



UCL

UCL-Penn Global COVID Study Summer Webinar Report

Lessons from COVID-19: Reflections, Resilience and Recovery

2 June to 28 July 2021

Dr Keri Wong

Department of Psychology and Human Development
UCL Institute of Education



SPONSORED BY



GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT



UNIVERSITÀ
DI TRENTO





UCL

The **UCL-Penn Global COVID Study** examines the short- and longer-term effects of COVID-19 on people's mental health, physical health, and social trust in others. This study consisted of three online surveys of 20-30 minutes long administered at Time 1 (April to July 2020), Time 2 (October - January 2021), and Time 3 (April to July 2021) to participants 18+ years and resident of any country. The survey was available in 7 languages. For more information about study specifics, please visit our [OSF](#) page.

This summer webinar series sponsored by the **UCL Global Engagement Fund** featured five themed papers presented by study collaborators and critiqued by leaders and experts in policy, public health, economics, sustainability, aging, and psychology. The latter group of experts were not part of the study and helped inform and provide a more balanced debate on the application of our study findings and complementary insights on the impacts of COVID-19. All webinar papers will now be peer-reviewed and collated alongside discussant commentaries in an open access COVID [special issue](#) as part of the *UCL Open: Environment Journal*. Webinar recordings can be found on our study [website](#) (<https://globalcovidstudy.com/events/>).

This document summarises the webinar series including key take home messages and recommendations as helpfully collated by my research assistants, Kyleigh Melville, Kimberly Loke, and Sammi Lee from the UCL Institute of Education. We hope this document will spark new *ideas*, *conversations*, and *action*. Should you have comments/suggests, please feel free to reach out to us at contact@globalcovidstudy.com.

[Dr Keri Wong](#)

Assistant Professor
Department of Psychology and Human Development
UCL Institute of Education

To cite this document:

Wong, Keri Ka-Yee (2021): Global Covid Study Webinar Report. University College London. Poster. <https://doi.org/10.5522/04/16563540>

Speakers

Dr Gianluca Esposito, Associate Professor, University of Trento & Nanyang Technological University

Giulio Gabrieli, PhD Candidate, Nanyang Technological University

Alessandro Carollo, Research Assistant, University of Trento

Dr Andrea Bizzego, Post-Doc, University of Trento

Discussant

Kasley Killam, MPH, Founder & President of Social Health Labs

Chair

Dr Keri Wong, Assistant Professor, UCL Institute of Education



BELIEFS



DEPRESSION



SLEEP



LONELINESS



EMPATHY



ANXIETY



EXERCISE



HOMELIFE

Key Findings

- Perceived loneliness was found to be the most significant and time-sensitive variable in the model.
- In addition, perceived loneliness in the UK significantly decreased in the 4th and 5th week of the first national lockdown. This effect is seen above and beyond other variables in the model.

Recommendations

- Create and implement measures and campaigns promoting stronger social support.
- Investigate whether perceived loneliness remains as the most-time sensitive trait at other points in the pandemic, especially after the easing of lockdown restrictions.
- Government-led initiatives, technology-based tools, healthcare-driven efforts to screen for loneliness and prescribe socialising and community-led programs to foster togetherness.

Discussion

"Social isolation does not necessarily cause loneliness. The findings from this study demonstrate that loneliness is a subjective feeling whereas social isolation is an objective state of being. One of the strongest protective factors for our mental wellbeing in COVID-19 is quality, size and connectedness of social relationships as well as engaging in prosocial behaviours. Social support is a source of resilience and can be honed as a prevention strategy." - Kasley Killam, MPH, Founder & President of Social Health Labs

"Our findings may have arisen from case numbers diminishing after one month of lockdown or perhaps participants' desire to meet online as opposed to in-person." - Dr. Gianluca Esposito, Associate Professor, University of Trento, Italy & Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

"Lower levels of loneliness in subsequent weeks of lockdown suggests participants were receiving social support, which may have acted as a protective factor against the negative impacts of social isolation." - Alessandro Carollo, Research Assistant, University of Trento, Italy

