

Older women more likely to report depressive symptoms than men

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Depression affects up to one in four people but is often associated with young adults in the public consciousness.

And though the likelihood of Canadians having depressive symptoms decrease into mid-life, rates of depression creep up once more as people—especially women—enter their 70s, according to a new study published in the *Journal of Affective Disorders*.

Simon Fraser University researcher John Best and his team looked at

data from the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA)—a long-term study that follows more than 50,000 people between the ages of 45 and 85—and tracked the number of reported depressive symptoms across age.

They found that people's association with depression was linked with late life and that females were more likely to report depressive symptoms than males.

"We do see across this entire age span, 45 to 85, women reported greater [depressive symptoms](#), but that separation between males and females is amplified the most in the 80s," says Best.

Best says there's no single reason why depression rates increase in late life, but older adults are known to be more likely to experience bereavement, failing health, becoming caregivers and social isolation.

His team hopes to study the myriad of factors in their follow-up work, but for now he says the findings can help shape the way we support older adults.

"Being aware that there is a likelihood that your older parent may be experience depressive systems as they get into their late 70s and 80s reinforces the importance of keeping [older adults](#) active mentally, physically, socially and perhaps spiritually as well," he says. "My advice is to make sure they are maintaining the best social contacts possible and encouraging them to be as physically active as possible as well."

More information: John R. Best et al, Age and sex trends in depressive symptoms across middle and older adulthood: Comparison of the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging to American and European cohorts, *Journal of Affective Disorders* (2021). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jad.2021.08.109](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2021.08.109)

Provided by Simon Fraser University

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