

# Blacks with higher education and prior treatment less likely to seek mental health care

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Young adult blacks, especially those with higher levels of education, are significantly less likely to seek mental health services than their white counterparts, according to a study published by the American Psychological Association.

"Past research has indicated people with higher education levels are more likely to seek out and receive [mental health services](#). While that may be true for whites, it appears the opposite is true for young adult blacks," said study author Clifford L. Broman, PhD, of Michigan State University. Broman's article was published in the February issue of APA's journal [Psychological Services](#).

Stigma, lack of knowledge, trust and cultural understanding were key barriers to using [mental health](#) services, according to previous research with focus groups of blacks, Broman said.

The study examined two sets of data -- one collected in 1994 and 1995 that consisted of 6,504 adolescents ages 13-18, and a second set collected in 2001, with 4,881 adults ages 18-26. The data came from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, conducted by the Carolina Population Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, which used a nationally representative sample.

The analysis also found that while whites who have previously used

mental [health services](#) were more likely to receive additional services, the opposite was true for blacks. Previous research suggests that blacks receive a lower quality of care when using mental health services and they report unpleasant experiences and unfavorable attitudes after receiving care, the study noted.

"Practitioners need to address the concerns of black clients in a culturally sensitive and appropriate manner, and during exit interviews, they should ask what is appropriate and what didn't work," Broman said.

Contrary to previous research findings, the study revealed that the need for professional mental health services and not demographics may be the most important factor associated with whether a young adult of any race uses the services. While almost all previous research has found women use mental health services more often than men, the current study found no general differences between men and women in use of mental health services when the researchers controlled for depression, both clinically diagnosed and self-reported. Likewise, black young adults who had been diagnosed with depression were more than 20 times more likely to use mental health services than those without a diagnosis of depression.

A limitation of the research was that the data did not specifically define "mental health provider;" therefore, respondents could have been referring to receiving mental health services from a medical doctor, religious leader or a specialty mental health provider, the article said.

**More information:** "Race Differences in the Receipt of Mental Health Services Among Young Adults," Clifford L. Broman, PhD, Michigan State University; Psychological Services, Vol. 9, No. 1. Full text of the article is available from the APA Public Affairs Office and at [www.apa.org/pubs/journals/releases/ser-9-1-38.pdf](http://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/releases/ser-9-1-38.pdf)

Provided by American Psychological Association

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