



Coronavirus: the consequences for mental health

The ongoing impact of
the coronavirus pandemic
on people with mental
health problems across
England and Wales

July 2021

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Foreword



“Many people faced mental health difficulties before the pandemic, and they have been hit hardest.”

It's been more than a year since the first lockdown was announced – and although restrictions may be beginning to lift, the impact of the pandemic is far from over. We all encountered the difficulties of not seeing family and friends and having to wear face masks. But it's important to bring to light the unequal effects the pandemic has had on mental health. In particular, its effects on young people of colour, as well as those living in poverty and having problems with money and housing. The constant changes in rules and restrictions have overshadowed the lived experiences of people with mental health problems, and the impact on their wellbeing.

Empowering young people from racialised communities to speak openly

My role in this research involved running a focus group with other young people from racialised communities. I thoroughly enjoyed training in qualitative research and facilitating a focus group to hear the experiences of young people from communities like mine. Not only was there empathy, but it was intriguing to discover each person's thoughts and opinions and how they felt about the situation over the past year. It's essential to provide young

people of colour with the platform to make their voices heard to break down stubborn social inequalities and empower and encourage them to speak openly about their mental health.

Involving young people from racialised communities in many aspects of research and unveiling what they have endured creates a community and a sense of togetherness. It shows no one is alone in their battles.

Even as we slowly resume our pre-pandemic lives, the effects of lockdown will still linger. Conquering the struggles of the pandemic has been a huge accomplishment in itself – but worries and anxieties about the future still remain. Many people faced mental health difficulties before the pandemic, and it is those who were struggling before that have been hit hardest in the past year. Understanding their experiences will enable people to get support that resonates with their experiences and improves their wellbeing.

Our research will not only create awareness of the challenges we have all faced, but will lead the way forward with confidence and reassurance.

Anisah Waheed

Youth Voice Network Member and facilitator of Mind's coronavirus research focus groups with young people from racialised communities. You can hear voices from the focus groups throughout our report.



Our findings at a glance

“ I hope we come out of this a kinder, more considerate society, but I’m not sure that we will. I worry that many people will be traumatised and will fall through the cracks. ”

How has coronavirus affected your mental health?

That’s the question we asked people at the start of lockdown. Now, one year on, we’ve asked again to understand the ongoing impact of the pandemic.

We’ve heard from nearly 12,000 people with mental health problems, both adults and young people. They’ve shared the personal impact, how they’ve coped, if

and how they got support and how they think easing restrictions might affect their mental health.

This important research will help us understand people’s experiences and fight for what matters to them. It also gives us clear evidence to shape effective mental health services for the future. Go to page 29 to find out what needs to be done next.

What we found: key points

1

People who struggled before now struggle more

People who were more likely to struggle with their mental health before the pandemic have experienced the greatest impact. They report an increase in the severity of challenges they're facing now and concerns about the future. They urgently need tailored support.

2

Hope is here for many, but anxiety remains

Nearly half of those who took part in our survey thought their mental health would improve once restrictions eased. However, people are most worried about the transition to seeing and being near others.

3

Coronavirus has heightened inequality

We knew there was a connection between poverty and mental health before the pandemic. Coronavirus has heightened these inequalities. Our research shows people receiving benefits have been hit particularly hard and are experiencing increasingly severe and complex problems. This shows support is needed beyond mental health services.

4

Young people are finding it hard to cope

Young people who struggle with their mental health were more likely to be using negative coping strategies, like self-harm, than adults. Isolation and loneliness have made people's mental health worse – with young people particularly badly affected.

5

People urgently need more support

There is an urgent need for investment in high quality trauma-informed support. Everyone should be given choice in how they access and receive support. Much more work needs to be done to ensure support is available for young people, racialised communities, and those in poverty.

What did we do?

- We carried out **two surveys**, one with adults (aged 25+) and one with young people (aged 13-24) with experience of mental health problems living in England and Wales. The research was done between 25 March and 10 May 2021, ending as we started to emerge from lockdown.
- This research explores the experiences of people with mental health problems rather than looking at how the population's mental health has changed overall.
- We can make some comparisons between this year's survey and last year's. But different participants have answered different surveys – so comparisons must be treated with caution.
- Eighty-five per cent of adults and ninety-one per cent of young people answering our survey have experienced mental distress or accessed mental health services. Most of those without lived experience care for someone with a mental health problem.
- We also carried out **qualitative research**, working with a young person with lived experience and training her to facilitate some of this research. In particular, we tried to get a better understanding of the experiences of people from racialised communities, whose voices are underrepresented in our survey results.

