

## 2006 to 2019 saw mental health-related visits increase for adolescents/young adults

March 13 2024, by Elana Gotkine

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Among adolescents and young adults, mental health-related visits increased from 2006 to 2019, and the proportion with prescription of at

least one psychotropic medication also increased significantly, according to a [study](#) published online March 7 in *JAMA Network Open*.

Rosa Y. Ahn-Horst, M.D., M.P.H., from Massachusetts General Hospital, and Florence T. Bourgeois, M.D., M.P.H., from Boston Children's Hospital, examined characteristics and trends in mental health-related outpatient visits and [psychotropic medication](#) use among U.S. [adolescents](#) and young adults using data from the National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey.

The researchers found an estimated 1.1 billion outpatient visits by adolescents and young adults from 2006 to 2019, 13.1 percent of which were associated with a [mental health condition](#). Mental health-related diagnoses were more prevalent among visits by male versus [female patients](#) (16.8 versus 10.9 percent), with the difference most pronounced among [young adults](#) (20.1 versus 10.1 percent).

From 2006 to 2019, there was an almost doubling in the proportion of mental health-related visits, from 8.9 to 16.9 percent. Overall, 17.2 percent of all mental health-related visits were associated with the prescription of at least one psychotropic medication, with a significant increase from 12.8 to 22.4 percent seen from 2006 to 2019.

"These findings suggest that increases in mental health conditions seen among youth during the pandemic occurred in the setting of already increasing rates of psychiatric illness, and treatment and prevention strategies will need to account for factors beyond the direct and indirect effects of the pandemic," the authors write.

**More information:** Rosa Y. Ahn-Horst et al, Mental Health–Related Outpatient Visits Among Adolescents and Young Adults, 2006-2019,

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