

Senior Services Division

Mental Health & Social Isolation in Older Adults



This report is intended to identify and understand public health issues affecting older adults age 60+ living in Davis County. The goal of this report is to increase awareness of these conditions and their impact on individuals and communities, identify groups most affected by these issues, and establish strategies for improvement.

Overview of Mental Health & Social Isolation

Mental health encompasses one's emotional, psychological, and social well-being. One's mental health can change over time and there is no single cause for mental illness. Mental health is a top concern for Utah residents.

Davis County adults reported that their mental health was poor on an average of 5.3 days per month, which is higher than the Utah and U.S. averages. However, the percentage of Davis County adults reporting frequent mental distress (14+ days of poor mental health per month) is consistent with Utah and the U.S. In Davis County, the number of poor mental health days decreases significantly as age increases. Ages 18-34 have the highest percentage of poor mental health days while those ages 65+ have the lowest percentage. Roughly 1 in 10 Davis County residents age 65+ reported experiencing 7 or more poor mental health days per month.

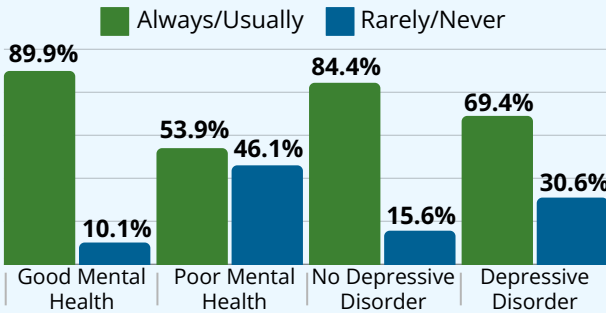
Mental Health Status Measures Among Adults Age 18+, 2024			
Measure	Davis	Utah	U.S.
Average Number of Poor Mental Health Days per Month	5.3 days	5.2 days	4.8 days
Percentage Reporting Frequent Mental Distress	16%	16%	15%

Data: [CHR&R](#), 2024 (age-adjusted); [IBIS BRFS](#), 2018 - 2022 (crude); [DCHD CHA](#), 2023; [CDC Mental Health](#), 2024

Social isolation is the lack of relationships or support from others while **loneliness** is the feeling of being alone or disconnected. Older adults are at increased risk for social isolation and loneliness because they are more likely to experience the loss of friends or family, chronic illness, and hearing loss. Social isolation and loneliness have been linked to an increased risk for a number of mental illnesses, including depression, anxiety, suicidal behaviors, and self-harm.

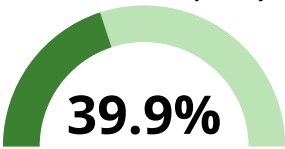
Among Davis County older adults, there is a noticeable difference in self-reported mental illness symptoms between those who feel they have adequate social/emotional support and those who do not. Nearly half of those who experience poor mental health reported a lack of social support. Roughly 1 in 3 who have ever been diagnosed with a depressive disorder also report a lack of social support.

Mental Illness Symptoms Among Davis County Adults Age 60+ by Social/Emotional Support (2018 - 2022)



Data: [IBIS BRFS](#), 2018 - 2022 (crude); [CDC Healthy Aging](#), 2021; [CDC Social Isolation & Loneliness](#), 2024

Lack of Social/Emotional Support Among Utah LGBTQ+ Older Adults (2022)



Nearly 40% of LGBTQ+ older adults in Utah report not receiving the social support they need, compared to 16% among non-LGBTQ+ residents. LGBTQ+ older adults are more likely to rate their health as poor while having less social support. LGBTQ+ older adults also have a higher likelihood of experiencing depression, anxiety, and suicidal behaviors compared to their non-LGBTQ+ peers.

Data: [IBIS BRFS](#), 2022 (crude); [SAGE](#), 2024; [DCHD LGBTQ+ Report](#), 2023



Key Findings



Nearly 1 in 5 Davis County older adults have a depressive disorder ⁶

6.5% of Utah older adults (60+) reported feeling socially isolated in 2022 ¹⁰

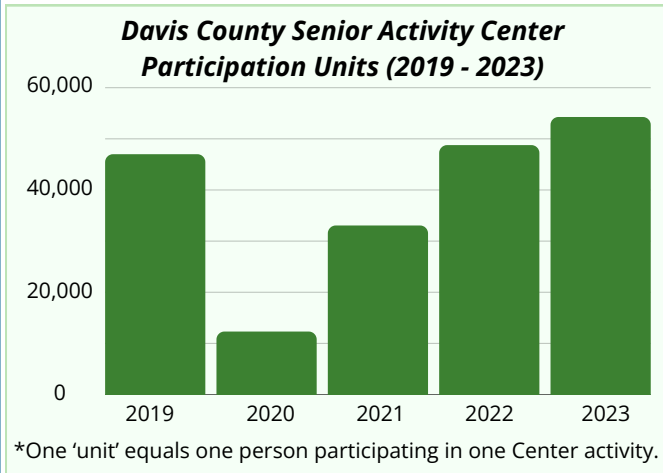
2.5x In 2022, Davis County older adults who were unmarried (widowed/divorced/never married) reported a lack of social support at a rate 2.5 times higher than the rate of those who are married ¹⁰



