

# Mental health disparities higher for older african American adults

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A new, revealing literature review suggests that older African American adults are more likely to be diagnosed with depression, anxiety, and dementia. African Americans, Mental Health, and Aging, published in Special Issue: Late-Life Diversity from Clinical Gerontologist (Routledge), reviews the mental health issues among the rapidly growing African American older adult population.

Assessment and treatment of [mental health conditions](#) in African American older adults is often complicated by various drivers of disparity. "There are," state the authors, "potentially very few areas of mental health research where there is not a need for further investigation among older African Americans."

Researchers focused on the three most common mental disorders in American patients over 55: depression, anxiety, and dementia. They found that prior studies suggest a tendency towards under-recognition of depression and anxiety among older African Americans. Interpretation of symptoms without proper attention paid to the cultural nuances in their expression is largely to blame, with perceptions of anxiety especially skewed by a glaring underrepresentation of African Americans in the research. Tools for diagnosing dementia, while more aware of cultural biases, still perpetuate misconceptions surrounding the perception and description of symptoms. Disparities in [mental health treatment](#) for African American older adults are intensified by these shortcomings alongside a lack of available mental health resources and mistrust of mental health services.

Given the existing disparities in [mental health](#) treatment and the projected growth of the African American older adult population, a dire need for further research to into assessment and treatment with a focus on cultural context is obvious.

**More information:** [www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10 ...  
07317115.2013.847515](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/07317115.2013.847515)

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