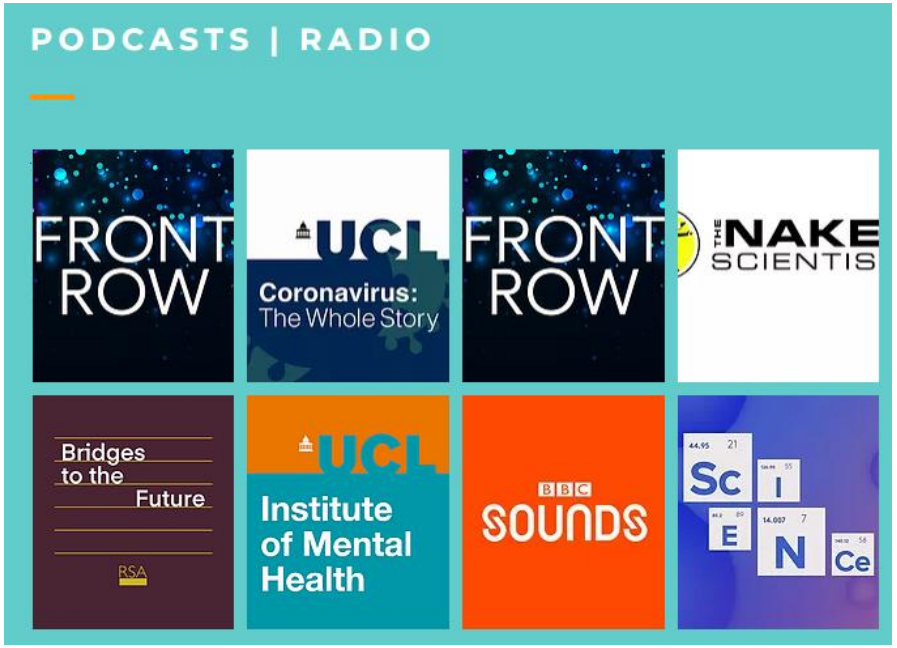
Public Health England

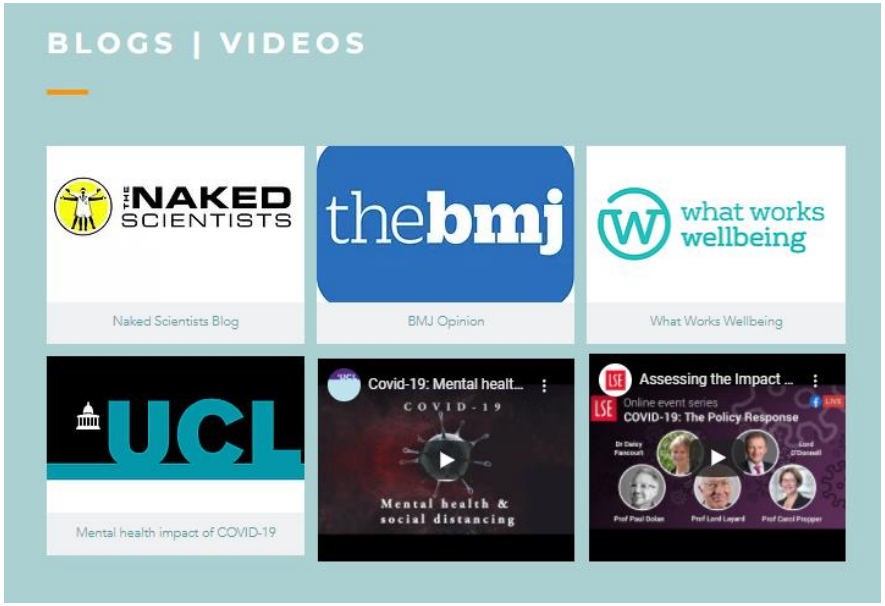
HM Government

NHS

World Health Organization

Informing media & public understanding





BBC

itv

4

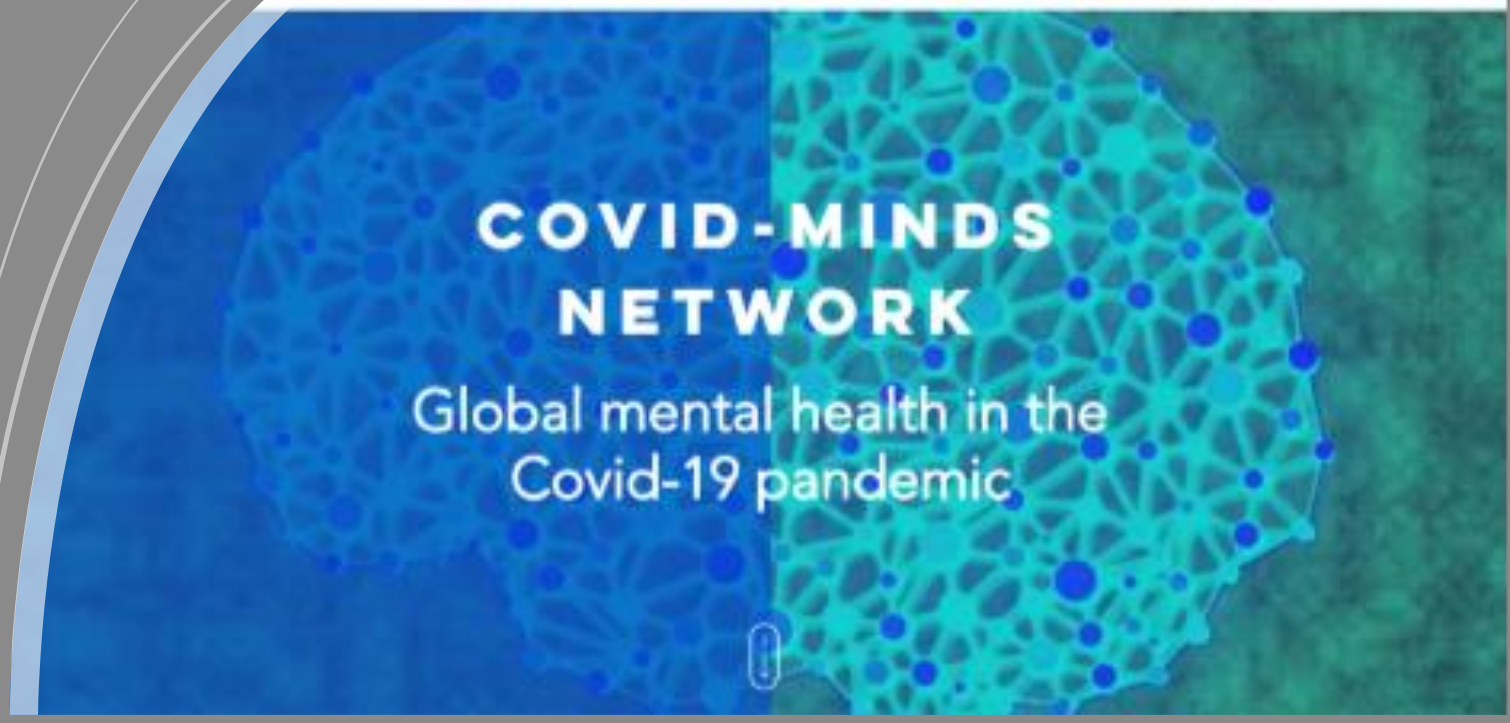
sky

BBC RADIO 4 TODAY

LBC

170
studies

60
countries



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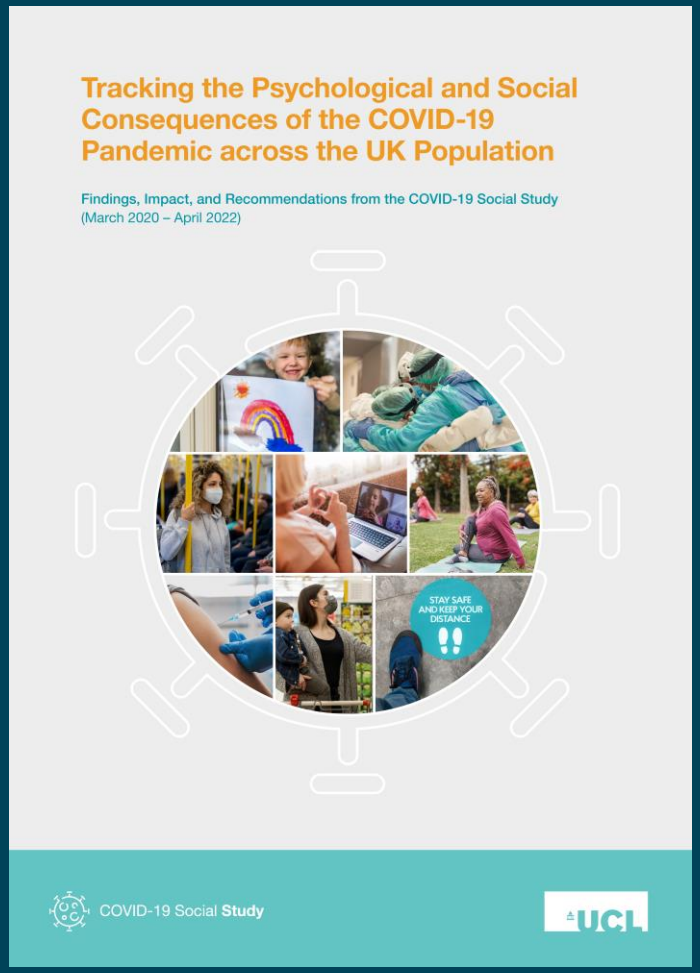
www.covidminds.org



