

Global Events & Mental Health

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Why are we talking about this now?

Conflict, political uncertainty, and financial pressures can leave us feeling that upheaval is never far away. Research into the UK public's experience over the past 15 years offers insight into how major events can affect our mental health, and how long these effects may last.¹



What did this analysis set out to do?

Researchers analysed data from nearly 88,000 people, examining changes in psychological distress around Brexit, two COVID-19 lockdowns, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the 2022 mini-budget.

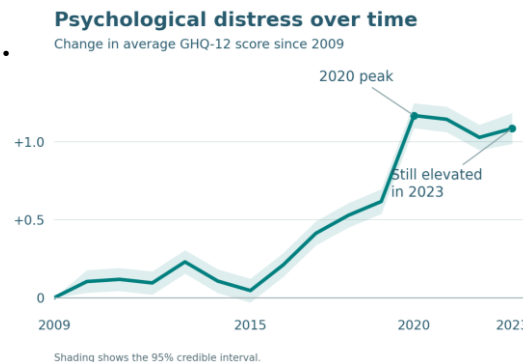


How can we look after our mental wellbeing?

Taking breaks from rolling news, keeping active and protecting time for sleep can help. Make room for things you enjoy, and seek support if worries become persistent. Personal coping strategies help, but financial security and accessible mental healthcare are also part of the picture.²

What did it tell us?

The first lockdown brought on the largest immediate increase in distress. Brexit was associated with a smaller increase, while the two 2022 events were followed by gradual rises. By 2023, distress remained above pre-pandemic levels. Young adults experienced the greatest deterioration over the study period.



What does this mean for long-term health?

The findings suggest that mental health effects can outlast the initial upheaval, potentially creating an ongoing need for support. However, this analysis measured distress, not diagnosed illness or physical health, and cannot tell us how these events will affect future disease or life expectancy.



1. Jeffrey et al. 2026. Impact of 15 years of social, political and economic shocks on population mental health in the UK. BMJ Mental Health. 2026;29:e302688. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjment-2026-302688>

2. Now more than ever: every mind matters. <https://www.whittington.nhs.uk/mini-apps/news/newsPage.asp?NewsID=2180&print=1&utm>