

Older African Americans fall less often

17 July 2014



(Medical Xpress)—A University of Michigan study examining how race and ethnicity predicts the frequency of falls by older people shows that African Americans are less likely to fall than others.

"Millions of [older adults](#) living in community settings are just one bad fall away from a nursing home," said Emily Nicklett, an assistant professor of [social work](#) and the study's lead author. "Identifying risk and protective factors can inform falls prevention interventions and policies."

Nicklett and colleague Robert Joseph Taylor, the Sheila Feld Collegiate Professor of Social Work, and faculty associate at the Institute for Social Research, examined data on falls incidence and frequency from the Health and Retirement Study from 2000 to 2010. The study followed nearly 10,500 African American, Latino and non-Hispanic white older adults.

Functional limitations, including difficulty walking across the room or preparing meals, and health problems such as [high blood pressure](#), cancer and diabetes, also predicted greater odds of

experiencing a fall for adults 65 and older, the study showed.

Although beyond the scope of this study, the authors suggested that older whites could be at highest risk for initial and recurrent falls because they are more likely to participate in activities with a high risk of falling, such as outdoor chores and leisure-time physical activity. Non-Hispanic white older adults are also more likely to live in suburban settings than other groups, which could account for some of the differences in falls.

The authors will next examine whether housing type and availability of support within one's household lowers the risk of falling. Previous research indicates that older African Americans were more likely to live in extended family households. The availability of help within the home could help older adults avoid scenarios or behaviors that could lead to [falls](#).

The findings appear in the *Journal of Aging and Health*.

More information: The complete study is available online: jah.sagepub.com/content/early/.../64314541698.full.pdf

Provided by University of Michigan

APA citation: Older African Americans fall less often (2014, July 17) retrieved 21 September 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-07-older-african-americans-fall.html>

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