

Nationwide Report Reveals That More Than 1 in Every 10 Adults Experienced Serious Psychological Distress in the Past Year

Report shows that less than half of those with serious psychological distress received mental health services.

An estimated 24.3 million people aged 18 years or older experienced serious psychological distress (SPD) in the past year – and only 44.6 percent of them received any kind of mental health services, according to a report by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

Serious psychological distress is an overall indicator of past-year mental health problems such as anxiety and/or mood disorders.

“This report shows that mental health problems affect almost 10 percent of people over age 18 years old, but less than half receive services that could help improve their situation,” said SAMHSA Acting Administrator Eric Broderick, D.D.S., M.P.H. “As we focus on advancing and protecting the nation’s health we must ensure mental health services are part of the solution.”

Serious Psychological Distress and Receipt of Mental Health Services also highlights significant differences in the levels of serious psychological distress suffered among various demographic groups, as well as considerable differences in the level of mental health services they received.

Among the findings:

- The SPD rate was significantly higher among young adults aged 18 to 25 years old (17.9 percent) than among those aged 26 to 49 years old (12.2 percent) or those aged 50 years and older (7 percent).
- Young adults aged 18 to 25 experiencing SPD were far less likely to receive mental health services (29.4 percent) than their counterparts aged 26 to 49 (47.2 percent) or aged 50 and over (53.8 percent) with SPD.
- Less than 30 percent of blacks and Hispanics experiencing these disorders received mental health services, compared to 50.9 percent of whites with SPD.

In addition, the report provides a breakdown on the types of mental health services (e.g., inpatient, outpatient, prescription medication, and combinations) that people with SPD received.

The report is drawn from SAMHSA’s 2007 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), which collected data from a representative sample of 45,000 civilian, non-institutionalized adults throughout the United States.

The full report is available on the web at <http://oas.samhsa.gov/2k8/spdtx/spdtx.cfm>. Copies may be obtained free of charge by calling SAMHSA's Health Information Network at 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727). For related publications and information, visit <http://www.samhsa.gov/>.

SAMHSA is a public health agency within the Department of Health and Human Services. The agency is responsible for improving the accountability, capacity and effectiveness of the nation's substance abuse prevention, addictions treatment, and mental health services delivery system.

