

Prevalence of Serious Mental Illness and Substance Use Disorders

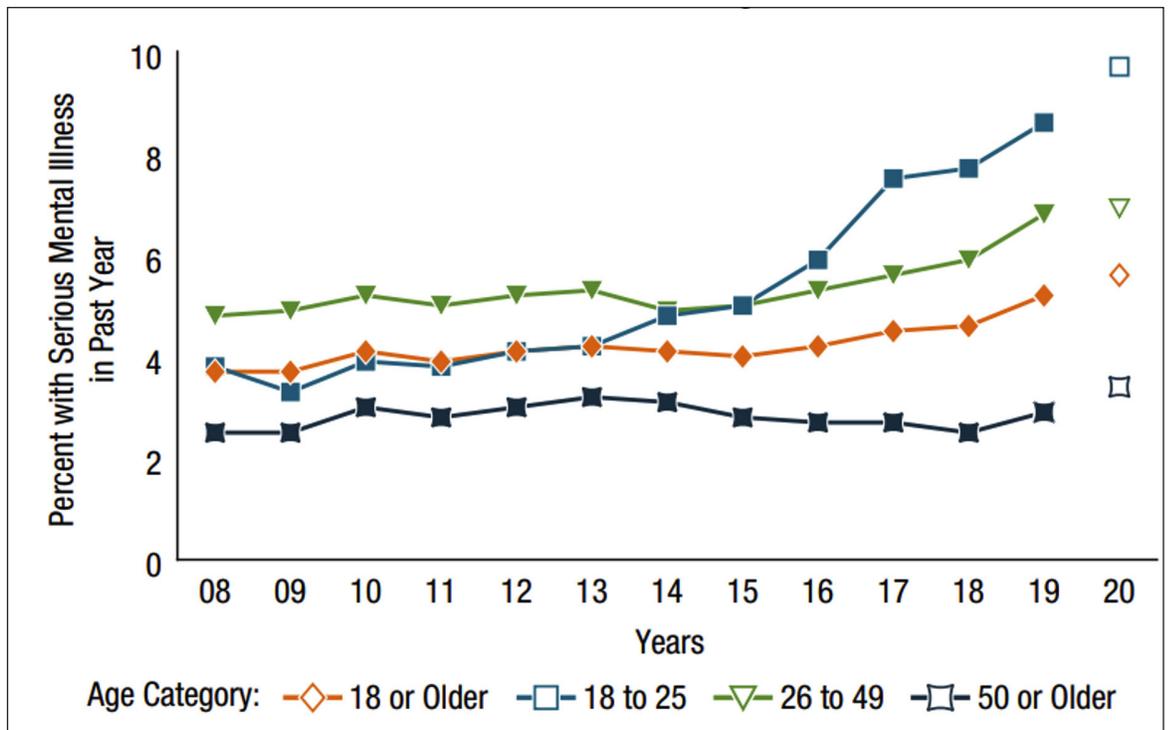
Dr. Michael K. Champion, Medical Director, Hawaii Department of Health, Adult Mental Health Division

Millions of people in the United States are living with Serious Mental Illness (SMI) and Substance Use Disorders (SUD), and many do not receive the treatment they need.

SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS

Adults with any mental illness are classified as having SMI if they have any mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder that substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities. SMI includes disorders such as bipolar disorder, major depressive disorder, schizophrenia, and schizoaffective disorder. **In 2020, the percentage of adults in the U.S. with SMI grew to 5.6%, or 14.2 million people** (up from 3.7%, or 8.3 million people, in 2008).¹

SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS IN THE PAST YEAR: ADULTS AGED 18 OR OLDER: 2008-2020¹

