



Depression and Bipolar  
Support Alliance

## Depression and Bipolar Disorder Fact Sheet

### Prevalence

One in four adults—almost 58 million Americans ages 18 and older—is diagnosed with a mental health disorder in a given year. Bipolar disorder affects 5.7 million adults, or 2.6% of the US population. Major depressive disorder affects approximately 14.8 million American adults, or about 6.7% of the US population ages 18 and older in a given year.<sup>1</sup>

### Stigma

The vast majority of media stories on mental illness either focus on negative characteristics related to people with the disorder (e.g., unpredictability and unsociability) or on medical treatments. Notably absent are positive stories that highlight recovery of many persons with even the most serious of mental illnesses.<sup>2</sup>

According to *Americans' Views of Mental Health and Illness at Century's End: Continuity and Change*, between 1950 and 1996, “the proportion of Americans who describe mental illness in terms consistent with violent or dangerous behavior nearly doubled.”<sup>3</sup>

Americans are hesitant to interact with people who have mental illnesses: 38% are unwilling to be friends with someone having mental health difficulties, 64% do not want someone who has schizophrenia as a close coworker, and more than 68% are unwilling to have someone with depression marry into their family.<sup>4</sup>

### Violence

Research has shown that the vast majority of people who are violent do not have mental illnesses.<sup>5</sup>

Mental illness increases the risk of being a *victim* of murder nearly fivefold.<sup>6</sup> People with severe mental illnesses, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or psychosis are 2.5 times more likely to be attacked, raped, or mugged than the general population.<sup>7</sup>

### Treatment

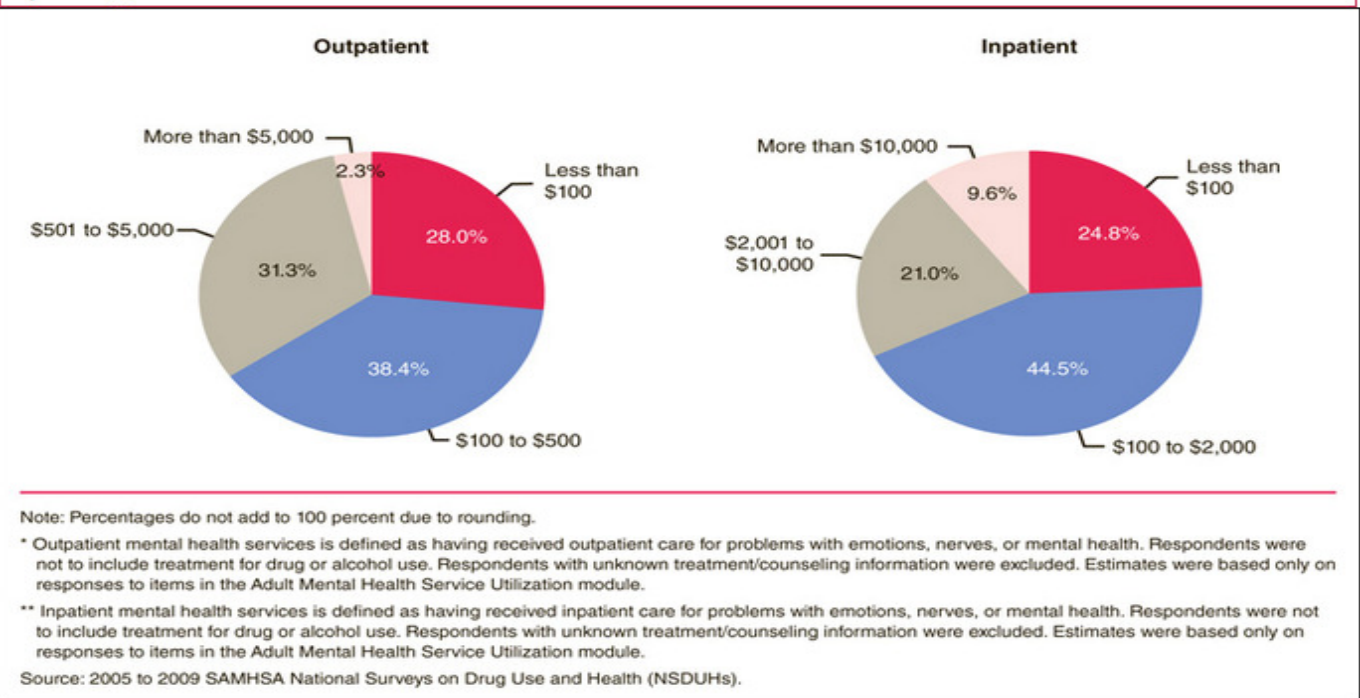
Only a third of people with a mental health diagnosis receive treatment.<sup>1</sup>

Access to mental health professionals is worse than for other types of doctors. 89.3 million Americans live in a federally-designated Mental Health Professional Shortage Area,<sup>8</sup> and the 2010 National Ambulatory Medical Care survey shows only 2.36% of primary care physician office visits included screening for depression.

In 2010, the United States spent \$135 billion on mental health treatment, or about 5.6% of the national health care spending. Unlike overall health spending, the vast majority of behavioral health services are publicly funded. Medicaid, currently the largest source of financing for behavioral health services in the nation, covers a quarter of all expenditures.<sup>9</sup>

For adults who have health insurance, significant out-of-pocket costs for mental health treatment have risen significantly from 2005–2009. In a national survey, 45% of the untreated cited cost as a barrier.<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 2. Out-of-Pocket Costs for Mental Health Services among Adults Aged 18 or Older Who Received Outpatient\* or Inpatient\*\* Mental Health Services in the Past Year: 2005 to 2009**



## Economic Costs

According to the 2004 World Health Report, major depressive disorder is the leading cause of disability in the United States for individuals aged 15–44.<sup>11</sup> The loss of productivity from mental health disorders costs \$63 billion dollars every year.<sup>12</sup> US workers experiencing bipolar disorder missed double the number of workdays compared to workers with depression, resulting in disproportionately higher costs to businesses.<sup>13</sup>

The unemployment rate for adults living with mental illness is 3–5 times higher than for those without mental illness. An estimated \$25 billion is spent annually for disability payments to people with mental illness.<sup>14</sup>

The diagnosis of bipolar disorder in children under 18 years of age rose 4,000% from 1996–2006.<sup>15</sup> More than 50% of students with a mental disorder, ages 14 and older, drop out of high school—the highest dropout rate of any disability group. High school dropouts cost the US economy \$1.8 billion every year.<sup>16</sup>

## Human Costs

Over the past 20 years, dollars spent on inpatient treatment have shifted to outpatient and prescription drugs, with the sickest patients turning up in jails and homeless shelters at a frequency that mirrors that of the late 1800s.<sup>17</sup>

Depressive disorders often co-occur with substance abuse.<sup>1</sup> People living with bipolar disorder have the highest rate of substance abuse of all mental health diagnoses, with a rate of 40–60%.<sup>18</sup> Of adults using homeless services, 31% reported having a combination of these conditions.<sup>19</sup>

More than half of all prison and jail inmates have a mental health problem. 70% of youth in juvenile justice systems have at least one mental disorder, with at least 20% experiencing significant functional impairment from a serious mental illness.<sup>20</sup>

## Suicide

Each year more than 8 million Americans think seriously about suicide, more than 1 million attempt suicide, and about 38,000 die from suicide. More than 90% of those who die from suicide have a diagnosable mental disorder.<sup>21</sup> 25–50% of individuals with bipolar disorder attempt suicide at least once during their lifetime, and suicide is a leading cause of death in this group.<sup>22</sup>

## References

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