

The Double Edged Sword of the Pandemic: Exploring Associations between COVID-19 and Social Isolation in the USA

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One of the primary recommendations to prevent COVID-19 infection is to avoid public spaces and people. This has proven to be an effective mitigation strategy, but comes at the cost of individuals potentially becoming socially isolated. Both the spread of COVID-19 and social isolation can have significant impacts on mental health, thus in this study we examined possible associations between COVID-19 infection, related-death, social isolation, and the mental health of the general population of the USA. We performed a state-by-state multiple time-series analysis via estimation of Vector Error Correction Models and their Impulse Response Functions. Variables related to COVID-19 were positively associated with our proxies for mental health, anxiety and depression. Variables related to social isolation had a varied association with mental health depending on the state.