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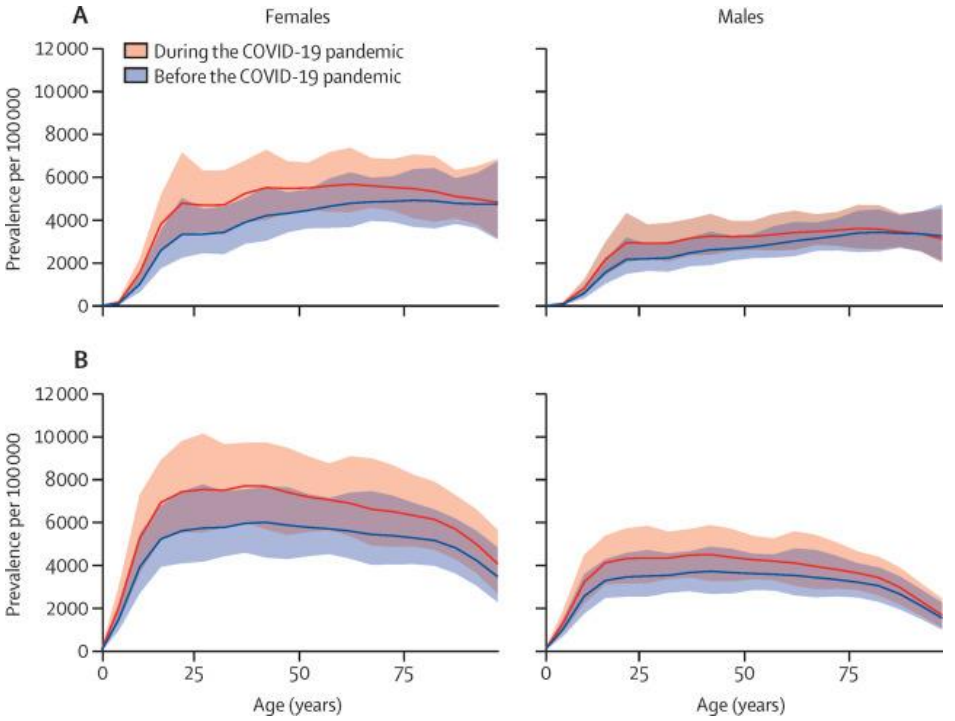
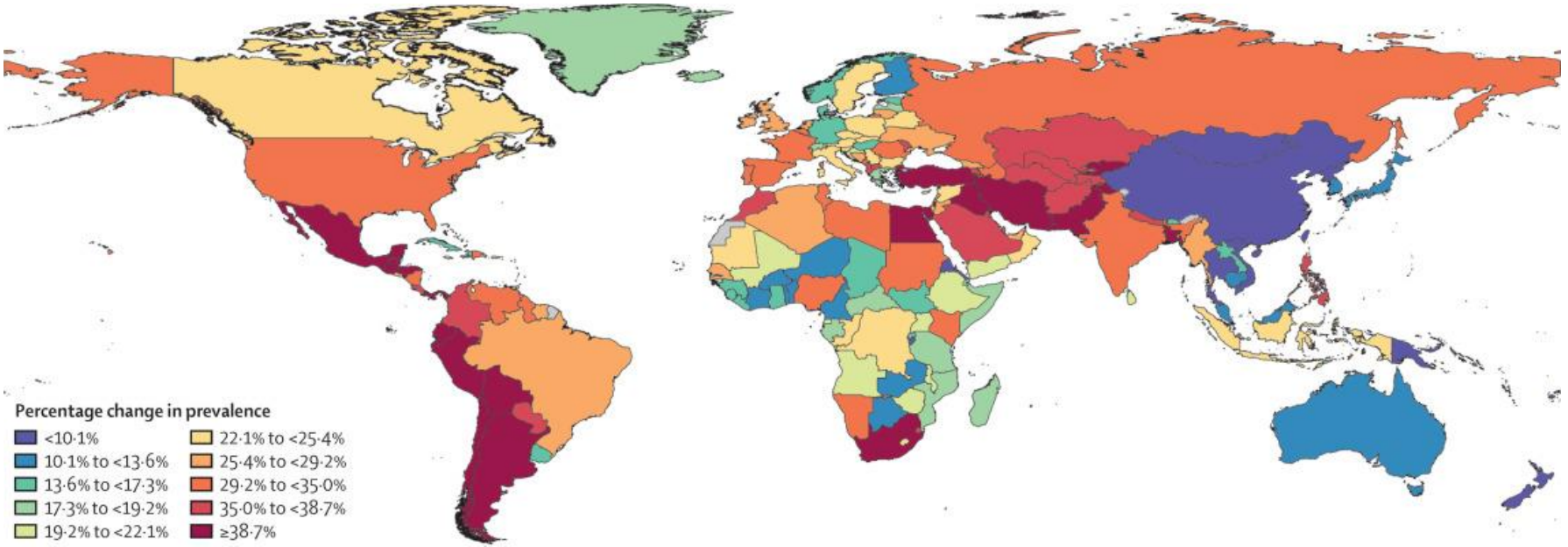
How has mental health been affected by COVID-19?

