

Two million Californians report mental health needs; most receive little or no treatment

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Nearly 2 million adults in California, about 8 percent of the population, need mental health treatment, but the majority receive no services or inadequate services, despite a state law mandating that health insurance providers include mental health treatment in their coverage options, a new report by the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research shows.

The report, which provides some of the first comprehensive data ever collected on the mental health of California's adult population, found that one in 12 Californians reported symptoms consistent with serious [psychological distress](#) and experienced difficulty functioning at home or at work.

Over half of these adults reported receiving no treatment for their disorders, and about one-quarter received "inadequate" treatment, defined as less than four visits with a health professional over the past 12 months or using prescription drugs to manage mental health needs.

The study draws on data from the 2007 California [Health Interview Survey](#) (CHIS), which is conducted by the center.

"There is a huge gap between needing help and getting help," said David Grant, the study's lead author and director of CHIS. "The data also shows large disparities in mental health status and treatment by demographic, economic and [social factors](#). These findings can help

direct the state's limited resources to those in greatest need of help."

Among the findings:

Insurance

Unsurprisingly, [uninsured adults](#) had the highest rate of unmet needs (87 percent), which includes receiving no treatment or receiving less than minimally adequate treatment; 66 percent of these adults received no treatment. By contrast, 77 percent of privately insured and 65 percent of publically insured Californians reported unmet needs. Although poverty and mental health needs are strongly correlated, the lower rate of unmet needs by public program participants suggests that these programs are more likely to effectively offer [mental health services](#) than even private insurance policies.

Single parents under stress

Single adults with children had more than double the rate of mental health needs (17 percent) when compared with all adults (8 percent). Single adults without children had the next highest rate (11 percent). Married adults with or without children had the lowest rates of mental health needs (6 percent and 5 percent, respectively.)

U.S.–born Latinos have greater need than immigrants

Nearly 12 percent of Latinos born in the U.S. needed mental health treatment, almost twice the level of Latino immigrants.

Racial groups

Approximately 17 percent of American Indians and Alaska Natives had

mental health needs, the highest of all racial and ethnic groups. Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander and multi-racial groups had the next highest rate, at 13 percent.

Lesbian, gay and bisexual adults

Nearly 20 percent of these adults needed [mental health treatment](#) — more than double the statewide rate.

Link to chronic health conditions

Compared to the general [adult population](#), those with [mental health](#) needs had higher rates of chronic diseases such as high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes and asthma. They were more than twice as likely to report fair or poor health status and five times more likely to report poor health.

Provided by University of California - Los Angeles

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