CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES • OFFICE OF WOMEN'S HEALTH

CWHS

Data Points

RESULTS FROM THE CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

DESIRE FOR AND RECEIPT OF MENTAL HEALTH CARE FOR WOMEN BY POVERTY STATUS, CALIFORNIA, 2000

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Good mental health means having the mental energy to function well at home, work, and play. Good mental health means being able to tend to everyday activities without feeling overly anxious, depressed, or worried. Most Americans believe that good mental health is just as important as good physical health.[1]

Poverty has long been associated with poor physical health status. Limited population-based information is currently available about the association between good mental health and poverty status.

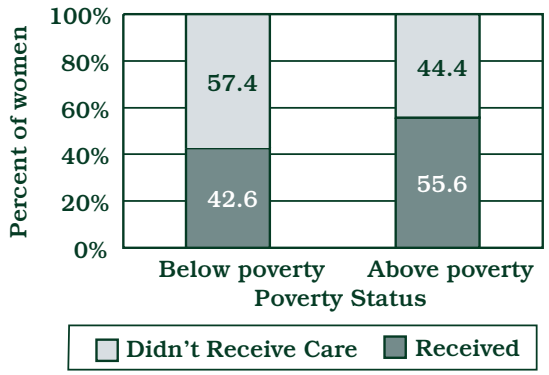
The 2000 California Women's Health Survey provided an opportunity to examine women's desire for mental health care, receipt of mental health care, and poverty status. The survey asked women, ***"In the past 12 months, did you ever want help with personal or family problems from a mental health professional such as a social worker, psychiatrist, psychologist or counselor"*** and ***"In the past 12 months did you visit a mental health professional to talk about personal or family problems?"***

- Of all women surveyed, 20% reported that they wanted to talk with a mental health professional and of these, 53.1% reported they visited a mental health professional within the past 12 months.
- Of those women who reported their annual income and were at or below the Federal Poverty Level, 19% wanted to talk with a mental health professional. For women who were above the Federal Poverty Level, 22% wanted to talk with a mental health professional.
- While approximately the same percentage of women regardless of income level wanted to talk with a mental health professional, women with incomes above the poverty level were more likely than women at or below the poverty level to visit a mental health professional, 55.6% vs. 42.6%.

Note: The Federal Poverty Level is defined as having an annual income of less than $16,984 for a family of four.

[1] APA Help Center, "Get the Facts: Psychology in Daily Life—How to Achieve Good Mental Health," 1996.

Women Who Desired Mental Health Care and Whether or Not They Received It by Poverty Status, California, 2000



Public Health Message:

Of California women surveyed who want mental health care, women in poverty were less likely to receive mental health care if they wanted it. Outreach efforts should be directed toward women in poverty to ensure they have ready access to mental health services.

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