

Minority Mental Health Awareness Month

Black & African Americans



Minority Mental Health Awareness Month brings awareness to the unique struggles that underrepresented groups face in regard to mental illness. This observance aims to improve access to mental health treatment and services for multicultural communities through increased public awareness.

FACTS:



About 30% of African American adults with mental illness receive treatment each year, compared to the U.S. average of 43%. [NAMI](#)



African Americans are less likely to be offered either evidence-based medication therapy or psychotherapy than the general population. [American Psychiatric Association](#)

35%

In 2017, 41.5% of youth ages 12-17 received care for a major depressive episode, but only 35.1% of Black youth received treatment for their condition. [Dept. of Health & Human Services Office of Minority Health](#)

COMPARED WITH WHITES, AFRICAN AMERICANS ARE:

- Less likely to receive guideline-consistent care
- Less frequently included in research
- More likely to use emergency rooms or primary care (rather than mental health specialists)
- More frequently diagnosed with schizophrenia and less frequently diagnosed with mood disorders, compared with whites with the same symptoms

Differences in how African Americans express symptoms of emotional distress may contribute to misdiagnosis.

[American Psychiatric Association](#)

BARRIERS TO MENTAL HEALTH CARE:

- Stigma associated with mental illness
- Distrust of the health care system
- Lack of providers from diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds
- Lack of culturally competent providers
- Lack of insurance or underinsurance