Please remember:

- Despite extensive outreach and targeted promotion, both our adult and young people's surveys underrepresent people from racialised communities. We will continue to work to earn the trust of racialised communities and ensure their voices are well represented in future research.
- The sample size for people from racialised communities (7% of adults and 12% of young people), and young people living in poverty (15% of young people have received free school meals), is particularly low. This sometimes prevents meaningful analysis.
- We recruited participants alongside other charities and voluntary organisations. This means they might be more familiar with Mind, mental health and charities.
- This research was conducted with people with lived experience of mental health problems, not the general public. When we refer to 'adults' or 'young people' throughout the report, we refer to people with experience of mental health problems.

Content warning

Some of the quotes and stories in this report mention self-harm, domestic abuse, abandonment, racial trauma, suicide and disordered eating.

Who took part in the survey?

Adults

We surveyed

10,023

adults aged 25+

Young people

We surveyed

1,756

young people aged 13 – 24

80%

experienced mental distress during or before the coronavirus pandemic

88%

experienced mental distress during or before the coronavirus pandemic

46%

have a long-term health problem or learning difference

35%

have a long-term health problem or learning difference

For full participant demographics, please see the [appendix](#).



Section 1: How has the coronavirus pandemic changed our mental health over the past year?

We asked young people and adults how their mental health has been affected by the pandemic since the first national lockdown in March 2020. We found that:

- Two thirds (65%) of adults and more than two thirds (68%) of young people with mental health problems say their mental health has got worse since the first national lockdown. Nearly half (46%) of those adults and over half (51%) of those young people said that their mental health has got much worse since the beginning of the first national lockdown in March 2020.
- One in four (26%) adults and over one in six (18%) young people experienced mental distress for the first time during the pandemic.
- People living in a household receiving benefits saw their mental health hit hardest by the pandemic.

“ Since March 2020 my mental health deteriorated and by the end of 2020 I was at breaking point once again. ”

Adult

The decline in people's mental health has become more severe over the past year

- Nearly a third (30%) of adults and over a third (34%) of young people said that their mental health has got much worse. That's more than double the proportion of people that told us this last year.
- Just under half of adults (47%) and young people (48%) have rarely or not felt close to people recently. Forty-four per cent of young people rarely feel optimistic, or don't feel optimistic, about the future.

💬 **Recently my anxiety has spiked so much that I can't even do mundane tasks like using a printer without shaking. I can't sit in a class I find difficult without shaking, I can't speak in front of a class without shaking.** 🗨️

Young person

Some people's mental health has improved

- Just over one in six adults (17%) and young people (18%) told us their mental health had got better since the first national lockdown.
- Some people told us that the pandemic had made it easier to talk about their mental health, as more people acknowledged its impact on wellbeing.
- One participant said that lockdown sparked her decision to end an abusive marriage – others spoke about how it had inspired them to move jobs or houses.

💬 **The lockdown made the world a less busy place and allowed me more time with nature and peace from other people.** 🗨️

Adult

Get advice and support

Worried about how the pandemic is affecting your mental health?

We've got lots of advice and tips on how to manage your mental health and wellbeing which you can access [here](#).

Lillian's story

Lillian's mental health has got a lot worse during the pandemic. She has faced many complex problems during the past year, having gone through a divorce with an abusive ex-husband and looked after her adult sons as an unpaid full-time carer in Wales. She is now facing eviction from her home, which is making her feel more anxious than ever as she can't find any private rentals that will accept tenants receiving benefits. She has had little support from family and friends and doesn't want to burden them with her problems during a tough time. On top of this, as restrictions begin to ease, she finds the thought of going to the supermarket, meeting up with friends or family, and the risk of catching coronavirus very anxiety-inducing.

Focus on: poverty

- People receiving benefits were more likely to experience poor mental health before the pandemic. They're now more likely to have seen their mental health decline, reinforcing mental health inequalities.
- Over half (58%) of survey participants living in a household receiving benefits currently have poor or very poor mental health.
- Seventy-two per cent are feeling worse or much worse since the first national lockdown in March 2020 (vs 63% of people not receiving benefits).

