



PHIRI

Population Health Information
Research Infrastructure

Covid-19 impact on population's Mental Health

Task 8.4:

COVID-19 related international
guidelines, initiatives, projects and
information sources

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REF meeting
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Policy Brief: COVID-19 and the Need for Action on Mental Health -13 MAY 2020, UN

Policy Brief: COVID-19 and the Need for Action on Mental Health



COVID – mental health crisis

- Although the COVID-19 crisis is, in the first instance, a physical health crisis, it has the seeds of a **major mental health crisis** as well, if action is not taken.
- Good mental health is critical to the **functioning of society** at the best of times.
- Psychological distress in populations is widespread. Many people are distressed due to the **immediate health impacts** of the virus and the consequences of **physical isolation**.
- Millions of people are facing **economic turmoil** having lost or being at risk of losing their income and livelihoods.
- A **long-term upsurge** in the number and **severity of mental health problems** is likely.

Mental health conditions before COVID

Before COVID-19 emerged, statistics on mental health conditions (including neurological and substance use disorders, suicide risk and associated psychosocial and intellectual disabilities) were already stark:

- The global economy loses more than US\$ 1 trillion per year due to depression and anxiety.
- Depression affects 264 million people in the world.
- Around half of all mental health conditions start by age 14, and suicide is the second leading cause of death in young people aged 15-29.
- More than 1 in 5 people living in settings affected by conflict have a mental health condition.
- People with severe mental conditions die 10-20 years earlier than the general population.
- Fewer than half of countries report having their mental health policies aligned with human rights conventions.
- Globally there is less than 1 mental health professional for every 10,000 people.

Specific population groups

Specific populations groups are showing high degrees of COVID-19-related psychological distress

- **Frontline healthcare workers** and first responders have been exposed to numerous stressors
- **Older adults and people with pre-existing health conditions** who are terrified and lonely
- Emotional difficulties among **children and adolescents** are exacerbated by family stress, social isolation, with some facing increased abuse, disrupted education and uncertainty about their futures
- **Women** are bearing a large brunt of the stress in the home as well as disproportionate impacts more generally



MINIMIZING CONSEQUENCES – three recommended actions:

1. APPLY A **WHOLE-OF-SOCIETY APPROACH** TO PROMOTE, PROTECT AND CARE FOR MENTAL HEALTH

2. ENSURE WIDESPREAD AVAILABILITY OF **EMERGENCY MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT**

3. SUPPORT RECOVERY FROM COVID-19 BY **BUILDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES** FOR THE FUTURE



APPLY A WHOLE-OF-SOCIETY APPROACH TO PROMOTE, PROTECT AND CARE FOR MENTAL HEALTH

- including mental health and psychosocial considerations in **national response plans** across relevant sectors
- **responding proactively** to reducing pandemic related adversities that are known to harm mental health
- crafting all **communications** to be sensitive of their potential impact on people's mental health

ENSURE WIDESPREAD AVAILABILITY OF EMERGENCY MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

- supporting **community actions** that strengthen social cohesion and reduce loneliness
- investing in **mental health interventions** that can be delivered **remotely**
- ensuring uninterrupted **in-person care for severe mental health conditions** by formally defining such care as essential services to be continued throughout the pandemic
- **protecting and promoting the human rights** of people with severe mental health conditions and psychosocial disabilities

SUPPORT RECOVERY FROM COVID-19 BY BUILDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR THE FUTURE

- using the current momentum of interest in mental health to **catalyze mental health reforms**
- making sure that mental health is **part of universal health coverage**
- **building human resource capacity** to deliver mental health and social care
- **organizing community-based services** that protect and promote people's human rights

Rapid implementation of these recommended actions will be essential to ensure people and societies are better protected from the mental health impact of COVID-19.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of young people Policy responses in European countries – 2022 European Education and Culture Executive Agency, European Commission



The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of young people

Policy responses in European countries

Main preventive and supportive measures implemented

The report illustrates the main preventive and supportive measures implemented, analyses the main trends and identifies good practices that might inspire further action.

- **Section 1** describes initiatives to collect information on the pandemic's impact on the mental health of young people and whether they were used to develop national measures
- **Section 2** addresses the main fields in which policies and initiatives were introduced, the type of initiatives and their target groups

COVID Tremendously impacted young people' lives

- The Covid-19 pandemic has **tremendously impacted young people' lives**, especially those of the most vulnerable ones.
- Separated from their peers, prevented from participating in social life, and restrained to their homes for prolonged periods of time during lockdowns, **many young Europeans have suffered from loneliness and isolation.**
- Three years after the breakout of the pandemic, young people are re-adjusting to what used to be normality. The experience of the pandemic is **still affecting their lives and their wellbeing.**
- The need to ensure effective support to their mental health has never been clearer, not only in the aftermath of the lockdowns but **also in 'normal' times.**

Sharp increases in the rates of depression, tension and anxiety

- Although mental health among European young people was already deteriorating before the pandemic, numerous studies have observed **sharp increases in the rates of depression, tension and anxiety** among young people during the COVID-19 crisis
- Concern for the health of family members, financial difficulties, and disruption to education and social relations have left **many young people afraid, frustrated and uncertain about their future**
- Available data show that young people's mental health has been **disproportionally affected** in comparison with other age groups

