

Mental and Behavioral Health Worsened Among Older Adults Between 2011 and 2020

Mary Ann Honors, PhD, MPH, Aaron Clark, MPH, Sarah Milder, MPH and Kristin Shaw, MPH

Arundel Metrics, Incorporated, Saint Paul, MN

Background

Mental and behavioral health are important for people of all ages, including older adults.

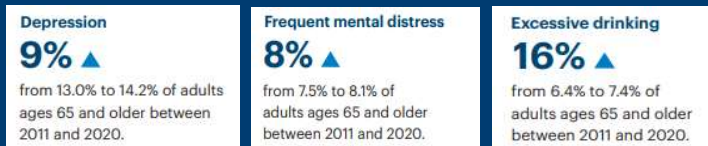
This analysis examines trends in depression, frequent mental distress, and excessive drinking among adults ages 65 and older between 2011 and 2020 from a state-level population health index to determine the prevalence of these issues and which subpopulations may be seeing rising rates.

Methodology

Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System data from 2011-2020 were restricted to adults ages 65 and older and analyzed for trends over time and within demographic subpopulations (gender, race/ethnicity, education, and income).

Depression was defined as the percentage who reported being told by a health professional that they have a depressive disorder. Frequent mental distress was defined as the percentage who reported their mental health was not good for 14 or more days in the past 30 days. Excessive drinking was defined as the percentage who reported binge or heavy drinking.

Results



Percent change in prevalence among subpopulations between 2011 and 2020

	Depression	Frequent Mental Distress	Excessive Drinking
Race/Ethnicity			
American Indian/Alaska Native	20%	8%	2%
Asian	19%	-	-
Black	-9%	-22%	51%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	-	-	-
Hispanic	-15%	-5%	2%
Multiracial	10%	-3%	-8%
Other Race	45%	14%	-
White	14%	15%	15%
Education			
Less Than High School	4%	3%	12%
High School/GED	9%	8%	21%
Some Post-High School	12%	27%	21%
College Grad	17%	23%	-4%
Gender			
Female	14%	16%	27%
Male	2%	-2%	5%
Income			
Less Than \$25,000	14%	15%	14%
\$25-\$49,999	29%	24%	15%
\$50-\$74,999	26%	47%	8%
\$75,000 or More	22%	41%	-4%

▲ = Statistically significant change between 2011 and 2020.

Results

Among adults ages 65 and older, depression, frequent mental distress, and excessive drinking all increased significantly between 2011 and 2020.

Significant increases occurred in all three measures among older white adults, older females, and those with some post-high school education.

Conclusions

Behavioral health problems including depression, frequent mental distress, and excessive drinking are on the rise among older adults.

Targeting awareness campaigns and interventions to specific subpopulations may be of benefit, as well as reducing stigma among the wider population.

For More Information

Visit the *America's Health Rankings*[®] website and the *America's Health Rankings 2022 Senior Report*.

AmericaseHealthRankings.org



Acknowledgments

We thank the advisory committee, who provided guidance in the development of the *America's Health Rankings*[®] Senior Report, and the United Health Foundation for their continued support of this project.

Disclosure

Arundel Metrics receives funding from United Health Foundation to produce *America's Health Rankings*. Arundel Metrics (arundelmetrics.com) is a data-driven consulting firm specializing in public health measurement and index generation.