

# Reports of mental health disability increase in US

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The prevalence of self-reported mental health disabilities increased in the U.S. among non-elderly adults during the last decade, according to a study by Ramin Mojtabai, MD, PhD, of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. At the same time, the study found the prevalence of disability attributed to other chronic conditions decreased, while the prevalence of significant mental distress remained unchanged. The findings will appear in the November edition of the *American Journal of Public Health*.

"These findings highlight the need for improved access to [mental health services](#) in our communities and for better integration of these services with primary care delivery," said Mojtabai, an associate professor in the Bloomberg School's Department of Mental Health. "While the trend in self-reported mental health disability is clear, the causes of this trend are not well understood."

For the study, Mojtabai reviewed data from the U.S. National [Health Interview Survey](#) covering 312,364 adults ages 18 to 64 years. He found that the prevalence of self-reported mental health disability increased from 2.0 percent of the non-elderly adult population from 1997 to 1999 to 2.7 percent from 2007 to 2009. According to Mojtabai, the increase equates to nearly 2 million disabled adults. He also noted the increase in the prevalence of mental health disability was mainly among individuals with significant psychological distress who did not use mental health services in the past year. Findings showed that 3.2 percent of participants reported not receiving [mental health care](#) for financial

reasons between 2007 and 2009, compared to 2.0 percent from 1997 to 1999.

In a study published last month, Mojtabai and his colleagues found that prescriptions for [antidepressant drugs](#) by non-psychiatrist providers without any accompanying psychiatric diagnosis increased more than 30 percent over the last decade.

Provided by Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health

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