🗨️ **I'm always worried about being called in for a review of my benefit payments. This would be even more anxiety-provoking due to the pandemic and I worry about catching the virus.** 🗨️

Adult

Focus on: racialised communities

- Racialised communities have been disproportionately affected by the health and social consequences of the pandemic. Our survey found people from racialised communities were no more or less likely than White people to experience mental distress or access services for the first time during the pandemic.

🗨️ **Speaking to Mind this year was my first time ever openly speaking about my issues and they were so kind and caring. They made me feel at ease and pointed me in the right direction to get help. It's not about living with these issues – it's about getting help and having a life away from these issues.** 🗨️

Adult (from a racialised community)

Ella's story

Ella is a 44-year-old British-born Chinese woman who lives in a council flat in London with her elderly mum. Ella has experienced anxiety and depression since childhood and was recently diagnosed with autism. She's worried about her mum who has had to shield, and Ella has struggled to find work. However, she has enjoyed social distancing and not being around so many people. With lockdown easing, Ella is finding that her panic attacks are starting to return because she is seeing more people.

Some people have accessed mental health support for the first time during the pandemic

- More than a quarter (26%) of adults and eighteen per cent of young people who took part in our research experienced mental distress for the first time during the pandemic.
- Around in one in six (16%) adults and one in five (19%) young people accessed mental health services for the first time during the pandemic.
- Many people used the pandemic to focus on improving their mental health and wellbeing. Some people decided to get mental health support. Others did more exercise, spent more time outside and built self-care routines.

“ I have never suffered with mental health issues but felt close to a breakdown recently. ”

Adult



Section 2: What has affected people's mental health?



We asked people what had a negative or positive impact on their mental health in the last year. We found that:

- Lack of personal contact with loved ones, loneliness and worries about getting or spreading coronavirus made people's mental health worse.
- Loneliness hit young people's mental health hardest – nearly nine in ten (88%) young people said it made their mental health worse.
- Young people (53%) and people receiving benefits (48%) were most likely to say that thoughts about money had a negative impact on their mental health.

“ I really badly miss school. I hate the school holidays because they feel no different than lockdown to me. During the school holidays I cry nearly every day and doing things like brushing my hair feels difficult. I just feel so lonely and crave any social interaction possible with my teachers and my friends. ”

Focus on: young people

- Loneliness affected most people we talked to – but young people were particularly affected. Nearly nine in ten (88%) told us feeling lonely made their mental health worse.
- Over half (53%) of young people said thinking about their family's or their own jobs or financial situation made their mental health worse. This makes them much more likely than adults (37%) to say that thoughts about finances had a negative impact on their mental health.
- Young people are also more likely to have been negatively affected by lack of private space in their house (56% said it affected their mental health, in comparison to 36% of adults).

“**I hate not seeing anyone. When you do go out and meet friends, you get shamed and feel even worse. You can't win.**”

Young person

“**Being a young carer...it's been really hard with the pandemic and I have constantly worried for my family's mental health. [I've] been trying to make everything better financially and mentally for everyone in the family but I don't know where to turn anymore.**”

Young person

Get advice and support

We've put together advice for [young people about their mental health and wellbeing during the pandemic](#).

Dara, a young person living in Wales, created this digital art to represent their experiences of the pandemic. Dara wanted to communicate loneliness and isolation, but also the constant need to be online and available, despite their many other worries.



Excerpt from a poem by Nia, a young person living in Wales

can't break the rules
I have to choose
between my one track mind
and a one way system

I've been locked out of
my favourite places

silently suffering in a
sea of masked faces

exhausted and trapped,
I've become a victim

of my one track mind
in a one way system

Lucy's story

Lucy has rheumatoid arthritis so had to shield in the first lockdown. She experienced anxiety when restrictions first started to lift because she felt that she was “always on edge and couldn't relax or let my guard down because I'm at risk of getting the virus.” Seeing people became more difficult for her as she became used to not meeting others. She now finds it “easier to stay at home.” She was reluctant to get support because she thought that “people are in a much worse situation than her”. However, with encouragement from her manager, Lucy accessed talking therapy through her GP for the first time. She found this really useful and now feels like she has plans in place for when she can't cope.

Focus on: poverty

- The economic consequences of the pandemic have fallen hardest on people who were struggling financially before the first lockdown.
- Nearly half (48%) of those living in a household receiving benefits told us that their financial situation has made their mental health worse.
- Twenty-nine per cent of people in a household receiving benefits say the lack of safety of their house or neighbourhood has made their mental health worse. Forty-four per cent say the condition of their house has made their mental health worse.

