

2022 Connecticut Epidemiological Profile: Mental Health



A product of the State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup (SEOW)

Prevalence

Mental health refers to emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Mental health disorders refer to conditions affecting an individual's thinking, feeling, mood, or behavior.¹

The 2021 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) reports 20.2% of adults in Connecticut reported any mental illness in the past year. This prevalence is highest in the 18-25 year old age group, at 32.4%. Any mental illness in the NSDUH refers to having mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder in the past year meeting DSM-IV criteria (excluding developmental disorders). The prevalence for serious mental illness in Connecticut adults is 4.3%. Serious mental illness refers to mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder which interferes with or limits major life activities.²

Depression

Depression is a relatively common mood disorder. Symptoms of depression can include persistent sad or empty mood, feelings of guilt or worthlessness, decreased energy, difficulty concentrating, and thoughts of death or suicide, among several others. These symptoms must be experienced by the individual most of the day, nearly every day, for more than two weeks in order to be diagnosed with major depression.³ Like other mental health disorders, depression symptoms can vary among types of depression and individual people.

In Connecticut, 7.7% of adults reported a major depressive episode in the past year, compared to 20.4% of adolescents 12-17 and 18.9% of young adults 18-25.² The prevalence in the US is slightly higher for adults (8.3%) and adolescents (20.1%), though it is lower than Connecticut in young adults (18.6%).²

Results from the 2019 Connecticut BRFSS showed more than one in seven adults had been diagnosed with

depression (14.4%). This is highest among 18-34 year olds (18.1%), and higher among adult females (17.8%) than males (10.8%).⁴

The 2021 Connecticut School Health Survey (CT's YRBS) showed 35.6% of high school students reported feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for more than two weeks so that it interfered with doing usual activities.⁵ This is significantly higher among high school females (47.6%) than males (24.2%), as well as higher among Hispanic students (42.6%) than Black (34.9%) or White (31.8%) students. It is also much higher among students identifying as gay, lesbian, or bisexual (62.4%) than those who are heterosexual (27.6%).

Anxiety

Anxiety disorders extend beyond temporary worries or fears and involves symptoms which can interfere with daily activities. Types of anxiety disorders can include general anxiety disorder, panic disorder, and phobia-related disorders. People with anxiety disorders may feel restless, be easily fatigued, have difficulty concentrating, have sleep problems, and have difficulty controlling feelings of worry. These symptoms typically persist for most days, for at least 6 months to meet a diagnosis. People with panic disorder have recurrent unexpected panic attacks, which may involve feelings of impending doom, heart palpitations, trembling, and sensations or shortness of breath.⁴ In Connecticut, 3.8% of the clients were treated for anxiety disorders in 2022.⁶

Trauma

Trauma is an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.⁷

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023). Mental Health.

² NSDUH (2021)

³ National Institute of Mental Health (2023).

⁴ Connecticut BRFSS (2019)

⁵ Connecticut School Health Survey (2021)

⁶ EQMI. DMHAS Annual Statistical Data, FY22

⁷ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Trauma and Violence



Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a disorder that develops in some people who have experienced a shocking, scary, or dangerous event. Events that may lead to PTSD include, but are not limited to, violent personal assaults, natural or human-caused disasters, accidents, combat, and other forms of violence.³ Exposure to events like these is common. About one half of all U.S. adults will experience at least one traumatic event in their lives, but most do not develop PTSD. People who experience PTSD may have persistent, frightening thoughts and memories of the event(s), experience sleep problems, feel detached or numb, or may be easily startled. In severe forms, PTSD can significantly impair a person's ability to function at work, at home, and socially.

In 2022, an estimated 45% of the clients were treated for serious mental illness that includes PTSD in Connecticut.⁶

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are stressful or traumatic events, including abuse and neglect, and household dysfunction. ACEs are strongly related to the development and prevalence of a wide range of health problems throughout a person's lifespan. The negative effects of ACEs are felt throughout the nation and can affect people of all backgrounds. ACEs showed high association with risk factors for diseases, disability and early mortality in many studies.⁸

ACEs are common in Connecticut. Three out of five adults reported having experienced at least one ACE, and 21.2% reported three or more ACEs.⁸ Among those who experienced one ACE, 32.3% were from separated/divorced parents, 20.8% from emotional abuse, and 18.6% from drinking problems in household. ACEs are clustered: two-thirds of those who experienced ACEs reported two or more ACEs (59.1%) and one in five experienced more than three ACEs (22.1%). In Connecticut, emotional abuse (27.9%) and parents separated or divorced (26.2%) are the most prevalent ACE events.⁸

⁸ DPH (2018)

Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is a serious mental illness that affects how a person thinks, feels, and behaves. People with schizophrenia may seem like they have lost touch with reality, which can be distressing for them and for their family and friends.³ The symptoms of schizophrenia can make it difficult to participate in usual, everyday activities, but effective treatments are available. Many people who receive treatment can engage in school or work, achieve independence, and enjoy personal relationships.³ In 2022, 7.4% of the clients were treated for Schizophrenia Spectrum and other psychotic disorders in Connecticut.⁶

Bipolar disorder

Bipolar disorder (formerly called manic-depressive illness or manic depression) is a mental illness that causes unusual shifts in a person's mood, energy, activity levels, and concentration. These shifts can make it difficult to carry out day-to-day tasks.³ In 2022, 6.7% of the clients were treated for Bipolar and related disorders in Connecticut.⁶

At-Risk Populations

- Adults 18-25 have the highest prevalence of mental illness and serious mental illness. 32.4% of Connecticut young adults reported any mental illness in the 2021 NSDUH, and almost 10% reported serious mental illness.²
- The risk of having depression among Connecticut adults was significantly greater for: adults 18-34 years old (18.1%), women (17.8%), non-Hispanic White adults (16.2%), adults from households earning less than \$35,000 (22.4%), adults with disabilities (33.0%).⁴
- Risk factors in developing an anxiety disorder include familial history of anxiety or other mental illness, or exposure to stressful and negative life or environmental events in early childhood or adult hood.⁴

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- Several factors may contribute to a person’s risk of developing schizophrenia: genetic, environment, brain structure/function.³

Consequences

In 2021:

- 14.1% of high school students reported seriously considered attempting suicide and 5.9% attempted suicide.⁵

In 2022:

- 12.3% of the clients were treated for depressive disorders.⁶

- 3.8% of the clients were treated for anxiety disorders.⁶
- 45% of the clients were treated for serious mental illness including PTSD.⁶
- 7.4% of the clients were treated for Schizophrenia Spectrum and other psychotic disorders.⁶
- 6.7% of the clients were treated for Bipolar and related disorders.⁶

Connecticut SEOW Data Portal

For more data and information on mental health in Connecticut, visit the

Connecticut SEOW Prevention Data Portal

<http://preventionportal.ctdata.org/>