

# Mood Disorder

## Survey Report



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## About NAMI

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness.

What started as a small group of families gathered around a kitchen table in 1979 has grown into the nation's leading voice on mental health. Today, we are an association of thousands that includes state organizations, local affiliates and volunteers who raise awareness and provide advocacy, education and support in communities across the United States.

## Acknowledgements

This guide was prepared by The Harris Poll on behalf of NAMI and is based on the findings of an April–May 2021 survey developed in collaboration with NAMI staff, Dr. Ken Duckworth, Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Teri Brister, National Director, Research, Support & Education, and Elizabeth Stafford, Director of Research. This project was possible in part due to generous support from Lundbeck, Myriad Genetics, Sage Therapeutics and Takeda.

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## Executive Letter

At the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), it is our mission to help people with mental illness get the care they need to build better lives. Connecting people to care is more than simply spreading information about how to access treatment. It is also understanding the barriers that prevent people from seeking care — and breaking down these barriers through research, education, awareness and advocacy.

It is with this guiding principle that many NAMI programs and projects are developed, including our 2021 Mood Disorder Survey. After the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting emotional turmoil highlighted the widespread need for better access to affordable, quality mental health care in our communities, we felt there was an opportunity to delve deeper and expand the conversation through this survey. Our hope was to better understand mood disorders, how they impact individuals and their loved ones, and what challenges they face in getting appropriate care and support.

Before conducting the survey, we knew that one of the primary barriers people with mood disorders face is stigma. People with a diagnosis commonly report that they are treated differently by those around them after sharing their mental health struggles, and that other people simply don't understand what it is like to have a mood disorder. Consequently, we surveyed people with lived experience of having a mood disorder and people with no experience. This allows us to benchmark what we are facing in terms of public perception and stigma. We can't possibly meet the needs of those with mood disorders without addressing the stigma and discrimination they face.

Beyond stigma, another major hurdle is the cost of treatment. To fuel our advocacy efforts to make mental health care more affordable, we wanted real data from those seeking services regarding cost of treatment and its relationship to likelihood of seeking help. In order to convince local, state and federal policymakers to prioritize mental health care, we must demonstrate the impact of a lack of affordable treatment options.

NAMI is an organization that focuses not only on people with mental health conditions, but also on their loved ones and caregivers. Through this survey, we heard from caregivers directly about their own mental health, specifically the emotional impact of caregiving duties, and the barriers to care that they are facing. Due to the stress and challenges of this role, it is essential for us to ensure that caregivers also have access to mental health treatment and support to help them prioritize their own mental health.

We also decided to spotlight several populations: young adults, people of color and frontline professionals. We chose these populations based on existing research that indicates they face unique barriers to care. To equitably address stigma, discrimination and other barriers to treatment, we must understand the needs and experiences of all communities.

When attempting to create change on this scale — improving our entire nation's access to mental health care — the first step is to understand the issues at hand from the people experiencing them. Through this research, we can pave the way forward to a world where everyone can get the care they need when they need it.

*Dan*

Daniel H. Gillison Jr.  
Chief Executive Officer

*Ken*

Ken Duckworth, MD  
Chief Medical Officer



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## Methodology

This survey was conducted online within the U.S. by The Harris Poll on behalf of NAMI from April 13 through May 10, 2021. The survey included three audiences: those who have been diagnosed with a mood disorder (n=2,093), caregivers to those who have been diagnosed with a mood disorder (n=507), and those with no personal mood disorder experience either with a diagnosis or as a caregiver (n=1,589). Self-reported mood disorder diagnoses included Bipolar Disorder, Dysthymia, Major Depressive Disorder, Post-Partum Depression, Seasonal Affective Disorder and other mood disorders. Data for each audience were weighted individually and then combined to a total general population sample of 2,308 U.S. adults.

