



Analysis of the Mental Health Impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic in a Scottish Context

Executive summary

- **Impacts us all** – Scots are much more likely now than pre-pandemic to be experiencing high levels of psychological distress¹, anxiety and depression.
- **Change in work status** – A change in work status (including being furloughed) made you significantly likelier to be experiencing poor mental health.
- **Pre-existing mental health condition** – Those with a pre-existing mental health condition have been the most adversely affected.
- **Women and 'BAME' communities** – Pre-existing inequalities for women (particularly those aged 18-29) and our ethnically diverse communities have been exacerbated.

Who we are?

[Scotland's Mental Health Partnership](#) is made up of seventeen professional bodies and mental health third sector organisations. Our members represent those with lived experience, providers, professionals, carers and the wider third sector. Each contributes its unique perspective to create an informed collective voice on mental health.

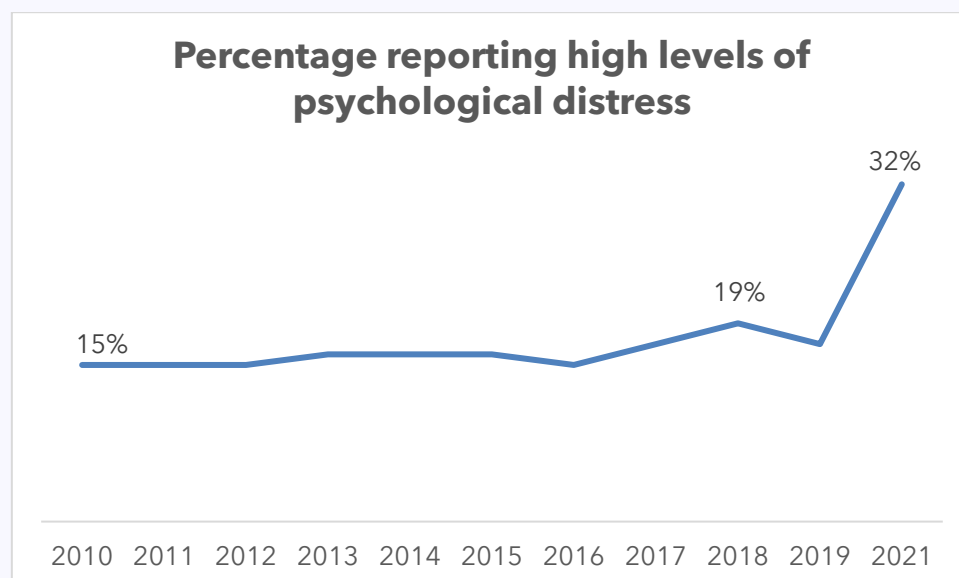
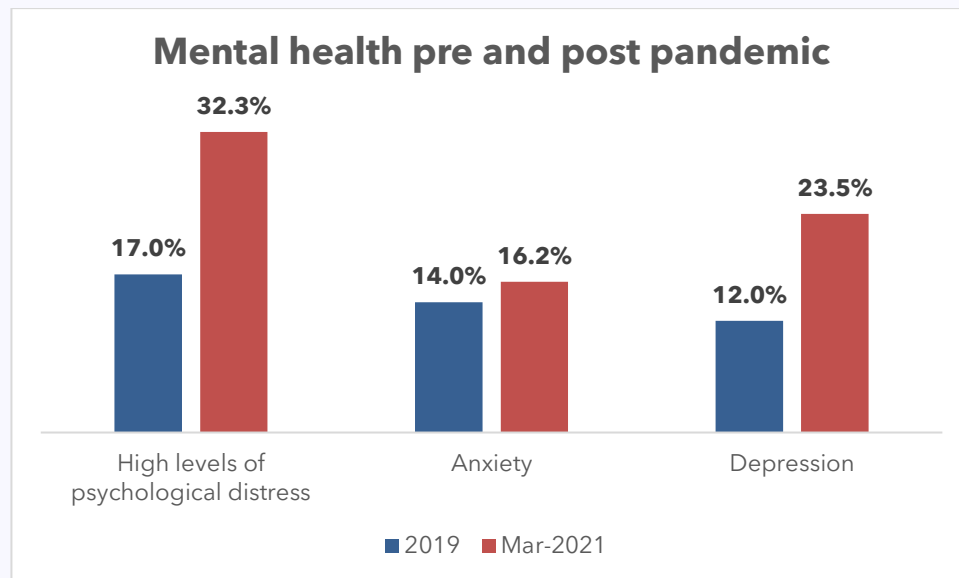
What do we know?

