

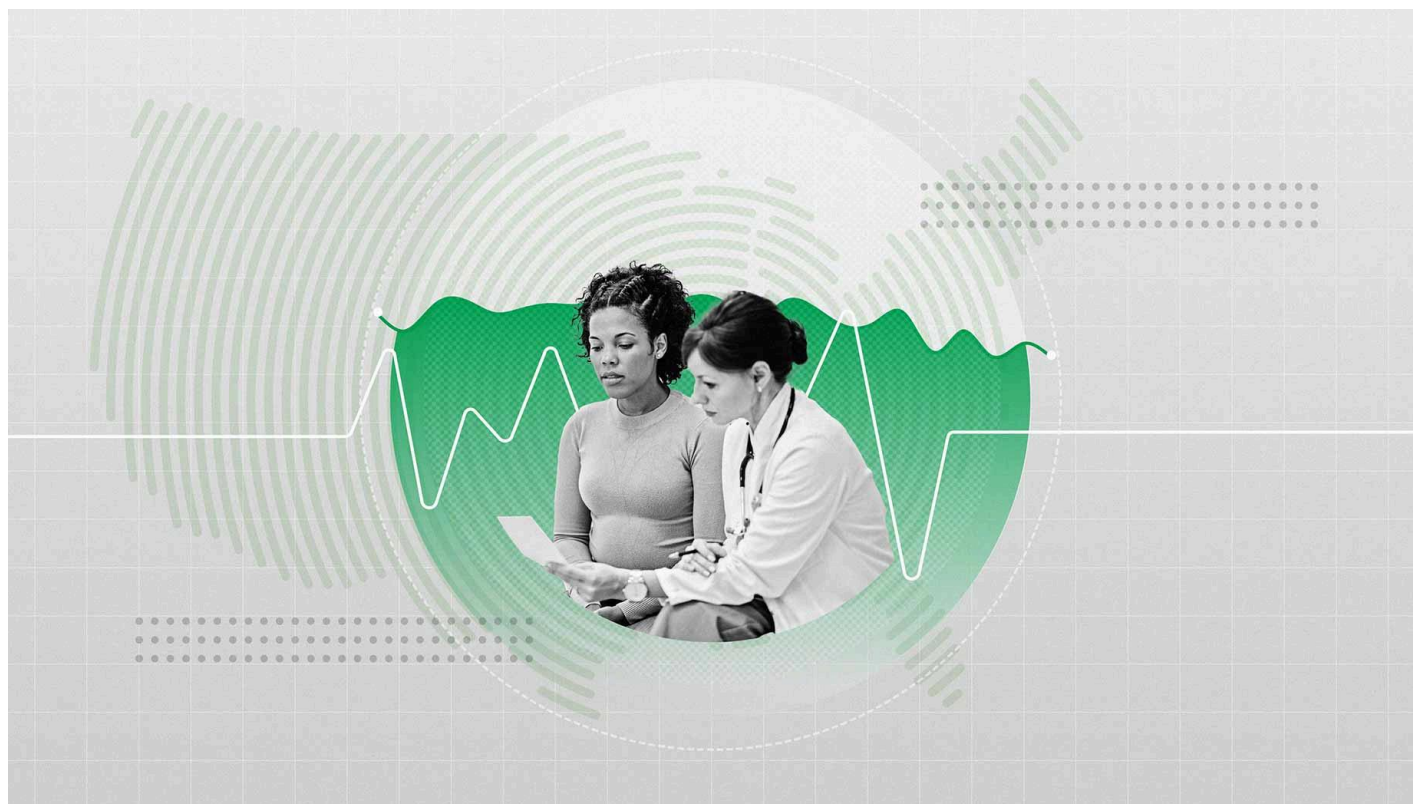
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Pandemic's Effects Linger in Americans' Health Ratings

After worsening during the pandemic, Americans self-reported mental and physical health remain down

BY **LYDIA SAAD**



Editor's Note: This research was conducted in partnership with West Health, a family of nonprofit and nonpartisan organizations focused on healthcare and aging.

