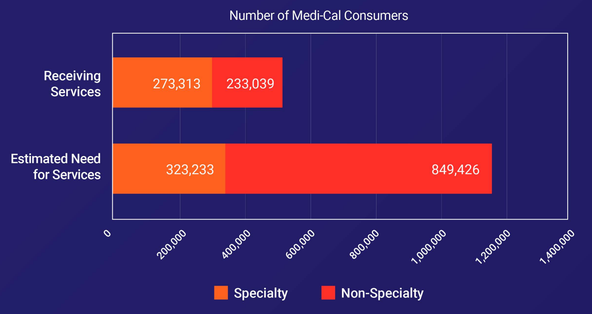
Mental Health Care in California: Inequities Persist

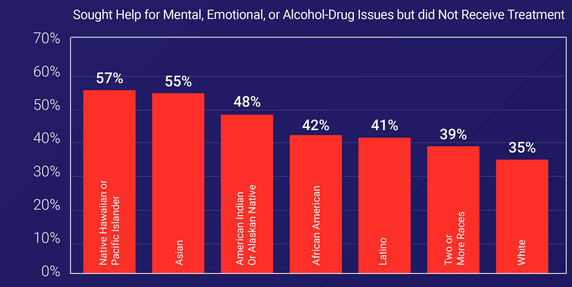
CPEHN
California Pan-Ethnic Health Network

Medi-Cal mental health benefits for adult consumers are delivered through two separate systems. Counties provide a broad range of specialty mental health services (SMHS) to adult consumers with more severe mental illnesses, while Medi-Cal managed care plans provide non-specialty mental health services to adult consumers with mild-to-moderate mental health conditions. New data show that communities of color continue to face wide disparities in both systems of care.

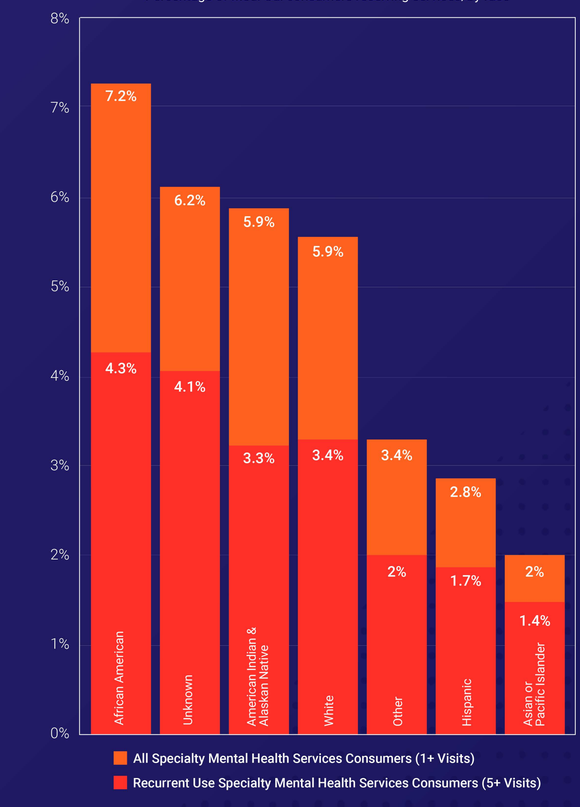
In 2017-18, less than half of adult Medi-Cal consumers needing mental health services received care.[1]



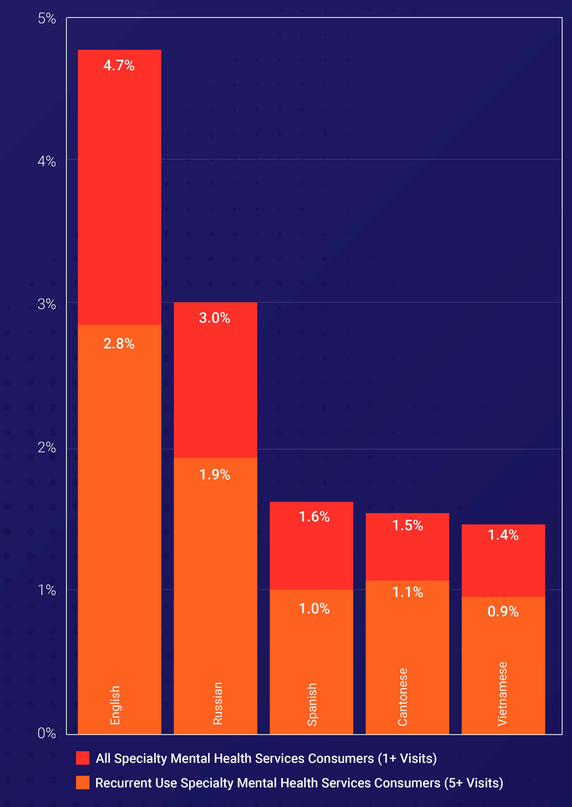
Racial disparities also exist among those who report seeking but not receiving care.[2]



