

Impact of COVID-19, Lockdowns and Quarantine on Mental Health

Dr Thomas Heffernan, Northumbria University, UK

Email: tom.heffernan@northumbria.ac.uk

Please Note: this presentation represents my own interpretation of the data to date and does not necessarily reflect the view taken by my university.

Impact of COVID-19 on mental health

Back in December 2019, the deadly outbreak of COVID-19, emerged in Wuhan, China and spread rapidly across the country and the rest of the world.

Despite the rapid emergence of this novel pandemic, research into the effects of COVID-19 moved forward swiftly.

As countries have focused on combating COVID-19

- ~ 'flattening the curve', treatments, vaccines
- ~ less focus on the mental health impact

For a minority, 10-15% of those having had COVID-19 infection, life may never return to normal

Why the interest in possible long-term effects of COVID-19?

Data from previous pandemics:

H₁N₁ (“Swine Flu”) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (“SARS”) impact on mental health.

Three main harmful psychological effects:

1. Increased fear and anxiety increased, due to worries about catching virus, as well as health, social and economic impact.
2. Anger - at the changing policies and protocols that impinge upon their everyday life and feelings of control.
3. Finally, long-term effects of quarantine leads to type of “post-traumatic-stress-reaction”, manifests itself in feelings of exhaustion, low-mood and irritability.

See e.g., Brooks, et al. (2020). The psychological impact of quarantine and how to reduce it: rapid review of the evidence. *The Lancet*, 395:10227.

