

Anxiety among fathers is higher than recently reported, new study suggests

5 April 2021



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New research suggests anxiety among men transitioning into parenthood is significantly higher than reported by the global World Health Organization (WHO) regional prevalence rates.

In a new study published in *The Journal of Psychosomatic Obstetrics & Gynecology*, researchers from the Colorado School of Public Health on the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus studied the prevalence of anxiety among fathers during the perinatal period, which includes pregnancy through the first year of postpartum.

"The transition to parenthood is a major life event that's often accompanied with new challenges related to financial, relationship, and work-life balance concerns. Despite those changes happening for both men and women, not much is known about the prevalence of anxiety among new fathers," said Jenn Leiferman, Ph.D., professor at the Colorado School of Public Health. "To our knowledge, our study is the first meta-analysis to explore the prevalence rates of anxiety among both fathers and mothers during the perinatal

period."

The researchers reviewed eligible studies representing more than 40,000 participants that have published between 1995-2020. The researchers found that the overall estimate of anxiety among men during the perinatal period was nearly 11 percent, with rates being lower during pregnancy (9.9 percent) than during the first year postpartum (11.7 percent).

These rates are considerably higher than the global WHO regional prevalence rates for anxiety among men that range between 2.2 to 3.8 percent, suggesting the transition into parenthood may increase risk for anxiety in men.

In terms of anxiety among mothers, the researchers found an estimated 17.6 percent of women experience it during the perinatal period. This is also substantially higher than global WHO regional preferences for anxiety among women, but in line with estimates for maternal anxiety from other meta-analyses.

"The prevalence of anxiety and depression among men is talked about less as a society, even though research shows men are more likely to commit suicide or abuse alcohol than women. It's important that we create more transparency around men's mental health issues. Our hope is by creating awareness, we can help people get help earlier when needed," said Leiferman.

The researchers suggest that many men suffer anxiety during the transition to parenthood, starting as soon as the first trimester throughout the first year postpartum. Given this, identifying appropriate support for new fathers as well as early identification and treatment efforts for paternal [anxiety](#) are needed.

More information: Jenn A. Leiferman et al, Anxiety among fathers during the prenatal and

postpartum period: a meta-analysis, *Journal of Psychosomatic Obstetrics & Gynecology* (2021).
[DOI: 10.1080/0167482X.2021.1885025](https://doi.org/10.1080/0167482X.2021.1885025)

Provided by CU Anschutz Medical Campus

APA citation: Anxiety among fathers is higher than recently reported, new study suggests (2021, April 5) retrieved 3 December 2021 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-04-anxiety-fathers-higher.html>

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