

MEDIA FACTSHEET

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Novel Coronavirus, Population Well-being and Resilience: A Cross-Sectional Study

1. The Institute of Mental Health (IMH), in collaboration with the University of Hong Kong, has undertaken a cross-sectional study to assess the well-being as well as psychological and behavioural responses of the general population in the respective cities during the outbreak of COVID-19.
2. Titled “Novel Coronavirus, Population Well-being and Resilience: A Cross-Sectional Study”, the Singapore study also examined the risk and protective factors of mental and social well-being during this period. It was funded by the Ministry of Health, Temasek Foundation, and the National Centre for Infectious Disease and the Principal Investigator is Prof Chong Siow Ann, Senior Consultant, Research Division, IMH.

How the study was conducted

3. Data collection for the study, which was done mainly via Zoom interviews, began in May 2020 amidst the Circuit Breaker period and was completed in June 2021. It involved 1058 Singapore citizens and permanent residents. These respondents had also participated in the Singapore Mental Health Study in 2016 and agreed to be contacted for future studies. Of the respondents, 38.9% were aged 21 – 34 years; 31.6% were 35 – 49 years; 19.5% were 50 – 64 years; and 10.1% were 65 and above.
4. Several questionnaires, focusing on anxiety, depression, stress and insomnia, were used to assess the participants’ psychological responses and mental well-being. Some of the main tools used were: Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9), Generalised Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7), Stress subscale of the Depression Anxiety and Stress Scales (DASS), Insomnia Severity Index (ISI) and Brief Resilience Scale (BRS). The PHQ-9, DASS, ISI and GAD-7 questionnaires measure depression, stress, insomnia and anxiety symptoms experienced by an individual in the past 2 weeks.

Key preliminary findings

5. Detailed analysis of the data is currently ongoing. However, some preliminary findings on the respondents' mental well-being, sources of stress and help-seeking behaviours are:

Mental Well-being

- a. About **13%** of the general population reported experiencing depression or anxiety symptoms. In terms of clinical symptoms, **8.7%** of the respondents met the criteria for clinical depression, **9.4%** met the criteria for clinical anxiety and **4.8%** had comorbid anxiety and depression, in the past two weeks before the interview.
- b. Among the participants, **9.3%** met the criteria for mild to severe stress and **7.6%** met the criteria for clinical insomnia, in the past two weeks before the interview.
- c. Based on published studies on global mental health, in particular depression, anxiety and stress, during the pandemic, Singapore fared better compared to the United States and United Kingdom, as well as other Asian countries such as Japan and Hong Kong.

Sources of Stress

- d. The **top three sources of stress** identified by participants were:
 - risk of family members or friends getting infected by Covid-19
 - financial loss, such as losing work opportunities or having to take unpaid leave
 - unemployment

Help-Seeking Behaviour

- e. Of the respondents, **81.8%** reported that they would seek help if they were to develop any emotional, or psychological problems related to Covid-19. Preferred sources of help were counsellors, general practitioners or family doctors, psychiatrists, polyclinic doctors and religious or spiritual advisors.
- f. For the remaining **17.8%** of respondents who stated that they would not seek professional help, the top reasons were a perceived ability to manage problems by themselves, and preference to seek help from family and friends first.

- g. On willingness to seek help from a mental health hotline, **50.1%** of respondents stated that they would not consider this. **32.8%** were open to seeking help from a mental health hotline, but were unaware of one, while **14.8%** would consider and were aware of mental health hotlines, but had not sought help. The remaining **1.8%** of respondents had sought or were seeking help from a mental health hotline.

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About the Institute of Mental Health (IMH)

The Institute of Mental Health (IMH), a member of the National Healthcare Group, is the only tertiary psychiatric care institution in Singapore. Located on the sprawling 23-hectare campus of Buangkok Green Medical Park in the north-eastern part of Singapore, IMH offers a multidisciplinary and comprehensive range of psychiatric, rehabilitative and therapy services in hospital-based and community-based settings. The 2000-bedded hospital aims to meet the needs of three groups of patients – children and adolescents (aged below 19 years), adults and the elderly. Besides providing clinical services, IMH also leads in mental health research and training the next generation of mental health professionals in Singapore. For more information, please visit www.imh.com.sg.