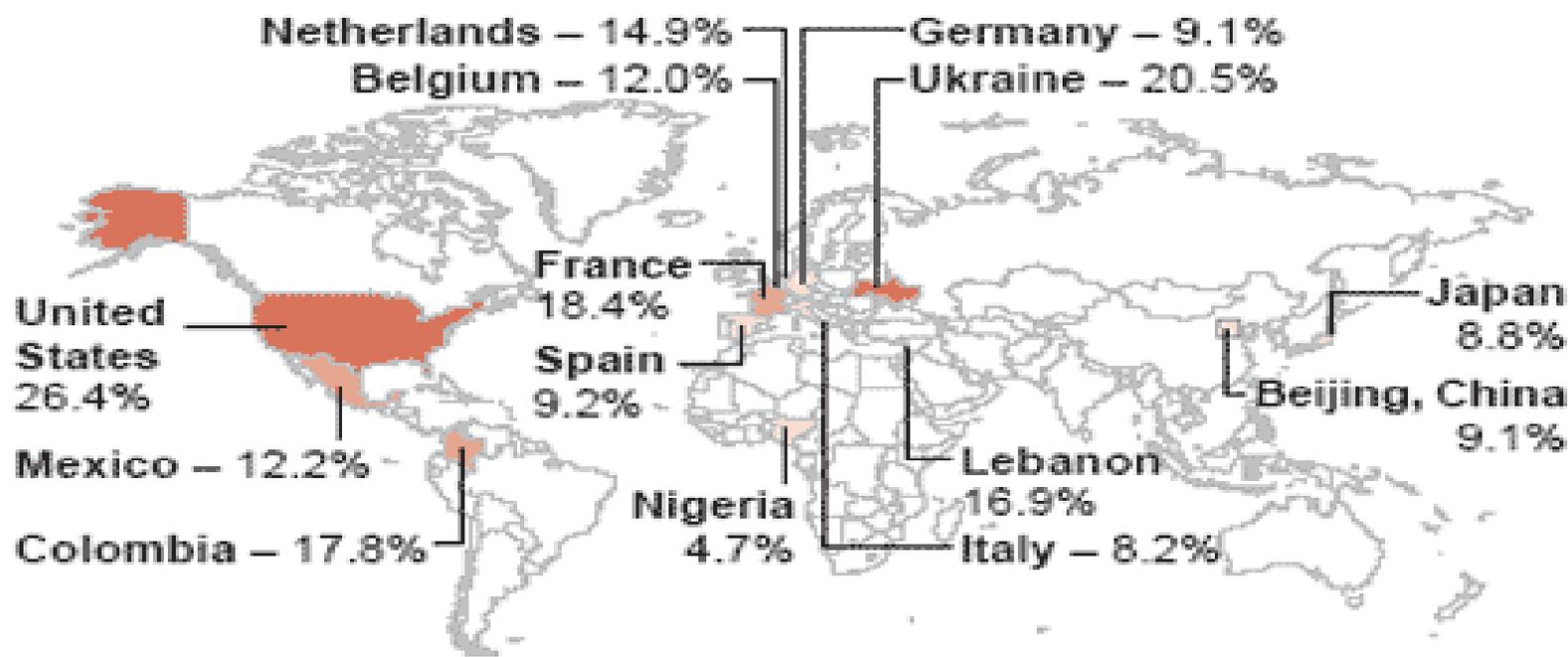
Mental Health and COVID-19

Mental disorders span the globe

According to surveys of 14 countries, the United States has the highest rate of mental illness.

