

# Measuring mental health in a cost-of-living crisis: a rapid review

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Alison Cooper, Clare England, David Jarrom, Jenni Washington, Elise Hasler, Leona Batten, Ruth Lewis, Rhiannon Tudor Edwards, Jacob Davies, Elizabeth Doe, Asha Mahamed, Brendan Collins, Adrian Edwards

## Background

For most people, wages and welfare payments have not kept up with rising costs, leading to a **cost-of-living crisis**.

Evidence indicates that economic crises are **damaging to population mental health** and that **some groups are particularly vulnerable**.

## Aims

1. To identify and review **available measures and methods for assessing the impact on mental health** of any public health response to the cost-of-living crisis.
2. To review the appropriateness of the measures for **specific, vulnerable populations**.

## Evidence Base

Most evidence came from **before and after the 2008/2009 economic crisis**.

Studies reviewed from the UK, Europe, Australia and New Zealand.



## Review Focus



Adults and households



Outcomes measured were mental health related e.g. wellbeing, suicide attempts

## Key Findings

**Vulnerable Groups** | Those most at risk are those living:



On lower incomes



In financial or housing insecurity



In more deprived areas prior to crisis



with pre-existing mental health problems

There is evidence that the **measurement tools and methods** noted in this review **are suitable for measuring mental health in people with different socio-economic and financial situations**, including those who are financially insecure.

It was **not possible to determine whether the methods and tools effectively captured data from minority ethnic groups**.

## Economic Considerations

- The impacts of the cost of living crisis **have not been felt equally**.
- Poorer households are more impacted due to **considerable inflation** on items such as **food and energy**.
- Mental Health problems cost the Welsh economy **£4.8 billion per annum**.



## Research Implications

The **UK has many population-level surveys**, which provide **rich data** that can be used to explore the mental health of the population.

Studies using data from a household panel survey (such as the UK Household Longitudinal Study), **could be suitable for measuring the mental health impact of specific groups**.

Reports and studies using population-level surveys or medical records **should present data on ethnicity** and, where possible, stratify analyses by ethnicity.

For the full report, and access to the related **Health Policy Journal** publication, please click here:

<https://researchwalesevidencecentre.co.uk/measuring-mental-health-cost-living-crisis-rapid-review>