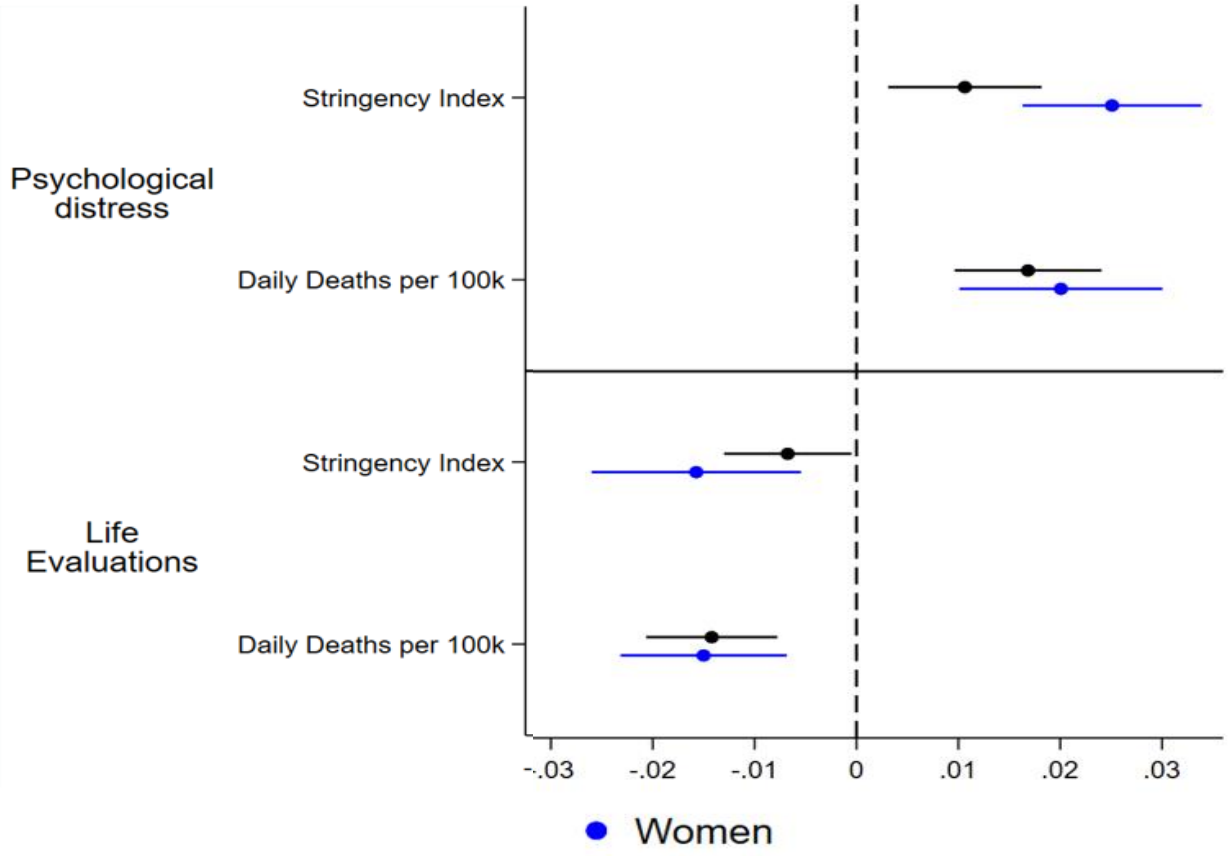
Mental health patterns globally

COVID-19 Mental Disorders Collaborative, Lancet 2021



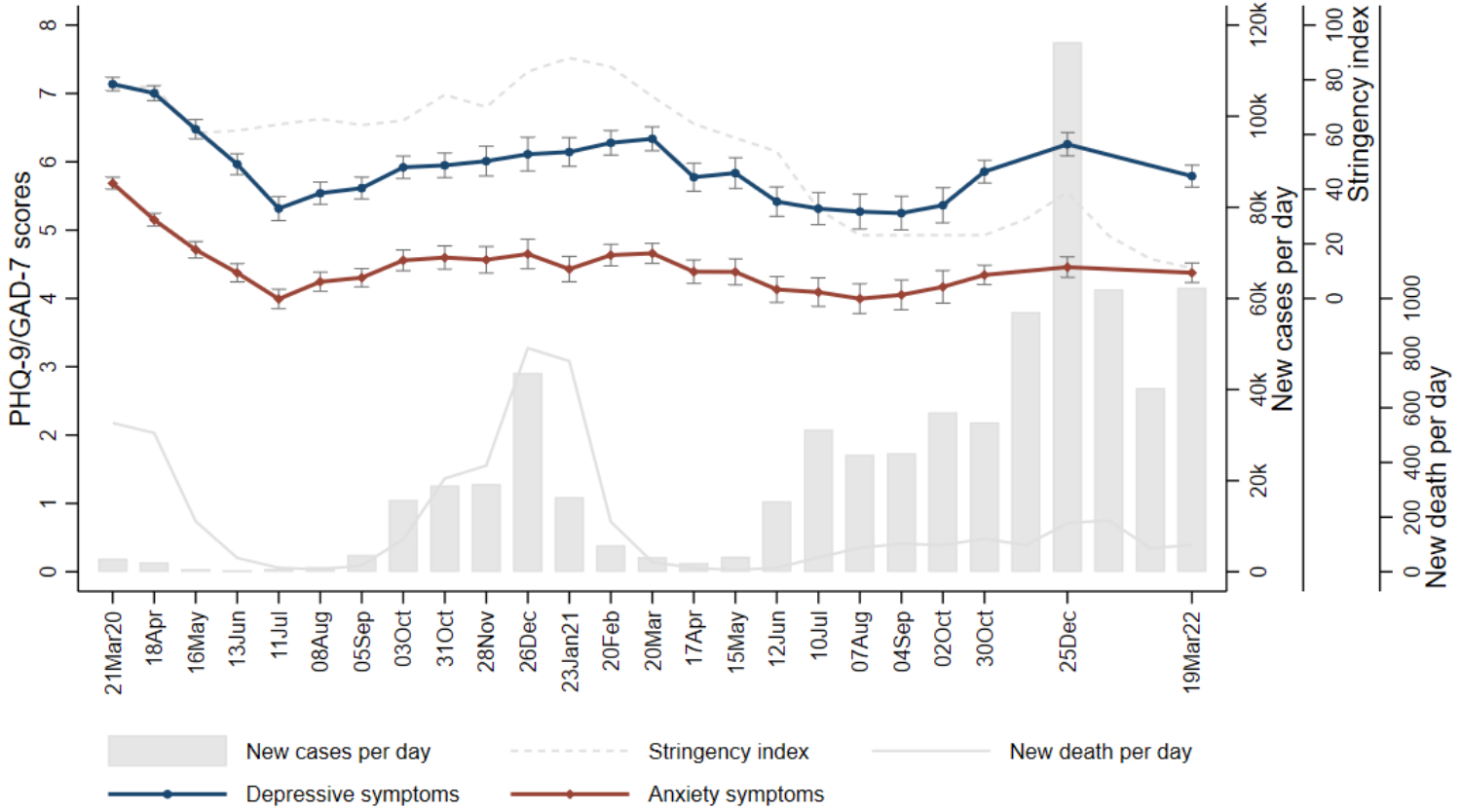


Mental health, pandemic intensity & policy stringency



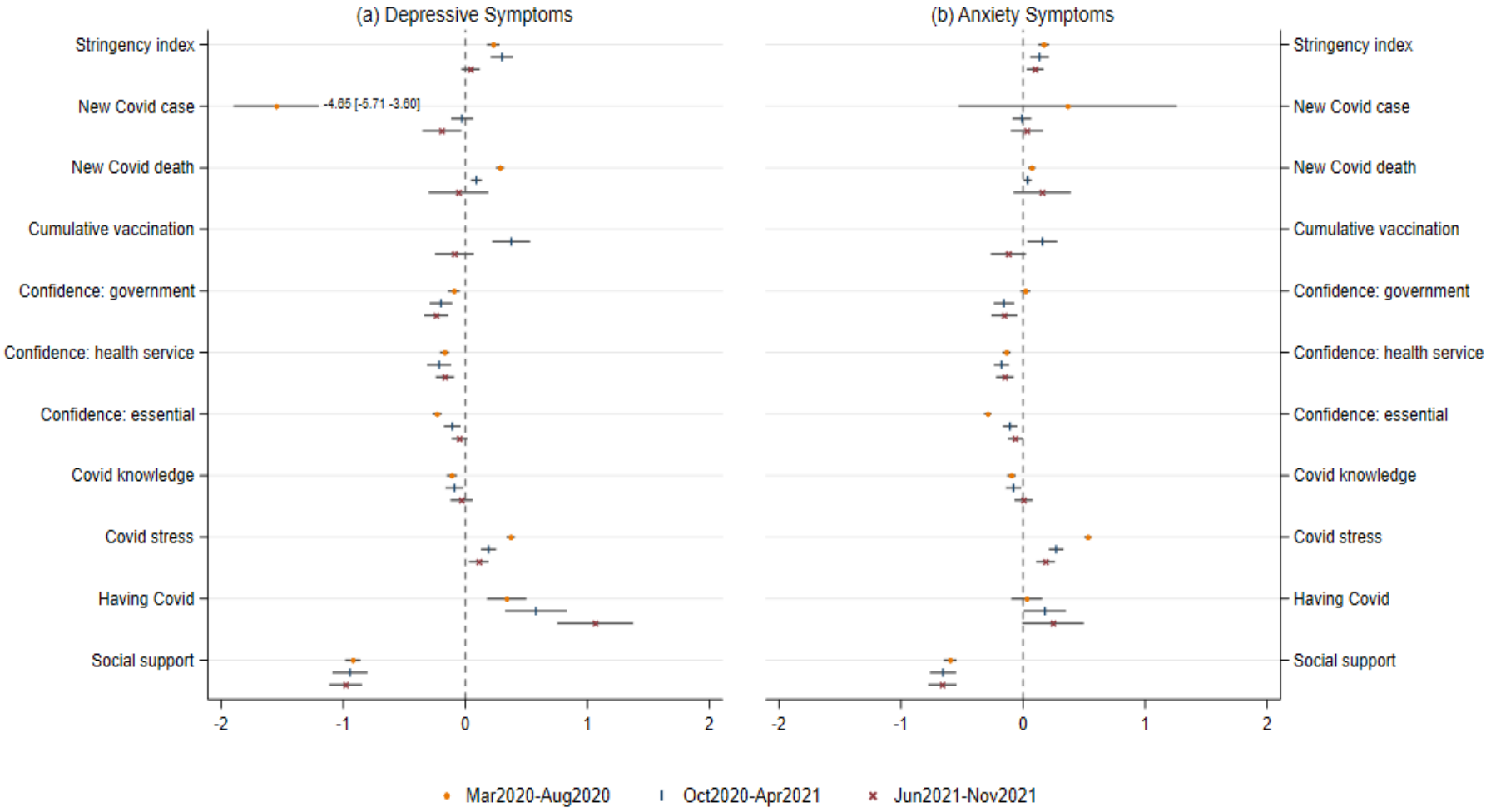
Aknin et al. Lancet Public Health 2022

Mental health patterns in the UK



Bu, Steptoe & Fancourt (under review)

