

Demographic factors linked to mental health in black men

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Demographic factors significantly affect mental health concerns among black men, according to a study by the University of Michigan and University of Southern California that provides the first-ever national estimates of several mental disorders for black men.

Advanced age was linked to better mental health status, the research showed. Older men had fewer depressive symptoms, lower levels of [psychological distress](#) and lower odds of having 12-month [major depressive disorder](#) than their younger counterparts.

However, the study found that lower [socioeconomic position](#)—lower levels of education, being unemployed or out of the labor market and being in poverty—was associated with poorer mental health status.

Researchers used data from 1,271 African American men from the National Survey of American Life: Coping with Stress in the 21st Century. The study examined three types of mental health issues: depressive symptoms, serious psychological distress and major depressive disorders among black men.

Only one out of 20 respondents reported major [depressive disorder](#) during the previous 12-month period, and nearly 10 percent reported having had the disorder at some point over the course of their lives.

Roughly 3 percent of men indicated the presence of serious psychological distress, while 6 percent had significant levels of

[depressive symptoms](#). Overall, these prevalence rates are relatively low compared to non-Hispanic whites.

Other findings indicate that married men and Southerners had lower odds of 12-month and lifetime major depressive disorder than men in the North Central region and those who were previously married (separated, widowed or divorced).

The authors said that noted demographic differences indicate that life circumstances are meaningful for the mental health of black men.

U-M researchers are Robert Joseph Taylor, the Sheila Feld Collegiate Professor of Social Work; Daphne Watkins, assistant professor of social work; and Linda Chatters, professor of social work and professor of health behavior and health education. Karen Lincoln is an associate professor of social work at USC and the study's lead author.

The study appears in *Research on Social Work Practice*.

Provided by University of Michigan

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