## Demographics

Key demographics and subgroups shown in this report:

		Diagnosed with a mood disorder	Caregivers	No mood disorder experience	General population
		n=2,093	n=507	n=1,589	n=2,308
<b>Gender</b>	Male	39%	53%	49%	48%
	Female	59%	46%	50%	51%
	Other	3%	2%	1%	1%
<b>Age</b>	18-34	41%	39%	25%	29%
	35-64	49%	54%	49%	49%
	65+	10%	7%	25%	22%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	White	60%	57%	60%	61%
	Black/African American	11%	15%	13%	12%
	Hispanic	19%	20%	16%	16%
	Asian	3%	4%	8%	6%
	Other	7%	4%	3%	4%
<b>Frontline Professional</b>	Yes	42%	59%	15%	25%
	No	58%	41%	85%	75%



# Executive Summary

Mental health has become more of a priority in recent years, especially during the pandemic. While there has been progress in recognizing that mental health conditions are common, education about and access to mental health care are still lacking. Learning how the public perceives mood disorders is a first step toward breaking down stigma. Further, bettering our understanding of how mood disorders impact individuals and their loved ones can inform our efforts to strengthen support for the mental health community.

In this report, we share insights from people who have a mood disorder, their caregivers and the general population – as uncovered in the 2021 Mood Disorder Survey – to encourage you to put your mental health first, talk openly with those around you and work to reduce barriers to care.

## Key Findings

1

### Public Perceptions of Mood Disorders

U.S. adults understand that mental health challenges can affect anyone and have significant impacts when left untreated. Despite this acknowledgement, misperceptions exist and can lead to stigma and negative attitudes. **Slightly more than 9 in 10 adults say mental health challenges can affect anyone.**

2

### Living with a Mood Disorder

People who have a mood disorder experience a range of symptoms and impacts on their daily lives. Many treatments and supportive service options are considered helpful – if they can be accessed. Cost and eligibility confusion are common barriers to care. Peer support, which is free and often easier to access than clinical care, is consistently well-regarded, but may be hampered by persisting stigma. **8 in 10 who have had guidance and support from other people with lived experience say it has been helpful in improving the symptoms of their mood disorder.**

3

### Providing Care for Someone with a Mood Disorder

Individuals who provide care to someone with a mood disorder experience their own struggles. While many are beginning to take steps to support their own mental health, caregivers emphasize the need for better education and support for family members. **More than 8 in 10 caregivers report negative impacts on their life from providing care.**

4

### Mental Health and COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has fostered greater openness about mental health and shared experiences. Many are struggling to get adequate support during this time, but telehealth may be a valuable option and way to improve access to care. **The majority of people with a mood disorder who have used telehealth say it has made it easier for them to access mental health care.**

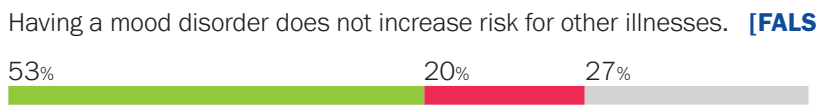
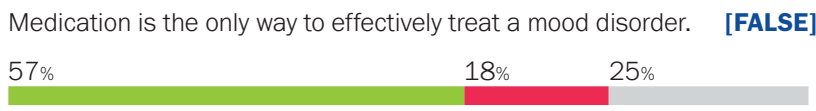
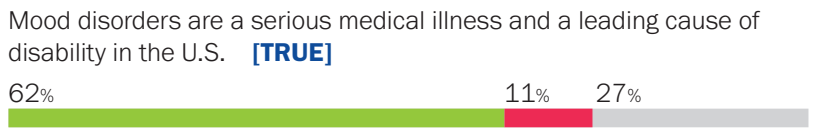
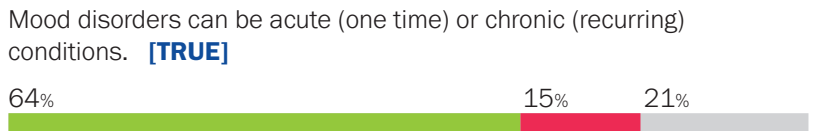
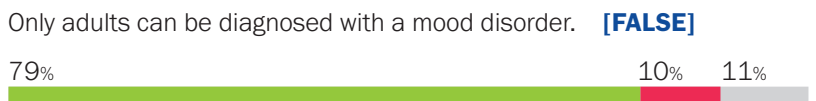
## Awareness and Knowledge of Mood Disorders