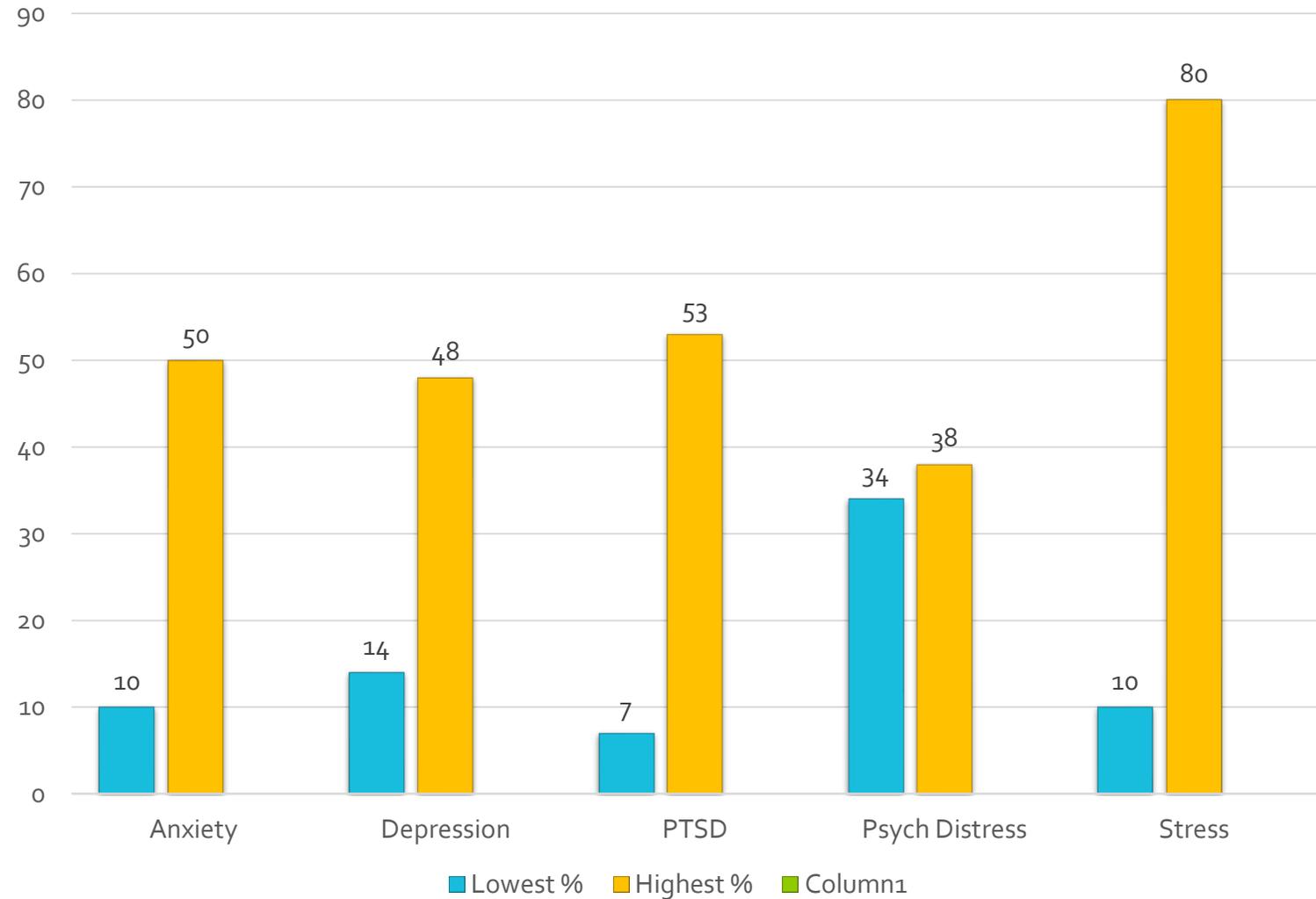
Prevalence of mental disorders

(Anxiety, mood disorders, impulse-control, and substance abuse/dependence)



Rates of symptoms reported following COVID-19*

*see additional references at end of presentation



COVID-19 lock-down, quarantine, self-isolation

Lockdown ~ strict restrictions on travel, social interaction and public space access.