“ I am scared of becoming ill, I am fearful of being stuck indoors but also of going out. I have no job and I worry about money: just living costs and not being able to save or buy the things I need. ”

Adult

Get advice and support

Are you feeling worried about your money and mental health? We have [lots of practical tips and information to support you.](#)

Arun's story

Arun, a Black British man living in the North West of England, has worked as a finance assistant for nearly six years. During the pandemic, four of Arun's close family died. His mental health began to decline when he was forced to work from home, which made him feel isolated and lonely – especially after his Dad died. Arun repeatedly told his employer that this was affecting his mental wellbeing. His concerns were not taken seriously, even when he told his employer he was feeling suicidal. It was only when Arun went to his GP for help, and got a letter stating he was being treated for severe depressive disorder, that he was given time off work. Arun found the therapy he received via his GP really useful in managing his thoughts and feelings.

Focus on: racialised communities

- Adults from racialised communities are slightly more likely to be affected by changes to how much they can go outside (75% people from racialised communities vs 66% White adult participants).
- Young people from racialised communities told us that their parents felt much more stressed during the pandemic due to hearing about 'BAME' people being more likely to die from coronavirus on the news.

“**I have lost friends to the virus and feel really low due to the exposure of the Black community trauma and the lack of acknowledgement from other communities.**”

Adult (from a racialised community)

Get advice and support

Are you feeling lonely? We've put together [practical tips to help you manage these feelings.](#)

- Others told us they found the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement difficult to deal with. They felt sad or anxious about the lack of change as a result, or found the coverage or reaction to the movement hard to witness.

“**There has been a lot of talk about BLM during the pandemic. It's been really difficult for me to see the images, see the videos and witness the people that deny it and don't want to listen or acknowledge the issues.**”

Young person (from a racialised community)

“**I haven't been to church over fears of spreading the virus which has been difficult spiritually. I also found the increased reporting of racism a source of anxiety: like BLM and increased racism towards Asians. I am Asian and noticed an increase in racism.**”

Adult (from a racialised community)

Section 3: How have people with mental health problems coped with the pandemic?



We asked how people coped with the changes and pressures they faced during the pandemic. We found that:

- Spending time outside is the most popular way to cope – three quarters (75%) of adults and young people have coped by going outside.
- People living in households receiving benefits are around twenty per cent less likely than those not receiving benefits to cope in this way.
- Young people are most likely to use negative ways to cope. A third (32%) of young people have self-harmed to cope, making them more than twice as likely to have coped by self-harming than adults (14%).
- Over three quarters (76%) of adults and young people (78%) have been over or under-eating to cope with the pandemic.

🗨️ **Around October 2020, I started experiencing symptoms of anorexia nervosa. I became preoccupied with food and my days now revolve around eating and exercise.** 🗨️

Young person

Top five most popular coping mechanisms for adults:

- 1 Spending time outside (75%).
- 2 Reading, watching TV/films or listening to music/radio (72%).
- 3 Eating too much or too little (70%).
- 4 Connecting with friends, family or a partner online (62%).
- 5 Sleeping too much or too little (61%).

Top five most popular coping mechanisms for young people:

- 1 Sleeping too much or too little (77%).
- 2 Spending time outside (75%).
- 3 Reading, watching TV/film or listening to music/radio (75%).
- 4 Spending too much time on social media (73%).
- 5 Eating too much or too little (72%).

“It can be hard to use mechanisms that I’ve used before [the pandemic] because of the ways that socialising has changed. I normally talk to my friends a lot about this [my mental health]. But now the only way you can connect with them is through a phone call or online, and it’s just not the same. You aren’t properly connecting.”

Young person

Physical activity has been a key coping mechanism for many during the pandemic

- Half of adults (50%) and over half of young people (57%) have coped by exercising during the pandemic.
- Closure of sport and leisure venues and restrictions on team sports has made over three quarters (76%) of adults’ and over two thirds (67%) of young people’s mental health worse (among those exercising before the pandemic).

“I have PTSD and BPD and it’s a roller coaster most days but, since this pandemic started with lockdown, I’ve been able to get out and exercise more because people stay at home and I don’t have to fear them. I’m fearing the end of lockdown more than the pandemic.”

Adult

“I have felt angry and anxious because all of my coping mechanisms, like going to the gym, were taken away.”