Mental health challenges are common and have persistent impacts. The general population acknowledges this, and also that mental health is increasingly important. Nearly all (91%) say mental health challenges can affect anyone. Further, many understand the impact that mood disorders can have on individuals and communities.

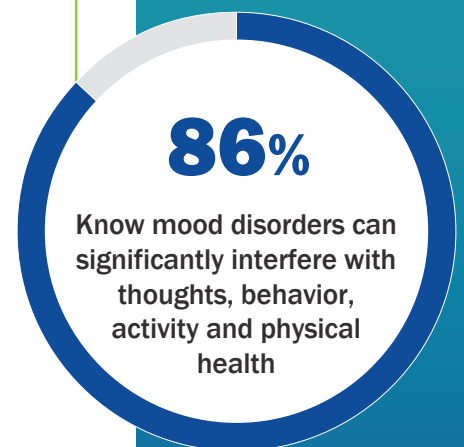
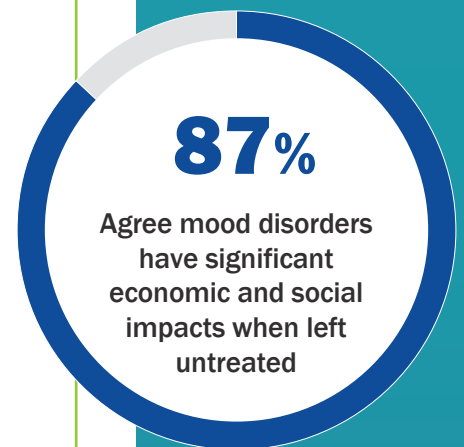
Given the breadth of impacts, the majority of U.S. adults (81%) say that mental health has become more of a health care priority in recent years. Although there is a focus on mental health, there is still a need to educate the public about mood disorders due to the general lack of understanding about these conditions. Adults' inability to correctly identify common facts and myths about mood disorders is evidence of this. While more than half of U.S. adults are able to do so, around 1 in 5 are not at all sure.

