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The impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on mental health

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VOJTĚCH BARTOŠ, JANA CAHLÍKOVÁ, MICHAL BAUER, JULIE CHYTILOVÁ

Summary

- In addition to direct effects on physical health and economic situation, the coronavirus pandemic also significantly affects the population's mental health.
- Using a set of questions that identify symptoms of depression and anxiety, we monitor the extent of these problems in a large representative sample of the Czech population throughout the pandemic.
- In the first phase of the pandemic, 20% of respondents suffered from impaired mental health (showing symptoms of at least moderate depression or anxiety). This represents more than a threefold increase compared to the situation before the pandemic (6%).
- The most affected were: **(i)** women (26%) and especially women with children (up to 37%), **(ii)** young people aged 18–24 (36%), and **(iii)** respondents from households affected by a high drop in income (30%).
- We observe that the mental health of respondents improves again after an initial surge in deterioration. However, the incidence of symptoms of at least moderate depression or anxiety is as of mid-June 2020 still almost twice as large compared to the pre-pandemic state.
- These findings highlight the importance of having a sufficient infrastructure for psychological assistance, financially supporting the households most affected by the pandemic, and reducing feelings of insecurity. Given the high level of concerns about widespread lockdown measures during a potential second wave of the pandemic, the results also underline the need to reduce uncertainty, in particular by openly informing the public about the state's readiness for widespread testing and targeted quarantine.

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