Adult

Courtney's story

Courtney is 24-year-old Asian man, who works for the police. While Courtney had previously received some mental health support at university, during the pandemic he “reached an all-time low”, and attempted to take his own life. Courtney has since accessed support through his workplace and A&E to improve his mental health. He found speaking to a counsellor a really useful way to begin resetting negative thinking patterns. Alongside counselling, he feels that setting himself physical activity goals helped him to manage his mental health and wellbeing on a day-to-day basis. Although not a runner before the pandemic, he is now going to be running the London Marathon for Mind, as he wants to ensure that others get support and respect when struggling with their mental health.

Focus on: young people

- With the exception of drinking alcohol and gambling, young people are more likely to have used all negative coping mechanisms compared with adults.
- A third (32%) of young people who responded to our survey have self-harmed to cope with the pandemic, making them more than twice as likely as adults (14%) to cope in this way.

“ Since the first lockdown, I’ve been feeling much lower and hopeless. My self-harming has increased and suicidal thoughts have also gotten more intense. Before lockdown, I’d never attempted suicide but have twice in past year. ”

Young person

Get advice and support

We have advice and support for young people about self-harm, including [how you can help yourself](#) or [support others](#).



Focus on: poverty

- People in a household receiving benefits are less likely to be coping with the pandemic by exercising (37% of those receiving benefits vs 58% of those who are not) or going outside (66% vs 82%).
- Over a fifth (22%) self-harmed to cope and forty per cent overspent to cope.

“ When lockdown happened and the gyms were closed, I found myself sleeping a lot because of my medication and it was very difficult to get motivated to do exercise. In May 2020, I ended up under the Mental Health team because I went manic. ”

Adult

Focus on: racialised communities

- People from racialised communities are more than twice as likely as their White counterparts to cope by praying or other religious worship. A quarter (24%) of adults from racialised communities coped in this way, compared to 12% of White adult participants.

“ I find connecting with God through the power of prayer very beneficial for my mental health problems and even more so if you can join others in a good church. ”

Adult (from a racialised community)



Section 4: Have people been able to access the support they need?

We asked about the support people sought or received during lockdown, and any barriers they faced.

We found that:

- Around one in five young people and one in six adults got support for the first time during the pandemic.
- Nearly three quarters of people using mental health support (73% of adults and 71% of young people using services) will continue to do so after coronavirus restrictions ease.
- More than one in five (21%) adults and one in seven (15%) young people didn't get support because they didn't think their problem was serious enough.

“A lot of mental health support is currently very difficult to access without speaking on the phone, and that is especially difficult for me. The times when I have felt worst this year and the times I have needed support most I have really struggled to get it.”

Young person

More people, particularly young people, are getting support:

- Over a third (35%) of adults and half (49%) of young people experiencing mental health problems accessed or tried to access support during the pandemic. One in six (16%) adults and one in five (19%) young people accessed mental health services for the first time.
- Of those who tried to access support, seventy-two per cent were successful. However, this means that twenty-eight per cent of people who tried to access support were not able to do so. We also know that forty-two per cent of young people who accessed mental health services had to wait three months or more. This is still a large proportion of people who are not getting timely access to the support they desperately need.

“**I sought therapy a few months into the pandemic, something I had always said I wanted to do as I was incredibly overwhelmed, culminating in a breakdown. Being from a Black Christian household, the message has always been you don't take your problems to strangers, you take them to God. I was able to get therapy through my workplace, which helped tremendously.**”

Adult (from a racialised community)

Most people will still need support after the pandemic

- Nearly three quarters (73%) of adults and young people (71%) currently accessing mental health services will continue to do so once restrictions ease.
- Of those who are currently accessing support, only six per cent of adults and five per cent of young people said that they would no longer access support after restrictions eased.
- Those who had experienced mental distress for the first time during the pandemic were less likely to continue using services.

What did people think of remote mental health services?

Our report into how people received mental health support during the pandemic recommends they need more choice over what support they get and how they get it.





Some people feel they don't deserve support

- Over one in five (21%) adults, and just over one in seven (15%) young people didn't get support because they didn't think their problem was serious enough. Some didn't go to family or friends for support for the same reason.
- Nine per cent of adults and eleven per cent of young people didn't feel comfortable getting mental health support.

Get advice and support

Remember, it's always OK to ask for help – you deserve support. [Our guide](#) to different support options could help you.