- **Covid Mental Health Tracker** – the Scottish Government has led efforts to track the mental health impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic through its tracker studies. Across the four iterations, clear themes have emerged regarding inequalities and the impact of the pandemic. This paper seeks to draw these out.
- **Our members' efforts** – This analysis of the Tracker sits alongside the wider work of our members to track and highlight the experiences and outcomes of Scots with mental ill health and poor mental wellbeing. These are [signposted on our website](#).

¹ Indicative of a possible psychiatric disorder

Where we are now versus pre-pandemic

- **Worsening mental health** – across the population, rates of anxiety, depression and high levels of psychological distress² are higher than they were prior to the pandemic. Using the [2019 Scottish Health Survey](#) (the last one conducted prior to Covid), and the latest [Covid Mental Health Tracker](#) study³, the equitable data suggests people are now nearly **twice as likely** to be experiencing these.

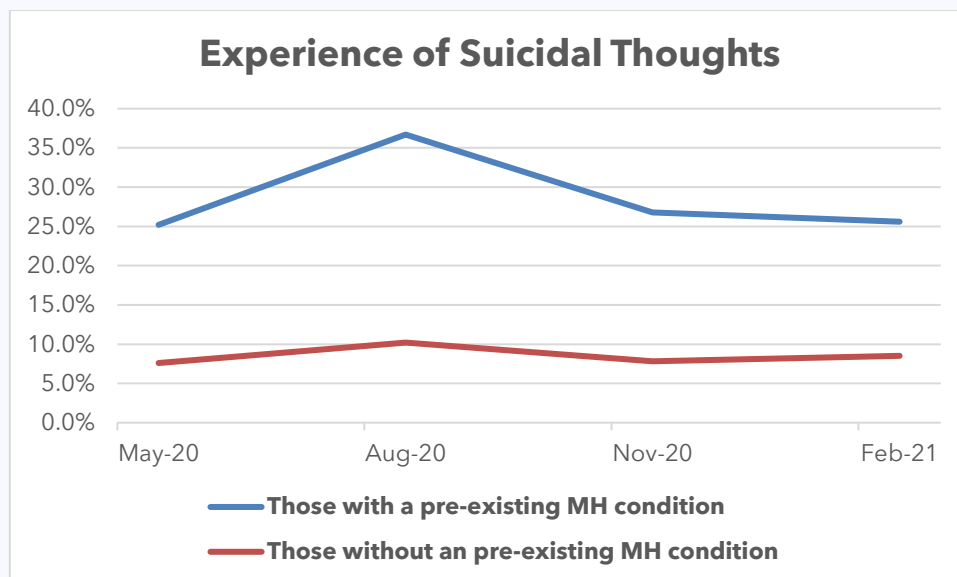
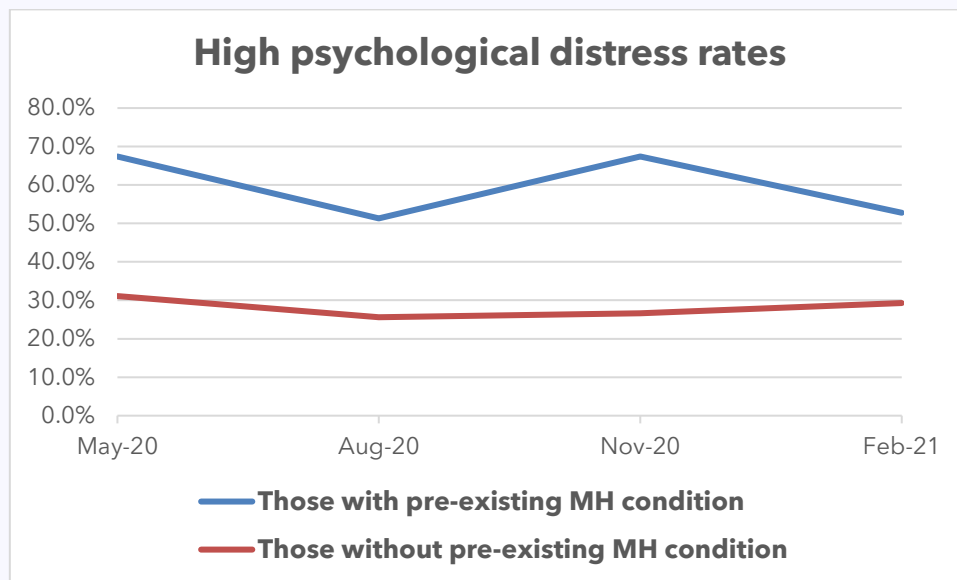


