

# ADHD rates doubled among U.S. adults over 10 years

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(HealthDay)—If the latest statistics are any indication, attention-

deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is no longer an issue for children only.

Over a 10-year period, ADHD rates more than doubled among American adults, new research shows.

However, the rate among [children](#) remains much higher than in adults.

"While we can't pinpoint the source of the increase in ADHD rates in adults, we can surmise that it has to do with growing recognition of ADHD in the adult populations by doctors and service providers, as well as increased public awareness of ADHD overall," said study co-author Dr. Michael Milham. He is vice president of research at the Child Mind Institute, in New York City.

For the study, researchers analyzed data from more than 5 million Kaiser Permanente Northern California patients, and found that the percentage of adults with a diagnosis of ADHD rose from 0.43% in 2007 to 0.96% in 2016.

White adults showed a larger increase—0.67% to 1.42%—than those in other racial/[ethnic groups](#).

Adults with other [mental health conditions](#)—such as depression, and bipolar, anxiety or eating disorders—were more likely to have ADHD. The researchers also found that adults with ADHD had higher rates of health care use and sexually transmitted infections.

Meanwhile, ADHD diagnoses among children aged 5 to 11 rose from 2.96% in 2007 to 3.74% in 2016, a 26% increase.

The study was published online Nov. 1 in *JAMA Network Open*.

"More work needs to be done to better understand why rates are higher in white adults, particularly whether there are deficiencies in detection and diagnoses among non-white adults," Milham said in a journal news release.

"And," he added, "we must develop more effective diagnostic tools and standards for adults, who, in general, remain more challenging to diagnose than children."

Study lead author Dr. Winston Chung, a psychiatrist with Kaiser Permanente in San Francisco, noted that people in some cultures are less likely to regard certain behaviors as a disorder or to seek help for them.

"It's always been just understood that [different cultures](#) and races might vary in meaningful ways in how they cope with stress or expressing emotions," Chung said.

However, "this is something we don't actually have definitive answers to," and more research is needed, he added.

**More information:** Winston Chung et al. Trends in the Prevalence and Incidence of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder Among Adults and Children of Different Racial and Ethnic Groups, *JAMA Network Open* (2019). [DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2019.14344](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2019.14344)

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