

What can we learn from the pandemic?

The mental health needs of autistic
people and their families



Introduction to Mind

- Mental health information and support
- Campaigning
- Local Minds



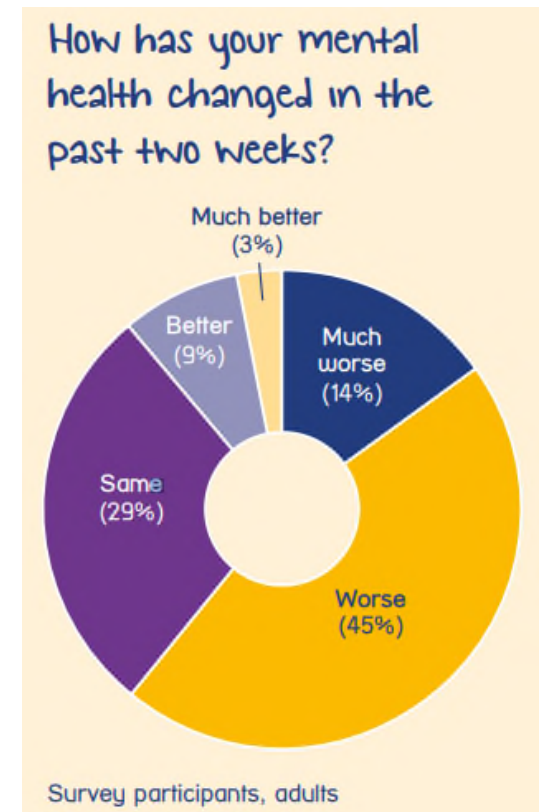
We won't give up until everyone experiencing a mental health problem gets support and respect.

Background to Mind's coronavirus survey

- Aimed to help us understand:
 - Experiences of people with pre-existing mental health problems
 - Challenges that they are facing
 - Coping strategies that they are using
 - Support they would like to receive from us
- April – June 2020
- 14,421 adults (25+)
- 1,917 young people (13-24)
- Content warning

How has coronavirus affected our mental health?

- More than half of adults and over two thirds of young people have said their mental health got worse during lockdown.
- Young people and people with experience of mental health problems are more likely to have seen their mental health worsen.
- Many without previous experience of mental health problems have experienced poor mental health.



How has coronavirus affected our mental health?

- The pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on:
 - Women
 - Non-binary people
 - Disabled people
 - People with a learning difference
 - People with a long-term physical health condition
 - People experiencing unemployment or whose employment status changed as a result of coronavirus

What is driving poor mental health during the pandemic?

- Not being able to see people
- Not being able to go outside
- Anxiety about family and friends getting coronavirus
- Boredom was a major problem for young people; 83% said it had made their mental health worse
- Loneliness has also been a key contributor to poor mental health – particularly for young people.

What is driving poor mental health during the pandemic?

Top five concerns for adults that made their mental health worse

- ① Being unable to see family, friends or partners that they didn't live with (79%)
- ② Feeling anxious about family or friends getting coronavirus (74%)
- ③ Not being able to go outside except for essential reasons (73%)
- ④ Feeling bored/restless (69%)
- ⑤ Feeling anxious about getting coronavirus (66%)

Top five concerns for young people that made their mental health worse

- ① Feeling bored/restless (83%)
- ② Not being able to see friends (80%)
- ③ Not being able to go outside except for essential reasons (76%)
- ④ Feeling lonely (72%)
- ⑤ Feeling anxious about family or friends getting coronavirus (64%)

Case study



Paula

A big worry for Paula is now the idea of coming out of lockdown. Routine is important to her, particularly because of her autism. Having finally adjusted to a new normal in lockdown, Paula is keen to stick to what she has been doing for the past two months long after lockdown is lifted. She is keen that her routine continues until it is known that no one has the virus.

Case study



Trix

Trix describes herself as a "40-year-old trans-woman living in North Yorkshire. Living with anxiety, autism and gender dysphoria." Trix prefers to stay inside when she can, and is enjoying lockdown. She used to dread having to attend a pub quiz every Thursday and would spend days rehearsing potential conversations. Trix felt relieved to not be going out during lockdown. However, Trix worries that staying inside all the time and not confronting her fears may set her recovery back, and she may struggle with resuming social contact and reaching the goals she set herself at her local Mind, once lockdown is over.

How have people been coping?

- Speaking to family and friends online was the most common coping strategy
- Over half of young people and adults have been over or under-eating to cope, nearly a third turned to alcohol or illegal drugs
- More than 1 in 4 young people were self-harming, which made them twice as likely as adults to cope in this way

"I have Autism, anxiety, anorexia and I self-harm. I am really struggling. I am eating a lot less and being sick more. I can't sleep. I feel unwell. I feel really panicky and can't go outside. I am hurting myself a lot more."

Advice from our participants

“Don’t put pressure on yourself to use this time for ‘self-improvement’. Just getting through is ok.”

“Your routine has changed and so may your mental health. Be patient and be kind while making a new routine.”

“I find minimising watching bad news on the TV helpful”

“Talk to people – it is worse if you hold it in. Email a teacher if something bad is happening to you and not to suffer in silence.”