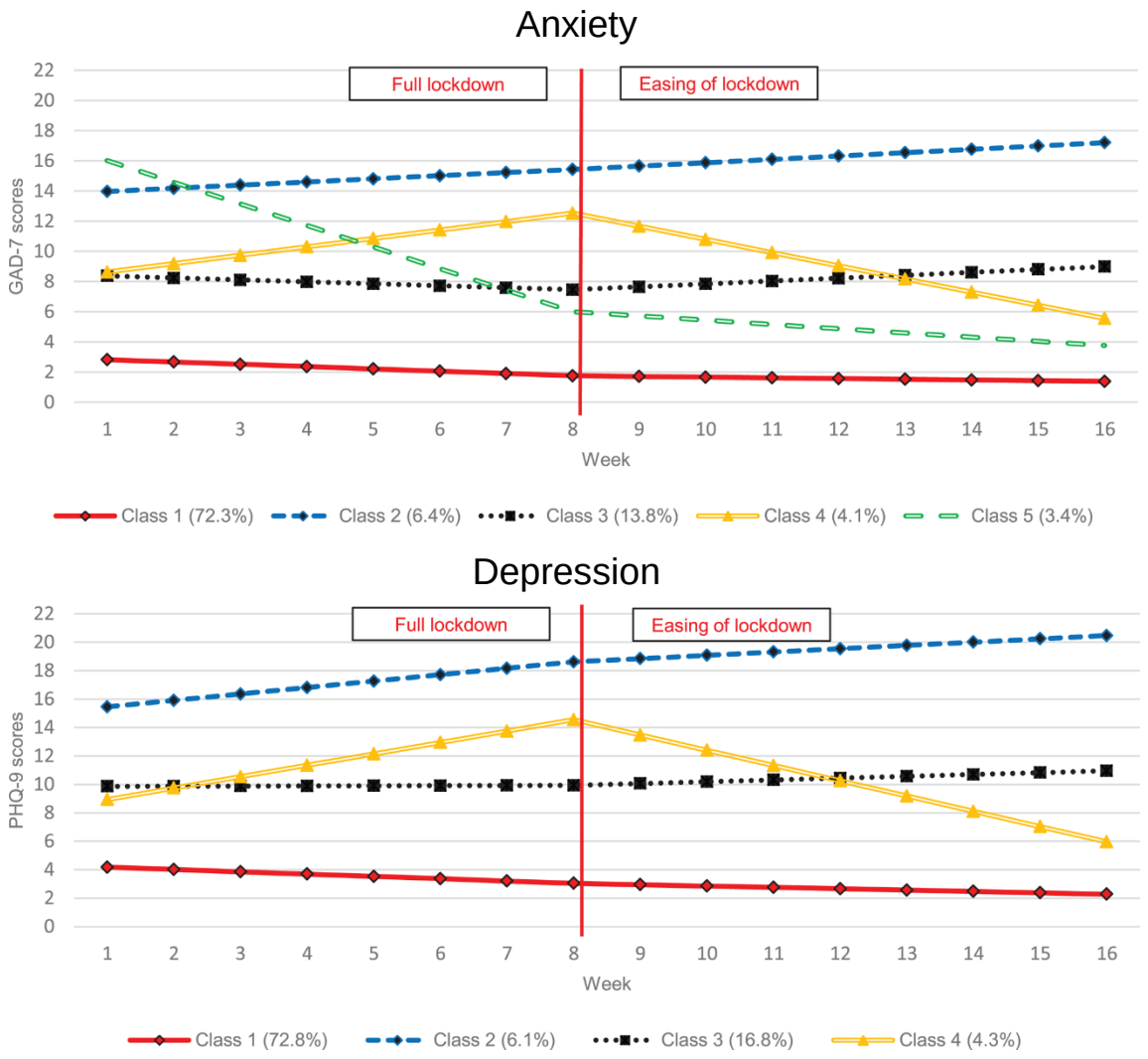
Mental health predictors in the UK



Bu, Steptoe & Fancourt (under review)

Have we all been “in this together”?

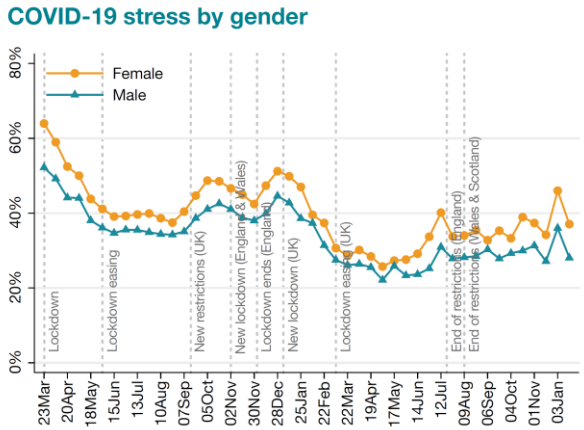
Averages vs Trajectories

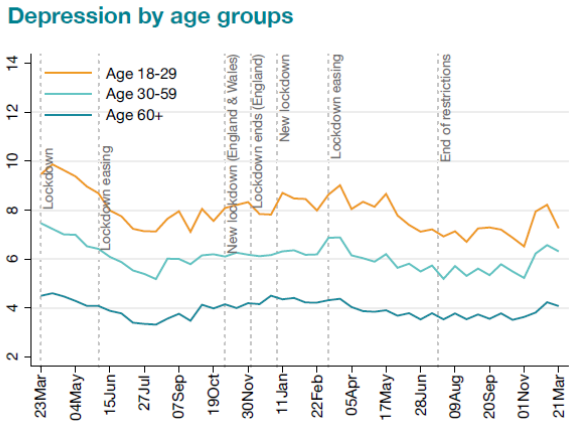


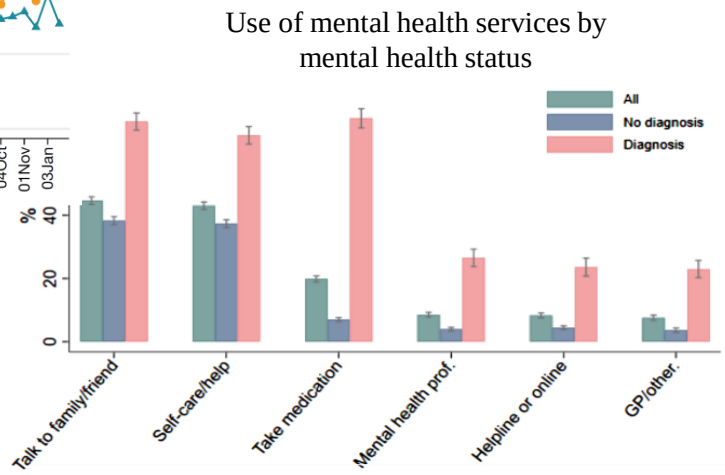
Sommerland et al. Psychological Medicine 2021

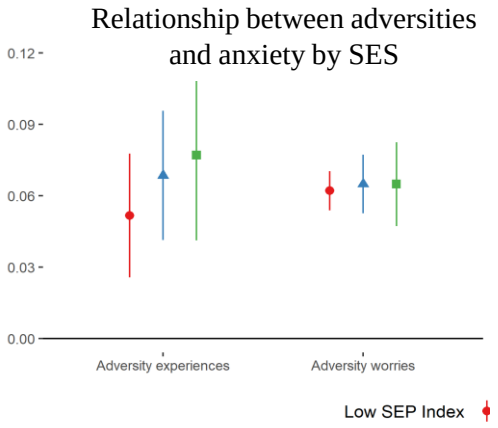
Inequalities

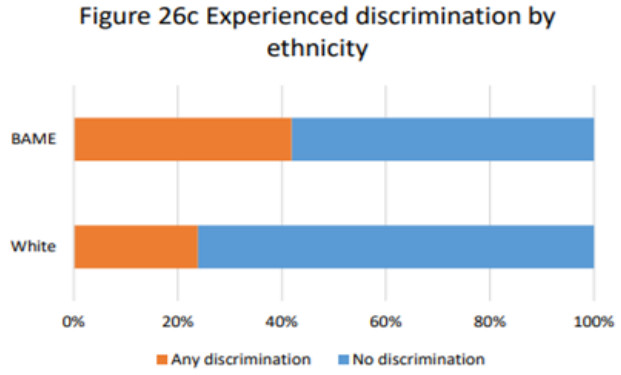
- Age
- Gender
- Mental illness
- Poverty
- Ethnicity









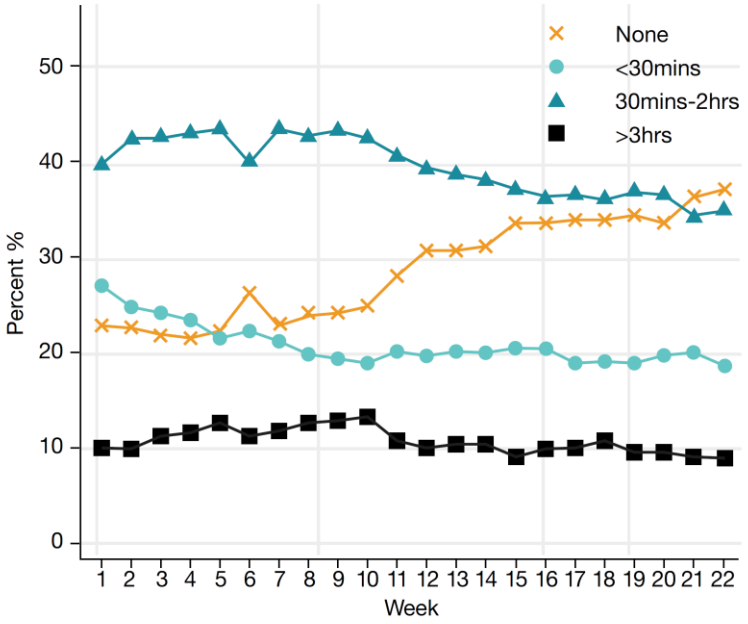


Fancourt et al. Lancet Psychiatry 2021
Fancourt et al. CSS Study Reports 2022
Bu et al. Soc Psych & Psych Epid 2021

How have our behaviours changed?

