

The impact of lockdown measures during the COVID-19 pandemic on personal stress and false news sharing on social media

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## **Abstract**

Lockdowns are hotly debated, as some consider them necessary to contain the spread of COVID-19, while others claim they cause an even greater damage to public health. To quantify the effect of lockdown measures on stress, fear, anxiety, and dis-information spread, we analyze more than 52 million tweets from 52 US cities during the first stage of the pandemic including data on local lockdown measures and socio-economic data to account for contingent effects arising from local heterogeneity. Using a linear mixed-effects model, we find that lockdowns increase stress only in cities with a low number of COVID-19 cases. Similar results are found for anger, fear and dis-information spread. Also, lockdowns reduce the spread of dis-information in cities with a high number of COVID-19 cases. Our results deliver crucial insights for marketing and public-policy scholars, as well as administrative bodies and social media platforms.

**Keywords:** *COVID-19; text mining; user-generated content (UGC)*

**Track:** Digital Marketing & Social Media