Quarantine ~ where you are kept away from others because you may be infected, thus protecting others from potential exposure to the virus.

Self-Isolation: to separate those who have the virus in order to keep them apart from others who are not sick.

General Stat

Studies of impact COVID-19 restrictions upon mental health:

Over 1/3 general public experienced significant psychological distress ~ including intense fear and anxiety.

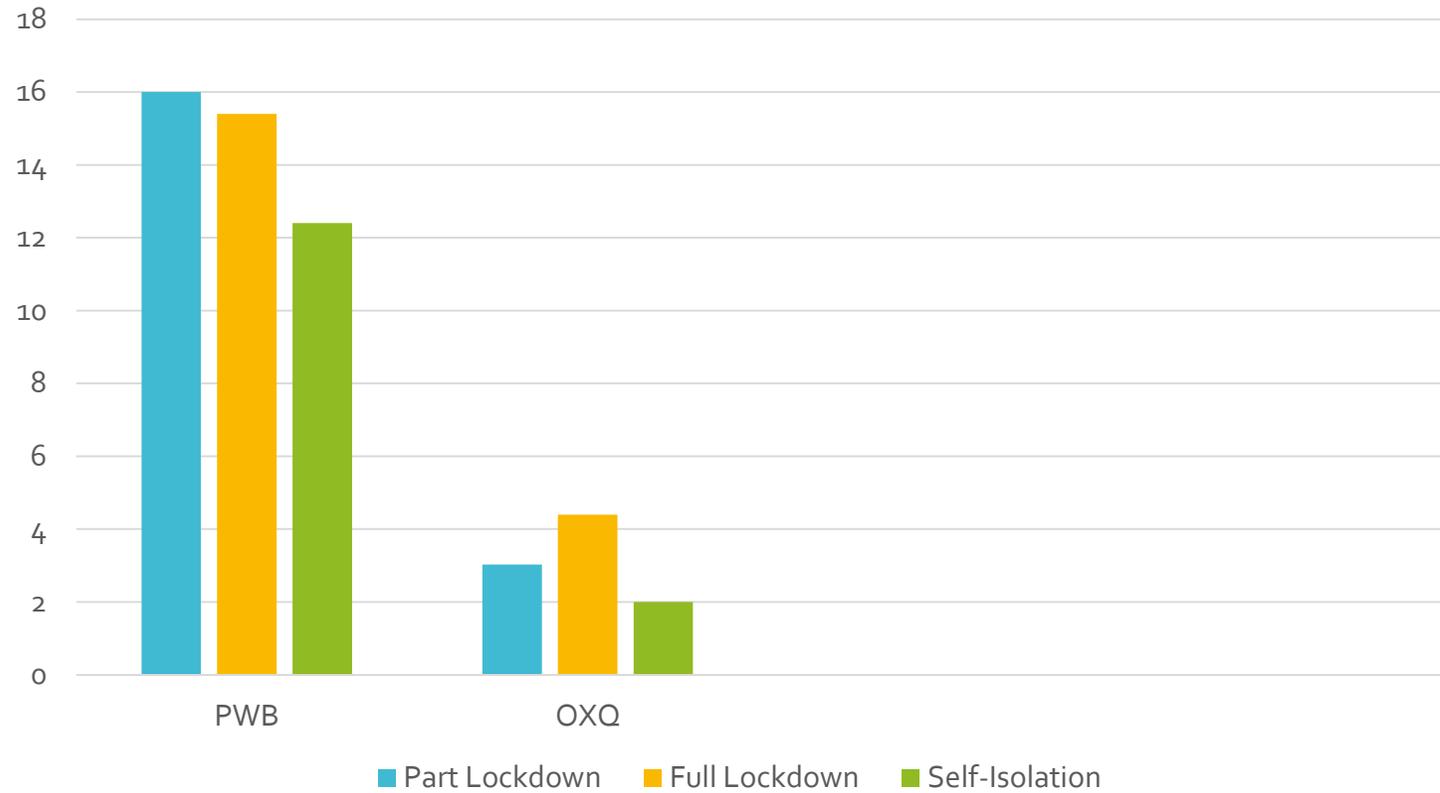
Fears stem from:

- ~ personal safety, fear of transmitting virus
- ~ missing relatives and friends
- ~ deprivation of liberty
- ~ loss of control
- ~ economic worries.

See e.g., Schimmenti, et al. (2020). The four horsemen of fear: an integrated model of understanding fear experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Clinical Neuropsychiatry*, 17:41–5

My work on psychological well-being and happiness

Psychological well-being and happiness



SI led to significantly poorer PWB and happiness than other 2 groups ($p < .05$), no difference in the part and full lockdown groups ($p > .05$)



Generalised anxiety is an important issue to watch out for:

- ~ can lead to/or exacerbate levels of obesity, diabetes, heart problems..
- ~ placing greater strain on already stretched health resources.

Increased feelings of loneliness from the isolation:

- ~ whether its 'objective loneliness' or 'subjective'
- ~ may become detached from the outside world
- ~ very difficult to re-integrate once pandemic/crisis finishes

Ongoing unemployment or loss of income:

- ~ may affect long-term mental health and wellbeing
- ~ many studies have shown this pre-pandemic times

Potential Practical Implications

- Hidden cost to health care systems
- Long-term impact on youth of our countries
- Fiscal deficit repercussion for years to come
- Health insurance

Final Comments

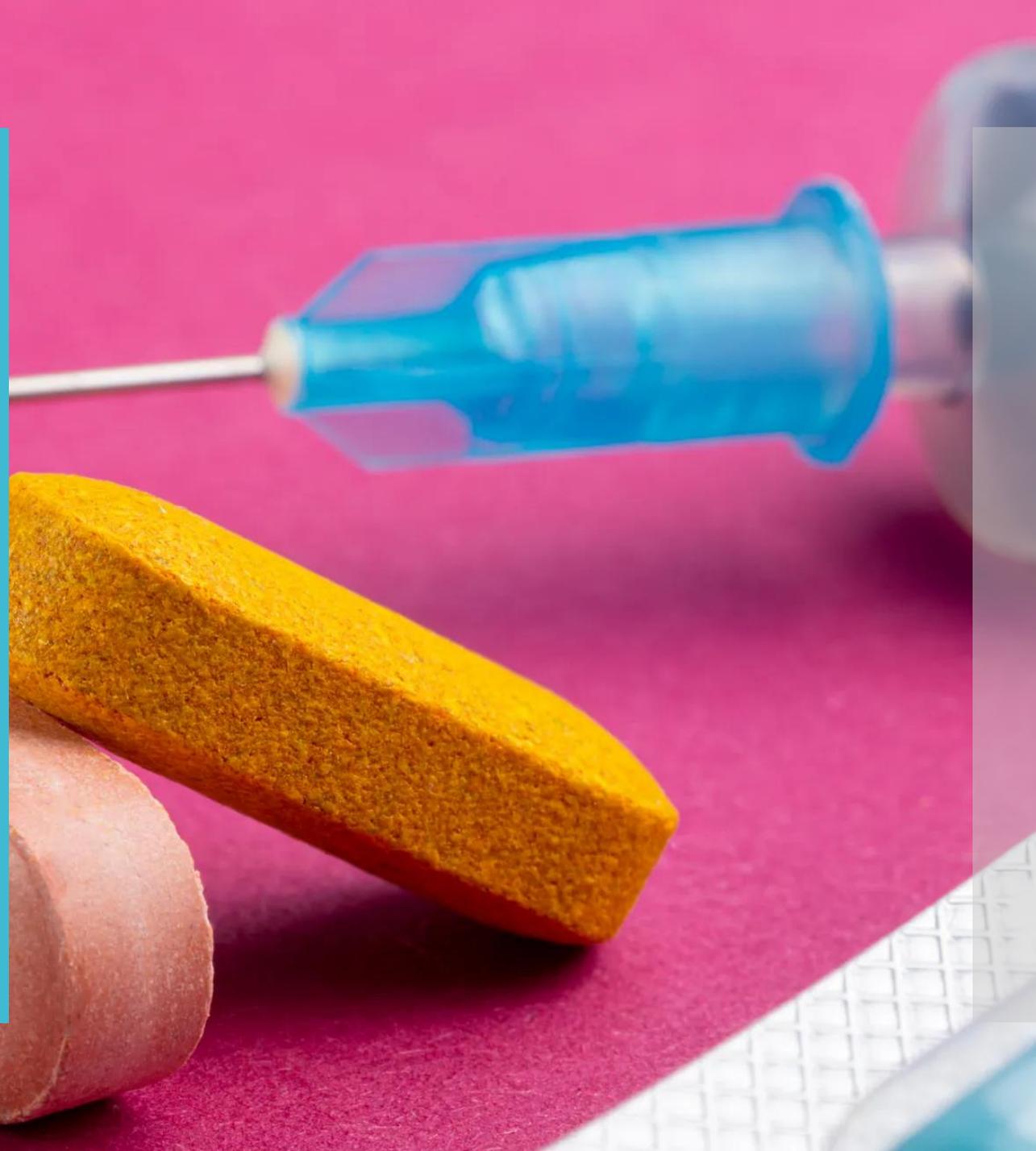
No vaccine will be found as antidote for the mental health impact of the covid-19 pandemic.

Humans are essentially “social animals”.

Our large brains have developed to embrace social contact and develop skills critical to survival.

Humans are “hard wired” for social contact and communication.

Social isolation breaks many of these forms of communication and interactions.



References: Mental Health Outcomes of COVID-19

- Banks et al. Recessions and health: The long-term health consequences of responses to coronavirus. Institute for Fiscal Studies, April 2020.
- Marsden, et al. Investigating and learning from the impact of COVID-19 infection on addictive disorders. *Addiction*. 2020 Apr 6.
- Wang, et al. Immediate psychological responses and associated factors during the initial stage of the 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) epidemic among the general population in China. *International journal of environmental research and public health*. 2020 Jan;17(5):1729.
- Moccia, et al. (2020). Affective temperament, attachment style, and the psychological impact of the COVID-19 outbreak: an early report on the Italian general population. *Brain, Behaviour and Immunology*, 87:75–9. doi: 10.1016/j.bbi.2020.04.048
- Schimmenti, et al (2020). The four horsemen of fear: an integrated model of understanding fear experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Clinical Neuropsychiatry*, 17:41–5. doi: 10.36131/CN20200202