Health and social behaviours

Physical activity

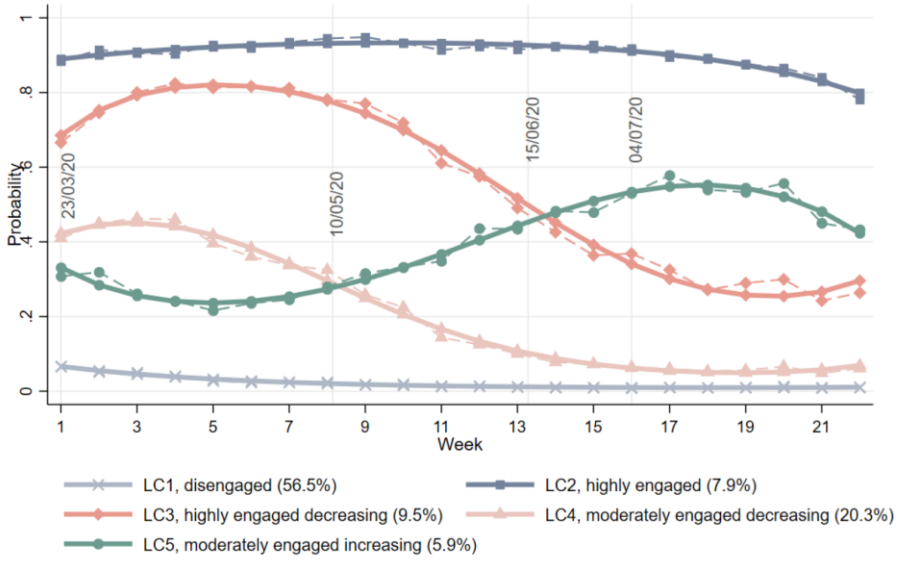


I started buying Fentanyl patches online. And then I started buying pregabs...so, I started taking them, just to keep me going

(Client, aged 21-25)

Neighbourhoods

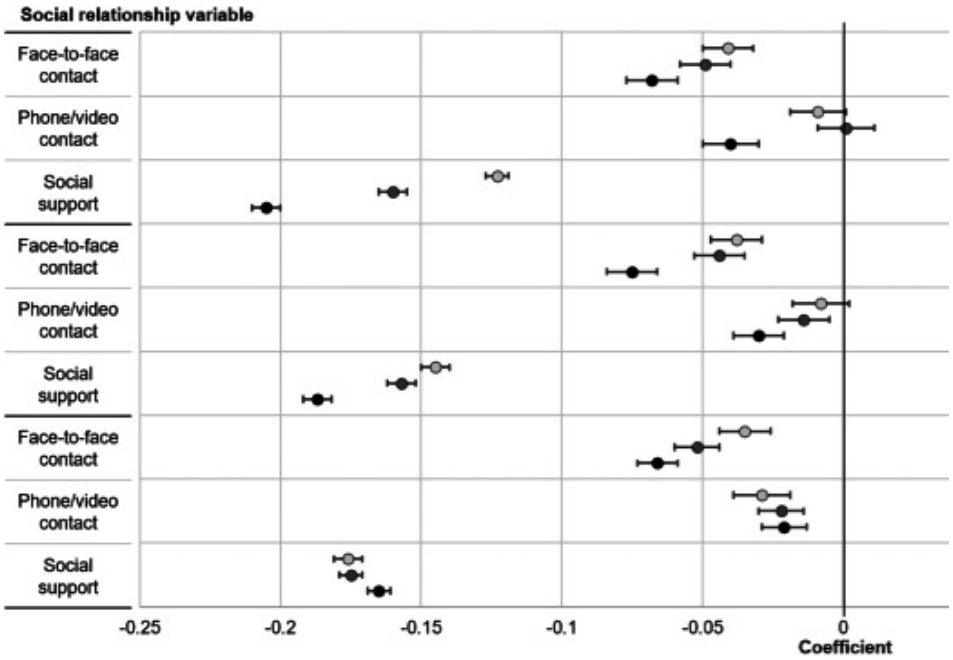
I just go out once a week, I've found a voluntary activity I can do which is working at a food bank food kitchen. I go into town, and I do that once a week, which is good for helping me feel like I'm doing something positive for the community.



Stock, Bu, Fancourt & Mak. MedRXiv 2021

Protective behaviours

Social support & cohesion



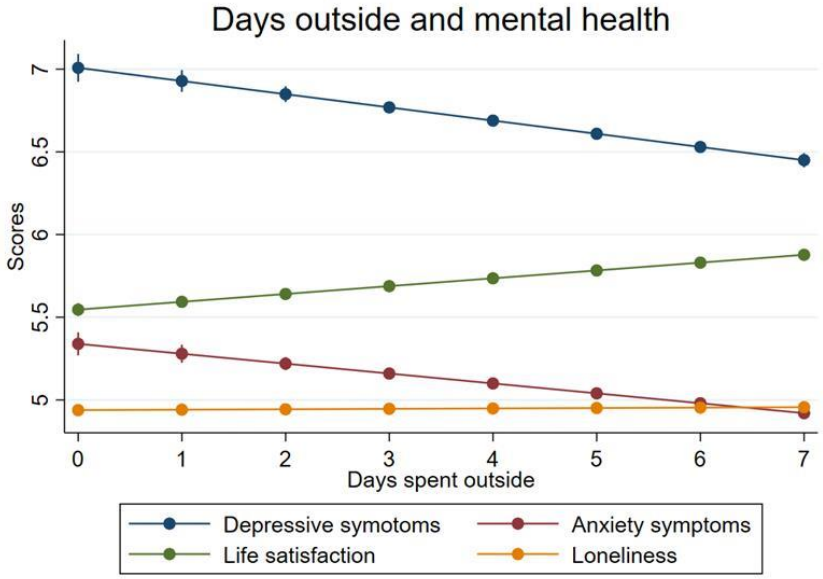
Sommerland… & Fancourt. Psychol Med. 2021

Arts & creativity

We've been playing a lot of box games and I do a lot of cross-stitching, which is very mindful. I'm trying to keep my mind occupied so it doesn't drift down into the abyss, as it were

(Individual living with a mental health condition, aged 45–49).

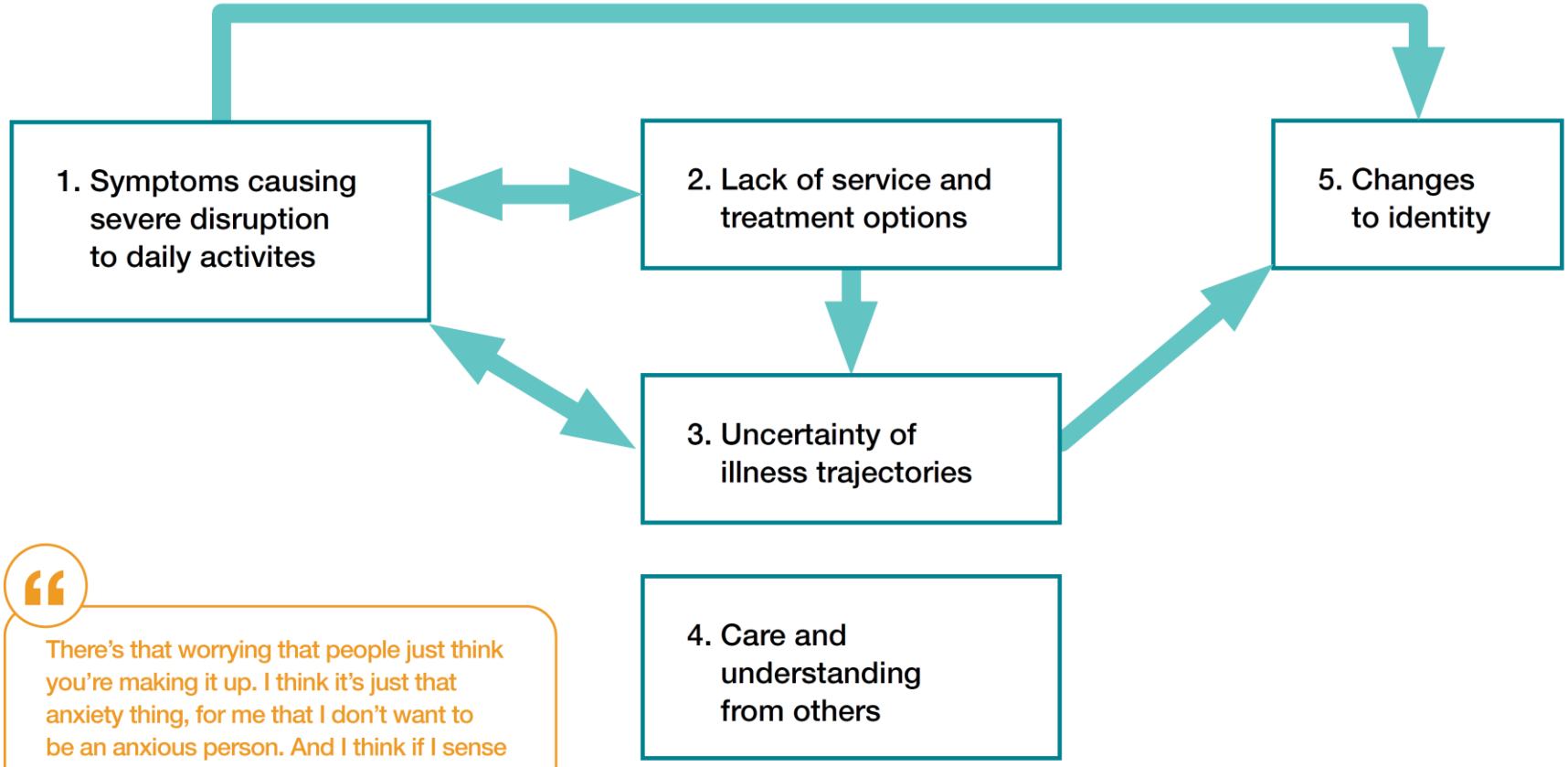
Nature & outdoors



Stock, Bu, Fancourt & Mak. Health & Place 2021

What do we understand about the psychosocial experiences of Long Covid?