² Indicative of a possible psychiatric disorder

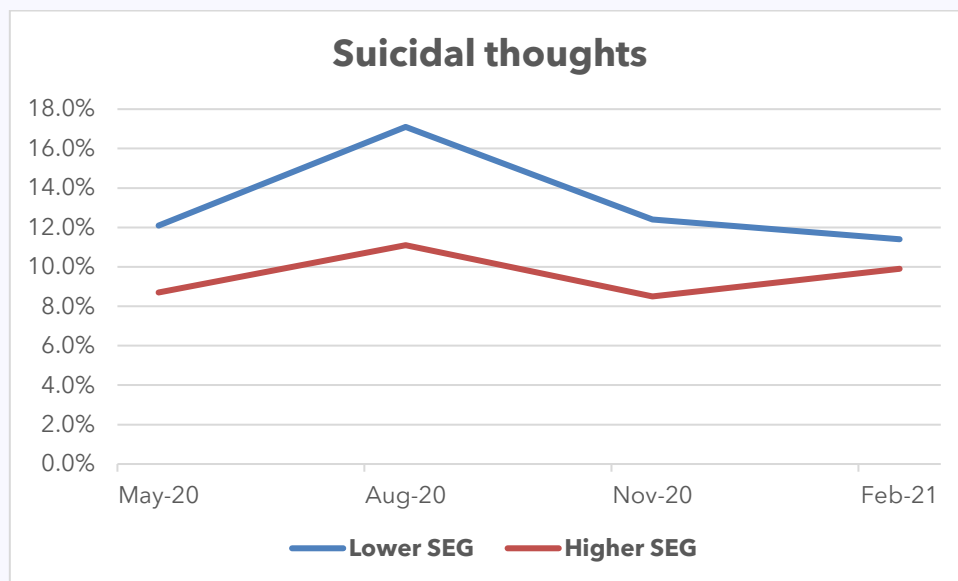
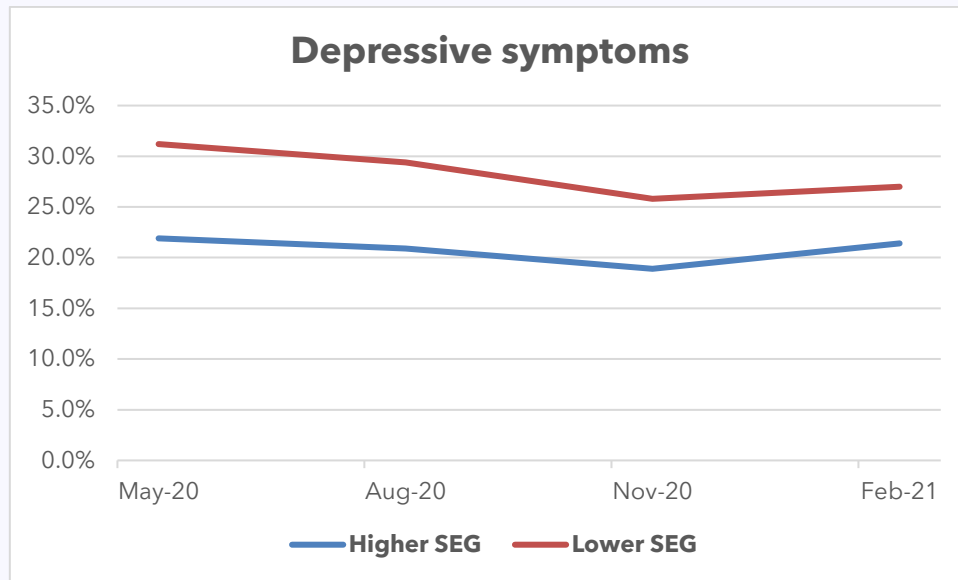
³ Please note the data collection methods for the 2019 study are more extensive compared to the Covid studies, which has no face-to-face component. Both studies use well-tested methods to establish depressive and anxiety symptoms.

