

## **Forecasting the economic consequences of COVID-19 on longstanding illnesses in Wales**

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### **Introduction:**

The unemployment rate following the COVID-19 pandemic in Wales is increasing and there is a positive link between unemployment and longstanding illnesses. This study aimed to project the percentage of adults with longstanding illnesses and chronic health conditions following COVID-19 associated with the economic consequences.

### **Methods:**

We retrieved historical data on the unemployment rates and status of longstanding illnesses among adults from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and National Survey for Wales (NSW), and used time-series models to project the unemployment rates and percentage of adults with longstanding illnesses and chronic health conditions over a three year period (2020/21 - 2022/23).

**Results:**

- Without reparative interventions, the unemployment rate is expected to increase sharply from 3.8% in 2019 to about 7% in 2020 following COVID-19 and then gradually increase over the projected period.
- With increased unemployment, longstanding illness (LSI) would be expected to increase gradually following COVID-19, with an estimated increase of around or exceeding 4% over three years depending on the LSI measure. There would be a higher increment in the percentage of adults with limiting LSI compared with adults with any LSI, suggesting implications for wider health and social care services.
- With current unemployment predictions, the percentage of adults with chronic health conditions is projected to increase following the COVID-19 pandemic over the projected period, with a higher increment for mental health and endocrine/metabolic conditions

**Conclusions:**

- The longstanding illnesses and chronic health conditions are expected to increase in the coming years following COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, preventative measures for longstanding illnesses and chronic health conditions should be a priority for a sustainable recovery from the COVID-19.

**Key messages:**

- Without reparative interventions, the unemployment rate is expected to increase following the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The projected prevalence of limiting longstanding illness in adults following COVID-19 suggests implications for wider health and social care services.