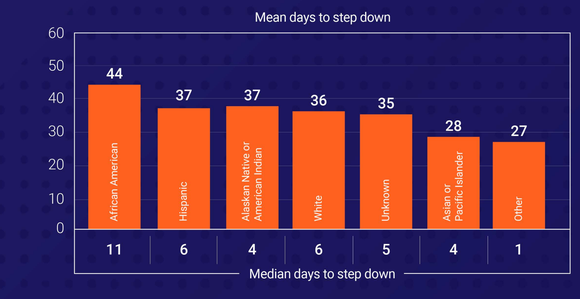
Utilization of specialty mental health services provided by counties varies by race, with Asian or Pacific Islander consumers the least likely to access care.[3]



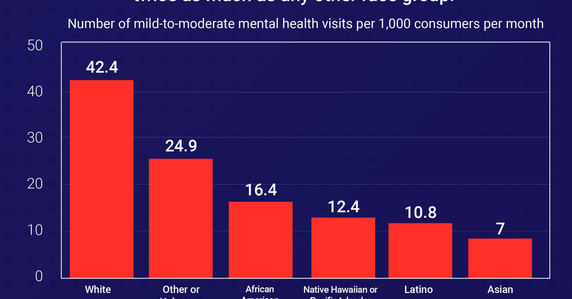
Access also varies by language.[3]



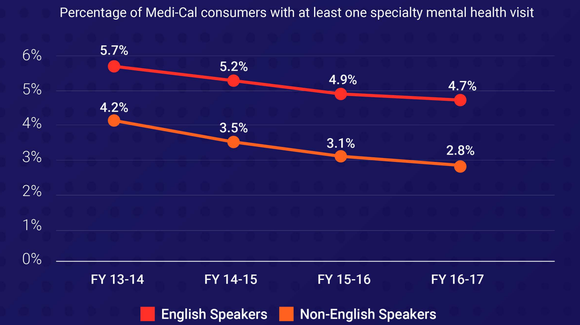
Compared to other race groups, African American consumers spend the longest time hospitalized for mental health care before being transitioned to lower levels of care.[3]



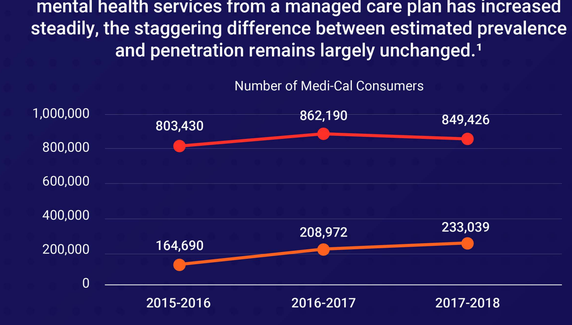
The ability to access mild-to-moderate mental health services provided by managed care plans varies significantly by race, with white consumers accessing service more than twice as much as any other race group.[4]



Disparities are not improving over time.[1]



While the number of consumers receiving mild-to-moderate mental health services from a managed care plan has increased steadily, the staggering difference between estimated prevalence and penetration remains largely unchanged.[1]



[1]California Department of Health Care Services. Performance Dashboard AB 470 Report Application. Available at https://data.chhs.ca.gov/dataset/adult-ab470-datasets/resource/c1908f78-3716-4b91-8afa-0dc9c3c2058a.
[2]UCLA Center for Health Policy Research. California Health Interview Survey, 2017. Available at http://ask.chis.ucla.edu
[3]California Department of Health Care Services. Adults Older than 20 Receiving Psychosocial Services Statewide by Fiscal Year as of 5/1/2019. Available at https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/MH/Documents/20190501_Psychosocial_Utilization_Adult.pdf
[4]California Department of Health Care Services. Medi-Cal Managed Care Performance Dashboard, March 28, 2019. Available at https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/Documents/MMCD/March28_2019Release.pdf.