

# Mental Health Trend in Post-Pandemic America: Long-Term Effect of Covid 19 on Mental Health in Different Demographic Groups

Khowaja Ahmad Talha<sup>1</sup>; Shreya Arora<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>University of Alabama at Birmingham

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**Abstract:** The COVID-19 pandemic has had a lasting impact on the mental health of people living in United States, majorly altering the psychological well-being across different demographic groups. A substantial rise in mental health issues has been reported post pandemic, compared to the pre-pandemic period, when only a small proportion of individuals experienced mental health struggles. This paper examines the mental health trends after the pandemic and its long-term effects on young adults, older individuals, and economically vulnerable populations. Findings indicate increased prevalence of anxiety, depression, and substance use disorders, exacerbated by economic instability, barriers to healthcare access and social isolation. Projections suggest a continued increase in mental health issues and treatment-resistant depression beyond 2025. To address this crisis, this paper advocates for early intervention, personalised treatment plans, expanded access to telehealth services, and policies targeting the socioeconomic determinants of mental health. Implementing a comprehensive, multi-faceted strategy is necessary for reducing mental health burden and promote long-term recovery in the post pandemic United States.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic indeed brings turmoil in terms of mental health not only for America but for the entire world. Considering the pre-pandemic era, only 21% of people were suffering from poor mental health and 79% were living life with stable mental health (statista, 2024). Reportedly, 1 out of 5 people in the USA listed self-reported mental health issues (statista, 2024). However, the scenario took a 360-degree turn in the post-pandemic era, where 3 out of 4 people especially adults are suffering from serious mental health distress (Richter, 2024). So, the paper critically evaluates mental health trends in post-pandemic times among different demographic groups in America. The paper aims to assess the long-term effect, that Covid 19 pandemic imposed on various age groups in the USA and based on the findings, suggest realistic recommendations that could eventually help in overcoming the issue.

### ➤ Mental Health Trend in Post Pandemic Time in America

Like the unprecedented impact on the global economy, the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted mental health too. According to Holingue et al. (2020), most of the USA adults have a history of mental health conditions, yet they become more vulnerable to psychological distress due to Covid 19 pandemic. Supporting this fact, Reinert et al. (2024) suggested, that since post-pandemic till the last year, 23% of adults have experienced a variety of mental health distress, estimating at present 60 million Americans are going through mental health illness. Of which

- 13% of Youth and 5% of adults reported serious thoughts of suicide
- 1 among 5 Youths witnessed a severe depressive episode (MDE) in 2023.
- 18% of USA adults are suffering from substance use disorder that indeed impacts their mental health negatively (Reinert et al. 2024).
- Massachusetts ranks at the top in terms of having mental health distress state-wise.

