

# Mental Health Stigma

**Stigma is defined as the “stereotypical or negative views attributed to a person or groups when their characteristic or behaviors are viewed as different from societal norms.”**



## Stigmatizing Beliefs

Stigmatizing beliefs about people with mental health issues may include:

- They're unpredictable and potentially violent.
- They're to blame for their mental health conditions.
- They're unable to do anything but the most menial of jobs.
- They're childlike and innocent.

As a result, they need an authority figure such as a parent or psychiatrist to make decisions about goals and treatments.



1 in 5 adults suffer from a mental health condition; such conditions are the leading cause of disability in the U.S.

## What's the Problem?

Suicide is among the top 10 causes of death in all age groups between 15 and 64. From ages 10-14 and 25-34 it is the second leading cause of death (LINK). People with serious mental illnesses struggle with the symptoms and disabilities caused by these diseases, and are challenged by the stereotypes and prejudice that result from misconceptions about mental illness.



<p>Stigma is inherently linked to power and oppression; stereotypical association between individuals and problematic ideas are created by the powerful and applied to the powerless.</p>	<p>Individuals experiencing mental health conditions often face rejection, bullying and discrimination.</p>	<p>Those already facing stigma because of their group identity (poor, Black, homeless, female, LGBTQ) may face additional stigma when dealing with a mental health condition. Transgender adults are four times as likely as cisgender heterosexual adults to report making at least one suicide attempt. LINK</p>	<p>Negative attitudes toward people with poor mental health cause delays in seeking help, discontinuation of treatment, suboptimal therapeutic relationship, patient safety concerns and poorer quality mental and physical care. In 2021 only 47% of American adults (51.7% women; 40.0% men) were treated for their mental health. LINK</p>	<p>Federal funding for mental health lags far behind other issues. Various studies have found that mental health professionals were similar to the general public in their desired social distance from individuals with mental health conditions. This can result in inferior care for individuals suffering from mental health conditions.</p>
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## Mental Health in the U.S.



While many individuals do not recognize their symptoms, one in five adults with mental health conditions report that they are not able to get the treatment they need.

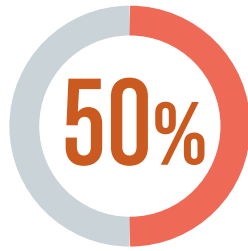
Anxiety and depression are markedly higher today than they were in the 20th Century.

Access to quality insurance and treatment is improving, but still a significant problem. Costs often must be paid out of pocket because mental health isn't treated like other physical health conditions.

Mental health concerns can be addressed through preventative action. Early identification and intervention is critical.

# Mental Health Stigma

Nearly half of adults with mental health conditions in the U.S. suffer a co-occurring substance abuse disorder.



## Levels of Stigma

These levels of stigma are interconnected. For example, legislators who hold problematic beliefs about people with mental health conditions could be less likely to advocate for increased funding for mental health. The lack of proper training for law enforcement officers can result in the arrest and incarceration of individuals experiencing mental health crises, rather than helping them access appropriate care.



### STRUCTURAL

Insurers offer lower reimbursement rates to mental health clinicians



### INTERPERSONAL

An employer refuses to offer a job to someone with a real or perceived mental health condition



### INDIVIDUAL

A person blames themselves for their condition, which leads them to avoid seeking treatment

## Strategies to Reduce Stigma

- Direct services such as crisis intervention
- Advocacy efforts, including social media campaigns and letter writing to encourage policy change
- Programs that encourage contact between people suffering from mental illness and those who are not
- Public education to build awareness about mental health issues
- Training programs for those helping people with mental health conditions
- Work with institutions such as universities to implement inclusive policies

**MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES:** The Trevor Project (LGBTQ mental health) • Mental Health America (disparities among populations of color and Black Americans) • NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) • Active Minds (mental health for teenagers and young adults) • Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

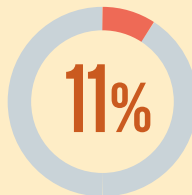
## Vulnerable Populations



### LGBTQ

LGBTQ individuals are 2 or more times more likely than straight individuals to have a mental health condition.

11% of transgender individuals reported being denied care by mental health clinics due to bias or discrimination. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth are 2 to 3 times more likely to attempt suicide than straight youth.

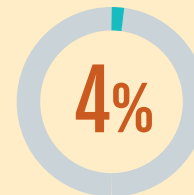


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### BLACK AMERICANS

According to the Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health, African Americans are 20% more likely to experience serious mental health problems than the general population. Only about one-quarter of Black Americans seek treatment, compared to 40% of whites. Barriers to mental health care are a result of systemic racism and medical mistrust from events like the Tuskegee Study. The lack of Black professionals is also a factor: Nationally, 4% of psychologists (American Psychological Assn., 2018), 2% of psychiatrists (American Psychiatric Assn., 2021), 22% of social workers (Institute for Health Workforce Equity, 2020), 7% of marriage and family counselors, and 11% of professional counselors are reported to be Black.



4% of working psychologists in the U.S. identified as Black/African American



### TEENAGERS

Mental health issues are common among teens and young adults. One in five live with a mental health condition. Approximately 50% of students age 14 and older with a mental illness drop out of high school. Suicide is the third-leading cause of death for young people ages 15 to 24. Only 30% of depressed teens are being treated for it.



50% of students age 14 and older with a mental illness drop out of high school

## The Impact of Covid-19

- The pandemic brought about an increase in mental health conditions, substance abuse, and suicidal ideation, particularly within communities of color and youth.
- Drug overdose deaths (largely due to fentanyl) sharply increased and suicide deaths are once again on the rise. [LINK](#)
- A KFF/CNN survey ([LINK](#)) reported that roughly half of parents (47%) said the pandemic had a negative impact on their child's mental health, including 17% who said it had a "major negative impact."
- People with pre-existing mental, neurological, or substance use disorders are also more vulnerable to Covid-19 infection, with higher rates of severe illness, hospitalization and death. [LINK](#)