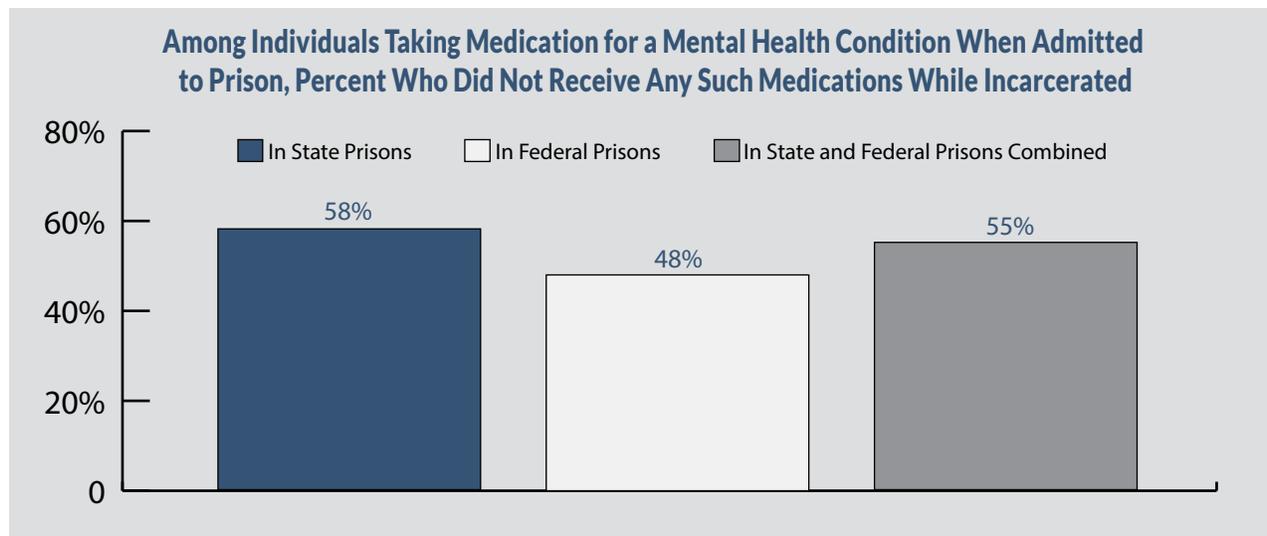




More Than Half of People Taking Mental Health Meds When Admitted to Prison Did Not Receive Them While Incarcerated

A recent study published in the *American Journal of Public Health* reported that more than half of individuals taking prescription medication for a mental health condition when they entered prison did not continue to receive such medications while incarcerated. Researchers assessed medication continuity¹ using data from a nationally representative sample of 18,185 individuals held in state and federal prisons.² Among the 18% in both state and federal prisons who had been taking medication for a mental health condition when they entered prison,³ 55% did not continue receiving such medications while incarcerated (58% in state prisons and 48% in federal prisons). Additionally, 61% of those receiving medication for such conditions in prison used no other form of treatment. Authors suggested that a more holistic, multidimensional approach to mental health treatment, including release and reintegration transitional plans that help maintain positive effects of prison-based treatment, may lead to improved outcomes and lower recidivism rates among this high-risk population. They urged prison administrators to prioritize the use of effective screening and treatment for mental and physical health conditions.



Source:

Reingle Gonzalez, J. M. and Connell, N. M. (2014). Mental health of prisoners: Identifying barriers to mental health treatment and medication continuity. *American Journal of Public Health* 104(12), 2328-2333. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2014.302043.

Notes:

¹ Respondents who reported taking medication at admission to prison and during incarceration were considered to have medication continuity.

² Researchers obtained data from 14,499 individuals in state and 3,686 in federal prisons interviewed as part of the Bureau of Justice Statistics' 2004 Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities. Respondents were asked if they had ever been told by a mental health professional that they had any of a series of mental or emotional conditions, including a depressive disorder; manic-depression, bipolar disorder, or mania; schizophrenia or another psychotic disorder; posttraumatic stress disorder; another anxiety disorder, such as a panic disorder; a personality disorder; or any other mental or emotional condition. Those answering affirmatively were asked if they had been taking medication prescribed by a doctor for such conditions when admitted to prison and while incarcerated.

³ One-quarter (26%) of participants reported receiving at least one mental health diagnosis in their lifetime.

Prepared by the Center for Health and Justice (CHJ) at TASC. CHJ works to build, enhance, and sustain strong and vibrant communities by promoting policies and practices that stop the cycle of drugs and crime. We conduct research and evaluations, and offer policy analysis, trainings, and technical assistance in the fields of health and justice. For more information, visit us online at www.centerforhealthandjustice.org.

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