

Serious Mental Illness Among Native Populations

A serious mental illness is a diagnosable mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder experienced by an adult in the past year that causes serious functional impairment interfering with or limiting at least one major life activity. This fact sheet summarizes the data surrounding serious mental illness and its prevalence in Native populations, along with best practices for Native peoples living with serious mental illness.

National American
Indian & Alaska
Native School
Mental Health
Program



National Institute of Mental Health's National Survey on Drug Use and Health by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), 2019

- In 2019, an estimated 13.1 million US adults aged 18 or older were diagnosed with SMI (5.2% of all US adults)
 - SMI was highest among adults reporting 2 or more races (9.3%), followed by AI/AN adults (6.7%)
- Of those 13.1 million, 8.6 million had received mental health treatment in the past year (65.5%)

Statistics and Facts from SMI Adviser (funded by SAMHSA and administered by the American Psychiatric Association)

- 1 in 25 adults has SMI in a given year
 - 10.4 million people or 4.2% of US adults 18 or older
- The most common SMI diagnoses include schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and major depressive disorder
- SMI "can make it difficult for an adult to carry out one or more major life activities"
- Research shows the most effective treatment is psychotherapy and medication, though it is different for each individual

Tips for Living Well with SMI (SAMHSA)

- Stick to a treatment plan
- Keep your primary care physician updated
- Learn about the disorder
- Practice self-care
- Reach out to family and friends

Locate SMI Treatment (SAMHSA):
<https://www.samhsa.gov/esmi-treatment-locator>

References

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). (n.d.). NIMH "Mental Illness". National Institute of Mental Health. Retrieved from <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness>.

SMI Adviser, American Psychiatric Association, SAMHSA. (2021, June 30). SMI Adviser. Retrieved from <https://smiadviser.org/>.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). (n.d.). Adults with SMI and children/youth with SED. SAMHSA.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). (n.d.). Living well with serious mental illness. SAMHSA. Retrieved from <https://www.samhsa.gov/serious-mental-illness>.

