

## Single Mothers Have a Higher Risk of Mood Disorders

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** Previous research has shown single mothers to be at greater risk for both physical and mental health disorders as compared to married mothers. Psychiatric disorders, in particular depression, have been shown to be more prevalent in single mothers than married mothers. This study was aimed at comparing the prevalence of depression, other mood, and anxiety disorders in single and married mothers in a multiethnic Asian society. **Materials and Methods:** The Singapore Mental Health Study (SMHS) was a cross-sectional survey of the representative population of Singapore. The survey targeted Singapore residents aged 18 years and above. Trained interviewers established the diagnoses of mental disorders using the Composite International Diagnostic Interview version 3.0 (CIDI 3.0). Physical illnesses, social support and sociodemographic correlates were established using structured interviews. For the purpose of this study, single mothers were defined as unmarried, divorced/separated/widowed mothers who had children aged 21 years and below. **Results:** Face-to-face interviews were completed with 6616 respondents from December 2009 to December 2010. After controlling for sociodemographic correlates in multiple logistic regression model, single mothers had significantly higher odds of having mood disorders (OR = 5.28) as compared to married mothers. **Conclusion:** Our study found that single mothers in Singapore across ethnicities, experienced a higher risk for mood disorders as elsewhere in the world. Single motherhood was also associated with lower age and education. Our study identifies young, single mothers as a vulnerable group associated with mental illnesses that must be targeted with specific interventions to improve mental health and well-being.

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**Key words:** Anxiety disorder, Major depressive disorder, Single mother, Social support

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