

Documents

Westgate, E.C.^a, Buttrick, N.R.^b, Lin, Y.^a, El Helou, G.^a, Agostini, M.^c, Bélanger, J.J.^d, Gützkow, B.^c, Kreienkamp, J.^c, Abakoumkin, G.^e, Khaiyom, J.H.A.^f, Ahmedi, V.^g, Akkas, H.^h, Almenara, C.A.ⁱ, Atta, M.^j, Bagci, S.C.^k, Basel, S.^l, Kida, E.B.^m, Bernardo, A.B.I.ⁿ, Chobthamkit, P.^o, Choi, H.-S.^p, Cristea, M.^q, Csaba, S.^r, Damnjanovic, K.^s, Danyliuk, I.^t, Dash, A.^u, Di Santo, D.^v, Douglas, K.M.^w, Enea, V.^x, Faller, D.G.^y, Fitzsimons, G.^z, Gheorghiu, A.^{aa}, Gómez, Á.^{ab}, Hamaidia, A.^{ac}, Han, Q.^{ad}, Helmy, M.^{ae}, Hudiyana, J.^{af}, Jeronimus, B.F.^c, Jiang, D.-Y.^{ag}, Jovanović, V.^{ah}, Kamenov, Ž.^{ai}, Kende, A.^{aj}, Keng, S.-L.^{ak}, Kieu, T.T.T.^{al}, Koc, Y.^c, Kovyazina, K.^{am}, Kozytska, I.^t, Krause, J.^c, Kruglanski, A.W.^{an}, Kurapov, A.^t, Kutlaca, M.^{ao}, Lantos, N.A.^{aj}, Lemay, E.P., Jr.^{an}, Lesmana, C.B.J.^{ap}, Louis, W.R.^{aq}, Lueders, A.^{ar}, Maj, M.^{as}, Malik, N.I.^j, Martinez, A.^{at}, McCabe, K.O.^{au}, Mehulić, J.^{ai}, Milla, M.N.^{af}, Mohammed, I.^{av}, Molinario, E.^{an}, Moyano, M.^{aw}, Muhammad, H.^{ax}, Mula, S.^{ay}, Muluk, H.^{af}, Myroniuk, S.^c, Najafi, R.^{az}, Nisa, C.F.^d, Nyúl, B.^{aj}, O'Keefe, P.A.^{ak ba}, Osuna, J.J.O.^{bb}, Osin, E.N.^{bc}, Park, J.^{bd}, Pica, G.^{be}, Pierro, A.^v, Rees, J.^{bf bg bh}, Reitsema, A.M.^{bi}, Resta, E.^{ay}, Rullo, M.^{bj}, Ryan, M.K.^{bk bl}, Samekin, A.^{bm}, Santtila, P.^{bn}, Sasin, E.^d, Schumpe, B.M.^{bo}, Selim, H.A.^{bp}, Stanton, M.V.^{bq}, Stroebe, W.^c, Sutton, R.M.^w, Tseliou, E.^e, Utsugi, A.^{br}, van Breen, J.A.^{bs}, Van Lissa, C.J.^{bt}, Van Veen, K.^{bu}, vanDellen, M.R.^{bv}, Vázquez, A.^{ab}, Wollast, R.^{ar}, Yeung, V.W.-L.^{bw}, Zand, S.^{az}, Žeželj, I.L.^s, Zheng, B.^{bx}, Zick, A.^{bg}, Zúfiga, C.^{by}, Leander, N.P.^c

Pandemic Boredom: Little Evidence That Lockdown-Related Boredom Affects Risky Public Health Behaviors Across 116 Countries

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^a Department of Psychology, University of Florida, United States

^b Department of Psychology, University of Virginia, United States

^c Department of Psychology, University of Groningen, Netherlands

^d Department of Psychology, New York University, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

^e Laboratory of Psychology, Department of Early Childhood Education, University of Thessaly, Greece

^f Department of Psychology, International Islamic University Malaysia, Malaysia

^g Department of Pedagogy, Pristine University, United States

^h Department of Organizational Behavior, Ankara Science University, Turkey

ⁱ Faculty of Health Science, Universidad Peruana de Ciencias Aplicadas, Peru

^j Department of Psychology, University of Sargodha, Pakistan

^k Department of Psychology, Sabanci University, Turkey

^l Department of Social Sciences, New York University, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

^m Faculty of Education, Pristine University, United States

ⁿ Department of Psychology, De La Salle University, Philippines

^o Department of Psychology, Thammasat University, Thailand

^p Department of Psychology, Sungkyunkwan University, South Korea

^q Department of Psychology, Heriot Watt University, United Kingdom

^r Doctoral School of Psychology, ELTE, Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary

^s Department of Psychology, University of Belgrade, Serbia

^t Department of Psychology, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine

^u Institute of Management and Organization, Leuphana University of Luneburg, Germany

^v Department of Social and Developmental Psychology, University "La Sapienza", Rome, Italy

