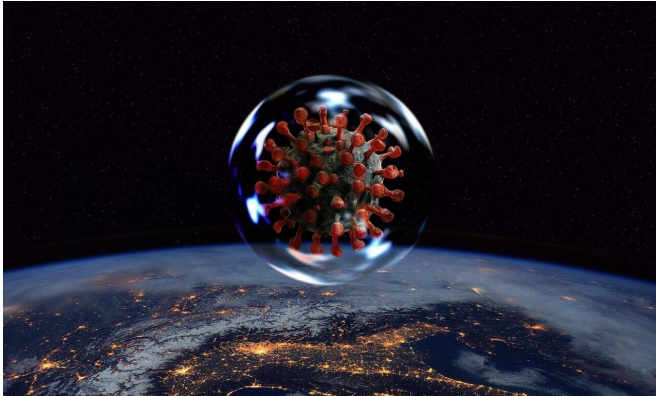# Blitz data used to identify those at risk of mental illness following COVID

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New research from the Institute for Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience (IoPPN) at King's College London has suggested that policy makers should utilize mental health data from the aftermath of the Blitz as a means of establishing who is at the greatest risk of poor mental health following the spread of COVID-19.

The research, which was published today in the *Lancet Psychiatry*, suggests that, while there have been examples of mental resilience in the face of a pandemic, people from areas of socio-economic deprivation, or who have lost family members, or work in high-risk occupations face an increased risk of experiencing mental health conditions like depression, anxiety, and PTSD. By identifying these risk factors we are more able to provide targeted support to those most in need.

Following the German raids over Britain in the 1940s, Government propaganda promoted London as a symbol of mental resilience that later became known as "Blitz spirit".

Professor Edgar Jones of King's IoPPN said "The "Blitz Spirit" has become a by-word for a nation

that faced down nightly bombing raids and emerged with its resolve and morale intact. The reality is that the worst affected parts of the UK saw significant increases in what we would recognize today as symptoms of PTSD and other common mental illnesses."

By studying the available data, Professor Jones was able to identify crucial risk factors that arose during the Second World War, and now says that we should be on the lookout for similar warnings this time around.

Professor Jones said "any area that has seen a particularly high rate of COVID-19 cases should be looked at closely. These are often areas of deprivation associated with worse health, poorer educational opportunities and crowded housing where you have a higher concentration of people working in low-paid "frontline" jobs or are more likely to have suffered economic hardship due to the pandemic."

The UK's urban centers have been some of the worst affected areas in the last year with London, Birmingham, Manchester, and Leeds seeing some of the highest rates of infection.

The British Medical Association has since warned that the mental health consequences of the pandemic will be "considerable".

Professor Jones went on to say "The Blitz was an undeniably traumatic experience for the nation, but there were opportunities for communities to come together to support one another. What we have seen in the last year of the pandemic is that people are facing equally traumatic experiences, but the lockdown and social distancing rules have meant that we haven't been able to recreate that sense of community and shared adversity in the same way."

Professor Jones now says that the Government should introduce targeted interventions to offer

mental health support in areas of socio-economic deprivation and high mortality where he says there is the highest potential risk, including an increase in funding for local authorities, with a particular focus on Black, Asian, and ethnic minority communities who have experienced some of the highest mortality rates as a result of the pandemic.