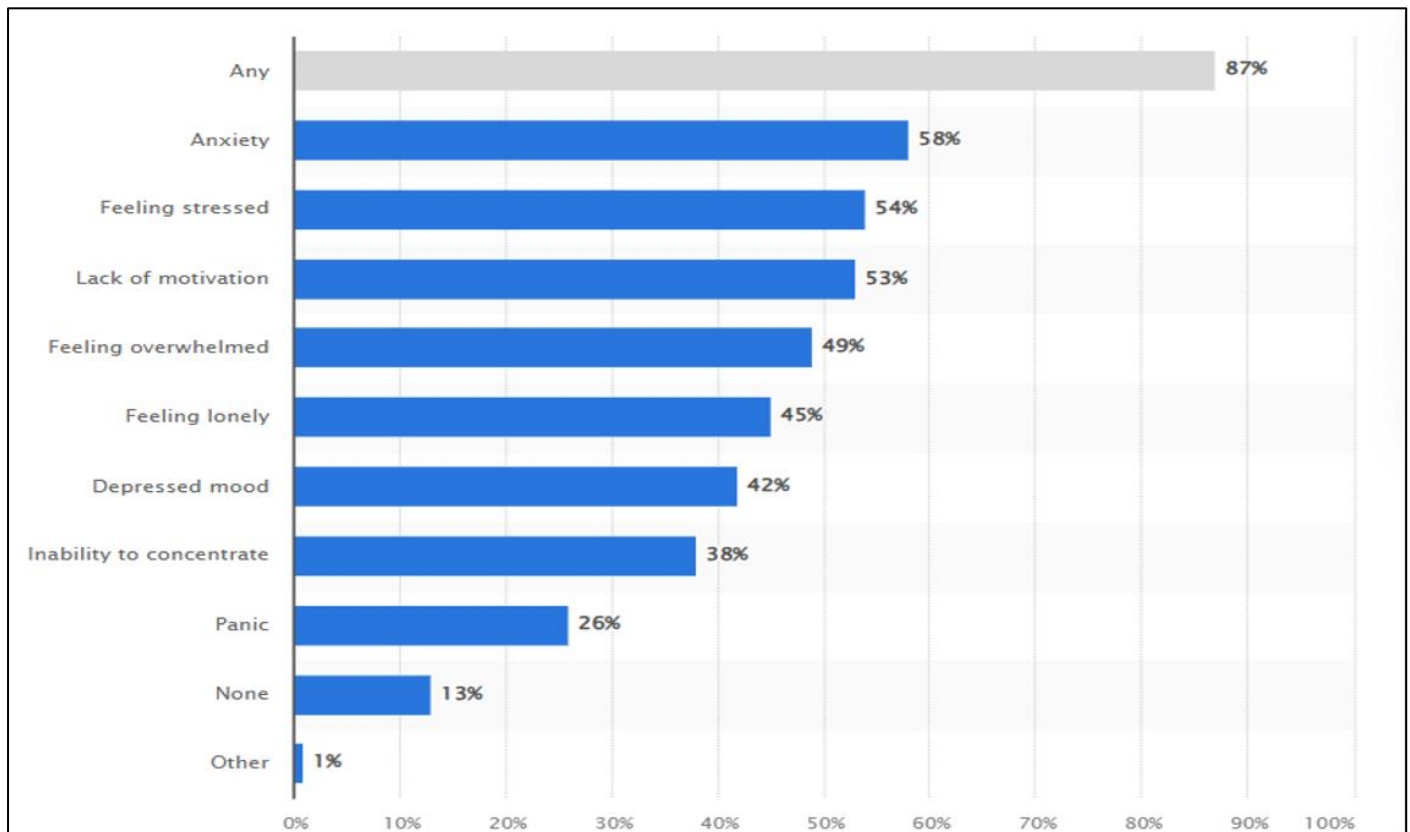


Fig 1 The kind of Mental Health Challenges Faced by US Adults in the Post-Pandemic Era  
(Source: Vankar, 2024)

As stated in the figure, 87% of US adults are facing any kind of mental health issue and 58% of them are specifically dealing with anxiety. Simultaneously, feeling stressed, lack of motivation, feeling overwhelmed, feeling lonely or even being depressed is quite a common phenomenon for 54%, 53%, 49%, 45% and 42% of the US population (Vankar, 2024). 36% of the population belonging to the age group of 18-25 are becoming more vulnerable whereas people from 26-49 years are witnessing any kind of mental health issue in post post-pandemic era. Thereafter, it is clear that mental health issues are emerging as a common social dispute and becoming a common phenomenon in all demographics.

➤ *The Long-Term Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Different Demographics in USA*

The resources of Jacobson et al. (2020) confirmed, that despite decreased social impact, the search queries for mental health support were drastically increased because of stay-at-home orders. Supporting this fact, Da Silva et al. (2020), defined that when their survival and that of others become a major issue, the severity of mental health distress Increased drastically. According to Tilstra et al. (2024), the immediate direct effect was substantial, the disruption of fertility, mortality and migration will jointly affect the US population estimated up to 2060. The fact emerged as a true consequence while Kaiser Family Foundation conducted a health tracking poll in the USA, between March 11-15 and March 25-30, the findings suggest.

