

Among college students, mental health diagnosis and treatment are up, stigma is down

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Mental health diagnoses and treatment of college students increased substantially between 2007 and 2017. More than one-third of students reported a diagnosed condition in 2016-2017, according to a study

published online today in *Psychiatric Services* in Advance.

The comprehensive nationwide study draws on 10 years of data from the Healthy Minds Study, an annual web-based survey involving more than 150,000 students from 196 campuses across the U.S. The study authors, led by Sarah Ketchen Lipson, Ph.D., EdM, with Boston University School of Public Health, found that from 2007 to 2017:

- Mental [health](#) diagnoses increased from 22 percent to 36 percent
- Treatment increased from 19 percent to 34 percent, with similar patterns for both therapy/counseling and medication use
- Suicidal ideation increased from 6 percent to 11 percent
- Mental health stigma decreased

Rates of both perceived and personal stigma decreased over time from 64 percent to 46 percent and from 11 percent to 6 percent, respectively. Perceived stigma was measured by agreement with the statement "most people think less of a person who has received mental health treatment," and personal stigma was measured by agreement with "I would think less of a person who has received [mental health treatment](#)." While the authors note the decreasing stigma and increasing [mental health problems](#) contribute to increased service use, they did not address the reasons behind those changes.

The most common location for receiving services was on campus. Nearly 12 percent of students reported using services of their campus counseling center in 2016-2017, about 9 percent used other [mental health services](#), and about 1 percent accessed emergency [psychiatric services](#).

"The trends revealed in this study have strained counseling centers across the country, as many are under-resourced and operate at full capacity with waitlists for much of the year," according to the authors. They

suggest that in addition to expanding capacity, increasing use of "preventive and digital [mental health](#) services, such as those delivered via mobile apps," could help address the need.

More information: *Psychiatric Services* (2018). [DOI: 10.1176/appi.ps.201800332](#)

Provided by American Psychiatric Association

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