Over the pandemic

- **Pre-existing mental ill health** - whether it be the likelihood of experiencing high levels of psychological distress, having suicidal thoughts or experiencing anxiety, having a pre-existing mental health condition was the strongest indicator across the four available Covid Trackers. This indicates the mental health impacts of the pandemic have exacerbated the pre-existing inequalities those with mental ill health face. With the life expectancy rate of those with mental ill health 20 years less than the rest of the population prior to the pandemic, the evidence suggests this group's life outcomes will only have worsened.

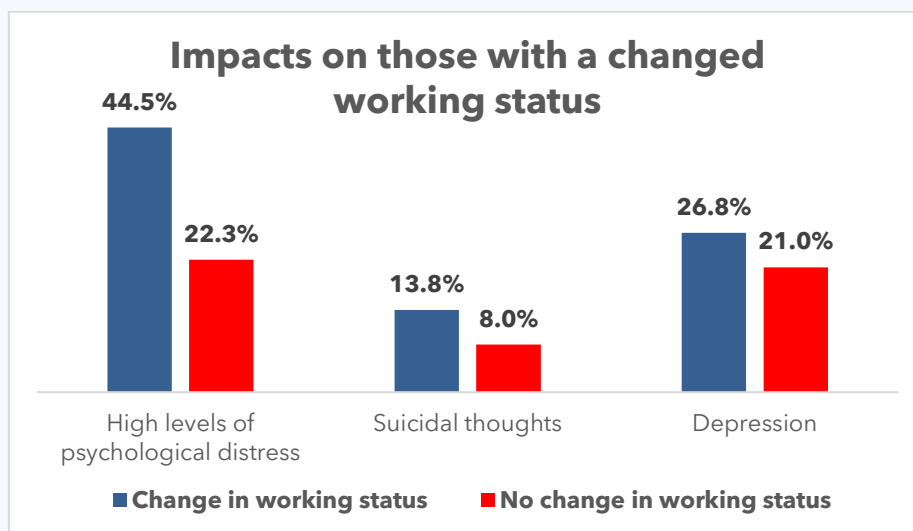


- **Socio-economic group (SEG)** – another critical indicator over time has been socio-economic status. Those from a 'lower' SEG have consistently reported higher rates of depression and suicidal thoughts compared to those from the 'higher' group during the pandemic.



Where we are now

- **Working status** - one of the key indicators as to whether you were experiencing depressive symptoms (26.8% versus 21%), thoughts of suicide (13.8% versus 8%) and high psychological distress (44.5% versus 23.3%) was whether you had experienced a change in working status. This included being furloughed or losing your job. With the pandemic's economic impacts yet to fully emerge, this indicates that the burden of poor mental wellbeing and mental ill health will fall hard on those affected by subsequent job losses.



- **Our ethnically diverse communities** - while there isn't comparable data in the latest edition, the [Wave 3 Tracker](#) (November 2020) included a 'booster' sample from these communities that indicated the mental health impacts had fallen harder. This included being nearly three times likelier to have experienced suicidal thoughts.

Mental health impacts	'Ethnic minority'	White
Suicidal thoughts	26%	9.4%
Depression	27.9%	21.2%
Anxiety	22.1%	15.9%
High psychological distress	33.7%	31.9%

- **Women aged 18-29** - women aged between 18-29 is, apart from having a pre-existing mental health condition, the group who is experiencing the most adverse mental health impacts of the pandemic. This includes high levels of psychological distress and anxiety, as well as being nearly twice as likely to be experiencing suicidal thoughts.

Mental health impacts	Woman aged 18-29	Men aged 18-29
Suicidal thoughts	19.9%	14.4%
Depression	42.1%	29.6%
Anxiety	37%	20.8%
High psychological distress	59%	41.6%