- 72% of Americans who are above the age group of 50 can face their lives being destructed a lot due to a sudden

outbreak of COVID-19 (Bhattacharjee and Acharya, 2020)

- 15.2% elderly population who are in the age group of 65 or above face critical anxiety and depression due to the unavailability of when to essential services (Bhattacharjee and Acharya, 2020)
- *Apart from these immediate impacts, the long-term impacts of Covid 19 pandemic that the different demographic populations still bearing till the date in the USA are listed below section:*
- Till the last fiscal, 57.8 million adults in the USA as suffering from any kind of Mental health disorder (usa.edu, 2024).
- 33.7% population belongs to the 18 to 25 age group prevalent mental health distress
- Where whereas 28.1% and 15% population aged 26 to 49 and 50 or older are still affected by mental health in less as an extended impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (usa.edu, 2024).
- Moreover, 17% of adolescents already experienced major depressive episodes at 12% experienced serious thoughts of suicide for that reason, mental-related Emergency Room visit specifications for adolescents have increased by 31% compared to 2019 (usa.edu, 2024).
- Approximately 25 million rural Americans faced a shortage of Mental Health Care Professionals, for which reason 22.7% of adults from the non-metropolitan Area experienced the symptoms of mental illness (usa.edu, 2024).

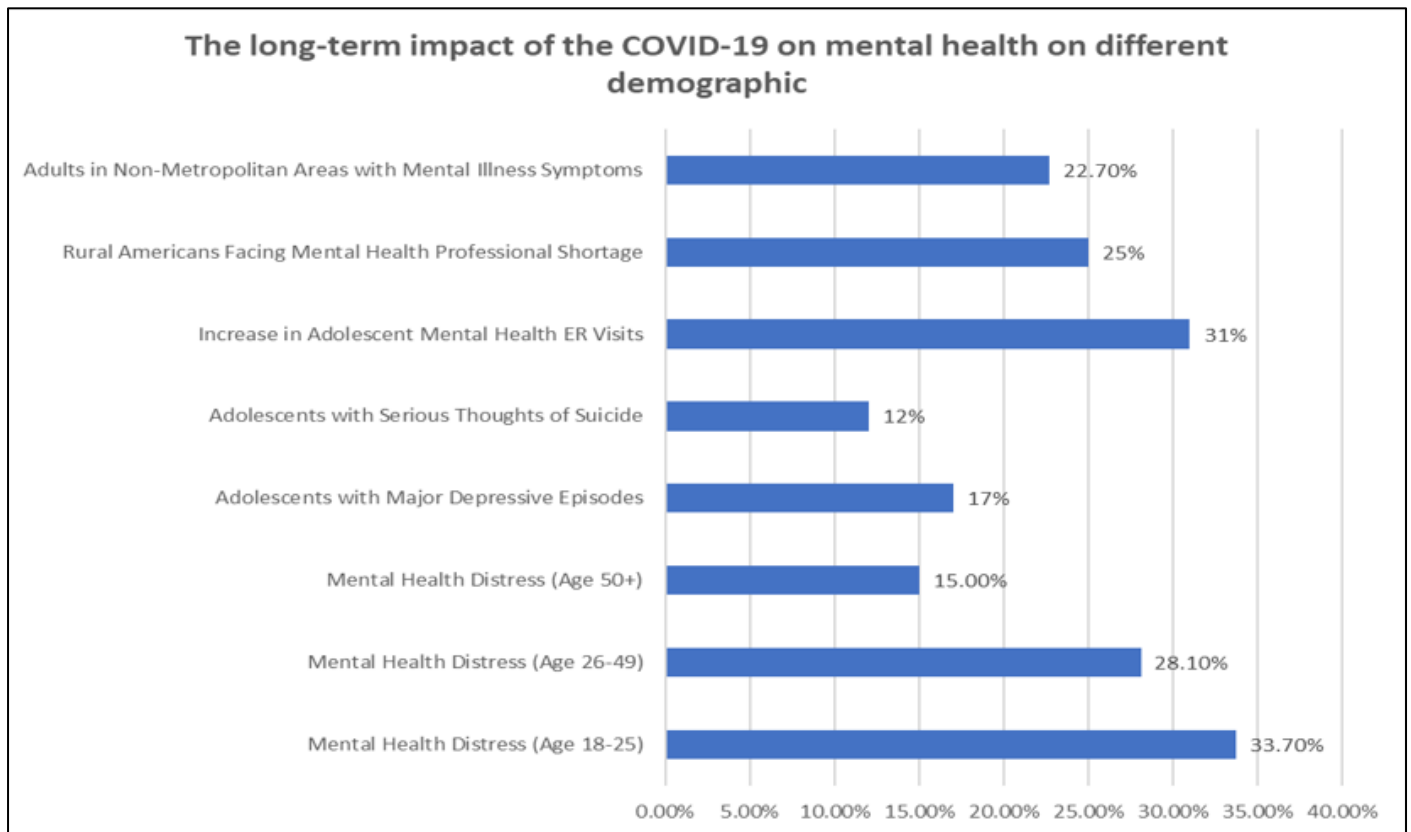


Fig 2 The Long-Term Impact of the COVID-19 on Mental Health in Different Demographic  
(Source: usa.edu, 2024)

➤ *Why US Adults are more Vulnerable to COVID-19-Induced Mental Health Distress even in 2024?*