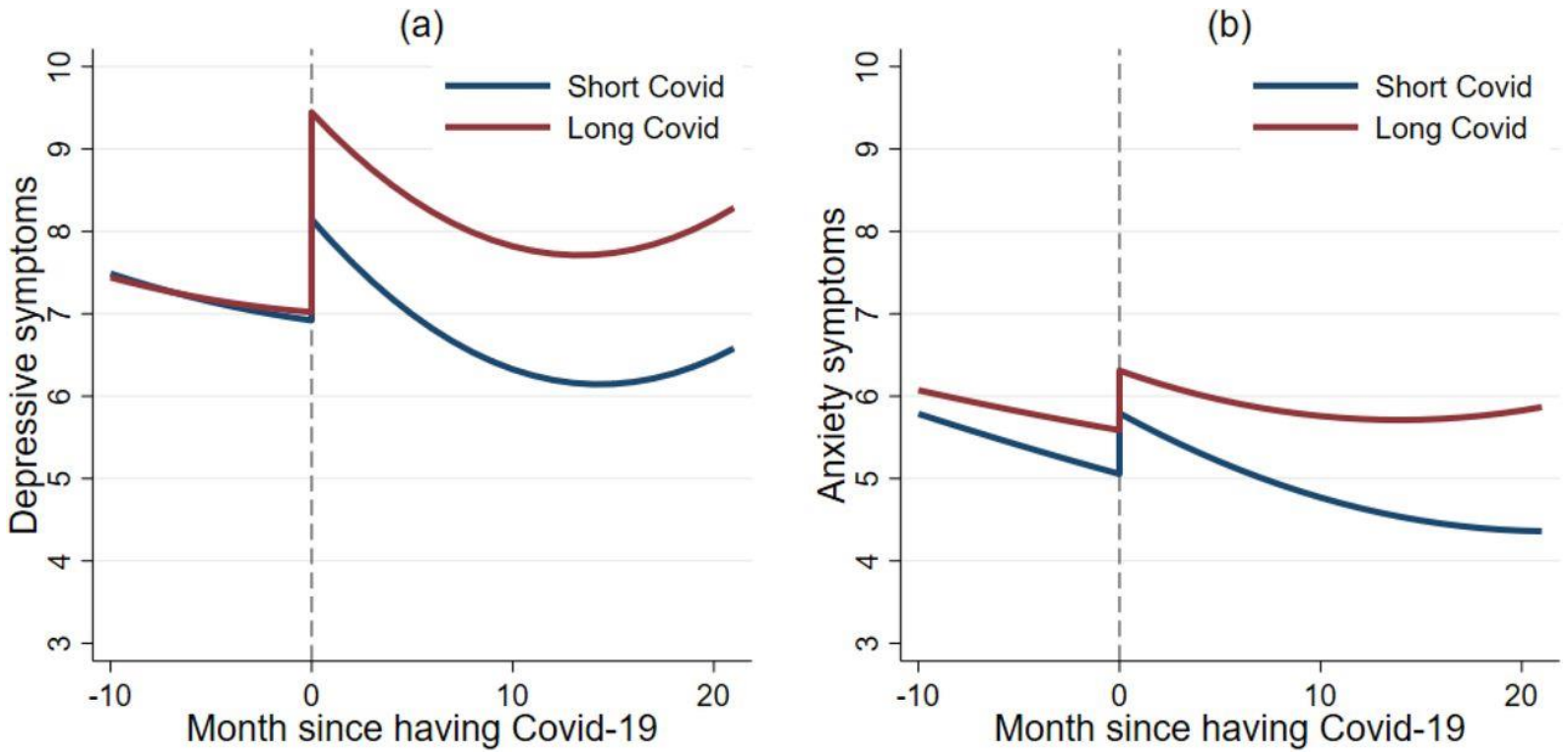
Psychosocial experiences of Long Covid



> There's that worrying that people just think you're making it up. I think it's just that anxiety thing, for me that I don't want to be an anxious person. And I think if I sense that I'm talking to a doctor, or sometimes they've said it outright, you're an anxious person, and I think oh great they just think I'm anxious."
>
> (Female, aged 35-39)

Burton et al. BJPsych Open 2022

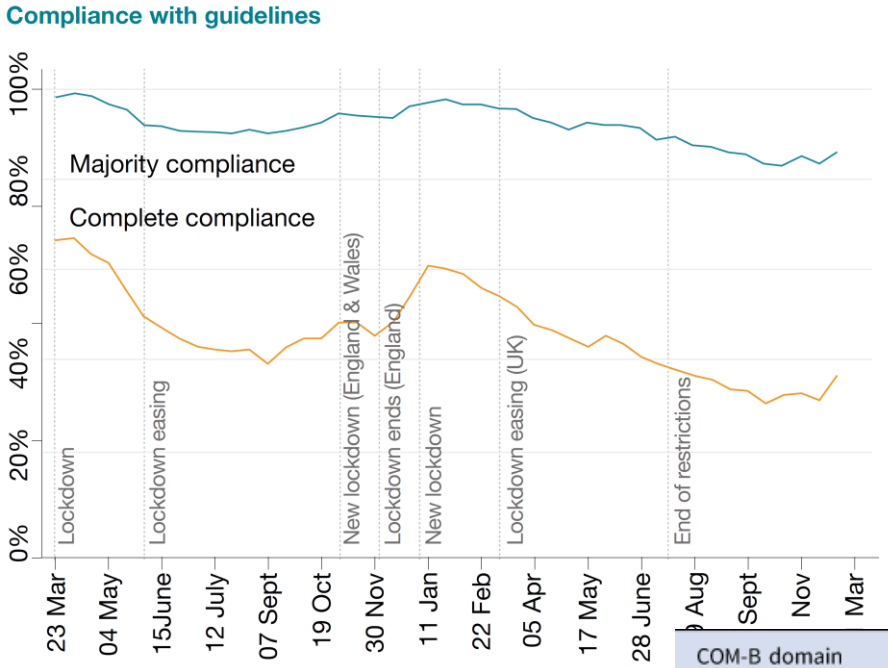
Mental health symptoms of Long Covid



Fancourt et al. BJ Psychiatry 2022

Have people complied?

Compliance patterns



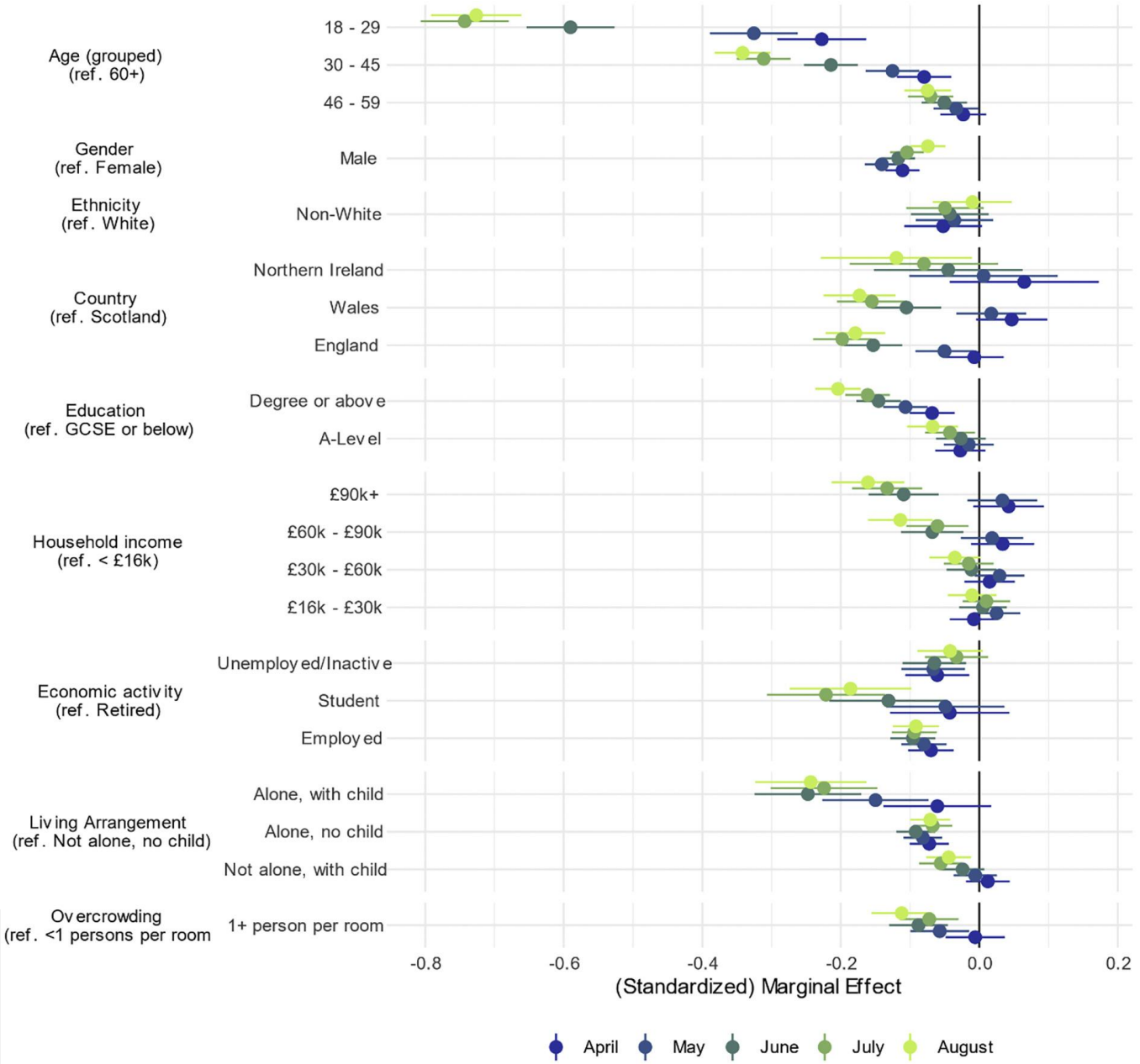
> It infuriates me as somebody who works in education, the style of communication that we received from the government. Often messages that are full of difficult vocabulary, idioms, colloquialisms, that I suspect quite a lot of first-language speakers of English wouldn't always follow, let alone speakers of other languages."
>
> (Female, aged 34–39)