### U.S. Adults' Knowledge of Mood Disorders

● CORRECT ● INCORRECT ● NOT AT ALL SURE



### U.S. Adults' Understanding of Mood Disorder Impacts



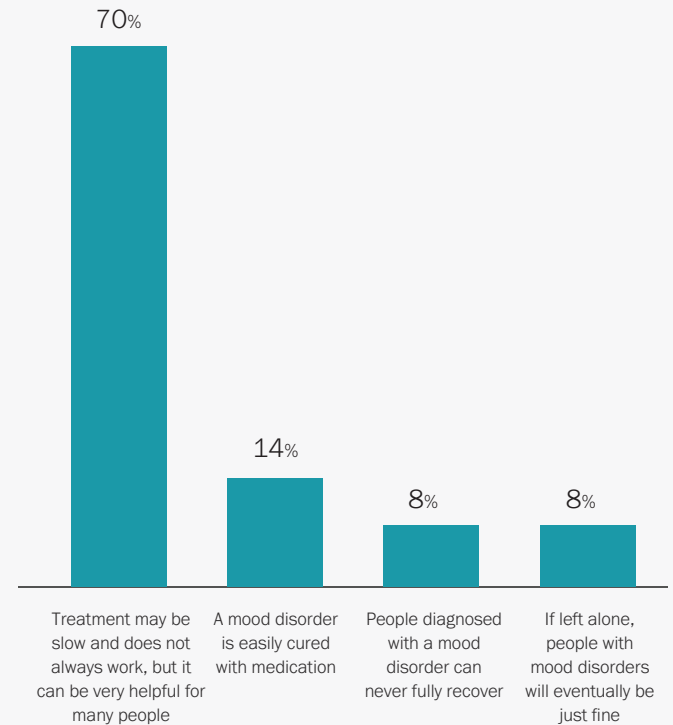
## Mood Disorder Treatment and Symptoms

There is general recognition of the helpfulness of treatment for mood disorders and many U.S. adults are aware that finding treatment can be difficult. The vast majority of U.S. adults (92%) believe most people diagnosed with a mood disorder could be helped if they received proper treatment. However, more than 8 in 10 (84%) say stigma is a major barrier to people accessing treatment for mood disorders.

While there is a recognition of stigma, harmful misperceptions exist. Around one-quarter of U.S. adults (27%) believe people diagnosed with a mood disorder could just “snap out of it” if they tried. Further, 3 in 10 (30%) do not know that mood disorders can affect a person for their whole life even if they get treatment, and many are uncertain regarding symptoms of mood disorders — particularly overestimating how often individuals with a diagnosis experience extreme mood changes.

The existence of these empathetic beliefs — the understanding of the need for treatment and the barriers stigma can bring — running in parallel with beliefs that stem from a place of judgment, again, point to an opportunity for greater education. Increased awareness may help mitigate these challenges and break the silence on mood disorders.

U.S. Adults' Views on Treatment for Mood Disorders



### Most Common Mood Disorder Symptoms

#### Knowledge of Mood Disorder Symptoms, According to Those with No Personal Experience

- 1 Extreme mood changes
- 2 Feeling excessively sad or low
- 3 Excessive worrying or fear
- 4 Avoiding friends and social activities
- 5 Prolonged or strong feelings of irritability or anger

#### Symptoms with the Greatest Impact on People with a Mood Disorder

- 1 Changes in sleeping habits or feeling tired/low energy
- 2 Feeling excessively sad or low
- 3 Excessive worrying or fear
- 4 Avoiding friends and social activities
- 5 Trouble concentrating and learning

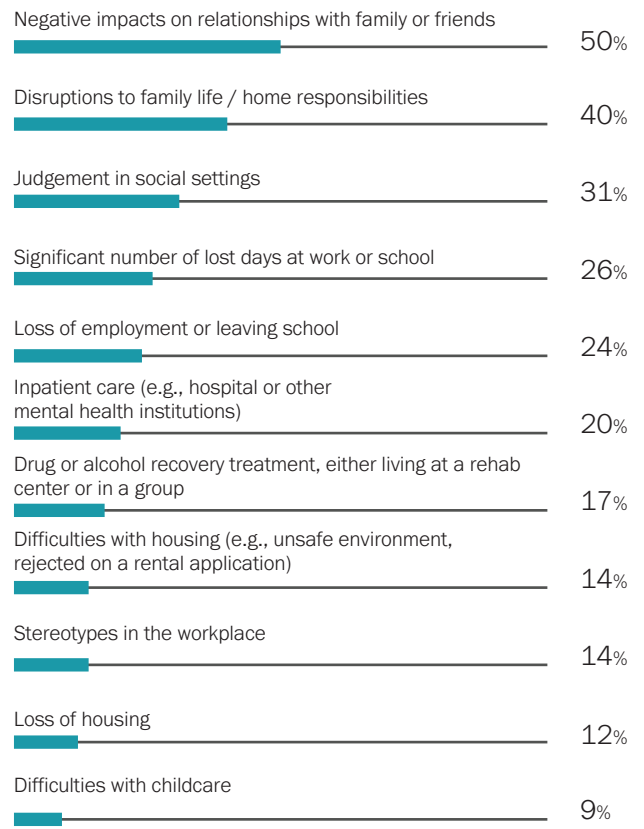


## Impact on Daily Life

People who have a mood disorder report experiencing symptoms daily. The impacts almost always persist beyond the individual person, touching their relationships, home life, social life, work and school. Most commonly, people with a mood disorder have experienced negative impacts on their relationships, disruptions to home responsibilities and judgement in social settings.

