

The impacts of the coronavirus pandemic continue to be felt around the world. We have been conducting rapid reviews of the emerging evidence surrounding the mental health impacts of the pandemic on children and young people in detail (Issues 1-4 of this series). This issue, and future issues, will briefly highlight key new findings from our rapid reviews in a condensed format<sup>a</sup> to enable us to share learning in a timely manner.

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## 1. What is the mental health impact on the general population?

The evidence that the coronavirus pandemic is having a negative impact on the mental health of children and young people continues to build.

- Large studies found increases in the prevalence of anxiety and depression among young people during the pandemic.<sup>1-3</sup>
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- In a study of secondary school pupils, LGBTQ+ pupils had higher anxiety and depression scores and lower levels of wellbeing than their peers before the pandemic. Wellbeing did not increase nor did anxiety decrease for LGBTQ+ pupils during lockdown as it did for the broader pupil sample in this study.<sup>21</sup>

### Children and young people of colour

Although previous issues of this series have identified that children and young people of colour are disproportionately affected by the pandemic, little research emerged during the period covered in this issue regarding how these young people in particular are being impacted. It is important that research continues to examine the disproportionate impacts of the pandemic, particularly on children and young people of colour.

### Adverse childhood experiences and experience of social care

Children and young people with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), experience of the care system or other forms of disadvantage have reported higher than usual levels of anxiety and stress. There also appears to have been an increase in child sexual abuse during the coronavirus pandemic.

- Increased adverse childhood experiences are associated with a higher probability of posttraumatic stress symptoms (PTSS and PTSD), anxiety, and depressive symptoms during the pandemic (China).<sup>24,25</sup>
- Among adolescents who have experience of the care system or other forms of disadvantage, many reported feeling low, more anxious and stressed since lockdown, while some reported experiencing significantly disrupted sleep.<sup>26</sup>
- There has been a threefold increase in the number of counselling sessions about child sexual abuse within the family for some services. Some of those attending reported more frequent sexual abuses or abuse that had happened recently (UK).<sup>27</sup>

### Living conditions

Young people's living conditions are linked with a range of mental health impacts during the coronavirus pandemic. Living in urban areas, living in poor quality housing, living alone, and experiencing homelessness are all associated with negative mental health outcomes.

- Significantly more children living in urban areas have mental health difficulties (depression, anxiety, and sleeping disorders) than those living in rural areas (Bangladesh).<sup>28</sup>
- Young people with poor-quality indoor living space had twice the odds of experiencing moderate-severe and severe depressive symptoms than those in better quality accommodation (Italy).<sup>29</sup>
- Hopelessness, anxiety, loneliness, sleep problems and depression are common among young people aged 18-25 experiencing homelessness during the pandemic.<sup>30</sup>
- University students living alone during the coronavirus pandemic appear more likely to experience an increase in depressive symptoms (Switzerland).<sup>31</sup>
- University students who did not return home during the lockdown were

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