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Background:

Containment and restriction measures introduced during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic have had a negative effect on the health and well-being of individuals, regardless of whether or not they were infected by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. We assessed how the pandemic impacted the overall well-being of middle-aged and older adults residing in 27 European countries. In particular, we assessed how having COVID-19 illness or experiencing symptoms associated with Long COVID impacted change in the level of well-being.

Methods:

We used data from the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe's Corona Surveys collected in 2020 and 2021. The sample consisted of 47,964 respondents aged 50 years and older. The outcome variable was the across-time change in the repeated measures of well-being which were operationalized as two latent variables. We used structural equation modeling techniques (i.e., latent change score models) to assess the effects of the relevant risk factors (demographics, socio-economic, chronic conditions, social support) on change in the level of well-being.

Results:

Overall, 8% of respondents were infected by the SARS-CoV-2 virus and 73% of those who were infected reported at least one persistent symptom associated with Long COVID. The results from the analyses indicate that individuals who were affected by COVID-19 illness had a significantly larger decline in the level of well-being than those not affected by this illness and that this decline was more pronounced among those who had Long COVID. We also observed that the degree of change in the level of well-being was associated with the risk factors.

Conclusions:

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the well-being of Europeans and its effects were more pronounced among those directly affected by COVID-19 illness. However, the magnitude of this effect differed across sub-groups of individuals.

Abstract citation ID: ckad160.022

Effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Well-Being of Middle-Aged and Older Adults from 27 European Countries: Evidence from a Longitudinal Analysis of Population-Based Surveys

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