

People with an intellectual disability vulnerable to adverse outcomes of COVID-19

March 25 2020, by Ciara O'shea



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People of all ages with an intellectual disability are particularly vulnerable to adverse outcomes associated with COVID-19 warns Mary McCarron, Professor of Ageing and Intellectual Disability at the Trinity Centre for Ageing and Intellectual Disability (TCAID).

Those with an [intellectual disability](#) fall into a high-risk category because they may suffer from several [health conditions](#), have low levels of health literacy and rely on other people for care. Professor McCarron notes that the health and disability sectors are also not adequately prepared and equipped to meet their needs.

Historically this population has been subjected to attitudinal bias and prejudice that has devalued their lives and reduced their timely access to appropriate health care.

Professor McCarron stresses the need to rapidly scale up and ensure the relevant skills are in place in the health care and social care systems to ensure they have the capacity to respond to this pandemic and its consequences for people with an intellectual disability.

She said: "It is essential for family and staff caregivers, clinicians and [health care](#) workers to consider these needs in order to provide appropriate care and support for those with an intellectual disability."

Facts and Health risks for people with an intellectual disability (Source IDS TILDA 2017)

- Extremely high prevalence of multimorbidity in adults with intellectual [disabilities](#) across the entire adult life course.
- IDS-TILDA identified multimorbidity for 71% of the older intellectual disability (ID) population in Ireland.
- - This is higher than rates reported in the general older population and it starts at an earlier age (59%).
- Multimorbidity starts earlier and increased with age:
- - 63% in those aged 40–49 years to
 - 72% in those aged 50–65 years and
 - 86% in those aged 65 years and older.
- Prevalence of eye disease, mental health disease, endocrine disease, joint disease, hypertension, cancer and stroke increased with age for people with ID.
- Multimorbidity is highest among those with more severe levels of intellectual disability.
- Having [chronic conditions](#) was associated with Down syndrome.
- Older people with Down syndrome are particularly at risk many having pre-existing cardiovascular and [respiratory problems](#), confounded by a 55% risk of dementia in those age 55+ increasing to 88% in those age 65 years and older
- Women with ID are at a higher risk of multimorbidity than men.
- The most prevalent multimorbidity pattern was mental health/neurological disease.

More information: [www.inclusionireland.ie/sites/ ...onavirus-updated.pdf](http://www.inclusionireland.ie/sites/...onavirus-updated.pdf)

[www.inclusionireland.ie/sites/ ...d-how-wash-hands.pdf](http://www.inclusionireland.ie/sites/...d-how-wash-hands.pdf)

Provided by Trinity College Dublin

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