

Living conditions, lifestyle habits and health among adults before and after the COVID-19 outbreak

Anu Molarius

A Molarius^{1,2}, C Persson³

¹Centre for Clinical Research, Region Värmland, Karlstad, Sweden

²Department of Public Health Sciences, Karlstad University, Karlstad, Sweden

³Department for Sustainable Development, Region Örebro County, Örebro, Sweden

Contact: anu.molarius@regionvarmland.se

Background:

Studies on the public health consequences of COVID-19 pandemic based on robust data and methods are scarce. The aim of this study was to investigate mental and physical health as well as living conditions and lifestyle habits in the general population before and after the COVID-19 outbreak in Sweden in spring 2020.

Methods:

The study is based on 2,273 persons 16-84 years who responded to the national public health survey in spring 2020 in Värmland county (overall response rate 45%). The differences between early (n=1,711) and late (n=562) respondents were studied using multivariate logistic regression, adjusting for background characteristics age, gender, educational level, and country of birth. Similar analyses were also completed in the corresponding survey carried out in spring 2018.

Results:

Statistically significant differences between the groups were obtained for economic difficulties and worry about losing one's job, which were more common among late respondents, and for sleeping difficulties, which were more common among early respondents. There were no differences in other living conditions nor in lifestyle factors. Prevalence of good self-rated health, high blood pressure, aches in shoulders or neck, anxiety or worry and stress did not differ between the groups. In 2018, the only statistically significant difference between early and late respondents concerned economic difficulties.

Conclusions:

Very few differences in living conditions, lifestyle factors and health were observed in the study population before and after the COVID-19 outbreak when adjusted for background characteristics. The results suggest that, in addition to a possible decrease in sleeping difficulties, the prevalence of being worried about losing one's job increased among the employed after the outbreak.

Key messages:

- The results suggest that the prevalence of being worried about losing one's job increased among the employed after the outbreak.
- More research on the short- and long-term public health consequences of the pandemic in the general populations and in different subgroups, using robust data and methods, is needed.