

Exploring Depressive Symptoms in Older Adults amid the COVID-19 Pandemic

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1 Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the daily lives of individuals throughout the world. Widespread lockdown and disease-prevention measures have isolated individuals and limited access to physical and mental healthcare. As the COVID-19 crisis has evolved, researchers have highlighted the importance of assessing depression in individuals, especially among the older population.

2 Objective

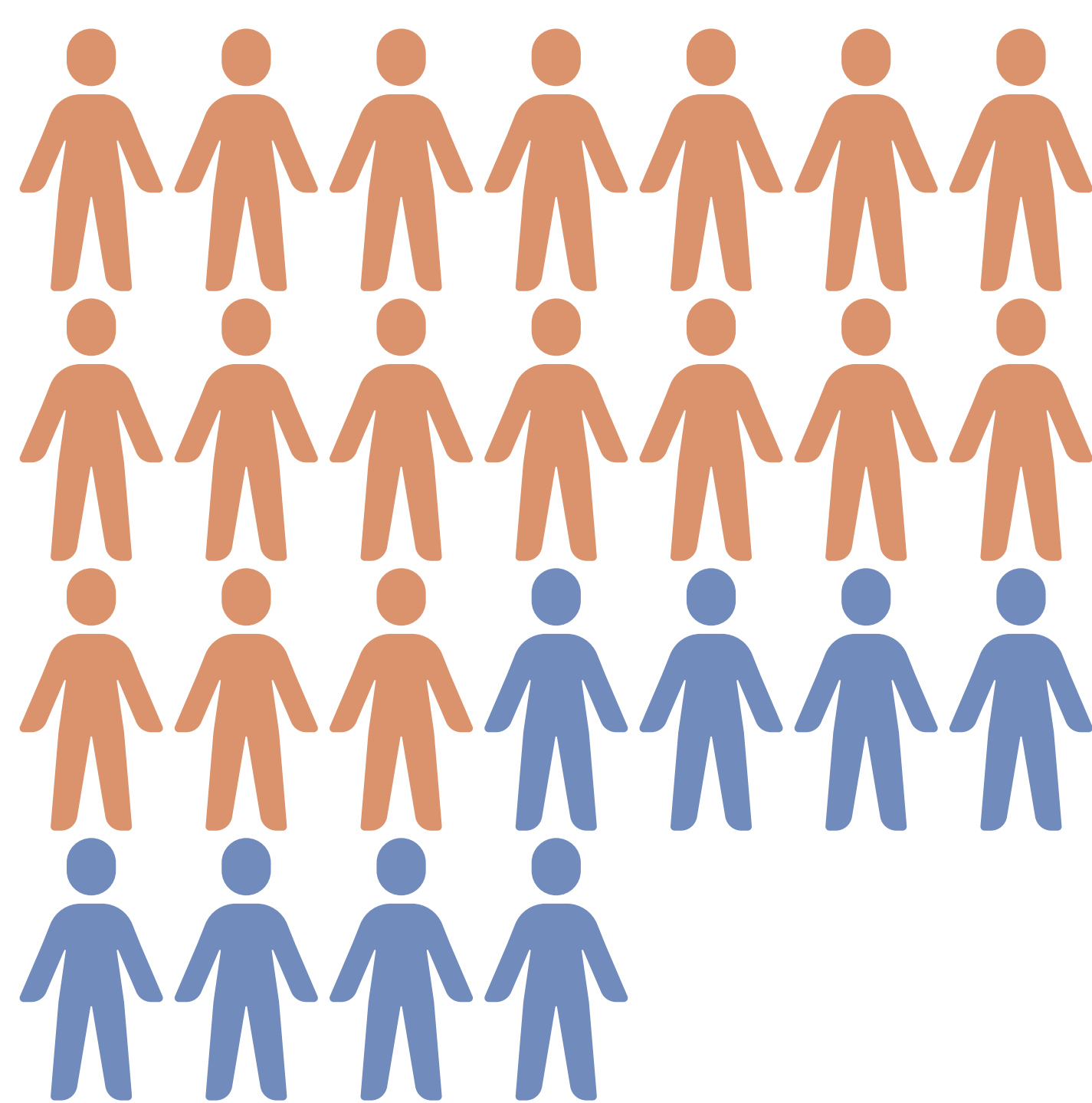
This study was designed to measure prevalent depressive symptoms and its associates among older adults amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

