

Pandemic affecting young people's mental health

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(HealthDay)—Nearly half of U.S. young adults report symptoms of

depression, with more than one-third reporting thoughts of death or suicide, according to the results of a survey released by the COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States.

Roy H. Perlis, M.D., from Harvard Medical School in Boston, and colleagues conducted an online survey of young adults (aged 18 to 24 years) in four waves—May (2,387 participants), June (1,600 participants), August (2,903 participants), and October (2,053 participants)—to assess changes in rates of depression as the COVID-19 pandemic expanded geographically.

The researchers found that the prevalence of major depressive symptoms among young adults remains higher than historical norms, with 47.3 percent reporting at least moderate depressive symptoms in October. No region of the country was spared. There were also parallel increases noted in rates of anxiety. Sleep disruption remains the most common [symptom](#), although it modestly decreased from 75.4 percent in May to 72.2 percent in October. The rates for thoughts of death and suicide in May were 32.2 percent—nearly 10-fold higher than historical findings. This prevalence increased further and reached 36.9 percent in October. Using October data, symptoms of reported mild or greater depression, generalized anxiety, and disrupted sleep were higher among women. The prevalence of mental health symptoms in [young adults](#) was similar across races and levels of education.

"These are clear indicators that the pandemic, with its social and [economic consequences](#), is taking a heavy toll on the mental health of Americans and especially on [young people](#)," a coauthor said in a statement.

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