

Over 60% of Women in the United States Report Urinary Incontinence Symptoms

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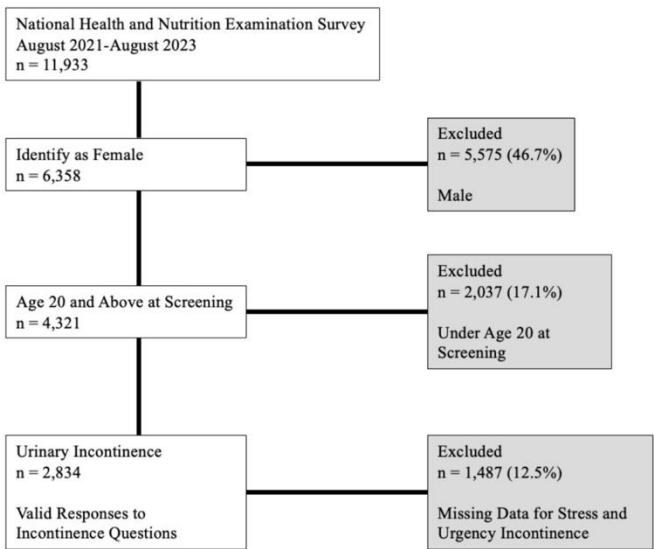
Background

Urinary incontinence (UI) is a significant health concern among women in the United States (U.S.) and is often underdiagnosed. Prevalence has increased over recent decades. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted national survey data collection, creating a gap in updated prevalence estimates.

Methods

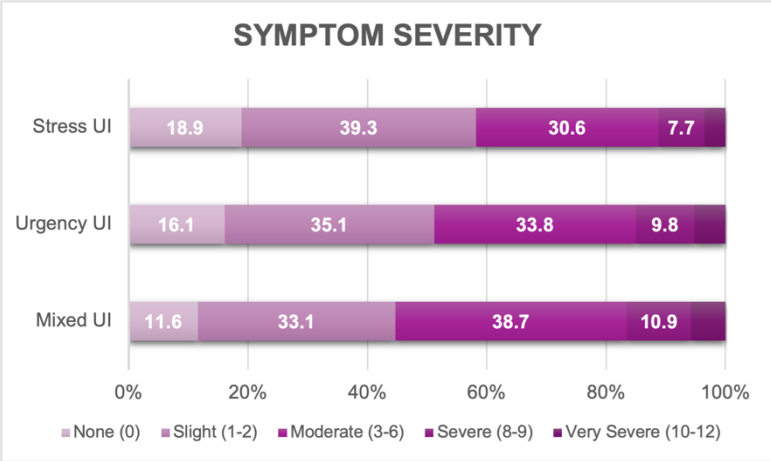
We analyzed publicly available data from the 2021-2023 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. Our study included women aged ≥ 20 years who completed incontinence-related survey items (n=2,834). Outcomes included stress (SUI), urgency (UUI), and mixed incontinence (MUI). Analyses were weighted to provide nationally representative estimates. Multivariable logistic regression stratified by age (<50 vs ≥ 50 years) was used to identify independent risk factors.

Figure 1: Flowchart of analytic sample selection from NHANES 2021-2023 participants



Results

The crude prevalence of UI was 63%, representing approximately 79.6 million U.S. women. Age-adjusted prevalence was 47.6%. Functional dependence was a consistent predictor of all subtypes across age groups. Among younger women, SUI was associated with current pregnancy, multiparity, and obesity. In older women, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease predicted SUI and MUI, while cardiovascular conditions were linked to UUI and MUI. “Moderately Severe” or “Severe” depressive symptoms were associated with UUI in both age groups. Prediabetic HbA1c was associated with SUI and MUI in older women only.



Implications

Urinary incontinence remains prevalent and symptomatically burdensome among U.S. women. Age-specific risk profiles underscore the importance of tailored screening and management. Addressing functional and mental health, as well as ensuring equitable access to urological care, will be critical priorities as the U.S. population ages.