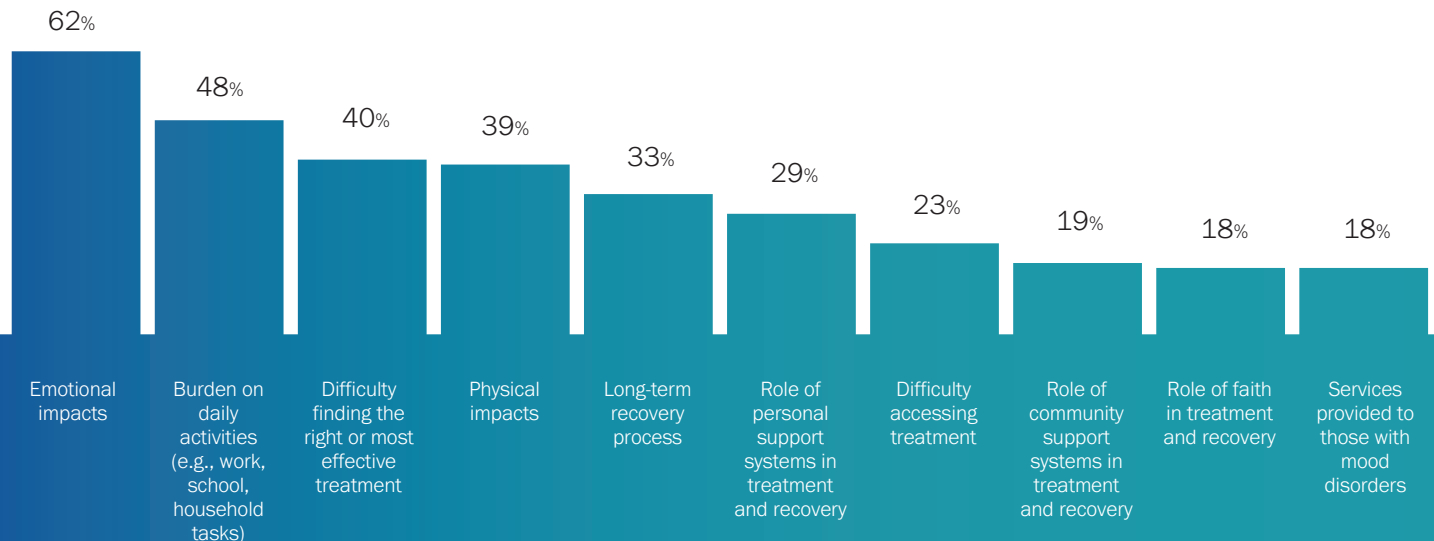
The data from the general public about their perceptions of those with a mood disorder, particularly when it comes to facts and myths, point to a misunderstanding of what it is like to live with a mood disorder. The misunderstanding is reinforced by the personal experiences of people who have mood disorders.

### Experiences Related to Living with a Mood Disorder



People with a mood disorder feel many aspects of their mood disorder are misunderstood by those around them, with more than 6 in 10 saying the emotional impacts of their mood disorder are misunderstood. Nearly half say the same for the burden on daily activities. These experiences may lead to feelings of isolation and judgement, enabling stigma to get in the way of seeking treatment.

