

Older people have better mental well-being than 30 years ago, says study

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Older people have better mental well-being than 30 years ago, according

to a study conducted at the Gerontology Research Center at the Faculty of Sport and Health Sciences, University of Jyväskylä (Finland). The study, published in the *Journal of Aging and Health*, examined differences in depressive symptoms and life satisfaction between current 75- and 80-year-olds and the same-aged people who lived in the 1990s.

The results showed that 75- and 80-year-old men and women today experience fewer [depressive symptoms](#) than those who were 75 and 80 years old in the 1990s. The differences were partly explained by the better perceived health and [higher education](#) of those born later.

"In our previous comparisons, we found that older people today have significantly better physical and cognitive functioning at the same age compared to those born earlier," says Professor Taina Rantanen from the Faculty of Sport and Health Sciences. "These new results complement these positive findings in terms of mental well-being."

Today, 75- and 80-year-olds are more satisfied with their lives to date. However, there was no similar difference in satisfaction with their current lives. In fact, 80-year-old men who lived in the 1990s were even more satisfied with their current lives than 80-year-old are men today.

"These men born in 1910 had lived through difficult times, which may explain their satisfaction with their current lives in the 1990s when many things were better than before," says postdoctoral researcher Tiia Kekäläinen.

"Individuals adapt to their situation and living conditions. Both in the 1990s and today, the majority of older adults reported being satisfied with their current lives."

The study was conducted at the Faculty of Sport and Health Sciences and Gerontology Research Center at University of Jyväskylä, Finland.

The first cohort consisted of 617 individuals born in 1910 and 1914 who participated in the Evergreen study in 1989–1990. The second cohort consisted of 794 individuals born in 1938–1939 and 1942–1943 who participated in the AGNES study in 2017–2018. In both cohorts, the participants were assessed at the age of 75 or 80 years.

More information: Tiia Kekäläinen et al, Cohort Differences in Depressive Symptoms and Life Satisfaction in 75- and 80-Year-Olds: A Comparison of Two Cohorts 28 Years Apart, *Journal of Aging and Health* (2023). [DOI: 10.1177/08982643231164739](https://doi.org/10.1177/08982643231164739)

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