



The BMJ

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2020;371:m4148

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.m4148>

Published: 27 October 2020

Covid-19: Two fifths of doctors say pandemic has worsened their mental health

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More than two fifths of doctors in the UK say that their mental health is now worse than before the pandemic, a BMA survey has found.

The association received responses from 6610 doctors working across England to a snapshot survey it conducted in October. Of the 6550 doctors who responded to a question about their mental wellbeing, 43% said that they were currently experiencing work related depression, anxiety, stress, burnout, emotional distress, or other mental health condition and that it was worse than it had been before the pandemic started.

A further 12% said they had a work related mental health problem but it was no different than it had been before the pandemic, while 39% said they did not have a work related problem, and 6% preferred not to say.

Of 6559 doctors who responded to a follow-up question, a third (32%) said that their health and wellbeing were slightly worse than it had been during the first wave of the pandemic and 10% said it was much worse. More than a third (37%) said it was the same, while 21% said it was better.

Doctors also expressed concern about how the service would cope with demand from patients for non-covid care during the second wave of the pandemic. Of the 6125 doctors who responded to the question, most (72%) said that they were not confident that social care would cope, while two thirds (65%) were not confident in their own local healthcare service's ability to cope.

Chaand Nagpaul, chair of the BMA council, said the findings showed the enormous scale of the challenges the NHS would face in the coming months and reinforced the BMA's call for a national and strategic approach to getting covid-19 under control.