3 Methodology

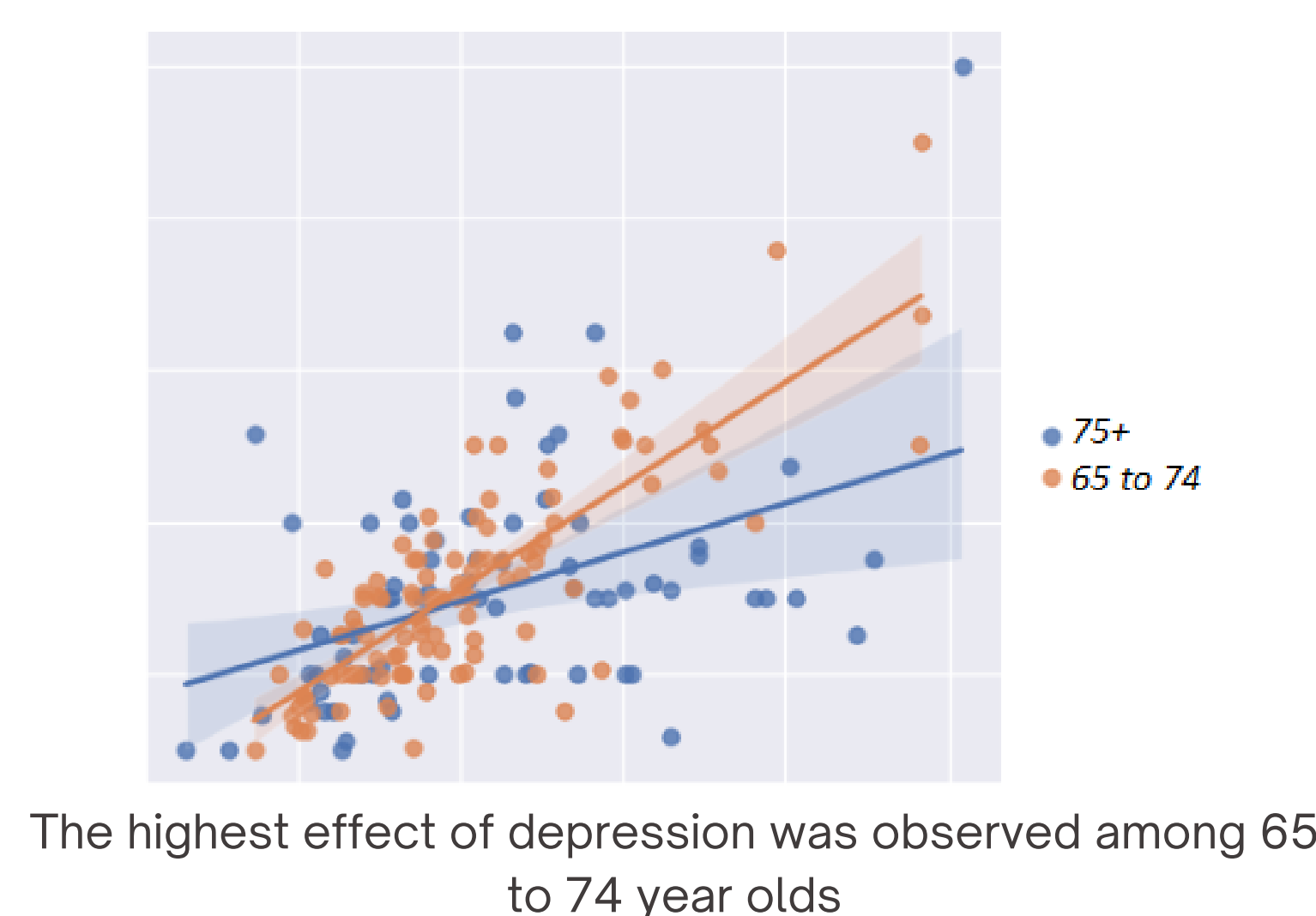
This cross-sectional study was carried out on 207 older adults, aged 60 years and above, via telehealth since the start of the pandemic. All data were collected as part of a telehealth neurocognitive screening. Information regarding participants' socio-demographic and lifestyle characteristics, pre-existing medical conditions, and COVID-19-related information was collected during initial intake interview. Meanwhile, depressive symptoms were measured using the 30-item Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS-30). A binary logistic regression model was used to identify the factors associated with depressive symptoms.