Top 3 reasons people did not think their problem was serious enough:

- 1** Fifty-seven per cent of adults and fifty-five per cent of young people felt that everyone was experiencing poor mental health and they were no different.
- 2** Forty-eight per cent of adults and fifty-seven per cent of young people felt others needed mental health support more urgently than them.
- 3** Thirty-nine per cent of adults and forty-six per cent of young people were worried about overburdening the NHS during a pandemic.

“You just feel ‘I’m a burden’, I’m there to help them [my family], they’ve already got enough on their plate, I know that they’re struggling, and I’m not going to add to their struggle by telling them about my issues.”

Adult



Focus on: young people

- Most young people said the pandemic made it harder to know where to start with getting support.
- With schools closed, many found they didn't have anyone that could reassure them about support options, whether their problem was serious enough, and whether they were seeking support in the right places.
- For young people, the most popular way of getting support was through their GP over the phone (27%) or through a counsellor or therapist over phone or video call (23%).
- Forty-two per cent of young people who accessed mental health services had to wait three or more months to get support. Over a quarter (27%) had to wait more than four months.
- Over a third (34%) didn't get any support while waiting for help. The most popular form of support was from family and friends.

“**Coronavirus delayed the help I needed to receive and made a lot of things either online or via phone which worsened my anxiety.**”

Young person

Rahul's story

Rahul, an Asian man living in Newcastle, spoke to a private coach to help him manage his mental health problems. He preferred private support to NHS services, even though he said it was more costly for him during a difficult financial period. He felt that it is “difficult to feel safe” with a GP. He feels “a bit mistrusting of authorities to have that power over you” and know so much about your life. Rahul valued the trust and non-judgemental approach of his coach, who was recommended to him by a friend. In Rahul's eyes, the kind of person who is able to access NHS services is comfortable with expressing vulnerability and knowing what they need. They are struggling but “know the mental health landscape and feel confident to go in and talk about their feelings.”

Focus on: poverty

- People receiving benefits are two times less likely to have accessed mental health services for the first time during the pandemic (10% of those receiving benefits vs 20% who are not receiving benefits).
- Of those who tried to access support, people receiving benefits were more likely to be unable to do so (19% vs 12%). They were also much less likely to say that they did not need or want support (11% vs 24%).

“I'm left alone with my negative thoughts – I have to fight to keep my benefits, I have to fight to look for a job. I feel like I've spent a year barely keeping my head above water and everyone I know has felt the same. I've lost connection with the people I used to go to support groups with and nothing has replaced that.”

Adult

Section 5: How are people with mental health problems feeling about the future?



We asked people how they felt about their future, and what support they wanted as lockdown restrictions eased. We also gave them the opportunity to share tips on managing their mental health during this period. We found that:

- Over half of adults and young people (55%) are worried about the transition to seeing and being near other people once restrictions ease.
- Around half of adults (47%) and young people (52%) think their mental health will improve as restrictions ease, with people receiving benefits much less likely to think so.
- Both young people and adults prefer in-person support. As our [Trying to Connect](#) report suggests, we need to provide people with greater choice in their mental health support.
- People have lots of great advice on how to cope with change and be kind to ourselves as restrictions ease (see [page 27](#)).

“I hope we come out of this a kinder, more considerate society, but I’m not sure that we will. I worry that many people will be traumatised and will fall through the cracks.”

Adult

The majority of people feel hopeful about the future and their mental health...

- The majority (47% of adults and 52% of young people) think that their mental health will improve once restrictions ease.
- A similar proportion (41% of adults and 47% of young people) feel hopeful about their future.
- Three quarters (74%) of young people told us that the pandemic has changed how they think about their own and others' mental health.

“ I’ve been suffering from depression, anxiety and agoraphobia and the lockdowns fed into that fear. Since the lockdowns have eased, I’m getting up and showering if I can and I’m definitely feeling more hopeful. ”

Young person

...but many people don't think that things will get better

- One in five (20%) adults and young people (21%) don't think their mental health will improve once restrictions ease.
- Over a quarter (29%) of adults and a third (32%) of young people don't feel hopeful about the future. Just over one in five (21%) adults and fifteen per cent of young people feel they can't achieve their pre-pandemic goals.
- Over half of both adults (58%) and young people (53%) don't think we will live in a fairer society after the pandemic.