Speakers

Dr. Wang Yi, Associate Professor, Institute of Psychology, Chinese Academy of Sciences

Dr. Keri Wong, Assistant Professor, UCL Institute of Education

Discussants

Dr. Emma Barkus, Senior Lecturer at Northumbria University, Newcastle Upon Tyne

Mitch Cooke, Head of Sustainability, Greengage Environmental

Chair

Evi Katsapi, Associate Professor, UCL Institute of Education



COUNTRY



DEPRESSION



SLEEP



INCOME



MISTRUST



GENDER



LONELINESS



SCHIZOTYPAL
TRAITS

Key Findings

- Social mistrust and schizotypal traits are related to poorer mental health.
- Relationships between variables did not significantly vary across networks (gender, age, country, income).
- Loneliness was an influential variable in the network that could potentially be targeted in future interventions.

Recommendations

- Strengthen our understanding of which thoughts increase our mistrust of others.
- Give communities the chance to engage with the data collection and dissemination process so interventions have a personal and meaningful impact.
- Work across disciplines and work with a range of practitioners to create rich evidence bases to inform effective interventions.

Discussion

"The local and international press has fed this sense of uncertainty and encouraged a sense of social mistrust... Loneliness can occur as a transitory emotion if timely changes are made to our environment, or, it becomes something chronic and becomes a part of our identity." - Dr. Emma Barkus, Senior Lecturer at Northumbria University, Newcastle Upon Tyne

"The network structures are different for high and low schizotypal individuals. High schizotypal individuals have stronger connections between social mistrust, loneliness and anxiety." - Dr. Wang Yi, Associate Professor, Institute of Psychology, Chinese Academy of Sciences

"The term 'social value' means something different for everyone. We are associating our mental health with where we work, play and interact with others. The pandemic has emphasised the importance of sunlight, proper ventilation and green space in these spaces." - Mitch Cooke, Head of Sustainability, Greengage Environmental

30 June 2021 - Family: Stress, Relationship Conflict & Child Adjustment

Speakers

Dr. Jill Portnoy, Assistant Professor, School of Criminology and Justice Studies, University of Massachusetts Lowell

Discussant

Dr. Yahayra Michel, Assistant Teaching Professor, School of Criminology and Justice Studies, University of Massachusetts Lowell

Chair

Dr. Keri Wong, Assistant Professor, UCL Institute of Education



STRESS



DEPRESSION



CONFLICT



RELATIONSHIPS



CHILD
BEHAVIOUR



MARRIAGE



FAMILY



PREDICTIONS

Key Findings

- Parental depression and stress predicted the same at Wave 2.
- Child conduct, emotional and hyperactivity problems at Wave 1 predicted higher levels of parental depression and stress at Wave 2.
- Unexpectedly, child behaviour did not predict Wave 2 relationship conflict, only predicted parental depression and stress.

Recommendations

- There is a need to focus on the family unit as a whole rather than children or parents only.
- Future research that tests the full transactional model during the Covid-19 pandemic is needed.
- Plans for longer term data collection efforts is essential.
- Breaking the sample into different groups can help us understand how family dynamics differ for different groups of people.

Discussion

"Providing parenting support during periods of disaster could help to improve mental health outcomes for parents and reduce levels of stress"- " - Dr. Jill Portnoy, Assistant Professor, School of Criminology and Justice Studies, University of Massachusetts Lowell

"No single social agency can address issues, but rather we need to look at the family unit and look at it in collaboration; not just researchers, not just the criminal justice system."- Dr. Yahayra Michel, Assistant Teaching Professor, School of Criminology and Justice Studies, University of Massachusetts Lowell

"Helping children and their parents reframe their cognitive strategies is important in reducing parental stress." - Dr. Jill Portnoy, Assistant Professor, School of Criminology and Justice Studies, University of Massachusetts Lowell