4 Results

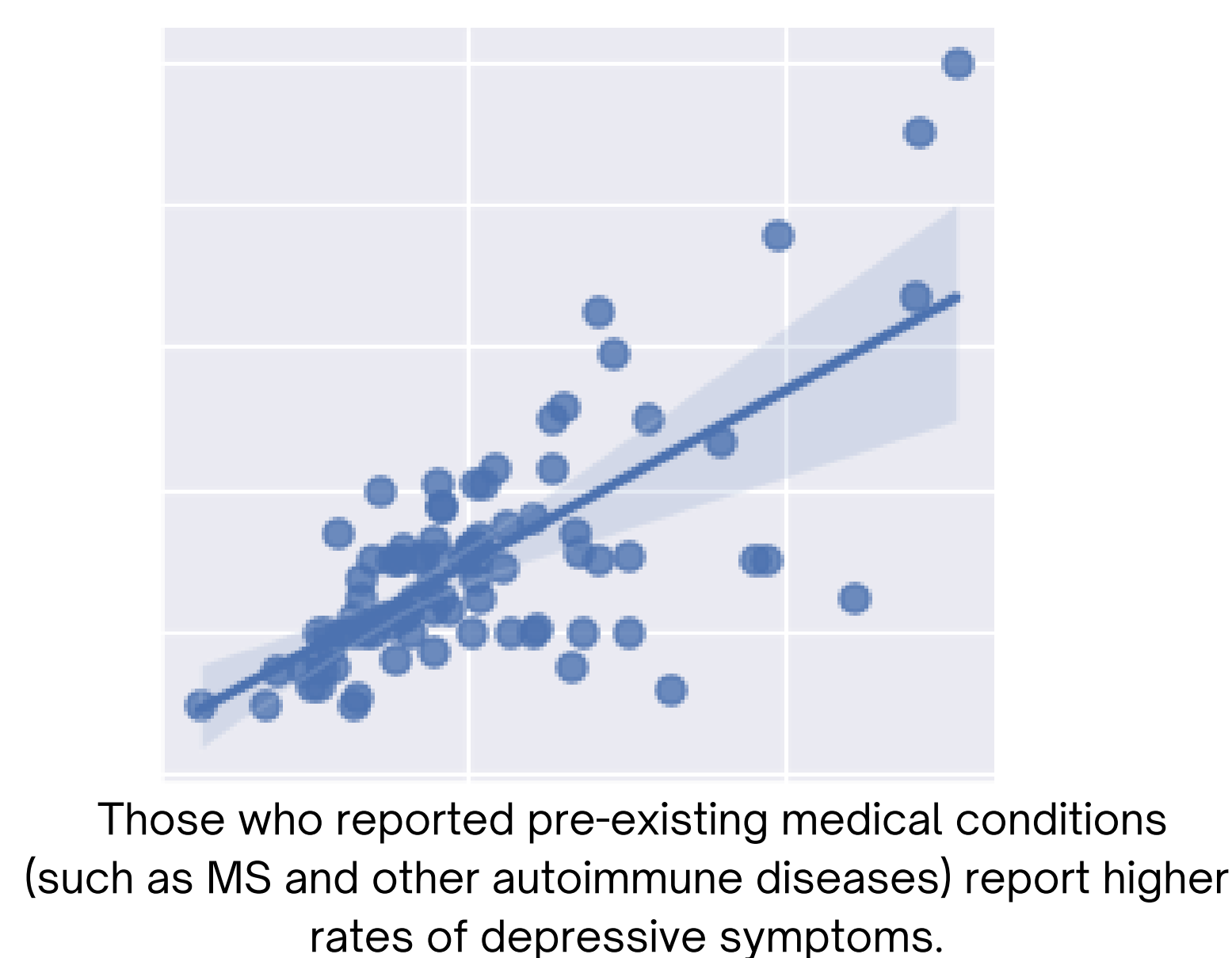
The highest effect of depression was observed among 65–74-year-olds. Those who reported pre-existing medical conditions (such as MS and other autoimmune diseases) report higher rates of depressive symptoms. Social isolation (AOR = 3.21, 95% CI 2.11-4.51), less frequent communication during pandemic (AOR = 1.25, 95% CI 0.97-2.06), perceived loneliness (AOR = 2.25, 95% CI 1.47-3.45), and history of psychological diagnosis (AOR = 2.45, 95% CI 1.62-3.70) were associated with higher rate of reported depressive symptoms. The most prevalent GDS-30 symptoms endorsed were “Have you dropped many of your activities and interests,” “Do you prefer to stay at home, rather than going out and doing new things,” and “Do you prefer to avoid social gatherings?”



