

Significant increase in major depression reported during recent recession

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Vincent van Gogh's 1890 painting

The recent Great Recession was accompanied by a significant and sustained increase in major depression in U.S. adults, according to a Loyola study published in the *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*.

Prevalence of major [depression](#) increased from 2.33 percent during the years 2005-2006 to 3.49 percent in 2009-2010 to 3.79 percent in 2011-2012, according to the study by Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine researchers.

Prevalence of less-[severe depression](#) increased from 4.1 percent in 2005-2006 to 4.79 percent in 2009-2010, but then declined to 3.68 percent in 2011-2012.

The study is the first to evaluate the population-wide impact of the Great Recession on [mental health](#).

The study was a collaboration among Loyola researchers in the Department of Public Health Sciences and Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neurosciences.

Prevalence of both major and less severe depression was highest among adults who were living in poverty or had less than a [high school education](#). "The mental health of these vulnerable populations may be most affected during time periods of economic distress, but more research is needed," researchers wrote.

It's plausible, researchers concluded, that the Great Recession's negative effects on employment, housing security, and stock investments contributed to the sustained increase in [major depression](#). However, they noted it is possible other factors could have played a role.

"The impact of the economic downturn on depression prevalence should be considered when formulating future policies and programs to promote and maintain the health of the U.S. population," researchers wrote.

The Great Recession officially began in December, 2007, and lasted for

18 months. But the effects of the recession, including high unemployment and home foreclosures and reduced consumer confidence, remained high even after the recession officially ended in June, 2009. During the past decade, more than 8 million jobs were lost and about 3 million homes were foreclosed.

Researchers analyzed data from 24,182 adults who participated in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey during the years 2005 to 2012. Respondents were judged to be depressed depending on their answers to a depression questionnaire. The questionnaire asked about such depression criteria as depressed mood or irritability; decreased interest or pleasure in most activities; feelings of worthlessness or guilt; thoughts of suicide; and fatigue or loss of energy.

More information: *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*,
www.psychiatrist.com/jcp/artic...v76n04/v76n0415.aspx

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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