



Treatment Advocacy Center Backgrounder

What Percentage of Individuals with Serious Mental Illness Are Receiving No Treatment?

(updated June 2016)

SUMMARY: For the past 20 years, studies have consistently estimated that between 40 and 50 percent of all individuals with schizophrenia or bipolar disorder are receiving no treatment for their mental illness at any given time. According to disease prevalence estimates of NIMH, this means that approximately *3.0-3.5 million* such individuals are receiving no treatment.

- **45 percent untreated**

In 2010, the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) estimated that 40 percent of adults with schizophrenia and 51 percent of individuals with severe bipolar disorder receive no treatment in a one-year period. NIMH also estimated that there are 2.6 million adults with schizophrenia (1.1% of the adult population) and 5.1 million adults with severe bipolar disorder (2.2% of adult population). That means that there are *3.0-3.5 million adults with schizophrenia or bipolar disorder not being treated in the US on any given day.*

NIMH website. Prevalence of serious mental illness among U.S. adults by age, sex, and race.

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/prevalence/serious-mental-illness-smi-among-us-adults.shtml>;

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/prevalence/schizophrenia.shtml>;

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/prevalence/bipolar-disorder-among-adults.shtml>;
all accessed June 21, 2016.

- **41 percent untreated**

Mark Olfson et al. at Columbia reanalyzed 2003 national Medicaid claims for 49,239 individuals with schizophrenia who were hospitalized. They found that 41 percent of the patients received no psychiatric follow-up treatment in the month following their discharge from the hospital. The strongest predictors of which patients would not get

follow-up treatment were substance abuse and a history of not having received treatment prior to their hospitalization.

Olfson M, Marcus SC, Doshi JA. Continuity of care after inpatient discharge of patients with schizophrenia in the Medicaid program: a retrospective longitudinal cohort analysis. *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* 2010;71:831–838.

- **40 percent untreated**

A 2009 review of all pertinent studies in the U.S. concluded that “approximately 40% of individuals in the community with schizophrenia remain out of care either consistently or for long periods of time while experiencing significant symptoms.”

Mojtabai R, et al. Unmet need for mental health care in schizophrenia: an overview of literature and new data from a first-admission study. *Schizophrenia Bulletin*. 2009. 35 (4): 679-695.

- **54 percent untreated**

Using data for the National Comorbidity Survey (NCS) carried out in 1990–1992, the authors reported that 54 percent of individuals with serious mental illness (broadly defined) had received no treatment in the previous 12 months.

Kessler RC, Berglund PA, Bruce ML, et al. The prevalence and correlates of untreated serious mental illness. *Health Services Research* 2001;36:987–1007.

- **46 percent untreated**

Vanelli M, Burstein P, Cramer J. Refill patterns of atypical and conventional antipsychotic medications at a national retail pharmacy chain. *Psychiatric Services* 2001;52:1248–1250.

- **42 percent untreated**

In another follow-up of the ECA study data, it was established that 42 percent of individuals with severe mental illnesses (as defined by the NIMH Advisory Mental Health Council) were not being treated.

Narrow WE. Mental health service use by Americans with severe mental illnesses. *Social Psychiatric Epidemiology* 2000;35:147–155.

- **35 percent untreated**

In the five-site Epidemiologic Catchment Area (ECA) survey carried out 1980–1985, it was reported that 35 percent of individuals with schizophrenia and 35 percent of individuals with bipolar disorder had received no treatment in the previous 12 months.

Health care reform for Americans with severe mental illnesses: report of the National Advisory Mental Health Council. *American Journal of Psychiatry* 1993;150:1447–1465.

References:

1. Olfson M, Marcus SC, Doshi JA. Continuity of care after inpatient discharge of patients with schizophrenia in the Medicaid program: a retrospective longitudinal cohort analysis. *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* 2010; 71:831–838.
2. Mojtabai R, et al. Unmet need for mental health care in schizophrenia: an overview of literature and new data from a first-admission study. *Schizophrenia Bulletin*. 2009. 35 (4): 679-695.
3. Kessler RC, Berglund PA, Bruce ML, et al. The prevalence and correlates of untreated serious mental illness. *Health Services Research* 2001; 36:987–1007.
4. Vanelli M, Burstein P, Cramer J. Refill patterns of atypical and conventional antipsychotic medications at a national retail pharmacy chain. *Psychiatric Services* 2001; 52:1248–1250.
5. Narrow WE. Mental health service use by Americans with severe mental illnesses. *Social Psychiatric Epidemiology* 2000; 35:147–155.
6. Health care reform for Americans with severe mental illnesses: report of the National Advisory Mental Health Council. *American Journal of Psychiatry* 1993;150:1447–1465.