“ I have been shielding for most of the past year. Now I cannot go into public without having an anxiety attack and I am deeply fearful of the return to normal life. ”

Young person

Get advice and support

Worried about restrictions easing? We've got lots of information and tips on how to manage your mental health and wellbeing throughout this period of change, which you can access [here](#).

Five tips from our participants on coping with restrictions easing

1 Keep talking and connecting with people

“I advise anyone to speak to loved ones or health professionals about how they are feeling. The more you open up, the more you realise you are not alone.”

“If you feel like you have no one, use online or phone support groups.”

“Talk to your friends, talk to your family, talk to anyone, whoever you love and trust. I promise you are not a burden.”

2 Do things at your own pace

“It’s OK to say no to socialising if you need to and prioritise your own health and mental wellbeing.”

“What we’ve been through is massive, and it’s OK to give yourself time to deal with how you’re feeling.”

“Be gentle with yourself and don’t put expectations on yourself as you ease back into society. Don’t feel guilty for not using lockdown to master a new skill or be ‘useful’.”

3 Try not to compare yourself to others

“Do what makes you happy. Happiness looks and feels different to everyone, so don’t worry about what everyone else is doing. Wear what makes you feel good, eat what makes you feel good, go somewhere that makes you feel good, see someone that makes you feel good.”

“Slowly emerge from lockdown, take your own time to reflect and choose activities that best suit you and make you feel good, not just following others because this is the easiest path.”

4 Limit your exposure to news and negative discussions

“Put your phone down and go outside – it’s a cliché but it works wonders.”

“Try and avoid the constant bad, inconsistent and constantly changing information about the virus, and limit discussion about it. It just adds to the stress, and is very unhelpful.”

5 Write things down

“Journal and write down positive thoughts before starting studying, like ‘You are going to smash your dissertation today’ or ‘You have got time, you are making good progress’.”

“I started writing my thoughts down when it felt like too much to cope with. I keep a one-line-a-day diary which helps me look back over the past few weeks and realise that my low moods are temporary.”

Focus on: poverty

- People living in a household receiving benefits are much less likely to think their mental health will improve once restrictions ease.
- Only twenty-eight per cent feel hopeful about their future.

People living in a household receiving benefits are also more likely to say that:

- Worrying about their finances will affect their mental health more than it did before the pandemic.
- They're worrying about their housing situation more than they did before the pandemic.
- They're worried about germs or catching any illness once restrictions ease.

“ I despair for the future and what may be done to welfare claimants like me to recoup the financial losses due to the pandemic. ”

Adult

“ I feel left behind. I feel angry, bereaved and scared for my future. I've experienced a large increase in flashbacks relating to trauma and suicidal ideation, that's only been worsened by the pandemic and poor access to support and care. ”

Adult

Being around others, and catching illnesses, are both young people's and adults' main concerns about restrictions easing

- Over half (55%) of adults and young people are worried about being near other people once restrictions ease.
- Forty-four per cent are worried about catching coronavirus as restrictions ease. This rises to forty-six per cent of all adults who have been vaccinated.
- A third of adults (32%) and over a third of young people (38%) are worried about germs or catching any illness in future.

“ I'm incredibly anxious about having to socialise in school and be back in the classroom and I just feel like crying a lot of the time but won't reach out to teachers because I feel as though I am annoying them. ”

Young person

Most people feel positive about the vaccine

- Sixty-one per cent of adults and twenty-two per cent of young people have had the coronavirus vaccine.
- Of those who have not, sixty-four per cent of adults and seventy eight per cent of young people said that they would have it when offered, twenty-three per cent of adults and nine per cent of young people said they wouldn't.
- Reasons given include lack of information on side effects and being scared of needles (especially among young people).
- Seventy-five per cent of adults and seventy-six per cent of young people said that knowing that a vaccine for coronavirus exists made their mental health better (only 9% of adults and 8% of young people said this made their mental health worse).

“I’m worried about possible long term effects it could have on our bodies. Most importantly because I am a young woman looking to have my first child in the next few year – I’m scared about the potential impact on my body/unborn child.”

Adult

“I’m very nervous about the vaccine because I’m scared of needles, and it’s hard when people around me get it so I have to mentally distance myself from the conversation.”

Young person

“I fear vaccine passports, I fear I will be pushed further out of society.”