Facilitators (F) and Barriers (B) to compliance

COM-B domain	Theme
Capability	
Psychological capability	Inconsistent rules (B) Informational support (F) Unintended consequences of control measures (B)[a] Wearing-off effect (B)
Physical capability	–
Opportunity	
Physical opportunity	Lived environment and shared spaces (B&F)
Social opportunity	Influence of others (B&F) Availability of practical support (B&F)
Motivation	
Reflective motivation	Beliefs about the consequences of non-adherence (B&F) Caring responsibilities (B) Social responsibility (F) Trust in government (B&F)
Automatic motivation	The need for emotional support (B)

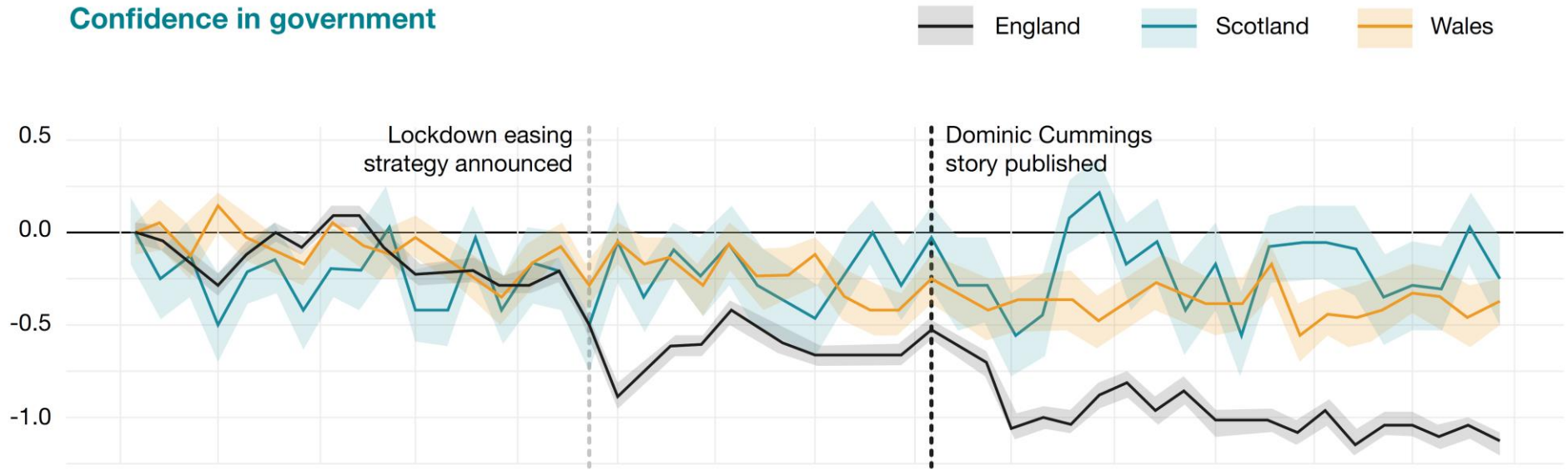
Wright et al. BMC PH 2022

Compliance predictors

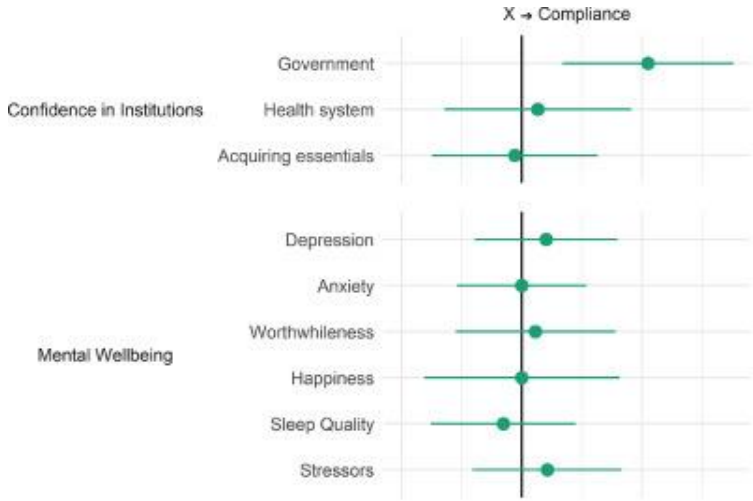


Wright & Fancourt, Prev Med 2021

Compliance & trust

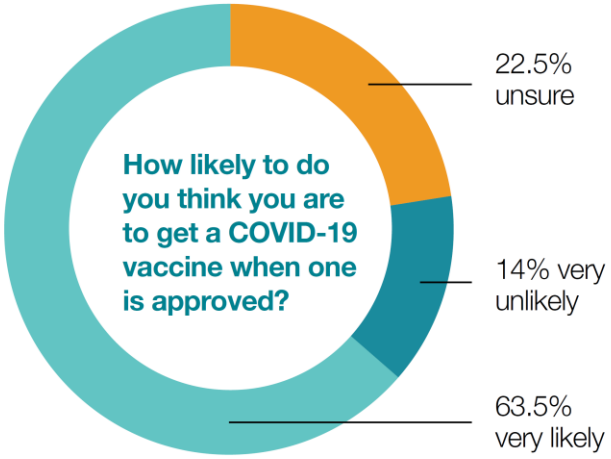


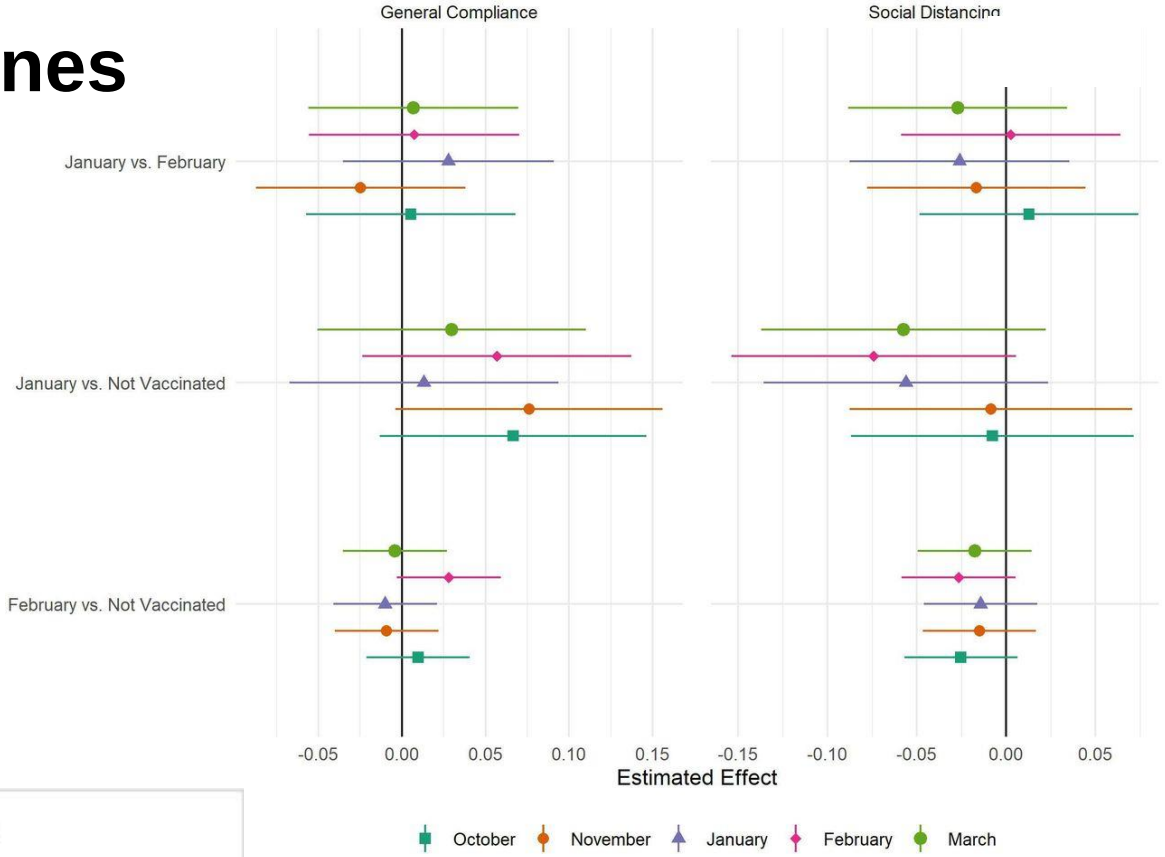
> We decided that… we are going to the pub to meet, that we are going to see our children and grandchildren. If it's all right for one of the chief advisors of the government then it must be okay."
>
> (Male, aged 60–64)

