

Coffee Helped Raised Adults' Negative Moods During Covid Lockdowns

A new pan-European study reveals heightened concern about the mental health impact of Covid-19 lockdowns and associated restrictions.

The survey, which was funded by the Institute for Scientific Information on Coffee (ISIC), explores the impact of Covid-19 lockdowns and associated restrictions. It found that nearly two thirds of adults (61 percent) expressed concern about their worsening mood; two times higher than those concerned about physical inactivity (24 percent).

The new survey (Censuswide pan European adults survey, March 2021) of 5,170 adults over age 18, across the United Kingdom, Italy, Finland, Germany, and Poland, sought to better understand people's perceptions of the effect of Covid-19 restrictions on their physical and mental health, and aspects they felt most impacted their mood. It also sought to explore the role that everyday pleasures such as coffee had, and other simple ways that people found to lift their mood during lockdowns and associated restrictions.

In terms of the impact on mental health, 34 percent admitted to having felt more anxious, and 28 percent having felt more depressed. These findings mirror other recent research on the impact of lockdown and associated restrictions on mental well-being, which shows a three-fold increase to the prevalence of anxiety in the general population (Santabàrbara, J. et al, "Prevalence of anxiety in the Covid-19 pandemic: An updated meta-analysis of community-based studies" published in *Progress in Neuro-Psychopharmacology and Biological Psychiatry*, 109, 2021) and a seven-fold increase in the prevalence of depression (Bueno-Notivol, J. et al, "Prevalence of depression during the Covid-19 outbreak: A meta-analysis of community-based studies" published in the *International Journal of Clinical and Health Psychology*, 21(1), 2021) globally.

Of those surveyed who identified exercise as playing an important part in their daily routines, nearly a quarter (24 percent) said that not exercising negatively impacted

their mood, while 27 percent said they used exercise to lift their mood.

The research revealed ways people had found helped improve their mood, with nearly half (44 percent) saying that taking time to enjoy a few cups of coffee a day helped, as did getting more sleep (31 percent), and eating and drinking more healthily (30 percent).

The finding that coffee had a beneficial effect on people's mood reflects previous research, which demonstrates that coffee helps to improve mood when consumed throughout the day, as well as enhancing alertness and attention (concentration).

Nearly a third (28 percent) of respondents said that coffee helped motivate them to exercise and that it helped enhance their physical performance. These findings are supported by previous research, which demonstrates that caffeine in coffee helps to improve physical performance during exercise.

"These findings highlight the considerable, and wide-reaching impact of lockdown and associated restrictions. While this is concerning, it is helpful to see that many have found small ways to break up their routines and improve their moods during lockdown and associated restrictions, through interventions as simple as making time to exercise or enjoying a coffee break," said assistant professor Giuseppe Grosso, Department of Biomedical and Biotechnological Sciences School of Medicine, University of Catania. "With regards to coffee breaks, this beneficial effect is likely two-fold. Firstly, through the holistic benefit of taking time to relax and enjoy coffee's flavour and aroma."

He added that coffee consumption has been demonstrated to improve mood, alertness and reduce feeling of fatigue through the acute effect of caffeine and the potential role of coffee polyphenols in neurogenesis and long-term maintenance of a healthy brain (and consequent reduction in some affective and neurodegenerative disorders).

As many reported a benefit to mood through drinking coffee, it

was also found that nearly half of coffee drinkers (42 percent) increased their intake in lockdown and associated restrictions. This was particularly the case in Italy with over half (52 percent) increasing their daily intake, compared to Finland (33 percent), Germany (39 percent), Poland (44 percent) and the UK (38 percent).

Shedding light on the ways that people enjoyed coffee during lockdown and associated restrictions, it was found that a third (32 percent) of coffee drinkers said they tended to drink coffee at regular intervals to break up the day at home, whereas 43 percent said they relied on coffee to start the day and 30 percent drank coffee at times where they could relax. In fact, 35 percent of coffee drinkers said they appreciated their coffee breaks more during lockdown and associated restrictions.

While the mental well-being impact of lockdown and associated restrictions is far reaching, the survey results highlight that adapting and finding ways to help lift mood can be beneficial, whether through adopting healthy eating, taking time to enjoy a coffee, or making time to exercise.

The Institute for Scientific Information on Coffee (ISIC) is a non-profit organisation, established in 1990 and devoted to the study and disclosure of science related to "coffee and health." ISIC members include six of the major European coffee companies: illycaffè, Jacobs Douwe Egberts, Lavazza, Nestlé, Paulig and Tchibo.

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Coffee has been found to have a beneficial effect on people's mood.