### Aspects of Their Mood Disorder Least Understood by Those Around Them



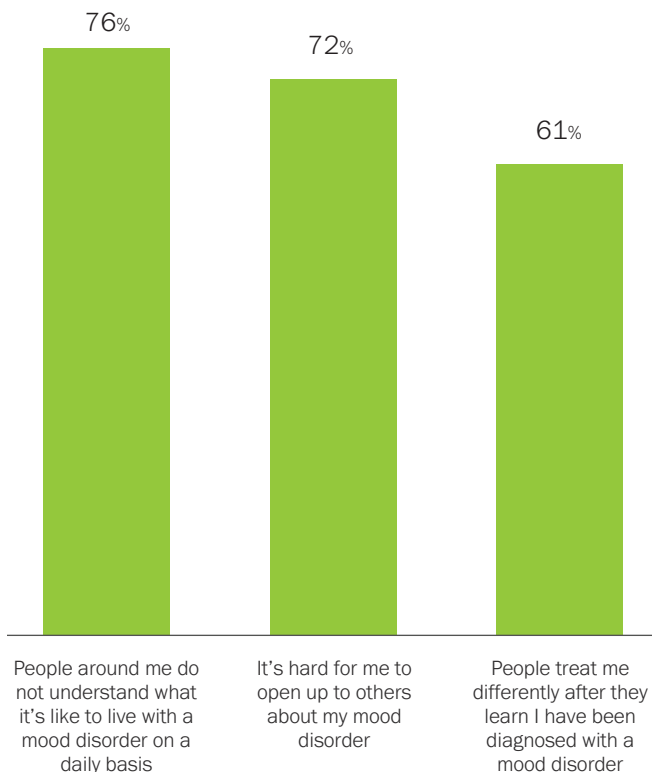
## Social Context

People with a mood disorder who experience symptoms that impact their relationships and interactions, and feel that certain aspects of their mood disorder are misunderstood, are left to navigate a complex social environment. Nearly three-quarters find it hard to open up about their mood disorder diagnosis. And, many feel misunderstood or like they are treated differently because of their mood disorder.

Nonetheless, there are some positive interactions — nearly three-quarters (73%) say when they tell others about their mood disorder, they are interested and supportive. Encouragingly, conversations about mood disorders often lead to greater openness and a sharing of experiences. Talking about mental health and promoting awareness may be one way to foster a social environment that is more welcoming and inclusive.

### Perceptions of People Who Have a Mood Disorder

% AGREE



### Openness About Mood Disorders

**75%**

Agree when they tell others about their mood disorder, they share their own mental health experiences

## Treatment and Support

Various treatments and supports are invaluable for people who have a mood disorder. The majority say their symptoms are well-managed (77%) and for those currently engaged in treatment, 82% are satisfied with it. When asked about the types of treatments used, those with a mood disorder most commonly said they used routine/maintenance psychiatric medication. Of those who use this, slightly more than 8 in 10 find it helpful. While many find treatments helpful, more than three-quarters (78%) say it is frustrating trying to find the right treatment.

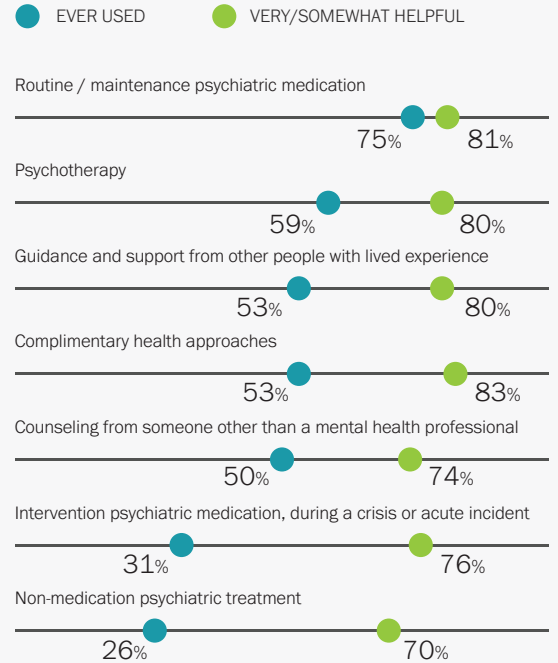
In addition to medications, many services and supports are also seen as helpful to those who have a mood disorder — and the support itself does not have to be formal. In fact, the most commonly used and most helpful support is financial or practical support from family or friends. Further, the majority say guidance and support from peers with lived experience has been helpful in improving the symptoms of their mood disorder. To this point, supportive personal relationships (47%) rises to the top of what has been helpful for mood disorder management and the recovery process. The general public realizes how valuable this is, too.

