**Depression Has Skyrocketed During the COVID-19 Pandemic, Study Says**

Almost as soon as coronavirus lockdowns went into effect in March, discussion turned to [mental health](https://time.com/5833619/mental-health-coronavirus/). It’s well-documented that [natural disasters](https://time.com/5759685/australian-bushfires-mental-health/), wars and other mass traumas can lead to significant increases in population-wide psychological distress. Weeks or months of anxiety, fear, sadness and [social isolation](https://time.com/5833681/loneliness-covid-19/) can take their toll, leading many experts to fear the U.S. would face a mental health epidemic at the same time it fought a viral pandemic.

Now, [a study](https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2770146) published in JAMA Network Open offers one of the first nationally representative estimates of how severe that epidemic may be: Three times as many Americans met criteria for a depression diagnosis during the pandemic than before it, according to the paper.

A pre-pandemic survey of about 5,000 American adults found that 8.5% of them showed strong enough [signs of depression](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1046%2Fj.1525-1497.2001.016009606.x) (including feeling down or hopeless; loss of interest in things that normally bring joy; low energy; [trouble concentrating](https://time.com/5878780/how-to-focus-covid-19-pandemic/); or thinking about self-harm) to warrant a probable diagnosis. When researchers surveyed almost 1,500 American adults about their mental health from March to April of this year, that number rose to almost 28%. Even more people—almost an additional 25%—showed milder signs of depression. Logically, people were more likely to suffer symptoms of depression during the pandemic if they experienced “COVID-19 stressors,” including losing a job, the death of a loved one or financial distress. People who said they had less than $5,000 in savings were also about 50% more likely to suffer from depression than wealthier people, the researchers found. In keeping with usual demographic trends, women were more likely to experience depression than men, and single people were more likely to experience depression than married couples.

But trends only go so far. Anyone—regardless of race, gender, relationship status or income—can experience mental health issues during something as traumatic as a pandemic. Small lifestyle tweaks can help. Getting enough sleep and [exercise](https://time.com/5511322/exercise-depression-mental-health/) go a long way, and [studies have shown](https://time.com/4695558/yoga-breathing-depression/) that meditation and yoga can have a positive effect on psychological well-being. Social support is also crucial, even if it happens virtually.

It’s also easier than ever to seek mental health care if you need it. [Teletherapy](https://time.com/5883704/teletherapy-coronavirus/) is surging in popularity during the pandemic, making it easier to see a clinician from home. If you need more immediate help, there are also hotlines that can provide support. If you or someone you know may be contemplating suicide, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or text HOME to 741741 to reach the Crisis Text Line. In emergencies, call 911, or seek care from a local hospital.