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Americans' assessments of their mental and physical health are the least positive they have been in Gallup's 24-year trend, reflecting a decadelong decline that began around 2013 and accelerated sharply with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

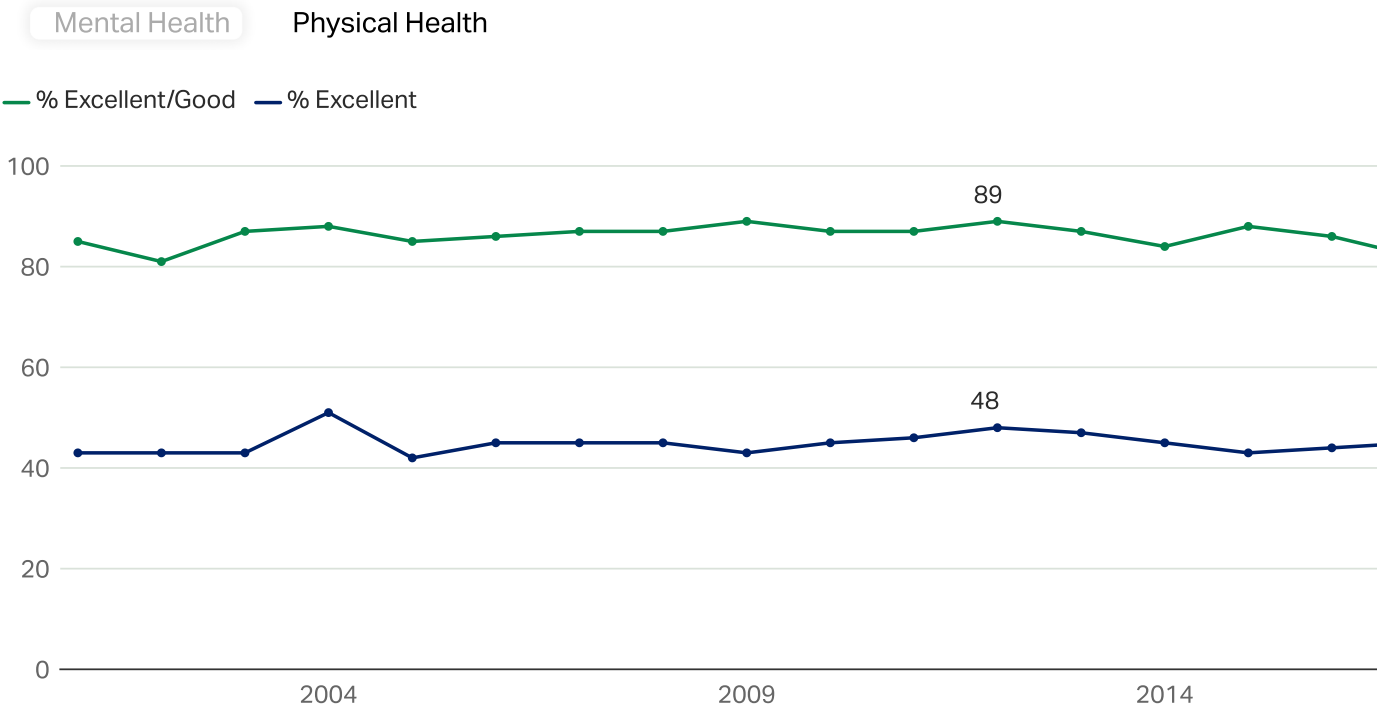
Three in four U.S. adults in Gallup's latest annual reading rate their mental health (75%) and, separately, their physical health (76%) as either "excellent" or "good." This contrasts with a record-high 89% rating their mental health positively as recently as 2012, and a high of 82% for physical health in 2003.

As fewer Americans have rated their mental and physical health positively, most of the change has been in the percentages rating each aspect "excellent" -- shrinking to 31% for mental health and 24% for physical health.

Americans' Self-Reported Mental Health

How would you describe your own mental health at this time? Would you say your mental health is -- excellent, good, only fair or poor?

Use the buttons to compare trends:



Results based on surveys conducted in November of each year

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Gallup has asked U.S. adults each November since 2001 to rate their physical and mental health, as excellent, good, only fair or poor. The latest figures are from Gallup's Nov. 6-20, 2024, Health and Healthcare survey, part of the Gallup-West Health partnership to study healthcare in the United States.

