

High levels of anxiety, depression seen in younger adults during pandemic

December 1 2023, by Elana Gotkine



Younger adults had high levels of anxiety and depression through the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a study published online Nov. 30 in *JAMA Network Open*.

Sarah Collier Villaume, Ph.D., from the School of Education and Social Policy at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, and colleagues

conducted a cross-sectional study to examine age disparities in anxiety and [depression](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic using a nationally representative online survey administered between April 2020 and August 2022. The study included 3,028,923 respondents.

In multiple regression analyses, the researchers found that likely anxiety and depressive disorders were identified in 40 and 33 percent, respectively, of adults aged 18 to 39 years; this compared with corresponding values of 31 and 24 percent of those aged 40 to 59 years and 20 and 16 percent of those aged 60 years and older.

For those aged 40 years and older, the levels declined throughout the pandemic period, but they remained elevated for younger adults. Several factors associated with these age disparities were identified; anxiety and depression increased more in younger than [older adults](#) after surges in COVID-19 case counts but decreased less following vaccination.

Economic precarity, which younger adults are disproportionately exposed to, accounted for about one-third of the age gap among individuals with depression and anxiety.

"While there is more to learn about the factors that contribute to the experience younger U.S. adults have with anxiety and depression in the current context, our findings point to a need for [mental health care](#) and [economic policies](#) that target the needs of young adults," the authors write.

More information: Sarah Collier Villaume et al, Age Disparities in Prevalence of Anxiety and Depression Among US Adults During the COVID-19 Pandemic *JAMA Network Open* (2023) [DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.45073](#)

Citation: High levels of anxiety, depression seen in younger adults during pandemic (2023, December 1) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-12-high-anxiety-depression-younger-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.