

Have introverts really fared better in lockdown?

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Since the onset of the pandemic, everyone from newspaper columnists to Twitter users has advanced the now idea that extroverts and introverts are handling the crisis differently.

Many claim that introverts adapt to [social distancing](#) and isolation better than extroverts, with some even suggesting that introverts are practically "[loving](#)" the crisis, as it offers them a rare chance to play to their [strengths](#).

According to personality theories, [extroversion-introversion](#) constitutes one of the fundamental psychological axes along which people differ. Extroverts typically exhibit higher levels of energy and sociability compared to introverts, enjoying a boost in mood after social interactions. [Introverts](#) do not tend to experience such benefits.

It therefore seems intuitive that introverts will fare better than extroverts during periods of lockdown isolation. Some [anecdotal evidence](#) supports this contention, but scientific evidence is now stacking up to dismiss the idea that introverts love lockdowns. In any case, it's worth bearing in mind how complex and multifaceted our personalities are—with many other traits determining how we've fared during the pandemic.

CDC: To prevent coronavirus stay home, avoid physical contact and don't go into large crowds.

Introverts: I've been preparing for this moment my entire life.

— Matthew (@CrowsFault) [February 28, 2020](#)

Coping with lockdown

In psychology, extroversion is associated with better wellbeing, happiness and mental health. Despite the social isolation we've been experiencing during the pandemic—something said to suit introverts—evidence suggests that extroverts' wellbeing has held remarkably firm during successive lockdowns.

Indeed, recent studies have found that [introversion was predictive](#) of

more severe loneliness, anxiety and depression after the circumstantial changes brought about by the pandemic. Extroversion, meanwhile, was correlated with lower levels [of anxiety](#) and a lower likelihood of experiencing [mental health issues](#) during lockdown.

These results were further supported by a [recent longitudinal study](#) that followed 484 US college students through their 2020 spring term. As the pandemic progressed, introverts experienced increases in stress, while more [extrovert](#) students reported slight decreases in stress.

Interestingly, the trend was reversed for positive mood: extroverts tended to experience a decline in mood during the early pandemic period, while introverts experienced a slightly improved mood.

If this finding appears to validate claims that introverts fare better than extroverts in a lockdown, it's important to note that despite the decline in mood among extroverts, they still reported an overall more positive mood than their introverted peers.

Explaining extroverts

Certain lifestyle factors may partly explain these findings. As the pandemic unfolded, even extroverts who lived alone may have found communication apps like Zoom, [Houseparty](#) and [Clubhouse](#) adequate in maintaining their social lives.

Equally, introverts who had greeted lockdown with a certain amount of glee may have soon discovered that being [locked in with housemates](#) or family hardly delivered the solitude they'd been looking forward to.

Truth about introverts. This quarantine is not our dream come true. We have people in our house who NEVER leave.

— Traci Rhoades (@tracesoffaith) [April 30, 2020](#)

But recent findings are also consistent with what psychologists would expect of extroverts—even during a crisis. Many theories have been proposed to explain why they tend to enjoy higher levels of wellbeing, with some researchers pointing to the support offered by extroverts' wider social network, while others highlight links between extroversion and [healthy activities](#)

A particularly relevant study recently investigated the [coping responses](#) of extroverts at times of crises, and found that extroversion was related to more problem-solving coping strategies such as seeking [emotional support](#). These patterns are consistent with the well-documented association of extroversion with [greater optimism](#).

Additional traits

Behind these diverse explanations lies a further consensual principle held by psychologists: personality is multifaceted, and it's the different combinations of personality traits that ultimately determines our behavior and wellbeing.

Let's take the [five-factor theory of personality](#), one of the most popular personality theories, as an example. In addition to the extroversion-introversion spectrum, the theory also accounts for four other traits: openness (being open to [new experiences](#), feelings and ideas); conscientiousness (being organized, self-disciplined and goal-driven); agreeableness (being helpful, cooperative and good-natured); and neuroticism (being emotionally unstable).

These other traits will also have influenced how people have reacted to the pandemic. While extroversion is often associated with healthy activities, it is [conscientiousness](#) that predicts health-related behaviors

best. Similarly, while extroverts tend to have a larger social network than introverts, it is [agreeableness](#) that ultimately predicts the quality of that social network.

In other words, extroversion-introversion on its own is far too simplistic a measure for us to use when thinking about people's response to the pandemic. When it comes to coping with lockdown, different combinations of personality traits could entail very different behaviors.

Beyond personality

Aside from [personality](#) traits, we all follow motivational forces, usually guided by values and beliefs, that could also influence our behavior and wellbeing during lockdown.

Even someone with high levels of extroversion and conscientiousness, which would predict a healthy set of behaviors during [lockdown](#), could have found their wellbeing affected by their values.

A materialistic person, for instance, might be compelled to follow maladaptive coping behaviors such as [impulsive online shopping](#), which one study revealed to have [increased](#) during the pandemic—as a coping mechanism for negative emotional states.

Such motivational forces can guide our behavior as much as our personalities, and our wellbeing during the pandemic will be determined by how all these forces intersect and interact.

Even though extroversion-introversion can be a revealing measure of our lives, it's missing the much more complex and intriguing picture of human behavior that psychologists are continuing to study with interest during the [pandemic](#).

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