

# **Mental health care access for teens improving, but less for communities with disparities**

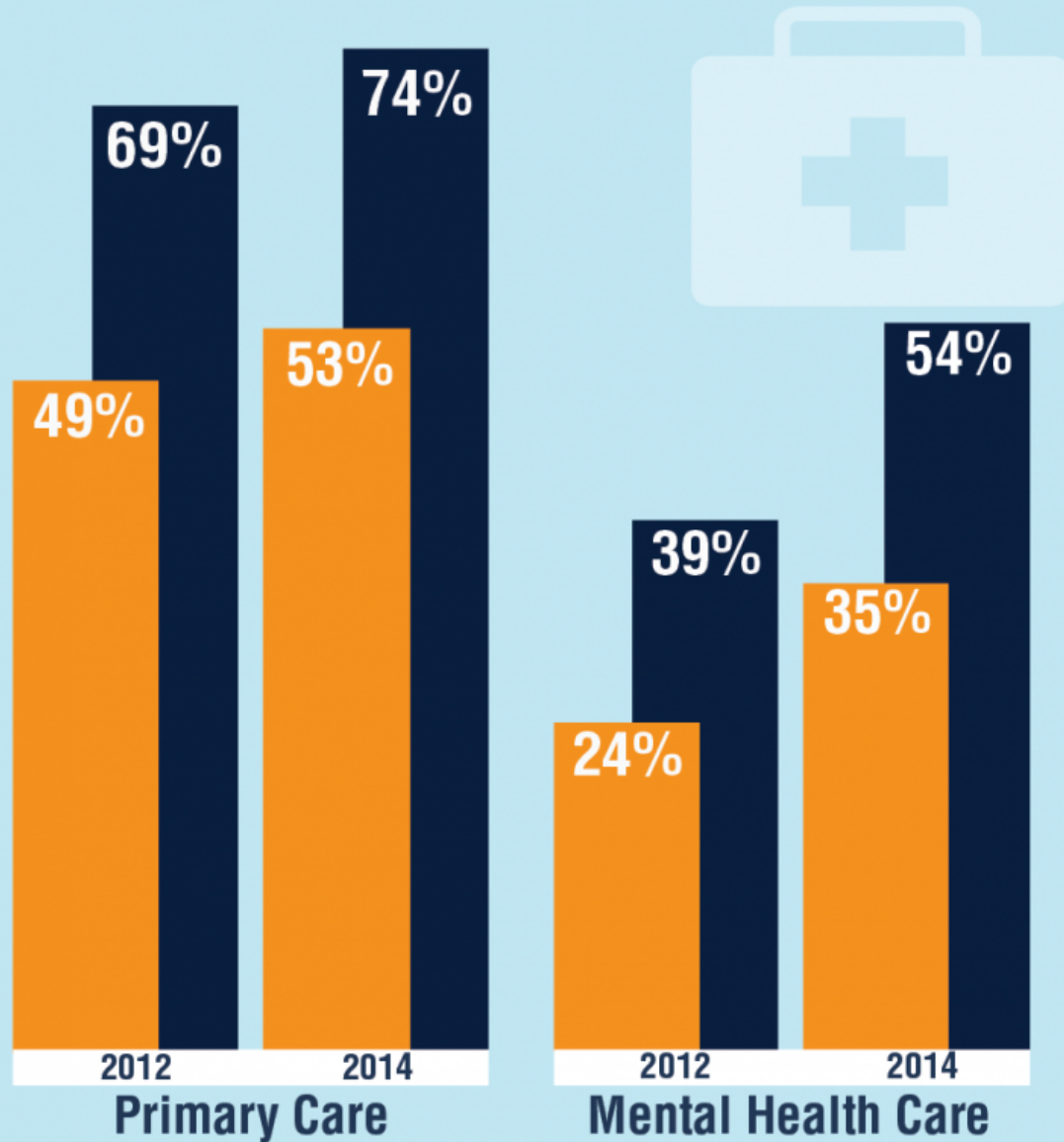
May 27 2015


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## Disparities in Access to Primary Care and Mental Health Care for Teens

Proportion of adults who perceive lots of availability for teens:

- In communities with "few or no" perceived racial/ethnic inequities
- In communities with "some or many" perceived racial/ethnic inequities



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Source: National Voices Project, 2014

Teens in the US have more availability of mental health care than they did two years ago, according to a new survey from the University of Michigan National Voices Project, but access is not equal in all communities. Credit: University of Michigan National Voices Project

Teens in the U.S. have more availability of mental health care than they did two years ago, according to a new survey from the University of Michigan National Voices Project, but access is not equal in all communities.

The University of Michigan National Voices Project was commissioned by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to facilitate a five year study to gauge opportunities for children and [teens](#) at the local level in communities across the U.S. The National Voices Project surveys over 2,000 [adults](#) across the U.S. who work and/or volunteer on behalf of children and teens.

In a 2014 National Voices Project survey, 40 percent of adults said teens in their communities had lots of availability for [mental health care](#). In a 2012 survey, only 30 percent of adults reported lots of availability. In comparison, 59 percent of adults in 2014 said that teens had lots of availability for primary care.

Adults' perceptions of healthcare availability were much different in communities where respondents perceived some or many racial/ethnic inequities. In these communities, just 35 percent of adults saw lots of availability for teens to get mental health care in 2014, up from 24 percent in 2012.

For the communities with few or no racial/ethnic inequities, 54 percent of adults perceived lots of availability for mental health care for teens,

an improvement from 39 percent in 2012.

"Access to mental health care for teens remains a problem," says Matthew M. Davis, M.D., M.A.P.P., director of the National Voices Project and professor of pediatrics, internal medicine, public policy, and health management and policy at the University of Michigan.

"The good news is that adults are seeing improvements in access for teens in their communities in comparison with 2012. However, the bad news is that they are still seeing significant disparities in healthcare access for teens in [communities](#) where they perceive racial and ethnic inequities.

"Furthermore, [mental health services](#) are perceived as much less available than primary [health care](#) services for teens," says Davis, who is deputy director of the UM Institute for Healthcare Policy and Innovation. "Given how common mental health concerns are among adolescents, improving access to behavioral services is as important as enhancing access to primary care."

Mental health services for children are also the subject of this month's C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health. The Poll, also directed by Dr. Davis, surveyed parents across the U.S. and found that many were reluctant to discuss their children's behavioral and emotional concerns with their doctors. Both surveys, released during Mental Health Awareness Month in May, highlight the continued need to improve [mental health](#) care for young people in the U.S.

These data are part of the sixth survey from the National Voices Project, conducted in September-October 2014.

Provided by University of Michigan Health System

Citation: Mental health care access for teens improving, but less for communities with disparities (2015, May 27) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-05-mental-health-access-teens-disparities.html>

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