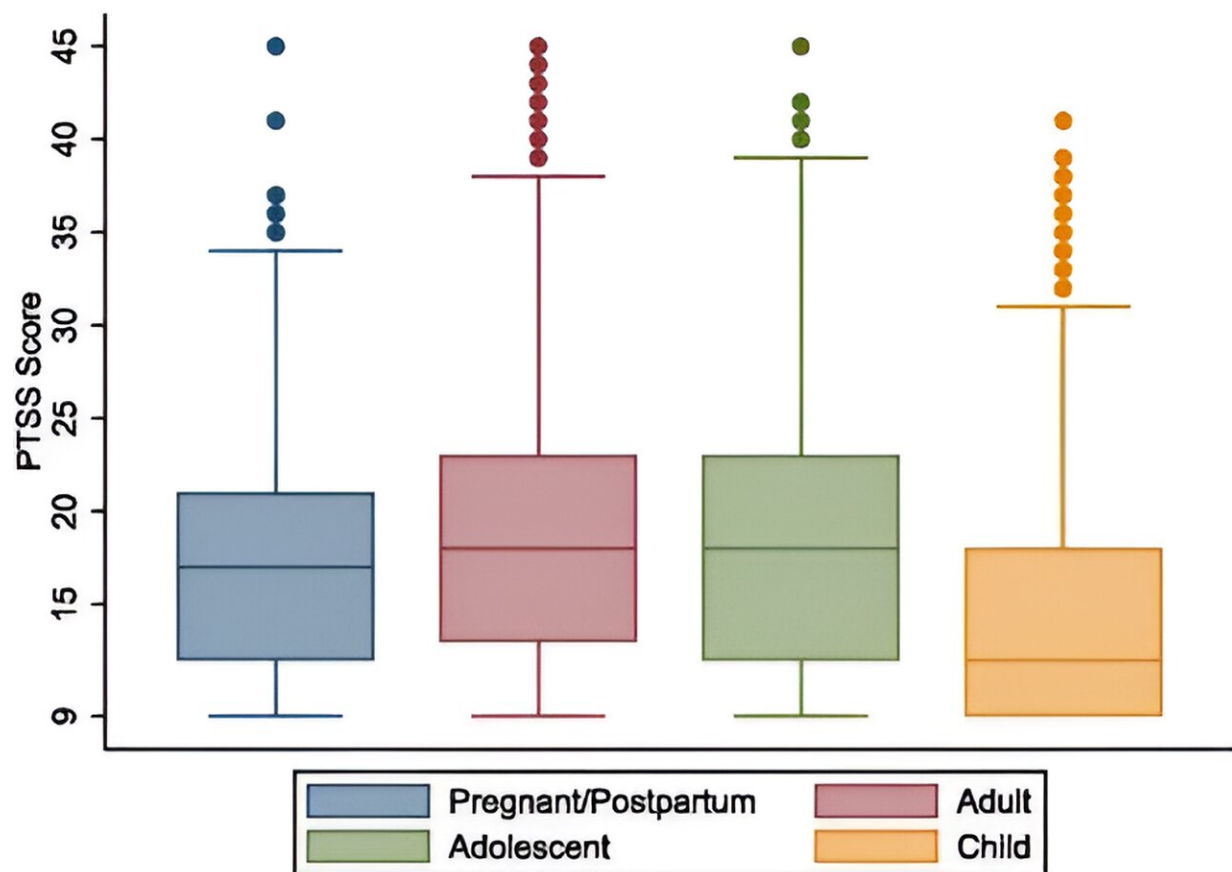


Study validates new scale for measuring pandemic-related traumatic stress in children and adults

November 6 2023



Boxplots of ECHO COVID-19 Pandemic-Related Traumatic Stress Scale Score Distribution, by Subgroup SampleNote. Pregnant/postpartum (n = 1,656) and adult (n = 11,483): ≥ 18 years; adolescent (n = 1,785): 13–21 years; child (n = 2,896): 3–12 years. ECHO = Environmental influences on Child Health Outcomes; PTSS = Pandemic-Related Traumatic Stress Scale. Credit:

The Pandemic-related Traumatic Stress Scale (PTSS) can be used to effectively measure stress related to the COVID-19 pandemic and identify children and adults with higher levels of stress who may need additional mental health support, according to a new study .

The study included 17,830 [children](#) and adults from 47 ECHO Cohort study sites representing all 50 states, Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico. Researchers split the sample into four groups including 1,656 pregnant or postpartum individuals; 11,483 adult caregivers; 1,795 adolescents aged 13 to 21; and 2,896 children aged 3 to 12.

Between April 2020 and August 2021, participants or their caregivers completed surveys about their pandemic-related traumatic stress, [depressive symptoms](#), anxiety, general stress, and life satisfaction. On average, caregivers had the highest PTSS scores, followed by adolescents, pregnant or postpartum individuals, and children.

Within these groups, the researchers found additional differences related to age and gender. Adolescents, females, and caregivers of children under 5 had higher PTSS scores on average than [younger children](#), males, and caregivers of children 5 and older, respectively. Higher levels of pandemic-related traumatic stress were associated with greater symptoms of distress and lower life satisfaction.

"The PTSS can be used beyond the immediate COVID-19 pandemic context," said Courtney Blackwell, Ph.D., an ECHO Cohort Investigator at Northwestern University. "Unlike previous measures that capture traumatic stress reactions to a single event, the PTSS was developed to evaluate potential traumatic [stress](#) reactions to ongoing large-scale

threats. In the future, the PTSS could be adapted to evaluate reactions to other acute onset stressors with lengthy durations."

Dr. Blackwell led this collaborative research published in [*Psychological Assessment*](#).

More information: Courtney K. Blackwell et al, Development and psychometric validation of the Pandemic-Related Traumatic Stress Scale for children and adults., *Psychological Assessment* (2023). [DOI: 10.1037/pas0001211](#)

Provided by Environmental influences on Child Health Outcomes

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