

Two in five formerly depressed adults are happy and flourishing

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A new study reports that approximately two in five adults (39%) who have experienced major depression are able to achieve complete mental health. Researchers consider complete mental health as occurring when people achieve almost daily happiness or life satisfaction, positive social and psychological well-being, and are also free of depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts and substance abuse for at least one full year.

"This research provides a hopeful message to patients struggling with depression, their families and health professionals. A large number of formerly depressed individuals recover and go on to reach optimal well-being" said Esme Fuller-Thomson, lead author of the study and Sandra Rotman Endowed Chair at the University of Toronto's Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work and the Institute for Life Course and Aging.

Social support was a major factor associated with complete mental health. "Formerly depressed [adults](#) who had emotionally supportive and close relationships were four times more likely to report complete mental health than those without such

relationships. Having at least one trusted friend was critical to cultivating complete mental health," said co-author Mercedes Bern-Klug, Associate Professor and Director of the Aging Studies Program at the University of Iowa.

The study's authors were surprised to learn that the length of the depressive episode had no bearing on an individual's ability to attain complete mental health. Those whose longest depressive episode lasted more than two years were just as likely to be in complete [mental health](#) as those who had had the disorder for only one month. "In other words, there is no need for individuals and families to lose hope that a full recovery is beyond reach" reported co-author Senyo Agbeyaka, a Masters in Social Work student at the University of Toronto.

The researchers also found that poorer physical health, functional limitations and insomnia were impediments to flourishing in the sample. "Clearly, this underlines the importance for health professionals to consider strategies that address both physical health problems and social isolation when treating those with depression," said co-author Deborah LaFond, Social Sciences Subject Librarian at the University at Albany, State University of New York.

The researchers examined a nationally representative sample of more than 2,500 Canadians who had experienced a major depressive disorder at some point in their lives. The data were drawn from Statistics Canada's 2012 Canadian Community Health Survey-Mental Health. This research was published this week in the journal *Psychiatry Research*.

Provided by University of Toronto

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