

# Exploring psychological resiliency of older adults with diabetes

November 15 2021

---



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

Studies suggest that exposure to the COVID-19 pandemic has been associated with a variety of different mental health consequences including reports of depression, loneliness, and insomnia. People who

are more than 65 years of age and those with underlying medical conditions such as type 2 diabetes and obesity are particularly vulnerable to negative outcomes from COVID-19. Until now, few investigations have identified and separated the mental health consequences of exposure to the COVID-19 pandemic from preexisting factors in this age group. A new prospective study of a large cohort of older adults with type 2 diabetes and overweight/obesity from across the U.S. has explored this subject with surprising results.

The prospective study, published in the journal *Diabetes Care*, showed that from pre-COVID to during the COVID-19 pandemic, the prevalence of mild or greater symptoms of depression increased by 1.6 times (from 19.3% to 30.4% of participants), while loneliness rose by 1.8 times (from 12.3% to 22.1% of participants). Reports of insomnia remained stable in the cohort (at 33.3% and 31.5%, respectively). More than half of the study participants remained free of clinically significant levels of adverse mental health conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Many older adults have demonstrated psychological resiliency amid the pandemic, but sex and race/ethnicity did play an important role in these outcomes," says Ariana M. Chao, Ph.D., CRNP, Assistant Professor of Nursing at the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing (Penn Nursing) and the lead author of the article. "Women, relative to men, had greater odds of depressive symptoms, anxiety, loneliness, and perceived COVID-19 threat. Compared with participants who were non-Hispanic White, those from underrepresented groups tended to report lower levels of depressive symptoms, loneliness, and insomnia. For example, 32.9% of women versus 26.1% of males reported symptoms of mild or greater depression during the pandemic."

"We were fortunate," said study co-author Thomas Wadden at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, "to have

been evaluating these more than 2800 participants in the Look AHEAD study for nearly 20 years, thus giving us a clear picture of their mental health and other functioning before and after the COVID-19 [pandemic](#)."

**More information:** Ariana M. Chao et al, Changes in the Prevalence of Symptoms of Depression, Loneliness, and Insomnia in U.S. Older Adults With Type 2 Diabetes During the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Look AHEAD Study, *Diabetes Care* (2021). [DOI: 10.2337/dc21-1179](https://doi.org/10.2337/dc21-1179)

Provided by University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing

Citation: Exploring psychological resiliency of older adults with diabetes (2021, November 15) retrieved 8 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-11-exploring-psychological-resiliency-older-adults.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.