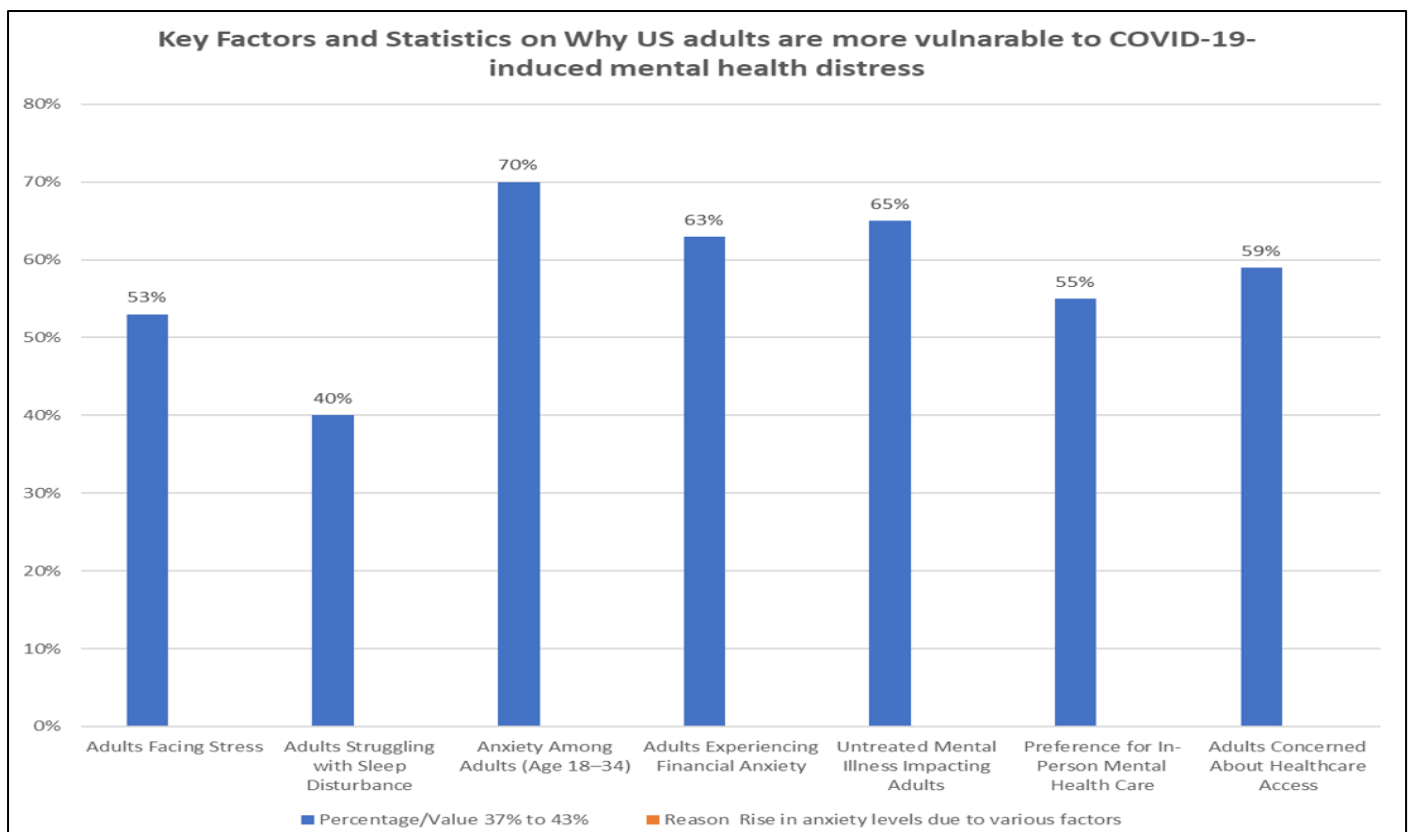


Fig 3 Key Factors and Statistics on why US Adults are more vulnerable to COVID-19-Induced Mental Health Distress  
(Source: American Psychiatric Association, 2024)

According to the results published by the American Psychiatric Association and their annual mental health poll, the adult population of the USA are witnessing more anxiety. The number increased from 37% to 43%, due to specific reasons such as current events, economic uncertainty and the long-lasting impact created by Covid 19 Pandemic (Chen et al. 2024). The report highlights that 53% of the adult population is facing stress and 40% of them are struggling with sleep disturbance which was orbited during a pandemic and since then has continued to affect many (American Psychiatric Association, 2024). The sudden dimension of social connection and prolonged isolation during the pandemic is the reason behind mental health distress in the post-pandemic era specifically in the age group of 18 to 34. Apart from that core reasons such as limited professional support, preference for in-person care and too much worry about healthcare access are other causal factors, which are induced by Covid 19, making mental health conditions worse among the US adult population (Swain et al. 2024). Financial instability is a prolonged impact of the pandemic, for which reason 63% of US adults are suffering from severe anxiety. On the other hand, 65% of the adult population is dealing with untreated mental illness which is emerging from economic strain on families and businesses in post post-pandemic era.

#### ➤ *Anticipated Mental Health Trends in USA in post 2025*

Due to treatment resistance and comorbidities, the increasing prevalence of depression and TRD Is expected to continue in the USA specifically among the adult population group. Moreover, depression within older adults is expected to become more prevalent because of increasing life stresses, and chronic conditions followed by the long-term impacts of Covid 19 pandemic (Chan et al. 2024). It is also expected that older and