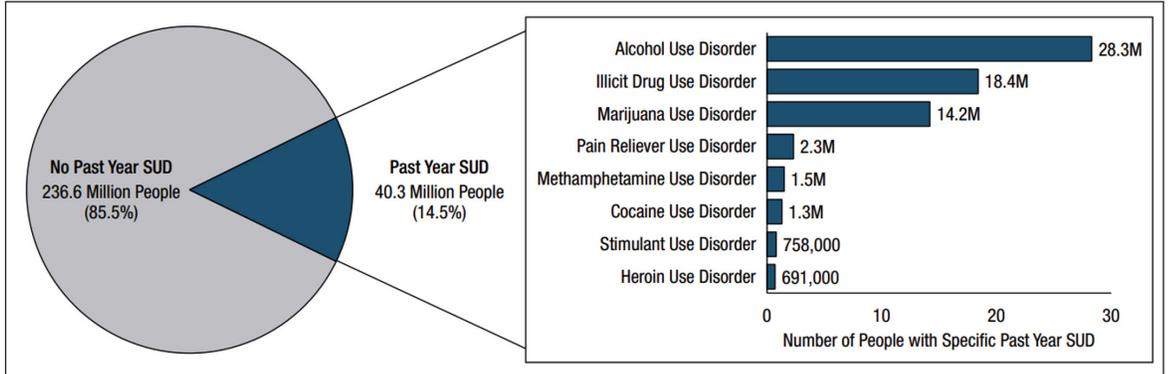


Note: There is no connecting line between 2019 and 2020 to indicate caution should be used when comparing estimates between 2020 and prior years because of methodological changes for 2020. Due to these changes, significance testing between 2020 and prior years was not performed.

SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS

SUDs are characterized by impairment caused by the recurrent use of alcohol or other drugs (or both), including health problems, disability, and failure to meet major responsibilities at work, school, or home. In 2020, 40.3 million people aged 12 or older (14.5% of this population) had an SUD in the past year.¹

PEOPLE AGED 12 OR OLDER WITH A PAST YEAR SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER (SUD): 2020¹



Note: The estimated numbers of people with substance use disorders are not mutually exclusive because people could have use disorders for more than one substance.

CO-OCCURRING DISORDERS

Among adults aged 18 or older, the percentage with both SMI and an SUD was 2.2%, or 5.7 million people, in 2020.¹

UNTREATED SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS AND SUBSTANCE DISORDERS

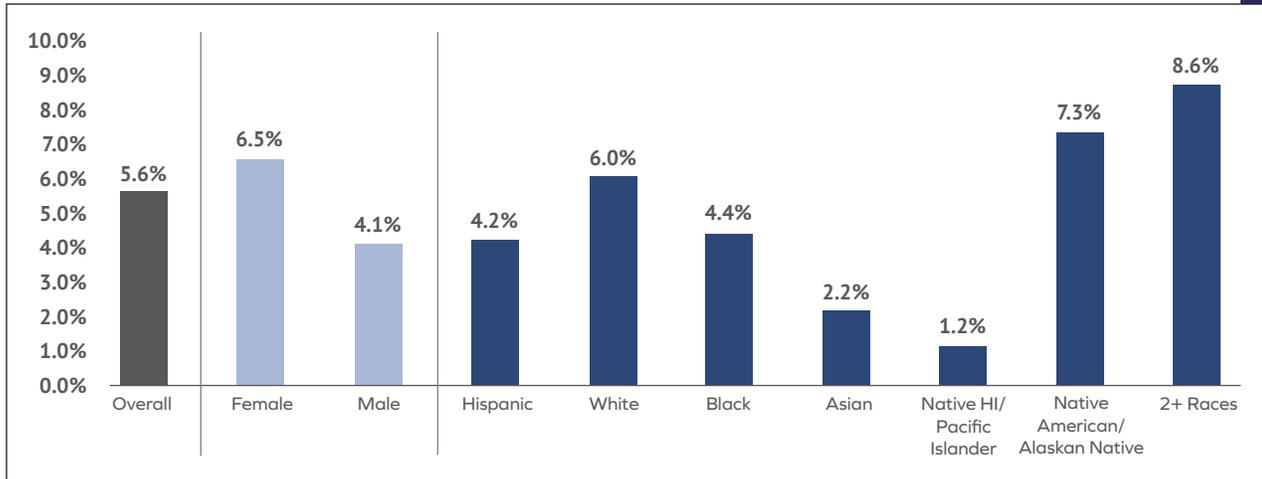
Among the 14.2 million adults aged 18 or older in 2020 with past-year SMI, 64.5% received inpatient, outpatient, or prescription medication treatment. **This left 5.0 million people, or 35.5%, without treatment.**

Among people aged 12 or older in 2020 who had a past year SUD, only 6.5%, or 2.6 million people, received any substance use treatment. **This left 37.7 million, or 93.5%, without treatment.**

