

UAMS News Bureau

Office of Communications & Marketing
4301 West Markham # 890
Little Rock, AR 72205-7199

uamshealth.com/news



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Media Contacts:

Leslie W. Taylor, 501-686-8998
Wireless phone: 501-951-7260
leslie@uams.edu

David Wise, 479-713-8679
Wireless phone: 501-259-1628
dwise@uams.edu

UAMS Researchers Find That COVID-19 Pandemic Increased Stress for Women

FAYETTEVILLE – The COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted women’s stress levels, according to a study conducted by researchers at the University of Arkansas Medical Sciences (UAMS) Office of Community Health & Research.

The study, which was published by [Dialogues in Health](#) analyzed various factors that affected women in Arkansas, particularly working women in caregiver roles, and documented how pandemic-related stressors have increased stress levels and impacted women’s well-being.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), women, especially front-line workers, are more likely to suffer from anxiety, depression, insomnia and burnout than their male counterparts due to COVID-19 exposure and the physical and emotional costs of being overworked.

Researchers found that participants reported the following four primary sources of stress:

- **Employment and Expenses:** Women reported employment disruptions and loss of income as the primary source of stress. Women in essential roles or front-line workers reported that the stress of being overworked and witnessing the pandemic up close significantly impacted their emotional and physical health.
- **Social Distancing and Quarantine:** Women reported that the lack of social engagement and isolation increased their stress because they lost the outlets that they once used to relieve stress and find enjoyment.
- **Caregiving:** Women in a caregiver role reported that the stress of balancing work and home life left them overwhelmed and with feelings of burnout. Women

reported they were also stressed about the impact the virus had on their family members.

- **Emotional and Mental Health:** Women reported that their emotional and mental health suffered directly because of the COVID-19 pandemic. They reported higher levels of anxiety and fear for their loved ones as well as depression from being isolated. Women also reported their frustration as a stressor affecting their emotional and mental health because of the lack of direction from both state and federal governments and people who refused to adhere to COVID-19 guidelines.

“These findings contribute important distinctions about women’s experiences and their increased stress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which can better inform future responses to public health pandemics,” said Rachel Purvis, Ph.D., an assistant professor in the Office of Community Health & Research and a lead researcher on the study. “Understanding how the pandemic impacted women’s daily stress will identify gender disparities and help reduce the impact of the pandemic and future pandemics on women’s mental health.”

The COVID-19 pandemic had a severe impact on women in the United States, which has disrupted women’s health and well-being, according to a new report from the World Health Organization. For resources on managing stress, contact your primary care provider or visit www.humanservices.arkansas.gov.

UAMS is the state's only health sciences university, with colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Health Professions and Public Health; a graduate school; a hospital; a main campus in Little Rock; a Northwest Arkansas regional campus in Fayetteville; a statewide network of regional campuses; and seven institutes: the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute, Jackson T. Stephens Spine & Neurosciences Institute, Harvey & Bernice Jones Eye Institute, Psychiatric Research Institute, Donald W. Reynolds Institute on Aging, Translational Research Institute and Institute for Digital Health & Innovation. UAMS includes UAMS Health, a statewide health system that encompasses all of UAMS' clinical enterprise. UAMS is the only adult Level 1 trauma center in the state. UAMS has 3,047 students, 873 medical residents and fellows, and six dental residents. It is the state's largest public employer with more than 11,000 employees, including 1,200 physicians who provide care to patients at UAMS, its regional campuses, Arkansas Children's, the VA Medical Center and Baptist Health. Visit www.uams.edu or www.uamshealth.com. Find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) or [Instagram](#).

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