The pandemic has affected the mental health of young people unequally

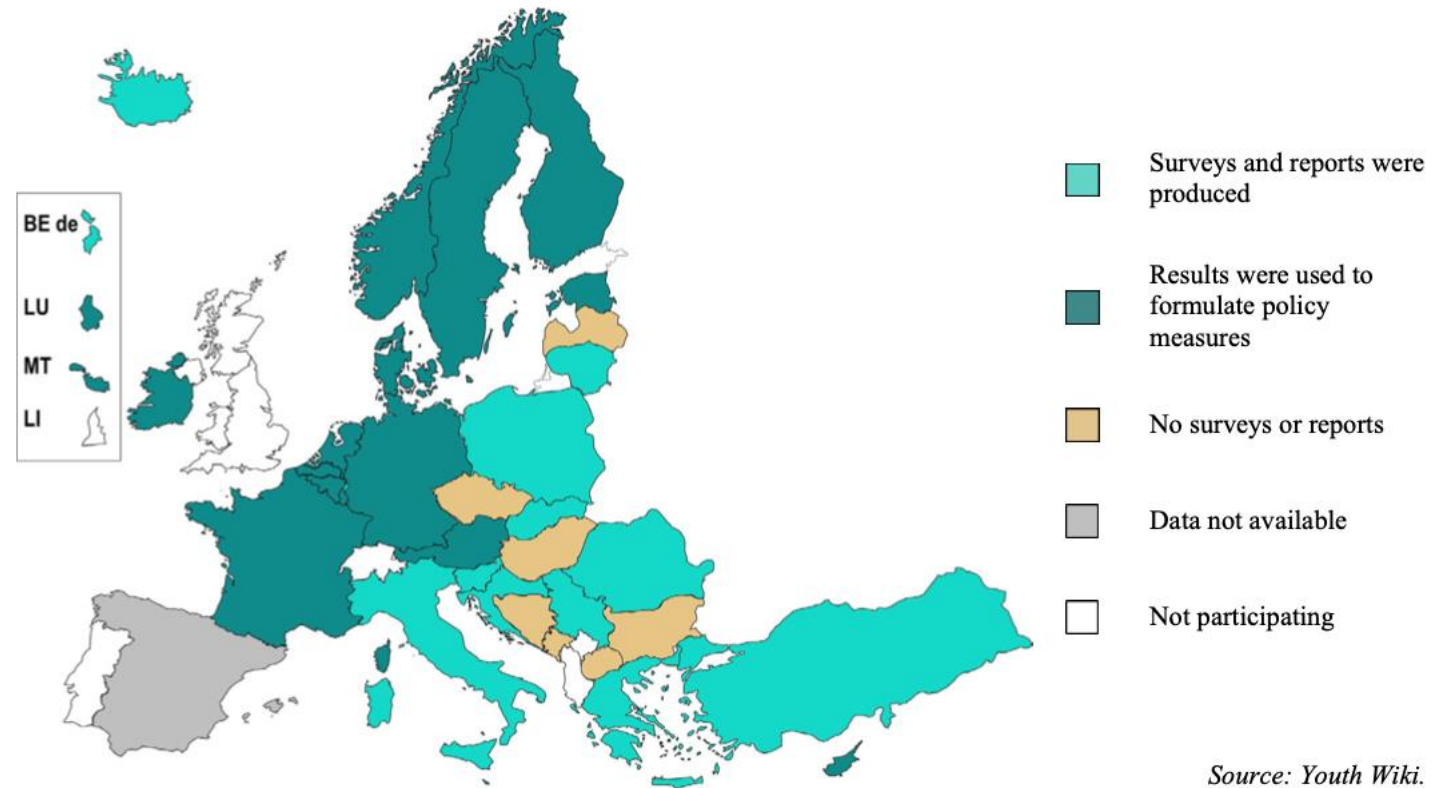
Groups at particular risk:

- With pre-existing mental health issues
- Belonging to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual plus (LGBTQIA+) community, especially when faced with a difficult family environment.

The crisis heightened existing economic and social inequalities.

- Young people from lower-income backgrounds were more vulnerable to social exclusion and related mental and emotional consequences due to the unaffordability of digital hardware and internet connections that could have enabled social contacts and distance learning