1 in 4 Utah men age 60+ who felt socially isolated also reported more poor mental health days in the past month ¹⁰

Current Progress and Strategies for Improvement

Senior Activity Center Participation



Data: [DCHD Resilience Assessment](#), 2023; [CDC Healthy Aging](#), 2023; [ACL](#), 2023

In Davis County, 8.6% of adults always or usually feel socially isolated from others and 23.4% do not get the social and emotional support they need. Social isolation is also associated with a 50% increased risk of dementia.

One of the main goals of our Senior Activity Centers is to provide a space for older adults to connect with one another. The number of older adults attending and participating in Center activities has bounced back dramatically since reopening the Senior Activity Centers following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our Senior Activity Centers also provide meals in a social setting. Studies have shown that eating together can greatly impact one's social connectedness. On a national level, 63% of congregate meal participants say that their social opportunities have increased and 73% say that their health has improved.

Community Health Improvement Plan

In 2023, the Surgeon General released an advisory regarding social isolation and loneliness, stating that our lack of social connection as a country has reached epidemic proportions. The advisory highlighted several recommendations for public health departments to combat social isolation, which helped inform Davis County Health Department's 2024-2028 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The first priority in the CHIP is improving mental, emotional and social well-being of Davis County residents. Several strategies have been identified to achieve this, including:

- Increase social connection in communities
- Increase skills to navigate life's challenges
- Reduce stigma by normalizing and promoting help-seeking, hope, and recovery in the community
- Improve access to relevant services, programs, and care for mental, emotional, and social well-being
- Advocate for the collection of Davis County mental, emotional, and social well-being data

The Davis County Senior Services Division has several programs that strive to meet these goals. One such program provides community support groups for family caregivers and those who are experiencing dementia and Parkinson's disease. These groups fulfill nearly every CHIP strategy regarding social and emotional well-being. They provide a space for community members to socialize with others who have similar experiences, teach skills to navigate challenging situations, promote hope and help-seeking, and improve access to similar caregiver programs. Another Senior Services program that implements CHIP strategies is our AmeriCorps Seniors Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). Research has shown that volunteering lowers one's risk of chronic disease and mental health conditions along with increasing social connections. RSVP also improves access to community services and programs and promotes hope in the community.

Data: [U.S. Surgeon General](#), 2023; [DCHD CHIP](#), 2024; [DCHD CHA](#), 2023

Local Resources		
988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline	988lifeline.org/	Call or text 988
Community Crisis Intervention & Support Services	Healthcare.utah.edu/hmhi/programs/crisis-diversion	801-587-3000
Davis4Health Resource Locator	Daviscountyutah.gov/health/davis4health/resource-locator	N/A
Davis Behavioral Health	Dbh.utah.gov/	801-773-7060
Davis County Behavioral Health Resources	Daviscountyutah.gov/health/behavioral-health-resources	N/A
Davis County Senior Activity Centers	Daviscountyutah.gov/health/senior-services/senior-service-centers	801-525-5050
University of Utah Geriatric Psychiatry Clinic	Healthcare.utah.edu/hmhi/treatments/geriatric-psychiatry	801-587-8007

1. ACL Meaningful Connection. 2023. Accessed May 3, 2024. ([View](#))

2. CDC Mental Health. 2023. Accessed March 27, 2024. ([View](#))

3. CDC Healthy Aging. 2021. Accessed March 29, 2024. ([View](#))

4. CDC Social Isolation & Loneliness. 2024. Accessed May 29, 2023. ([View](#))

5. CHR&R. 2024. Accessed May 29, 2024. ([View](#))

6. Davis County Community Health Assessment. 2023. Accessed May 29, 2024. ([View](#))

7. Davis County Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). 2024. Accessed May 6, 2024. ([View](#))

8. Davis County Community Resilience Assessment. 2023. Accessed May 29, 2024. ([View](#))

9. Davis County LGBTQ+ Population Health Report. 2023. (Accessed May 6, 2024. ([View](#))

10. IBIS BRFSS. 2018 - 2022. Accessed April 16, 2024. ([View](#))

11. SAGE Journals. 2023. Accessed April 17, 2024. ([View](#))

12. U.S. Surgeon General. 2023. Accessed May 3, 2024. ([View](#))