^w School of Psychology, University of Kent, United Kingdom

^x Department of Psychology, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Romania

^y Center for Global Sea Level Change, New York University, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

^z Department of Marketing and Psychology, Duke University, United States

^{aa} Center for European Studies, Faculty of Law, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Romania

^{ab} Social and Organizational Psychology, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, Spain

^{ac} Psychology/Research Unit Human Resources Development, Setif 2 University, Algeria

^{ad} The School of Psychological Science, University of Bristol, United Kingdom

^{ae} Department of Psychology, Menoufia University, Egypt

^{af} Department of Psychology, Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia

^{ag} Department of Psychology, National Chung-Cheng University, Taiwan

- ah Department of Psychology, University of Novi Sad, Serbia
- ai Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, Croatia
- aj Department of Social Psychology, ELTE, Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary
- ak Division of Social Science, Yale-NUS College, Singapore
- al Department of Psychology, HCMC University of Education, Viet Nam
- am Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan
- an Department of Psychology, University of Maryland, United States
- ao Department of Psychology, Durham University, United Kingdom
- ap Department of Psychiatry, Udayana University, Indonesia
- aq School of Psychology, University of Queensland, Australia
- ar Laboratoire de Psychologie Sociale et Cognitive, Université Clermont-Auvergne, France
- as Institute of Psychology, Jagiellonian University, Poland
- at Department of Psychology, University of Sheffield, United Kingdom
- au Department of Psychology and Human Development, Vanderbilt University, United States
- av Mass Communication, Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto, Nigeria
- aw Department of Psychology, University of Cordoba, Spain
- ax Department of Psychology, University of Peshawar, Pakistan
- ay Dipartimento dei Processi di Sviluppo e Socializzazione, University "La Sapienza", Rome, Italy
- az Department of Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Rasht Branch, Iran
- ba Department of Management and Organisation, National University of Singapore Business School, Singapore
- bb Department of Political Science and Administration, National Distance Education University (UNED), Spain
- bc Department of Psychology, National Research University Higher School of Economics, Russian Federation
- bd Graduate School of Management, NUCB Business School, Japan
- be School of Law, University of Camerino, Italy
- bf Research Institute Social Cohesion, University of Bielefeld, Germany
- bg Institute for Interdisciplinary Research on Conflict and Violence, University of Bielefeld, Germany
- bh Department of Social Psychology, University of Bielefeld, Germany
- bi Department of Developmental Psychology, University of Groningen, Netherlands
- bj Department of Educational, Humanities and Intercultural Communication, University of Siena, Italy
- bk Department of Psychology, University of Exeter, United Kingdom
- bl Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Groningen, Netherlands
- bm Department of Psychology of Religion and Pedagogy, International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan, Uzbekistan
- bn Department of Psychology, New York University Shanghai, China
- bo Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences, University of Amsterdam, Netherlands
- bp Department of Psychology, King Saud University, Saudi Arabia
- bq Health Sciences, California State University, East Bay, United States
- br Graduate School of Humanities, Nagoya University, Japan
- bs Institute of Security and Global Affairs, Leiden University, Netherlands
- bt Department of Methodology & Statistics, Utrecht University, Netherlands
- bu Sustainable Society, University of Groningen, Netherlands
- bv Department of Psychology, University of Georgia, United States
- bw Department of Psychology, Lingnan University, Hong Kong
- bx Ageing Epidemiology Research Unit, School of Public Health, Faculty of Medicine, Imperial College London, United Kingdom
- by Department of Psychology, Universidad de Chile, Chile

Abstract

Some public officials have expressed concern that policies mandating collective public health behaviors (e.g., national/regional "lockdown") may result in behavioral fatigue that ultimately renders such policies ineffective. Boredom, specifically, has been singled out as one potential risk factor for noncompliance. We examined whether there was empirical evidence to support this concern during the COVID-19 pandemic in a large cross-national sample of 63,336 community respondents from 116 countries. Although boredom was higher in countries with more COVID-19 cases and in countries that instituted more stringent lockdowns, such boredom did not predict longitudinal within-person decreases in social distancing behavior (or vice versa; $n = 8,031$) in early spring and summer of 2020. Overall, we found little evidence that changes in boredom predict individual public health behaviors (handwashing, staying home, self-quarantining, and avoiding crowds) over time, or that such behaviors had any reliable longitudinal effects on boredom itself. In summary, contrary to concerns, we found little evidence that boredom posed a public health risk during lockdown and quarantine. © 2023 American Psychological Association

Author Keywords

COVID-19; emotion; public health; self-regulation; Simpson's paradox

Index Keywords

adult, Article, boredom, coronavirus disease 2019, fatigue, hand washing, health behavior, health hazard, high risk behavior, home quarantine, human, infection prevention, national lockdown, pandemic, population density, psychological well-being, public health, social distancing, spring, summer

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Lawrence Erlbaum

Correspondence Address

Westgate E.C.; Department of Psychology, 945 Center Drive, United States; email: erinwestgate@ufl.edu

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