

# Race, sex, age influence pediatric mental health emergency visits

October 26 2023, by Elana Gotkine

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For children and adolescents, mental health disorder-related emergency department (ED) visits are higher among adolescents, girls, and Black

non-Hispanics versus Hispanics, according to a study published online Oct. 24 in the *National Health Statistics Reports*.

Loredana Santo, M.D., M.P.H., from the National Center for Health Statistics in Hyattsville, Maryland, and colleagues derived nationally representative estimates from data collected in the 2018 to 2021 National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Care Survey to describe [emergency department visits](#) related to [mental health disorders](#) among children and adolescents.

The researchers found that an annual average of 1,026,000 visits were made by children and adolescents with a diagnosis of a mental health disorder from 2018 to 2021, representing 14.0 emergency department visits per 1,000 children and adolescents. Mental health disorder-related visits were higher among adolescents (age 12 to 17 years) than children (younger than 12 years; 30.7 versus 5.3), among girls than boys (16.1 versus 12.1), and among Black non-Hispanic versus Hispanic children and adolescents (20.8 versus 13.2).

At mental health-related emergency department visits, [mood disorders](#), [anxiety disorders](#), and behavioral and emotional disorders were the most frequent diagnoses. The primary expected source of payment was Medicaid at 60.2% of the visits. Of the children and adolescents visiting the emergency department with any diagnosis of a mental health disorder, about one-quarter received at least one psychiatric medication.

"During 2018 to 2021, emergency department visit rates for mood disorders, anxiety disorders, and behavioral and emotional disorders were higher than visit rates for the other mental health disorders assessed," the authors write.

**More information:** [Abstract/Full Text](#)

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Citation: Race, sex, age influence pediatric mental health emergency visits (2023, October 26)  
retrieved 27 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-10-sex-age-pediatric-mental-health.html>

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