

How many adults in US are taking psychiatric drugs?

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About 1 in 6 adults in the United States reported taking psychiatric drugs at least once during 2013, according to a new research letter published online by *JAMA Internal Medicine*.

Thomas J. Moore, A.B., of the Institute for Safe Medication Practices, Alexandria, Va., and Donald R. Mattison, M.D., M.S., of Risk Sciences International, Ottawa, Canada, used the 2013 Medical Expenditure Panel Survey to calculate percentages of adults using three classes of [psychiatric drugs](#): antidepressants; anxiolytics, sedatives and hypnotics; and antipsychotics.

The research letter reports:

- 16.7 percent of adults reported filling one or more [prescriptions](#) for psychiatric drugs in 2013.
- 12 percent of adults reported antidepressant use; 8.3 percent reported filling prescriptions for anxiolytics, sedatives and hypnotics; and 1.6 percent reported taking antipsychotics.
- 20.8 percent of white adults reported use of psychiatric drugs compared with 8.7 percent of Hispanic adults, 9.7 percent of black adults and 4.8 percent of Asian adults.
- 8 of 10 adults taking psychiatric drugs reported long-term use, defined as three or more prescriptions filled in 2013 or a prescription started in 2011 or earlier.

The use of psychiatric drugs also appeared to increase with age, with

25.1 percent of adults 60 to 85 reporting use compared with 9.0 percent of [adults](#) 18 to 39 years of age. Women also were more likely to report using psychiatric drugs than men, according to the results.

The authors note that the use of psychiatric drugs may be underestimated because the prescriptions were self-reported.

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