Speakers

Dr. Jana Brinkert, UCL Institute of Education

Dr. Dora Kokosi, UCL Institute of Education

Vassillis Sideropoulos, Research Technician, UCL Institute of Education

Discussant

Dr. Tara Béteille, Senior Economist, The World Bank

Chair

Dr. Maria Kambouri, Associate Professor, UCL Institute of Education



STRESS



DEPRESSION



LEVEL OF STUDY



FUNDING



GENDER



ANXIETY



TIMETABLE



AGE

Key Findings

- 60.23% of participants agreed that the COVID19 pandemic has impacted their PhD studies.
- PhD students scored higher on depression and anxiety than the general population in Waves 1 and 2.

Recommendations

- Further research is needed to understand doctoral students' wellbeing using longitudinal data.
- There is a need to raise awareness and generate more preventative measures for students' mental health.
- There is a need to better understand how levels of stress differ by different factors, such as gender and ethnicity.

Discussion

"There are three main takeaways we can use to help reduce students' level of stress. Firstly, to support students' resilience during this time with financial support, mental health resources and counselling services. Second, to improve students' professional abilities before they progress to the academic or vocational job market. Lastly, helping students with technology." - Dr. Tara Béteille, Senior Economist, The World Bank

"We conducted a reflexive thematic analysis (...) We looked at the adjustments to academic work suiting to the new circumstances of being in a pandemic, personal impact and isolation of working from home, and the uncertainty that students have found difficult, especially when it came to finances and voices about the future." - Dr. Jana Brinkert, UCL Institute of Education

"Provide students with greater certainty, such as access to financial support, peer support systems, clear communication around access to labs, data and participant recruitment could help alleviate mental health difficulties." - Dr. Dora Kokosi, UCL Institute of Education

28 July 2021 - Let's Talk! What do you need to recover from the pandemic?

Speaker

Dr. Keri Wong, Assistant Professor, UCL Institute of Education

Discussants

Deborah Alsina MBE, CEO of Independent Age

Professor David Murphy FBPsS, FRSA, President of the British Psychological Society (2019-2020)

Mr Nigel Atter, Policy Advisor for the British Psychological Society

Chair

Evi Katsapi, Associate Professor, UCL Institute of Education



STRESS



DEPRESSION



WORK



RELATIONSHIPS



EXERCISE



ANXIETY



LONELINESS



SLEEP

Key Findings

- Participants expressed feeling more stressed over their mental health, physical health, work and relationships.
- 40% expressed vaccines, freedom to travel and seeing people would help alleviate their stress.
- Top 3 factors for post-Covid support: relationships, access to mental health support and bereavement support systems.

Recommendations

- The UK government needs to implement multi-agency initiatives drawing on expertise from national and local communities.
- Closing the researcher-practice gap is essential to providing evidence-based support to our participants.
- Post-Covid recovery, particularly in education, will require acknowledgement from researchers, practitioners and government that it will take longer than just 6 months.

Discussion

"From our surveys, there are 5 key areas of support for seniors' post-COVID19 recovery: financial security, bereavement support, combatting loneliness, mental health and physical health." - Deborah Alsina MBE, CEO of Independent Age

"Mental health policy needs to encompass social factors such as poverty, racism, housing circumstances, and domestic violence to strengthen support for individuals' needs and psychological support." - Nigel Atter, Policy Advisor for The British Psychological Society

"We've all been affected by the same storm, but we're all in different boats. Seeing the individual context is more important than ever. Connections are so important, and no one is safe until everyone is safe. We need to tackle COVID19 on a global level. We need to facilitate people supporting one another socially." - Professor David Murphy FBPsS, FRSA, President of The British Psychological Society 2019-2020



UCL

Acknowledgement

Thanks to our webinar attendees who continued to support us from all corners of the world, study collaborators, discussants and chairs. Special thanks to our project research assistants Ms Kyleigh Melville, Ms Kimberly Loke, and Ms Sammi Lee for all of their hard work, creativity, and coordination without which the webinars would not have been a success.



SPONSORED BY



GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