Adult

Focus on: young people

- Just under two thirds (63%) of young people have picked up habits they will struggle to stop, in comparison to less than half (45%) of adults.
- Fifty-nine per cent of young people will enjoy school, college or university more once restrictions ease. However, over a fifth (21%) do not think that they will enjoy school, college or university without restrictions.
- Two-thirds of young people (65%), in comparison to half (50%) of adults, think that they will have to support others more with their mental health once restrictions ease.

“Going back to normal is a lot of uncertainty, and as someone struggling with anxiety, uncertainty is anxiety-provoking.”

Young person

“I feel there might be a social expectation after easing to be always doing things and always be in groups and doing things. Like I know people are saying at school that everyone’s gonna go to London every weekend in the summer, and it will make people socially stressed and overloaded.”

Young person

Get advice and support

Worried about the coronavirus vaccine? We have lots of [information and tips](#) on managing your worries.

What support do adults want to receive after the pandemic?

- 1 More opportunities to socialise or interact with other people (55%)
- 2 Mindfulness or meditation (37%)
- 3 Information about specific ways to manage specific mental health problems as coronavirus restrictions ease (35%)

What support do young people want to receive after the pandemic?

- 1 More information and education about mental health in school, college, university or work (53%)
- 2 Counselling in person (43%)
- 3 More self-referral options to mental health services (42%)

Focus on: young people

- Counselling is far more popular among young people than adults – only a third (32%) of adults would like counselling in person, compared to forty-three per cent of young people. However, just fifteen per cent of adults and seventeen per cent of young people wanted support by video call or telephone, showing a clear preference for in-person support.

“Going through my education institution to get mental health support has been more beneficial for me. It should be on the school curriculum, as it can be difficult to tell if you’re struggling, there’s not enough awareness of what that looks like.”

Young person

Focus on: racialised communities

- People from racialised communities are slightly more likely to want information about how to process memories and experiences of the pandemic (46% vs 32% of White people) and information about how to cope with bereavement (21% vs 15%).
- People from these communities are more likely to want information about money and benefits (23% vs 14%) and housing (10% vs 6%) to help manage their mental health.

“Information and advice, both written and oral, in different languages would be beneficial. Given the effects of the pandemic on BAME groups, given the lack of understanding of mental health issues by BAME groups (I am Bengali) outreach to specific communities is needed.”

Adult



Looking forward: what needs to happen next

Coronavirus has robbed many of us of what we need to stay healthy – both mentally and physically. The severity and complexity of many people’s mental health problems has increased and lots of people who have been accessing support during the pandemic will continue to do so.

Our research shows that we have to ensure the pandemic’s after-effects don’t make life worse for people who were disadvantaged before it even started, and that people can access the right support that caters to new and complex needs.

We want this research to change lives. That’s why we’re using it as evidence to shape services and fight for what you care about.

Here's what needs to be prioritised:

1

Supporting those who need it most

Some groups have been hit harder by the pandemic. We should work with young people, people in poverty and those from racialised communities to ensure they can get the support they need.

2

Understanding people's complex needs

Many people with mental health problems who were already struggling report new and complex challenges. It's essential that support is holistic and services are ready for the increase in severity of people's mental health problems. Services must also take into account the trauma that people have faced over the past year and how this might affect the support they need. This also means responding to pressing social problems.

Get advice and support

If you need support where you live – or if you already use the services of a local Mind, it's best to contact your local Mind directly. You can find your nearest local Mind using [our online map](#).

3

Giving people choice

We must give people more choice over the type of support they would like, whether different types of talking therapies, medication, or creative therapies. It's also important that people have a choice about how they access support. It could be digital, on the phone, in-person, or a blend. People want to choose the kind of support they receive and how they get it. Find out more about our research into accessing services remotely and what this means for the future in our report [Trying to Connect](#).

4

Beating stigma and giving people hope

Many adults and young people told us they didn't think their problem was important enough to warrant support. We need to help them feel valued and convince them that they are worthy of support.

5

Boosting self-referral

We must also ensure that people feel able and know how to refer themselves for the support they need when they need it.



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 [mindforbettermentalhealth](https://www.facebook.com/mindforbettermentalhealth)

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If you would like to see the overall responses to each question we asked, they are available here:

[Adults \(25+\)](#)

[Young people \(13–24\)](#)

Please note that these include some incomplete responses that were filtered out of the results in our final analysis. This may mean that some frequencies may not be identical to those included in the report. If you are a researcher who is interested in finding out more detail about the research and the data we have collected, please contact research@mind.org.uk

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