The recent findings echo what Gallup reported in 2022, when Americans' "excellent" mental health rating descended to a low of 31%. The lowest reading to date for physical health, 24%, was first recorded in 2023. And both remained at these levels in 2024 despite the 2023 federal government declaration that the COVID-19 health emergency was over and with much of the disruption it caused also subsiding.

Supporting the physical health finding, separate Gallup research has found a significant increase in Americans' self-reports of being obese since before the pandemic, increasing six percentage points between 2019 and 2023, as well as a reduction in healthy eating.

Mental Health Ratings Sharply Lower Among Women 18 to 29

Americans' consistently dampened mental health ratings since 2020 provide an opportunity to combine data across multiple years to examine the trend among smaller population subgroups than is possible with a single poll.

Analysis of the data in mostly five-year groupings since 2001 makes clear that the downturn in Americans' perceptions of their mental health has occurred across society, including among all major gender, age, racial, education, income, religious and political party groups. The decline has been particularly sharp among young adults, especially young women.

Comparing results from 2020-2024 with 2010-2014, which was a high point for mental health readings this century, Gallup finds:

- The percentage of 18- to 29-year-olds reporting excellent mental health has dropped 27 points to 24%, and the percentage among 30- to 49-year-olds is down 16 points to 30%.
- This contrasts with single-digit declines among the older groups, those 50 to 64 (down six points to 37%) and those 65 and older (down four points to 40%).

Reported mental health has worsened slightly more among women overall (down 15 points to 29%) than men (down 12 points to 37%). However, focusing on age groups within gender reveals a particularly sharp decline among young women.

- Just 15% of **women aged 18-29** polled from 2020 to 2024 said they have excellent mental health, down 33 points from the 48% of women this age saying the same in 2010-2014. This reflects a 19-point decline among young women from 2010-2014 to 2015-2019, followed by a 14-point decline since then.
- This well exceeds the 20-point decline for **men aged 18-29** during the same time frame, falling from 53% in 2010-2014 to 33% in 2020-2024. Most of this decline has occurred in the latest

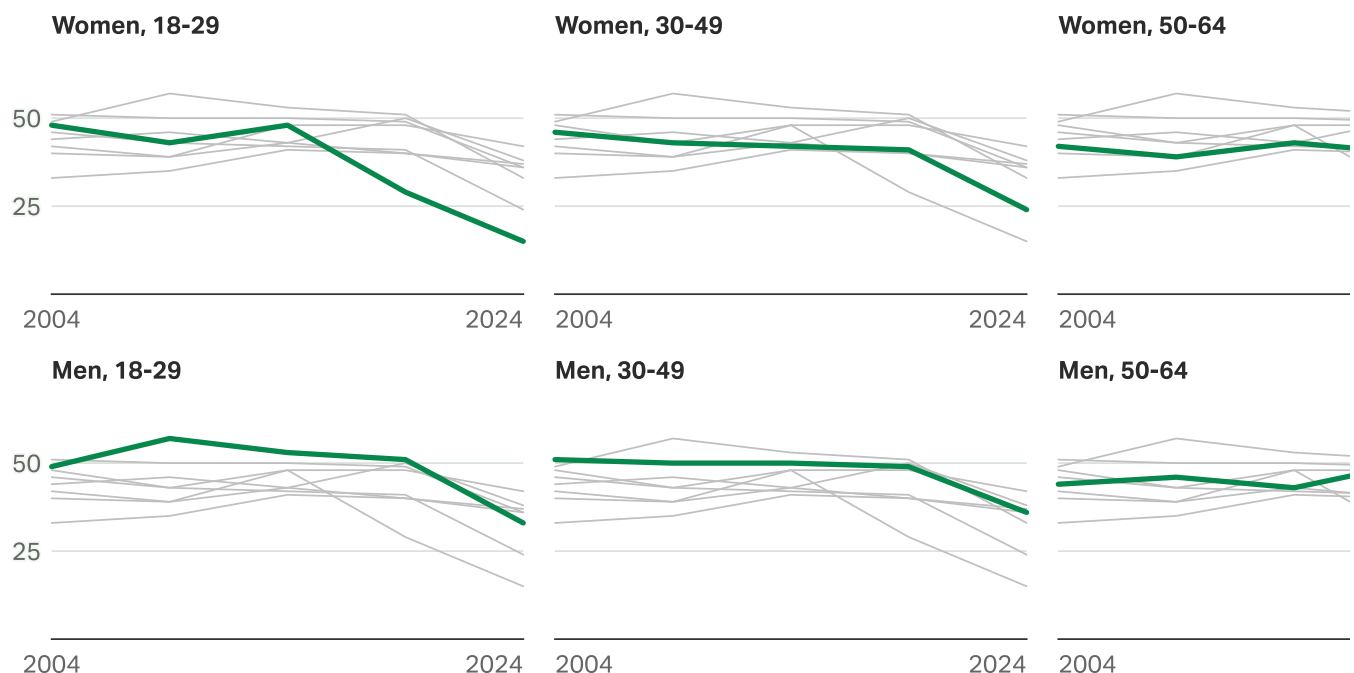
period, since 2015-2019.