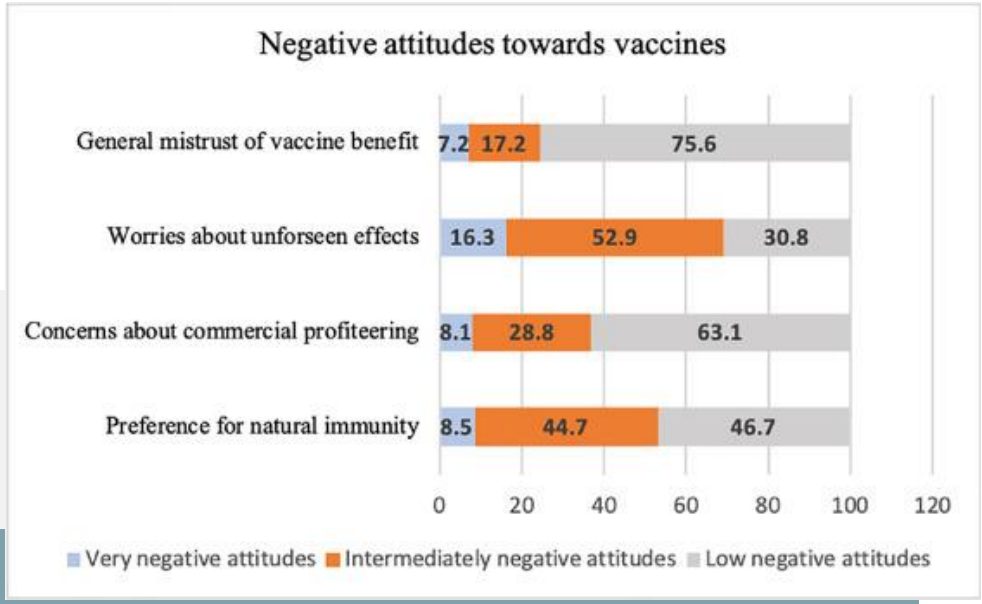


Fancourt et al, Lancet 2020
Wright et al, Lancet RHE 2021

Compliance & vaccines







I think that there's been a lot of things, for example, not in the media, but social media that's trying to make people not want to have it

Paul & Fancourt, Lancet RHE 2022
Wright et al, JECH 2022

What has the impact of this research been?

Study impact

85% of participants felt that taking part in the COVID-19 Social Study had been a worthwhile experience.

Policy Impact

- Bespoke data analysis for policy
- Policy presentations
- Policy dashboards
- Task forces
- Health service planning
- SAGE

Academic Impact

- Publishing our study protocol, data dictionary, recruitment methods, study design & bespoke measures
- Providing helpful resources
- Writing blogs on topical issues

Community Impact

- Informing suicide prevention
- Supporting public mental health campaigns
- Supporting the vaccine roll-out
- Supporting local authorities

International Impact

- Informed WHO studies in 33 countries
- Supported sister studies
- Provided resources for researchers
- Formed special interest groups
- Contributed to commissions
- Analyses of pooled data

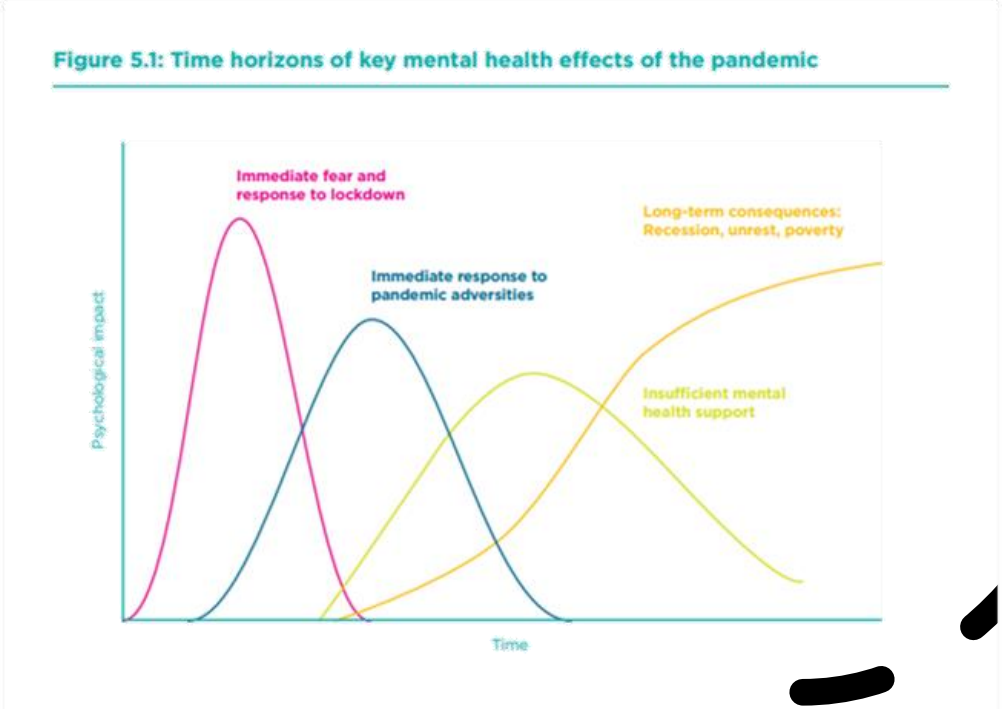
UK Data Service

Data are now available via UK Data Service

What can we learn and do?

What can we learn & do?

1. Tackle entrenched social inequalities
2. Invest in mental health services
3. Expand community-based support
4. Embed transparency & integrity in health policy
5. Invest in social and behavioural research
6. Foster social solidarity and cohesion
7. Plan for the next pandemic or health emergency



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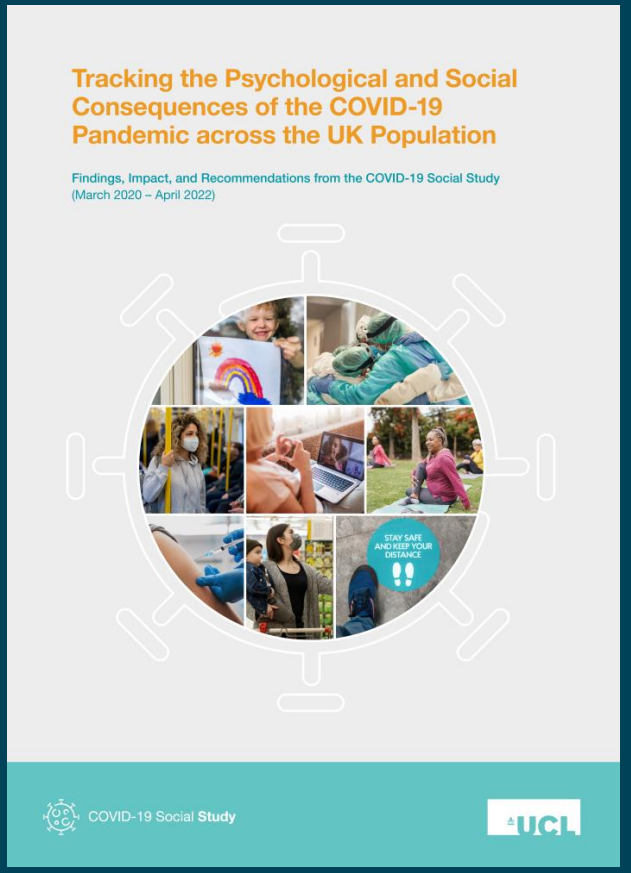
www.covidsocialstudy.org
www.covidminds.org



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