

Nearly 1 in 5 U.S. adults has mental illness or drug problem

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(HealthDay)—Nearly 1 in 5 American adults deals with a mental illness

or substance abuse problem each year, a U.S. government study says.

Oregon has the highest rate, and New Jersey the lowest, according to 2012-2014 data analyzed by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

Overall, almost 44 million Americans 18 or older had a diagnosable mental, behavioral or emotional disorder in the past year, researchers said. They reviewed national surveys on drug use and health.

"The figures in SAMHSA's [report](#) remind us how important it is to take [mental health](#) as seriously as any other health condition," Kana Enomoto, SAMHSA acting deputy assistant secretary, said in an agency news release.

The overall national rate of mental [illness](#) was about 18 percent.

In Oregon, almost 23 percent of the state residents had any type of mental illness. Utah, West Virginia, Maine and Rhode Island were next, with rates above 21 percent.

In New Jersey, the mentally healthiest state, fewer than 16 percent of adults had a mental health condition, according to the report. The other lowest rates were in Illinois, North Dakota, Florida and South Dakota (all about 16.5 percent).

Rates varied within states, too. For example, northwestern Oregon had a high of almost 24 percent. South Florida came in with less than 15 percent having a diagnosable mental illness in a given year.

"The presence of [any mental illness] in every state reinforces that mental illness is a major public health concern in the United States," the report noted. "Overall treatment levels remain low, and addressing the

mental health of U.S. adults remains a concern for state and national public health officials."

Highlighting the percentage of people with a mental illness at state and local levels can help policymakers assess mental [health](#) needs in their communities, the researchers noted.

Examining changes over time is a key part of such assessments. The report said that rates of past-year [mental illness](#) among adults rose in California, Maine, North Carolina and Rhode Island between 2010-2012 and 2012-2014. There was no change in other states.

More information: The U.S. National Institute of Mental Health has more on [mental health](#).

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