- By contrast, reports of optimal mental health were only slightly lower among **women aged 30 to 49** than **men 30 to 49** in 2010-2014 versus 2020-2024, down 18 points and 14 points, respectively.
- The mental health ratings of **women and men aged 50-64**, as well as **women and men 65+**, today are down by no more than seven points in the latest reading, compared with women and men in those age ranges in 2010-2014.

Mental Health Ratings by Gender/Age

How would you describe your own mental health at this time? Would you say your mental health is excellent, good, only fair or poor?

% Excellent



Gray lines represent all other age and gender groups, shown to facilitate direct comparison

Date ranges are 2001-2004, 2005-2009, 2010-2014, 2015-2019, 2020-2024.

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Mental Health Struggles Also Tied to Other Demographic Subgroups

Historically, White and Black adults, college graduates and middle- and upper-income Americans have reported better mental health than have their counterparts. But perhaps because they had more distance to fall, these groups show somewhat steeper declines than others over the

past decade.

Whereas nonreligious Americans were as likely as Protestants and Catholics (the two leading U.S. religious groups) to rate their mental health as excellent in 2010-2014, they have since become significantly less likely to do so.

By contrast, Republicans have consistently been more likely than Democrats and independents to report excellent mental health, and that has remained the case as the rate of excellent mental health has declined by a similar degree among all three party groups.

Recent Trend in Mental Health, by Demographics

How would you describe your own mental health at this time? Would you say your physical health is -- excellent, good, only fair or poor?

% Excellent

	2010-2014	2015-2019	2020-2024	Change since 2010-2014
	%	%	%	pct. pts.
Race/Ethnicity				
White adults	47	45	35	-12
Black adults	43	43	29	-14
Hispanic adults	41	37	31	-10
Education				
College graduate	56	53	37	-19
Not a graduate	42	40	31	-11
Household income				
\$75,000 and over	60	58	40	-20
\$30,000 to \$74,999	46	40	27	-19
Less than \$30,000	30	28	23	-7
Religion				
Protestant/Christian	45	44	36	-9
Catholic	47	44	32	-15
None/No religion	48	42	27	-21
Party ID				
Republicans	53	53	39	-14
Independents	44	44	32	-12
Democrats	43	35	28	-15

Results are based multiyear groupings of annual data. Polls conducted in November of each year.

Having a life partner doesn't shelter people from mental health difficulties, as seen in the sharp declines among adults who are married or living with a partner saying their mental health is excellent. The mental health reports of adults who have never been married also worsened over the past decade, while those who are divorced or widowed saw little change in their already-low ratings.

