



Women and mental health



Mental health is important for everyone. It’s part of how we think, feel and act, and it can affect how we interact with others.¹ When we can experience our thoughts and emotions in a healthy way, we can better accomplish our goals and deal with stress.² For many people, however, mental health conditions are part of everyday life. And some conditions, such as depression and bipolar disorder, affect more women than men.^{3,4}

Mental health conditions aren’t a sign of weakness or a character flaw.⁵ They may not always be preventable,² and there’s no one cause for them. Family history and genes, life experiences such as trauma and abuse, loneliness and chemical imbalances in the brain can be contributors.⁵

Most serious mental health conditions can’t be cured, but they can be treated so that symptoms improve.³ That’s why it’s so important to watch for signs and know where to get support. It’s also important to think about overall mental well-being - not just conditions that can be diagnosed.

5.1%
of women experience **depression** globally.⁴

4.6%
of women experience **anxiety** globally.⁴

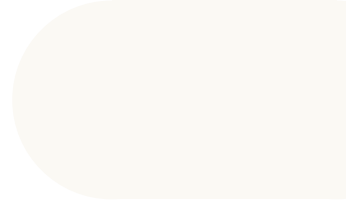


Looking for support?

To find out about the resources available to you, visit [livewell.optum.com](https://www.livewell.optum.com).

Overall well-being: Many women are stressed

The past couple of years have been especially tough for women, who as a whole have felt greater impacts from the pandemic than men.



Job loss and economic stress

More women lost jobs during the pandemic because the industries they're more likely to work in, such as service industries, were hit harder.^{6,7} Globally, women hold 39% of jobs but experienced 54% of job losses.⁸ Losing a job is stressful, and long-term poverty can have lasting mental health effects. Rates of depression and other mental health conditions are much higher among people living in poverty.⁹



Increased caregiving responsibilities

In married opposite-sex couples, women provide about 60% of childcare⁷ and take on more household responsibilities. With schools closed or operating remotely and many childcare programmes closed during the pandemic, women took on the majority of the burden. At the same time, a study in the U.S. showed that fewer women (22%) than men (28%) have jobs that allow remote work.⁷

Many women felt pushed out of the workforce to care for children,¹⁰ but children weren't the only reason for women leaving jobs. Many had to care for ageing parents or other adults with poor physical or mental health.¹¹

Postpartum depression

Developing depression during pregnancy or after having a baby is common. A global study found that rates vary by country, but overall the rate of postpartum depression is 17.22%.¹² For women who gave birth during the pandemic, with extra worries and friends or family often unable to visit, pregnancy and childbirth may have been even more stressful than usual.

Mental well-being was certainly affected negatively by the pandemic, but it's an ever-present matter that needs addressing. To ensure that all people get the support they need for mental well-being, we must continue to break down stigma, recognise the symptoms of mental health conditions and ensure that people know how to seek help.

54%

of **job losses** were experienced by women globally.⁸

60%

of **childcare** is provided by the women in married opposite-sex couples.⁷





If you're feeling stressed by financial, caregiving, relationship or other personal concerns, or you think you might be experiencing depression, anxiety or another mental health condition, reach out.

Visit livewell.optum.com to find out about the resources available to you.



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