GROUP DISPARITIES IN THE PREVALENCE AND TREATMENT OF SMI

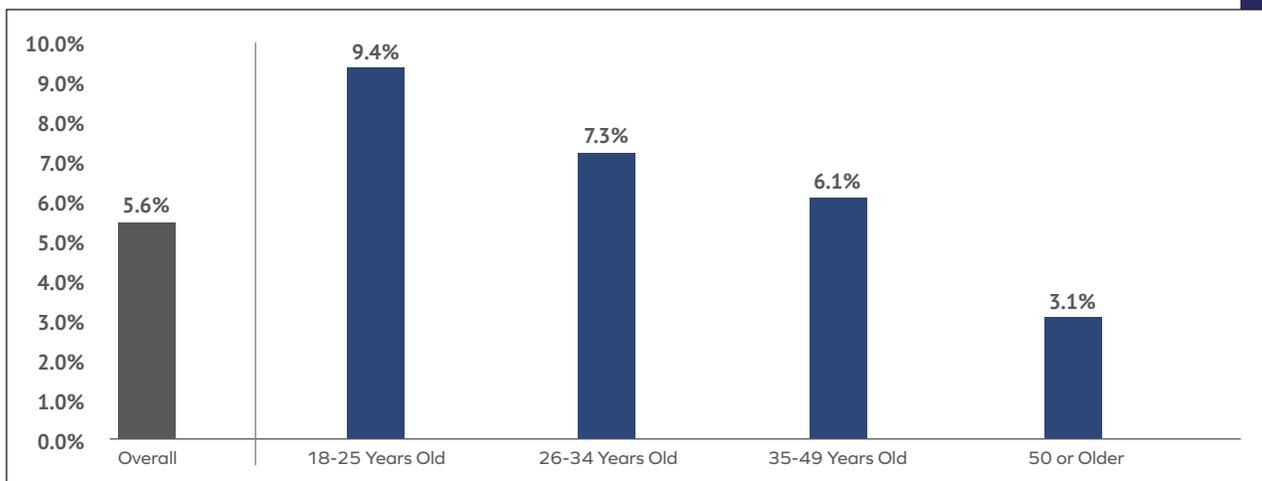
In 2020, the prevalence of SMI was disproportionately higher among women than among men and disproportionately higher among some racial and ethnic groups. The prevalence of SMI was also highest in the 18-25-year age group.²

PAST-YEAR PREVALENCE OF SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS AMONG U.S. ADULTS: 2020



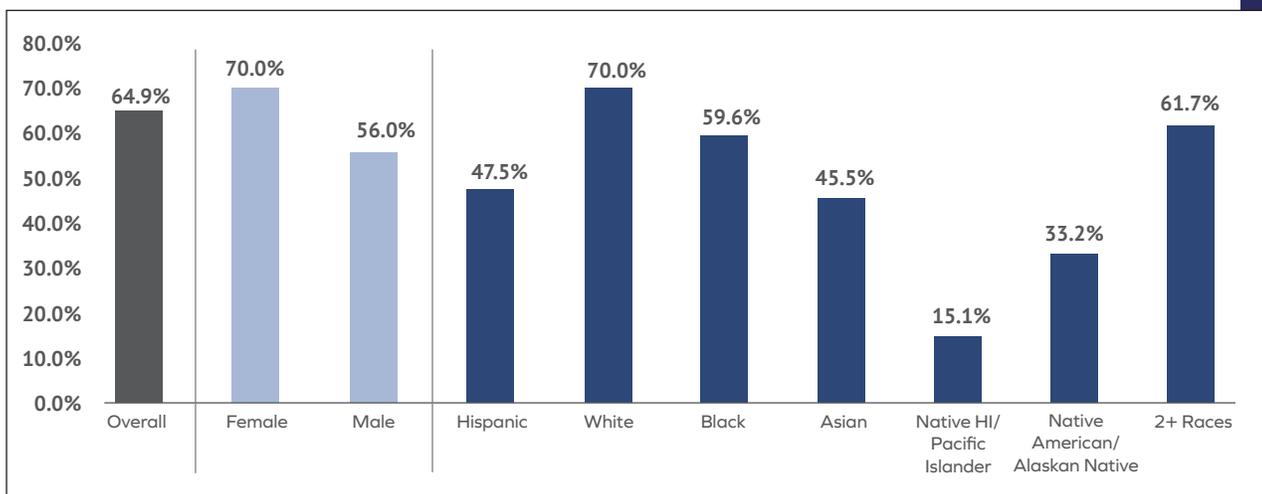
*Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race; all other racial/ethnic groups are non-Hispanic.

