

# Discrimination has pervasive adverse links to mental health

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(HealthDay)—Interpersonal discrimination is associated with adverse

mental health and substance use outcomes among young adults, according to a study published online Nov. 8 in *Pediatrics*.

Yvonne Lei, from the University of California in Los Angeles, and colleagues used data from six waves of the Transition to Adulthood Supplement (2007 to 2017) for 1,834 participants to examine associations between different types of interpersonal discrimination (e.g., racism, sexism, ageism, and physical appearance discrimination) and [mental health](#), substance use, and well-being. Cross-sectional and longitudinal associations were examined between discrimination frequency and outcomes.

The researchers observed associations for increased discrimination frequency with a higher prevalence of languishing, [psychological distress](#), mental illness diagnosis, drug use, and poor self-reported health in the same wave (relative risks, 1.34, 2.03, 1.26, 1.24, and 1.26, respectively). The associations persisted at two to six years after discrimination exposure. In cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses, similar associations were found with cumulative high-frequency discrimination and with each discrimination subcategory.

"Discrimination has downstream long-term and cumulative associations with mental and behavioral health that contribute to health inequity," the authors write. "With the shifting conceptualization of mental health and the growing recognition of disparities in [mental health care](#) and treatment, preventive approaches reducing discrimination upstream could play a critical role in decreasing these inequities and minimizing their health impact, particularly during the transition to adulthood."

**More information:** [Abstract/Full Text](#)  
[Editorial](#)



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