Though informal support from peers, family and friends is seen as helpful, this is not to say that formal assistance is not needed or wanted. Nearly three-quarters of those who have not received financial support from the government think it would be helpful. This also helps to ensure a financial safety net when that is not possible from a person's social network.

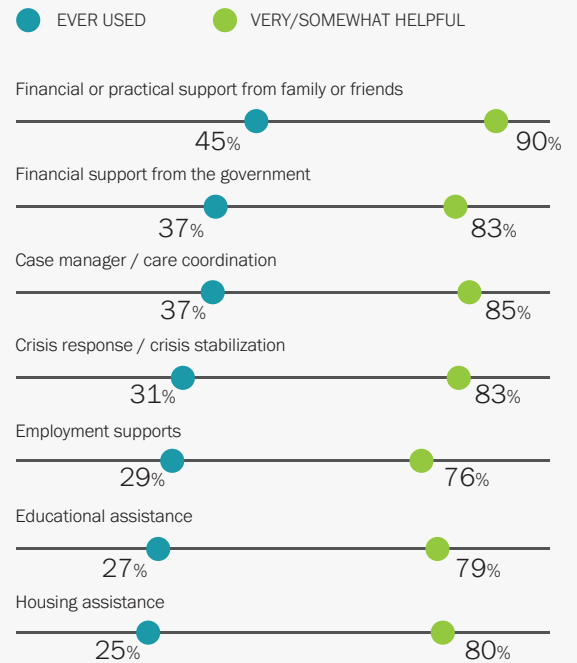
### U.S. Adults' View on Peer Support



### Mood Disorder Treatments Used and Helpfulness of Each



### Supports Used and Helpfulness of Each



## Barriers to Care

More than half (58%) of people with a mood disorder have experienced a time when they wanted mental health treatment but did not end up receiving it. The top reason cited is they could not afford the treatment (44%). The top barrier to accessing treatments they are interested in, but have never used, is also cost (52%). This is significant considering nearly two-thirds (64%) are interested in a mood disorder treatment that they have never used.

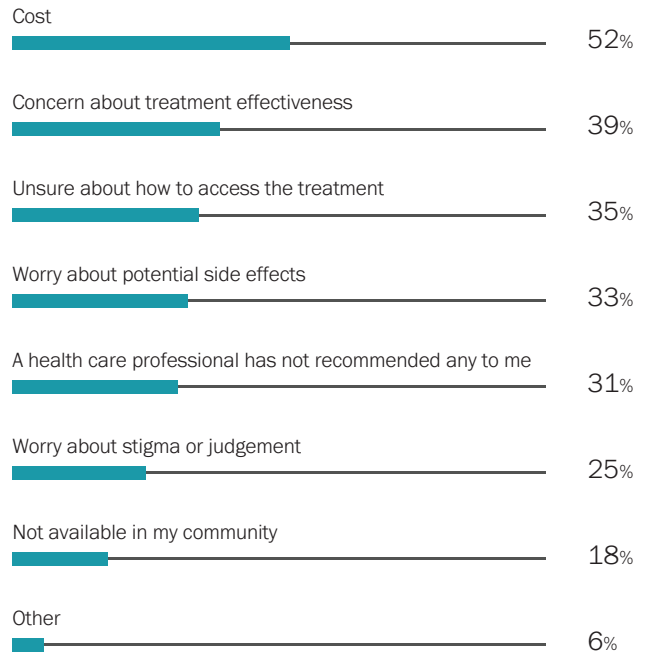
While cost is a common barrier to accessing mental health care, it is not the only one.

- The majority (87%) say stigma is a major barrier to people accessing treatment for mood disorder.
- The most common barrier to receiving a support (e.g., financial support from the government, case manager/care coordination, housing assistance) they think would be helpful is uncertainty about their eligibility (48%).