PAST-YEAR PREVALENCE OF SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS AMONG U.S. ADULTS: 2020



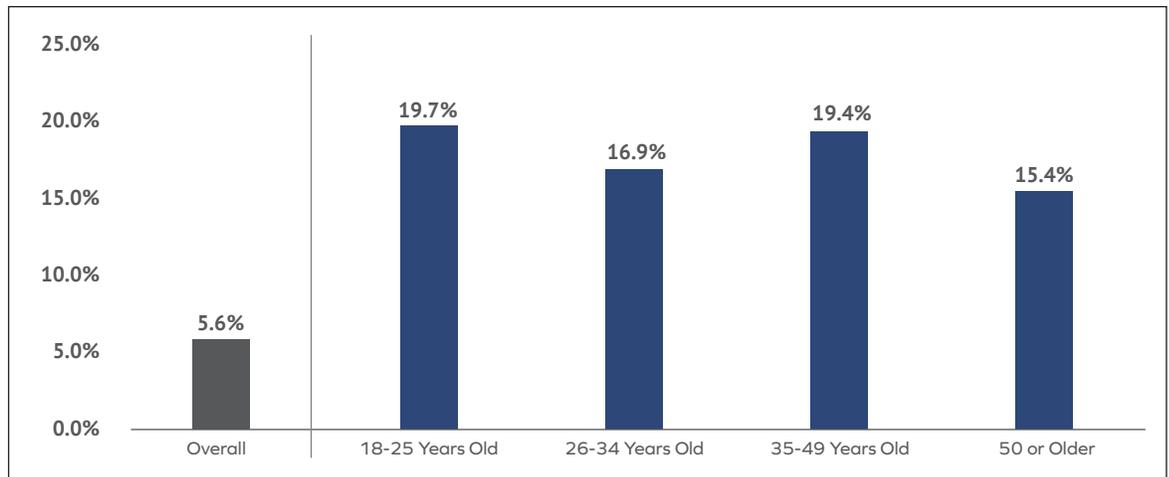
Treatment of SMI also varied significantly among different gender, racial/ethnic, and age groups.²

MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT RECEIVED IN PAST YEAR AMONG U.S. ADULTS WITH SMI: 2020



*Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race; all other racial/ethnic groups are non-Hispanic.

MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT RECEIVED IN PAST YEAR AMONG U.S. ADULTS WITH SMI: 2020



MENTAL ILLNESS IS OVERREPRESENTED IN THE COURTS

People living with SMI or SUD are overrepresented in the criminal legal system. One recent study examined SMI and SUD diagnoses among arrestees in Indiana.³ It found that **in the 2 years before being arrested, nearly one-third (31.3%) of arrestees had a mental health diagnosis, and over a quarter (27.7%) of arrestees had an SUD diagnosis.** These rates are substantially higher than the rates found in the general population, as described above. The study also found that arrestees with multiple mental health, SUD diagnoses, or co-occurring conditions in the preceding 2 years had **significantly higher odds of repeat arrest.**

People living with mental illness are also overrepresented in the courts and in the incarcerated population.⁴ **The rate of serious mental illness is four to six times higher in jail (14.5% of men and 31% of women in jails) than in the general population.**⁵ Substance use disorders are even more prevalent than serious mental illnesses in jails and prisons; **68% of people in custody in jails, 53% of people in custody in state prisons, and 46% of people in custody in federal prisons report symptoms consistent with SUD** in the year prior to their incarceration.⁶

State courts need better data on justice-involved people living with SMI and SUD. The National Center for State Courts published a Behavioral Health Data Elements Interim Guide,⁷ which begins to lay out the data elements needed to thoroughly understand and evaluate the courts' processing of cases involving behavioral health issues. NCSC is currently developing the updated version of the Behavioral Health Data Elements Guide.

Endnotes

¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), [Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States: Results from the 2020 National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#).

² Compiled using data from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), [Public Online Data Analysis System \(PDAS\)](#), (accessed March 25, 2022).

³ Magee, L.A., Fortenberry, J.D., Rosenman, M. et al. (2021). [Two-year prevalence rates of mental health and substance use disorder diagnoses among repeat arrestees](#). *Health Justice*, 9, 2.

⁴ McNeil, D. E., & Binder (2005). [Incarceration associated with homelessness, mental disorder, and violence](#). *Psychiatric Services*, 56, 699-704; Osher, F., D'Amora, D., Plotkin, M., Jarrett, N., & Eggleston, A. (2012). [Adults with Behavioral Health Needs under Correctional Supervision](#). Council of State Governments Justice Center.

⁵ Vera Institute of Justice, [Incarceration's Front Door: The Misuse of Jails in America](#) (February 2015).

⁶ Osher, F., D'Amora, D., Plotkin, M., Jarrett, N., & Eggleston, A. (2012). [Adults with Behavioral Health Needs under Correctional Supervision](#). Council of State Governments Justice Center.

⁷ National Center for State Courts, [State Court Behavioral Health Data Elements Interim Guide](#).

