

Increased risk of dying from COVID for people with severe mental disorders

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People with severe mental disorders have a significantly increased risk of dying from COVID-19. This has been shown in a new study from Umeå University and Karolinska Institutet in Sweden. Among the elderly, the proportion of deaths due to COVID-19 was almost fourfold for those with severe mental disorders compared to non-mentally ill people in the same age.

"We see a high excess mortality due to COVID-19 among the elderly with severe mental disorders, which gives us reason to consider whether this group should be given priority for vaccines," says Martin Maripuu, associate professor at Umeå University.

In the current study, the researchers studied data covering the entire Swedish population over the age of 20 during the period from 11 March to 15 June 2020. Among citizens with severe mental disorder, 130 people died from COVID-19 during this period, which corresponded to 0.1 percent of the group. Among people who had not been diagnosed with a severe mental disorder, the mortality rate was almost halved, 0.06 percent.

Above all, after the age of 60, people with severe mental disorders had a higher excess mortality compared with the [general population](#) of the same age. In the age group 60-79 years, death from COVID-19 was almost four times as common among people with a severe mental disorders.

In the study, severe mental disorder was referred to as [psychotic disorders](#), such as schizophrenia and [bipolar disorder](#). The study did not include depression or anxiety in the term, although these conditions can also be severe.

As to what exactly causes the excess [mortality](#) in COVID-19 among people with severe mental disorders, the study itself provides no answer.

"It might be that severe mental disorders can lead to premature biological aging, that the disease impairs health and the [immune system](#) in general or that this group has other risk factors such as obesity. It is always important to address both, mental and physical health problems of people with these [disorders](#)," says Martin Maripuu.

In total, almost eight million individuals formed basis for the study. The study has been published in the scientific journal *Frontiers in Psychiatry*.

More information: Martin Maripuu et al. Death Associated With Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection in Individuals With Severe Mental Disorders in Sweden During the Early Months of the Outbreak—An Exploratory Cross-Sectional Analysis of a Population-Based Register Study, *Frontiers in Psychiatry* (2021). [DOI: 10.3389/fpsy.2020.609579](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2020.609579)

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