Brief survey on mental wellbeing and COVID-19

FAI CIMP
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Background and execution of survey

• CIMP board interest for insight into impact of COVID-19 on mental wellbeing in air sports

• lack of previous data

• decision for a brief online survey to form an overview
  • a couple of structured and open questions

• number of respondents globally = 638
  • over and under representation?
  • data from September

• comprehensive statistical analysis not available nor feasible due to distribution, type of data

• interesting data nonetheless
Respondee area

Multiple options allowed: n=636, selected=667

- Europe
- North America
- Australia / Oceania
- South America
- Asia
- Africa
- I do not wish to answer
Respondee experience in air sports

n=636

- 20 + years: 60%
- 10 - 20 years: 10%
- 1 - 5 years: 20%
- 5 - 10 years: 10%
- Less than a year: 10%
- I do not wish to answer: 0%
Respondee age
n=637

- Under 20
- 20 - 30
- 31 - 40
- 41 - 50
- 51 - 60
- 61 and above

I do not wish to answer
COVID-19 impact on participation in air sports

n=637

- Significantly decreased: 50%
- Somewhat decreased: 20%
- No effect: 10%
- Somewhat increased: 10%
- Significantly increased: 10%
- I do not know / I do not wish to answer: 0%
COVID-19 has affected my physical wellbeing

n=637

- Very negatively
- Somewhat negatively
- No effect
- Somewhat positively
- Very positively
- I do not know / I do not wish to answer
COVID-19 has affected my mental wellbeing

n=636

Very negatively
Somewhat negatively
No effect
Somewhat positively
Very positively
I do not know / I do not wish to answer
Observations from data

Age seems to be the most relevant background factor

All age groups seem to be somewhat equally affected by decrease of activity
  • the oldest and middle-aged seem to have been least able to maintain, increase activity
  • increased activity only for the healthiest with most free time & economic means, good location, solo / socially distanced / outdoors sport? (small n=46 for increased activity)

Effects of COVID-19 on physical wellbeing correlate with mental wellbeing
  • negative physical wellbeing = 78 % negative effect on mwb, 3 % positive
  • positive physical wellbeing = 38 % negative effect on mwb, 27 % positive
  • no effect on physical wellbeing = 35 % negative effect on mwb, 6 % positive

The older you are, the less negative effect on mental wellbeing?
  • From almost 70 % negative effect in the youngest groups to about 45 % in the oldest

The most active report the least negative effect on mental wellbeing
  • only 32 % negative, though very small n=25 for significantly increased activity
Reported factors on physical wellbeing

Positive factors
- more rest, less stress
- more free time
- better life balance
- more outdoors
- more exercise
- better sleep
- better diet
- stopped drinking
- new hobbies

Negative factors
- closed gyms
- loss of muscular strength
- weight gain
- less active
- more indoors due to lockdown
- loss of routines
- no airtime
- more alcohol
- worse sleep
- fear of leaving home
- financial stress, loss of job
# Reported factors on mental wellbeing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive factors</th>
<th>Negative factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>changed view on life</td>
<td>isolation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time to reflect</td>
<td>less social contacts</td>
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<tr>
<td>less obligations</td>
<td>financial stress, loss of job</td>
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<tr>
<td>more time with family</td>
<td>no travel</td>
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<tr>
<td>more time in solitude</td>
<td>no flying</td>
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<tr>
<td>less general stress</td>
<td>loss of sense of freedom</td>
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<tr>
<td>preference to work from home</td>
<td>fear of infection</td>
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<tr>
<td>slower life</td>
<td>frustration, anger (on restrictions)</td>
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<tr>
<td>broadened interests</td>
<td>no real holidays</td>
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<tr>
<td>more introspection</td>
<td>always alert</td>
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<tr>
<td>more time to work out</td>
<td>increased anxiety, worrying</td>
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<tr>
<td>more time in nature</td>
<td>depression (also before covid)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more time to read</td>
<td>apathy, boredom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One important fact, which has emerged during decades of research, is that in the study of capsule environments there are few main effect variables. Almost every outcome is due to an interaction among a host of physical and social environmental variables and personality factors. Thus, we must remember that how people experience an environment is more important than the objective characteristics of the environment.”
General takeaways for better wellbeing

- Ability to maintain sense of control and coherence
- Functional coping methods
- Staying (physically) active
- Staying socially active
- Ability to proceed with own interests despite restrictions
- Economic stability
- Emotional stability: more open, more optimistic, less neurotic
Reported issues on wellbeing in air sports

Supportive factors

need and passion to fly
most important hobby
helps keep calm and happy
provides adrenaline, freedom
regular activity, peer interaction
risk management, awareness of
importance of following rules
good training and support
being able to maintain mental focus (alertness)

importance of staying active
risk awareness
Reported issues on wellbeing in air sports

**Negative factors**

- uncertainty about future
- too many/changing rules, no more fun
- general stress, financial etc. burdens
- closed sites, not able to fly
- others’ negligence of social distancing
- loss of confidence
- loss of ability to maintain fitness
- loss of enthusiasm due to lack of activities
- afraid to be honest about mental health
- aging participants
- risk of lack of concentration
- afraid of accident
- fear of flying due to past incidents
- “flying while stoned on weed”

- directly covid related
- other factors of interest
Reported issues on wellbeing in air sports

Deniers and speaking for others

“not slowfakes but well-adjusted aging males”

“should be no issues”

“there are no issues”

Taboo topics?
Suggestions on improving wellbeing

Providing sense of control:

Offer social and physical activity

- emphasize social aspect / camaraderie of clubs, more peer support
- build ability to help people meet each other and fly again
- organize gettogethers etc. activity (outdoors?)
- simulator flights
- mentoring system / flying with more experienced pilots
- flying with others in general

Communicate and deliver on risk awareness

- clear, realistic and easy to apply rules for social distancing, masks etc.
  - in different sports
  - in clubs' common areas
- emphasis on cleanliness
- refresher training / checklists to help decrease mental workload in general and especially when returning to flight after long break

Communicate optimism and predictability, stability

- "easy to approach" regulations (guides)?
Suggestions on improving wellbeing

Providing sense of control continued:

Build awareness and acceptance through training and comms

- strengthen supportive, positive environment in clubs, competitions
- talk about mental wellbeing issues, "fit to fly"
- offer training in fear management
- offer training in mental strength and specific topics of each sport
- offer coaching, psychological support
- offer (and require?) training in risk management
- organize safety seminars
- provide written guides and first-person experiences
- support and promote beneficial activities (other sports, meditation etc.)
- provide content for all ages, backgrounds and experience levels
- dialogue within clubs etc. for further insight