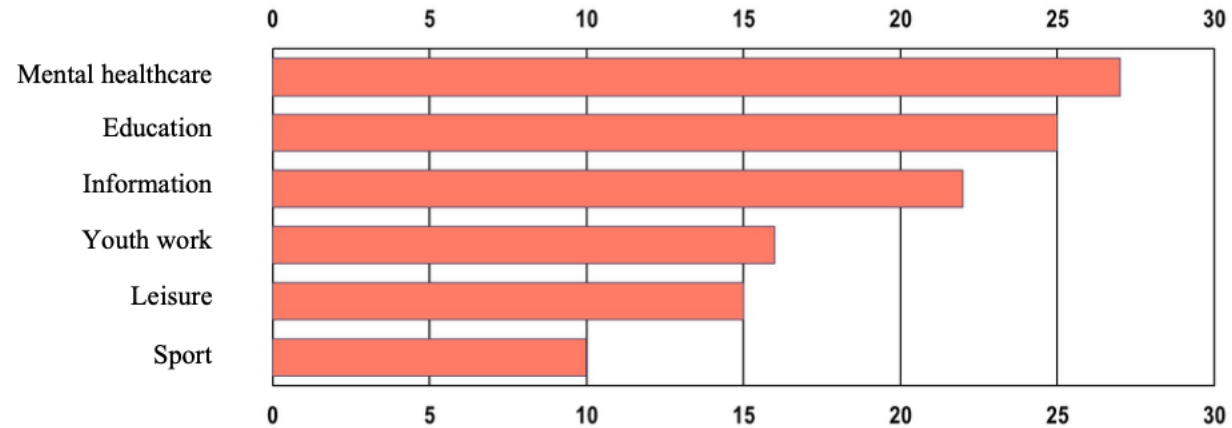
Figure 1. Surveys and reports on the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of young people, and their use in formulating policy measures, March 2020 - March 2022



Source: Youth Wiki.

No. of countries implemented relevant measures

Figure 2. Policy fields by the number of countries that implemented relevant measures, March 2020 - March 2022



Source: Youth Wiki.

Hungary – COVID – Mental health

COVID-19: STUDY OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND THE MENTAL EFFECTS OF THE EPIDEMIC IN THE INSTITUTE OF BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES – Semmelweis University, May 2021

They wanted to find out what are the driving forces that move people in the direction of physical activity and sports in the crisis situation caused by the epidemic, as well as how emotional and psychological well-being is related to exercise and changes in sports habits.

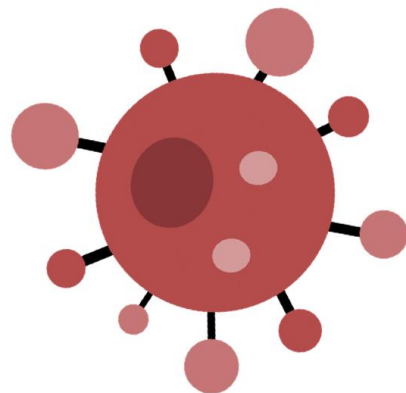
During the coronavirus, the number of clients visiting psychologists increased by around 30 percent, and the symptoms are also more severe.

Clients visiting a specialist psychologist is about 30 percent more - 2022

- During the coronavirus, the number of clients visiting a specialist psychologist is about 30 percent more, and similarly, the symptoms are about 30 percent more severe than before the coronavirus.
- The increase in anxiety and temper caused by confinement (imprisonment) caused basic psychological disturbances and increased their extent.
- The frequency of anxiety disorders (e.g. panic disorder) in women, and diseases arising from anger management problems (e.g. alcoholism, domestic violence, physical symptoms, primarily cardiovascular diseases, sleep disorders) in men has increased.
- Post-covid or long-covid disorders, such as problems with memory, balance, emotional life, etc., were connected to this.
- There have been a lot of children's clients, among them the appearance of self-harming behaviors (e.g. wallowing) has increased significantly.

White book – not just mental

FEHÉR KÖNYV A COVID-19-JÁRVÁNY TÁRSADALMI-GAZDASÁGI HATÁSAIRÓL



ELKH | Eötvös Loránd
Kutatási Hálózat

WHITE BOOK ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 EPIDEMIC – 2022

In the first study, the authors analyze the number of coronavirus cases and deaths.

In the second study, they examine how the epidemic affected the health care system and the state of health.

In the third study, they examine Hungarian attitudes to vaccination against the coronavirus.

In the fourth study, they analyze how the coronavirus epidemic affected fertility and birth events.



Public policy conclusions

- **Extensive and targeted testing practices can reduce mortality and have a high rate of social return.** Well-targeted testing makes it possible to identify mild and asymptomatic cases and break chains of infection.
- In the case of restrictions on access to certain healthcare services – which becomes necessary due to the outbreak of the epidemic – it is important to take into account that **untreated (non-coronavirus) diseases can later worsen the health of the population and increase the use of the healthcare system.** It is necessary to make up for missed cancer screenings and to prepare the care system for the growing number of mental illnesses.
- **In order to increase the willingness to be vaccinated, it is worth focusing on those unvaccinated social groups that are open to receiving vaccination in the future.** It may be worth making the topic of side effects the focus of programs and information campaigns aimed at increasing vaccination rates. Taking vaccinations without registration can also increase the demand for vaccinations.
- **The rate of cesarean births seems to have decreased due to the epidemic,** which may be welcome if the decrease was caused by a decline in caesarean sections that are not justified from a medical point of view. Further research is warranted to precisely explore the factors causing the decline.
- In order to further explore the connections and effects of the coronavirus epidemic and to understand the factors affecting the epidemic, it would be **extremely important to make public the data related to the epidemic** - for example, death data by settlements and institutions, other hospital data, such as intensive care.