MENTAL HEALTH CARE UTILIZATION

In 2009, more than 30 million adults in the United States reported receiving mental health treatment in the past year for a mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder other than a substance use disorder. Women represented two-thirds of users of mental health services, which is roughly commensurate with the higher prevalence of mental illness (excluding substance use disorder) among women. More than 17 million women aged 18 years and older reported using prescription medication for treatment of a mental or emotional condition, representing 14.7 percent of the population, which is almost twice the proportion of men using prescription medication for treatment (7.6 percent). Women were also nearly twice as likely as men to report receiving outpatient mental health treatment (8.2 versus 4.3 percent, respectively). Inpatient treatment was reported equally by men and women. Not every person with a mental illness receives treatment; among adults with a mental illness, women were more likely than men to report utilization of prescription medication and outpatient care (data not shown).

In 2007–2009, mental health services were needed, but not received, by about 11.3 million adults annually (on average), corresponding to 5 percent of adults in the United States. Due in part to greater need, women were twice as likely as men to have an unmet need for mental health treatment or counseling in the past year (6.7 versus 3.3 percent, respectively; data for men not shown). Unmet need for treatment among women varies by race and ethnicity. Compared to non-Hispanic White women, unmet need was higher among non-Hispanic women of multiple races (12.2 percent) and significantly lower among non-Hispanic Asian and Hispanic women (2.7 and 4.9 percent, respectively).

Among women, cost or lack of adequate insurance coverage was the most commonly reported reason for not receiving needed services (49.5 percent; data not shown). However, non-Hispanic Black women were significantly less likely than non-Hispanic White women to report a problem with cost or lack of adequate insurance (40.6 versus 51.1 percent). Other commonly reported reasons for unmet need included a fear of stigma—such as concerns about confidentiality, the opinions of others, or the potential effect on employment—and not knowing where to go for services (21.0 and 14.8 percent, respectively); these did not vary significantly by race and ethnicity.

Past Year Mental Health Treatment/Counseling* Among Adults Aged 18 and Older, by Sex, 2009
Sources II.10: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, National Survey on Drug Use and Health

Unmet Need for Mental Health Treatment/Counseling* Among Women Aged 18 and Older, by Race/Ethnicity,** 2007–2009
Sources II.3: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, National Survey on Drug Use and Health

*Excludes treatment for alcohol or drug use. Respondents could report more than one type of treatment.