middle-aged women will face the greatest collective burden of depression while adolescent men and older men with medical histories bear the highest individual costs that further lead to mental health distress (El-Warrak et al. 2023). As a whole, it can be stated that post-2025, America is likely to face severe escalation in mental health burden due to the rising rate of treatment-resistant depression and comorbidities.

## II. RECOMMENDATIONS TO COMBAT THE SOCIAL ISSUE

After analysing the secondary qualitative data, it becomes evident to apply a comprehensive approach to combat the social disease. On that note, early detection and intervention need to be priorities along with rooting mental health screening to tackle the issue from the grassroots level (Chen et al. 2024). On the other hand, considering the factors influencing multiple demographic groups, personalized treatment plants can be a prosperous option. extending access to telly healthcare curbs the need for immediate healthcare assistance (Bhattacharjee and Acharya, 2020). Finally addressing the socio-economic stressors such as housing insecurity, financial instability by implementing economic support programs and workplace health initiatives can help in reducing and anxiety and stress levels among the adult age group.

## III. CONCLUSION

In can be summarised, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound and lasting impact on mental health in the United States, affecting various demographic groups to varying degrees. The post-pandemic era has seen a significant increase in mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and substance use disorders, with adults, especially younger and older populations, being particularly vulnerable. To mitigate these effects, a multifaceted approach is necessary, including early intervention, personalised treatment plans, expanded access to telehealth services, and addressing socio-economic stressors. These strategies are crucial in reducing the mental health burden and fostering long-term recovery.

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