

Stress related to catching COVID-19 is highest among 30-59 year-olds

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Stress relating to catching COVID-19 is currently highest amongst adults aged 30-59, according to UCL's COVID-19 study, the UK's largest study on adults' wellbeing and mental health during the coronavirus epidemic.

The study, which was launched three weeks ago, has over 60,000 participants and reports on how adults feel about the lockdown, government advice, feelings of loneliness and wellbeing, and their [mental health](#).

Lead author Dr. Daisy Fancourt (Associate Professor of Epidemiology, UCL Epidemiology & Health Care) said: "Since the lockdown measures were brought in two weeks ago, we have seen a change in what most people are worrying about. Encouragingly, stressors relating to finance and food have decreased over the past fortnight, but the current highest stress factor appears to be worries about either catching COVID-19 or becoming seriously ill from it.

"We also see there has been a slight increase in depression over the past two weeks, but fortunately a slight decrease in [anxiety levels](#) amongst the general public."

The researchers found that immediately before the lockdown, the public were most worried about getting COVID-19, but since social distancing and social isolation measures have come in, this has decreased—suggesting that the measures are helping people to feel safe. However, compared to results from the first week, worries about catching COVID-19 are still higher than stresses relating to finance, getting food or unemployment.

Those over 60 have reported the highest levels of life satisfaction of between six and 6.5 out of ten since the survey began, with those aged between 18 and 24 reporting the lowest levels of around four to 4.5. By comparison, a similar ONS wellbeing scale last year showed that satisfaction scales were around 7.5 on average for the population at the end of March 2019.

Loneliness levels are higher amongst younger adults, those living alone,

those with lower household income levels, and those with an existing diagnosed mental health condition. However, there has not been much evidence to date of a change in these levels over the lockdown period.

The full UCL COVID-19 study report shows breakdowns by age groups, gender, income, and whether people are living alone or have reported diagnosed mental health conditions.

Andrew Steptoe, Professor of Psychology and Epidemiology (co-author, UCL Institute of Epidemiology and Health Care) added: "Although this study is not representative of the population, we are pleased that such a large number people are participating in the study and have sent us data. This gives us a snapshot of how people are feeling and coping during the [lockdown](#) and allows us to track changes over time as the situation evolves."

More information: The study is still recruiting and participants can sign-up anonymously at www.marchnetwork.org/research

Provided by University College London

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