Have people been able to access the support they need?

- One in four people of all ages who tried to access mental health support during lockdown were not able to do so.
- A third of adults and just over a quarter of young people did not access support because they did not think that their issue was serious enough.
- Young people were more likely to find it difficult to access mental health support, and less likely to feel comfortable accessing mental health support over the phone or on a video-call.

"I thought my issue was too trivial and selfish given the current situation."

How have people been accessing mental health information?

The top five most popular sources of information and advice for adults were:

- ① Friends and family (52%)
- ② Official government guidance (41%)
- ③ Social media (37%)
- ④ Charities e.g. Mind (28%)
- ⑤ TV (25%)

The top five most popular sources of information and advice for young people were:

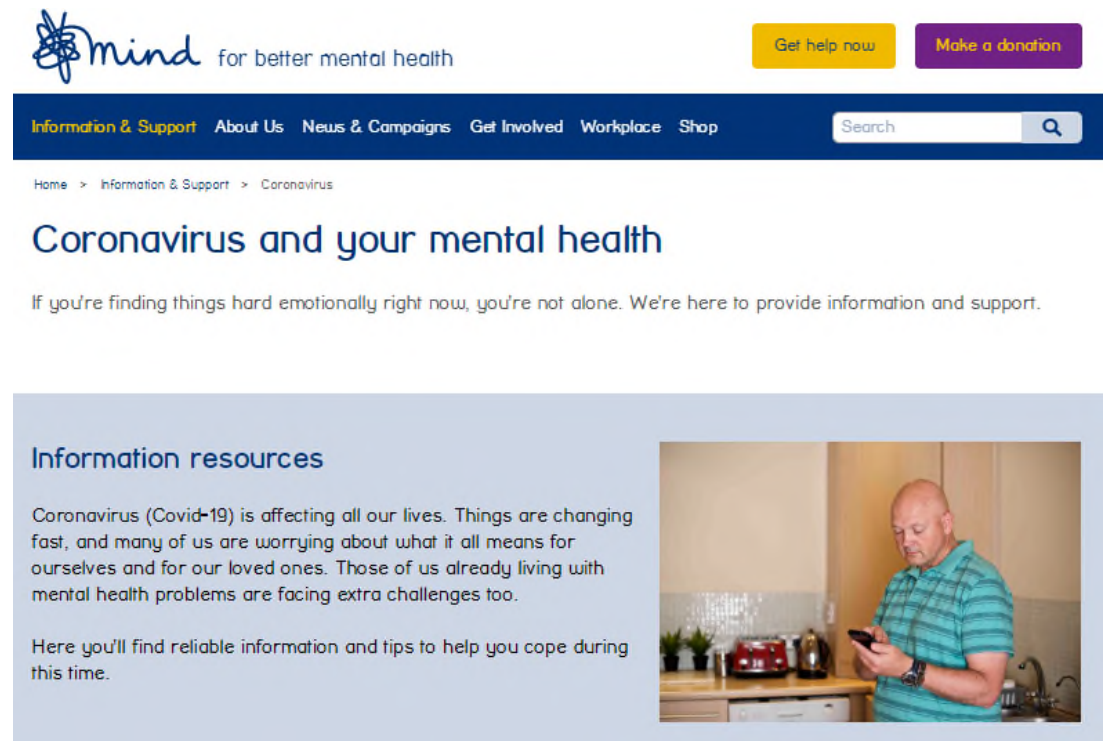
- ① Friends and family (54%)
- ② Official government guidance (33% of 18–24 year olds)
- ③ Social media (36%)
- ④ Charities e.g. Mind (25%)
- ⑤ Internet searches (25% of under-18s)

Information needs

- Supporting wellbeing
- Coping with specific mental health problems
- Mindfulness or meditation online
- Supporting family and friends
- Accessing mental health services

Coronavirus information hub

- Wellbeing
- Difficult feelings
- Mask anxiety
- Work
- Mental health problems and support
- Student mental health
- Young people
- Parents



The screenshot shows the Mind organization's website. At the top, the Mind logo is followed by the tagline "for better mental health". To the right are two buttons: "Get help now" (yellow) and "Make a donation" (purple). Below this is a dark blue navigation bar with links: "Information & Support", "About Us", "News & Campaigns", "Get Involved", "Workplace", and "Shop". A search bar is on the right. Below the navigation bar, a breadcrumb trail reads "Home > Information & Support > Coronavirus". The main heading is "Coronavirus and your mental health". Below this is a paragraph: "If you're finding things hard emotionally right now, you're not alone. We're here to provide information and support." Further down, under the heading "Information resources", is another paragraph: "Coronavirus (Covid-19) is affecting all our lives. Things are changing fast, and many of us are worrying about what it all means for ourselves and for our loved ones. Those of us already living with mental health problems are facing extra challenges too. Here you'll find reliable information and tips to help you cope during this time." To the right of this text is a photograph of a man in a green and blue striped polo shirt standing in a kitchen, looking down at a smartphone in his hands. On the counter behind him are a red kettle and some potted plants.

mind.org.uk/coronavirus

“Try to remember, nothing lasts forever.
You can get through this difficult time.”

mind.org.uk/coronavirus