

Study reveals disparities in mental health care access across different housing environments

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A new [study](#) by CUNY SPH researchers suggests that residents of low-income housing in Harlem faced twice as many barriers to mental health

care during the COVID-19 pandemic as their neighbors who live in market-rate housing.

The study, led by Associate Professor Victoria Khanh Ngo and doctoral student Thinh Toan Vu, in collaboration with faculty members Deborah Levine, Distinguished Professor Luisa N. Borrell, and Associate Professor Pedro Mateu-Gelabert, provides critical insights into the [mental health challenges](#) faced by individuals in these different housing environments.

In addition to reporting significantly higher use of all types of mental health resources, low-income housing residents reported greater difficulty getting time off work (34.1% vs. 14%), lack of health insurance (18.7% vs. 9.8%), lack of trust in mental health providers (14.6% vs. 4.7%), and stigma (12.2% vs. 5.1%) compared with market-rate housing residents.

"This research sheds light on the critical need to bridge gaps in mental health support for vulnerable communities in Harlem," says Vu, "Addressing these disparities and providing accessible and preferred [mental health services](#) is paramount."

The study also explored [mental health care](#) preferences among the two groups and found they were largely in agreement. Residents from both housing types preferred receiving services at health clinics and houses of worship, provided by health care and [mental health providers](#). In-person and phone-based counseling were the most preferred service delivery methods and mental health clinics were the least preferred locations for receiving support.

"Preferences for mental health services indicate a need to diversify service delivery settings, considering the limited preference for services to be provided exclusively at mental [health clinics](#)," says Vu.

More information: Victoria K. Ngo et al, Mental Health Service Use, Barriers, and Service Preferences During COVID-19 among Low-Income Housing and Market-Rate Housing Residents of Harlem in New York City, *Journal of Community Health* (2023). [DOI: 10.1007/s10900-023-01301-w](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10900-023-01301-w)

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