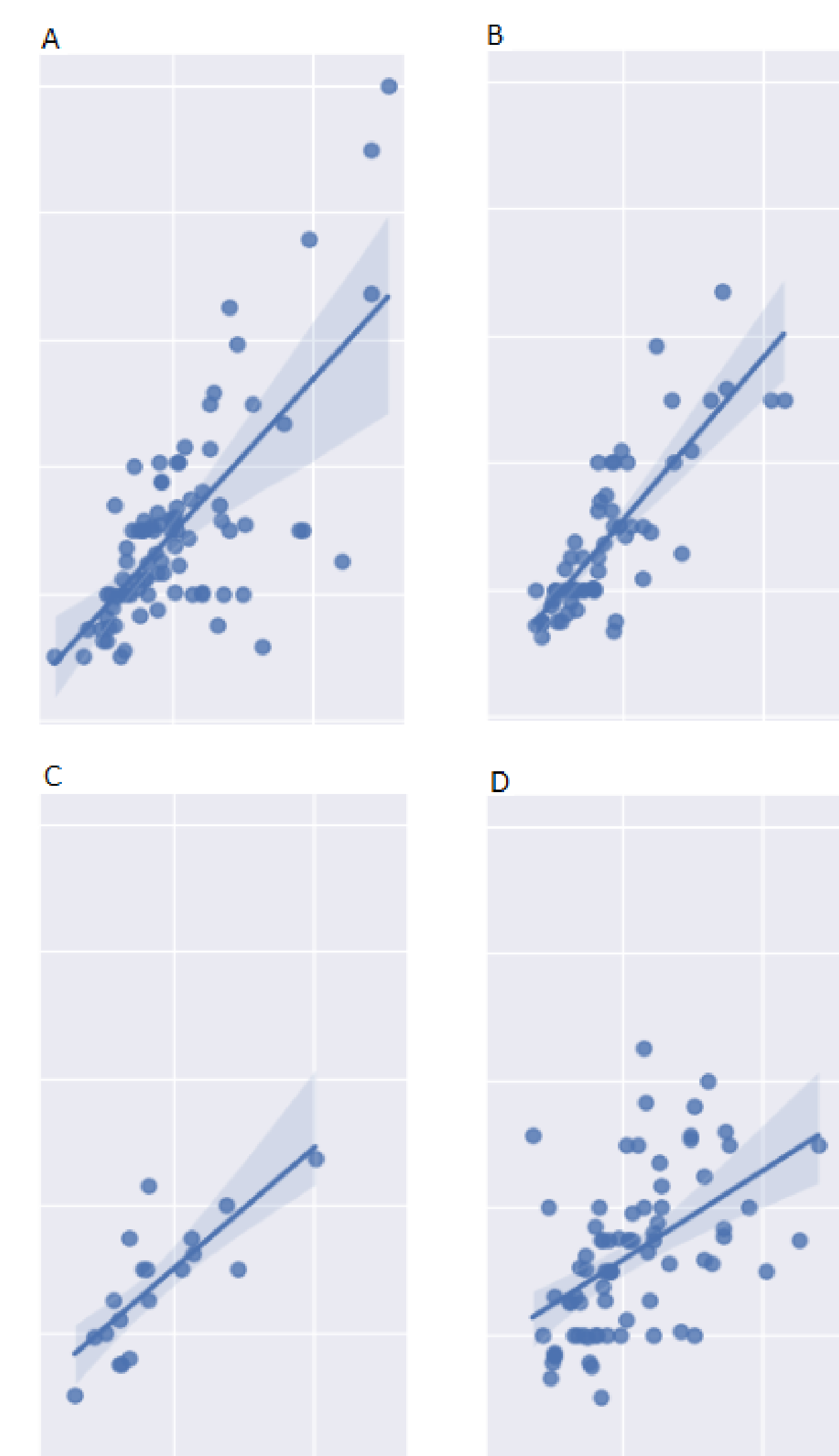
68% of older adults assessed reported depressive symptoms



The highest effect of depression was observed among 65 to 74 year olds



Those who reported pre-existing medical conditions (such as MS and other autoimmune diseases) report higher rates of depressive symptoms.



A) Social Isolation
B) Perceived Loneliness
C) Less Communication
D) Psychiatric History

5 Conclusion

This study found that a majority of older adults presented with depressive symptoms amidst the ongoing pandemic. The importance of emotional distress and how to alleviate it should be investigated further in these patients, particularly with those with pre-existing medical conditions. While the pandemic continues, policies and interventions are necessary to provide increased access to medical services and social interaction opportunities to help maintain mental health and quality of life in older adults.