Physical Health Ratings Differ by Gender and Age

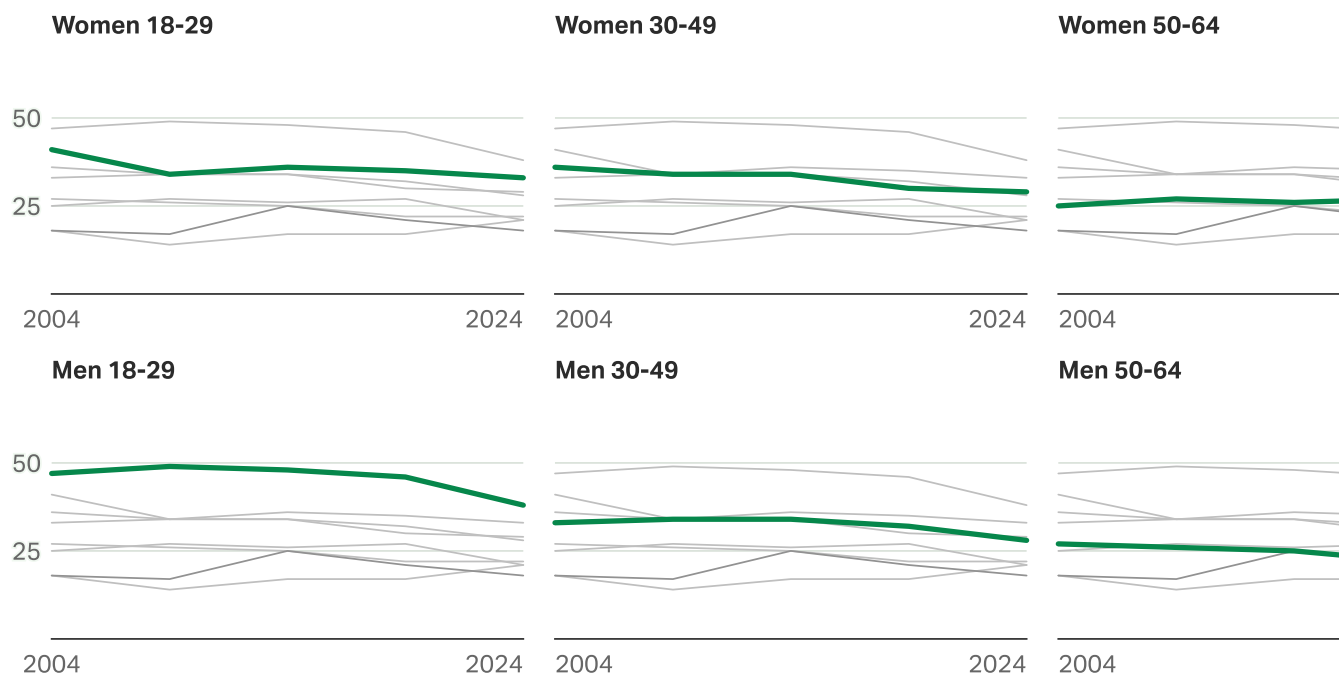
Reports of physical health vary across gender/age groups, from a high of 38% of men aged 18 to 29 reporting they are in excellent physical health to a low of 18% among 65-year-old men. However, there is relatively little differentiation in the declines seen since 2010-2014, varying from a 10-point drop in excellent health ratings among young men between the two time periods to three-point drops among young women and 50- to 64-year-old men. Older women buck the pattern, with their reports of being in excellent physical health increasing slightly, from 17% to 21%.

Longer term, since 2001-2004, reports of optimal physical health have declined slightly more among young men (-9 points), young women (-8) and women aged 30-49 (-7) than is seen among older adults in the two time periods, or in contrast to the improvement among senior women.

Physical Health Ratings by Gender/Age

How would you describe your own physical health at this time? Would you say your physical health is excellent, good, only fair or poor?

% Excellent



Gray lines represent all other age and gender groups, shown to facilitate direct comparison

Date ranges are 2001-2004, 2005-2009, 2010-2014, 2015-2019, 2020-2024.

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Bottom Line

The COVID-19 pandemic appears to have been a turning point in Americans' perceptions of their mental and physical health, compounding declines already underway.

The shift in how people perceive their mental health since the pandemic could reflect several dynamics: heightened anxiety brought on by the COVID-19 crisis; heightened public and medical attention to mental health during this period; and a lessening of the stigma around admitting mental health challenges. Supporting the hypothesis that increased anxiety is a factor, Gallup's ongoing National Health and Well-Being Index documents a sharp increase in clinical diagnoses of depression among Americans since 2019.

The worsening of Americans' already-subdued physical health reports has been milder and more evenly distributed across society. However, the somewhat greater decline in young adults' perceptions that they are in excellent health is worthy of further investigation, and is something Gallup and West Health will be monitoring in future updates of this survey.

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