

Te Hiringa Mahara is producing a series of short reports during 2022 and 2023 to add our collective understanding of the wellbeing impacts of the pandemic and to provide key insights on wellbeing areas or populations of focus.

Media reporting of COVID-19

Our first report Media reporting of COVID-19 and mental health and wellbeing provides a scene-setter for the rest of the series.

The wellbeing analysis in the report draws on the He Ara Oranga Wellbeing Outcomes Framework, which describes the aspects of good wellbeing in Aotearoa and guides the way we monitor the systems that influence wellbeing in our communities.

In this report we publish analysis to better understand how mental health has been reflected in media coverage of COVID-19 in Aotearoa. The findings are presented in short, summary form; with a longer technical report providing greater detail on the data, methodology, and findings.

Drawing on more than 3000 publicly available media articles, we used natural language processing to investigate and to explore media coverage by mainstream news media and how this changed over the pandemic.

The report identifies nine broad themes and six sub-themes that describe the impacts of the pandemic on mental health in Aotearoa. In short:

- Media coverage on the mental health problems contributed to by the pandemic has been concentrated on the changes to people's work, education, and lifestyle, the material impacts of this, and loneliness
- Media coverage on mental health solutions has focused on resources, namely access to services, supports and resources
- Distress and other impacts of the pandemic have frequently been normalised and universalised in media coverage.

These are important factors, but this narrow view misses out other factors that we know are important to mental health in Aotearoa.

Understanding mental health requires understanding the broader aspects of good wellbeing – including connection, hope, rights, self-expression, and self-determination of individuals and communities. In the pandemic context, this would mean considering mental health much more broadly than the direct impacts on health and work.

Everybody experiences wellbeing differently, based on a variety of factors; and some communities experience poorer wellbeing across a range of measures. If we are to improve wellbeing for all, we need to understand these experiences, and ensure everyone is supported to flourish.

Read other reports in the [Covid-19 insights series](#)