

# Study finds significant increase in chronic anxiety and depressive symptoms in young adults

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Since the coronavirus outbreak, the number of young adults with moderate to severe chronic anxiety and depressive symptoms has

increased sharply. In the year before the pandemic 16.7% of 18- to 24-year-olds suffered from moderate to severe chronic anxiety and depressive symptoms. They were experiencing these complaints in March 2019, November 2019 and in March 2020. In the year after the pandemic, this had increased to 21.4%. This translates to an increase of about 73,000 young adults.

Among the entire adult Dutch population, the percentage of adults with chronic anxiety and [depressive symptoms](#) increased slightly from 10.9% to 11.9% during this period. Among working people, working people with children, adults with a non-western background, and (partially) disabled people, the rates of chronic anxiety and depressive complaints before and after the [outbreak](#) did not differ statistically.

These are the main results of a new comprehensive longitudinal study among a representative group of about 3,500 [adults](#). The study was conducted by Tranzo—Tilburg University, Centerdata, Fonds Slachtofferhulp, GGz Breburg, Nivel and Amsterdam UMC.

The study was published in the *Journal of Affective Disorders*. For the study, anxiety and depressive symptoms from before the pandemic (in March 2019, November 2019 and March 2020) and after the outbreak (in November 2020, March 2021 and November 2021) of the 3,500 participants were analyzed.

The results show that the adult Dutch population as a whole weathered the pandemic reasonably well and was resilient. For the approximately 1.54 million 18- to 24-year-olds, this is true to a much lesser extent: in the year before the pandemic, about 255,000 [young adults](#) were struggling with moderate to severe chronic anxiety and depressive symptoms. In the year after the outbreak, that number had risen to about 328,000.

**More information:** Peter G. van der Velden et al, The prevalence of anxiety and depression symptoms (ADS), persistent and chronic ADS among the adult general population and specific subgroups before and during the COVID-19 pandemic until December 2021, *Journal of Affective Disorders* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jad.2023.06.042](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2023.06.042)

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