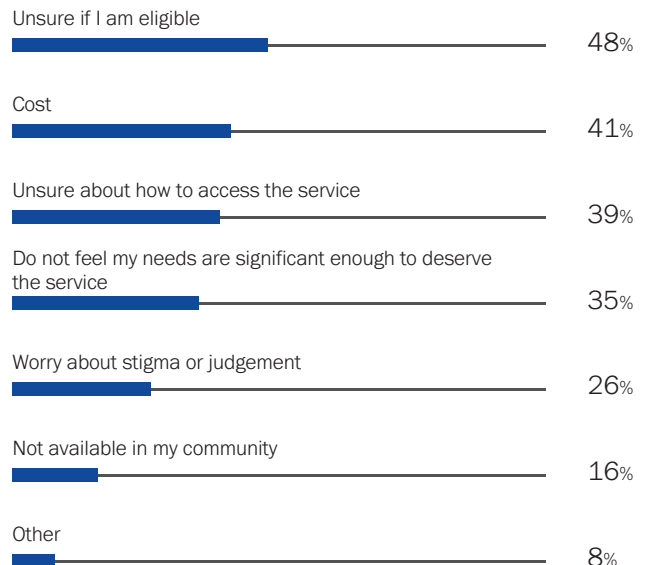
The findings indicate that resources – whether that be money or information – are substantial barriers to care for those who have a mood disorder.



### Reasons for Not Using a Mood Disorder Treatment They Are Interested In (Among those interested in a treatment they have not used)



### Reasons for Not Receiving a Support They Think Would Be Helpful (Among those who think a support they have not received would be helpful)



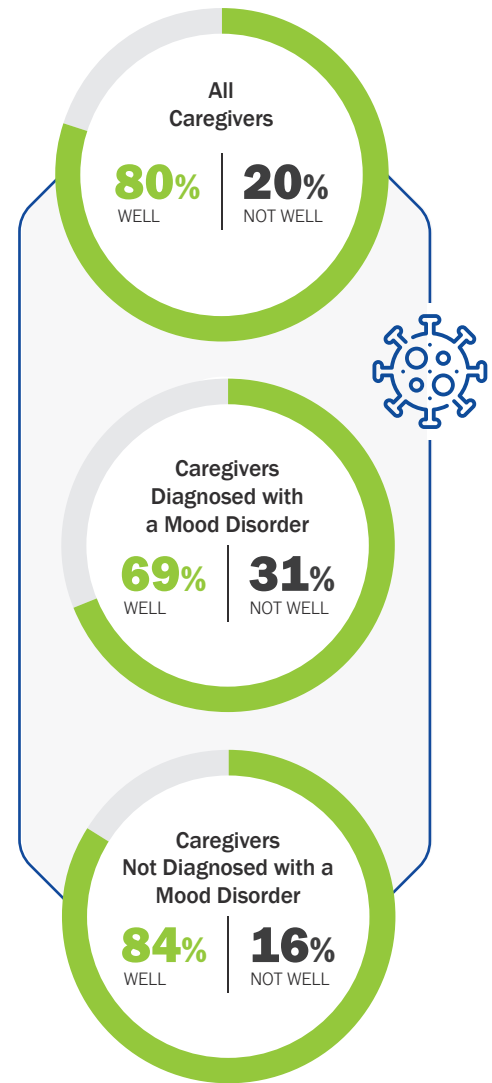
## Caregivers' Mental Health

Caregivers of people with a mood disorder face their own mental health challenges. The vast majority (87%) experienced symptoms of a mood disorder within the last two weeks and more than a quarter (28%) have been diagnosed with a mood disorder. The pandemic is likely to have exacerbated mental health struggles. During the COVID-19 pandemic, 1 in 5 caregivers say they did not cope well with changes to everyday life, and among caregivers who have also been diagnosed with a mood disorder, nearly one-third say they struggled to cope.

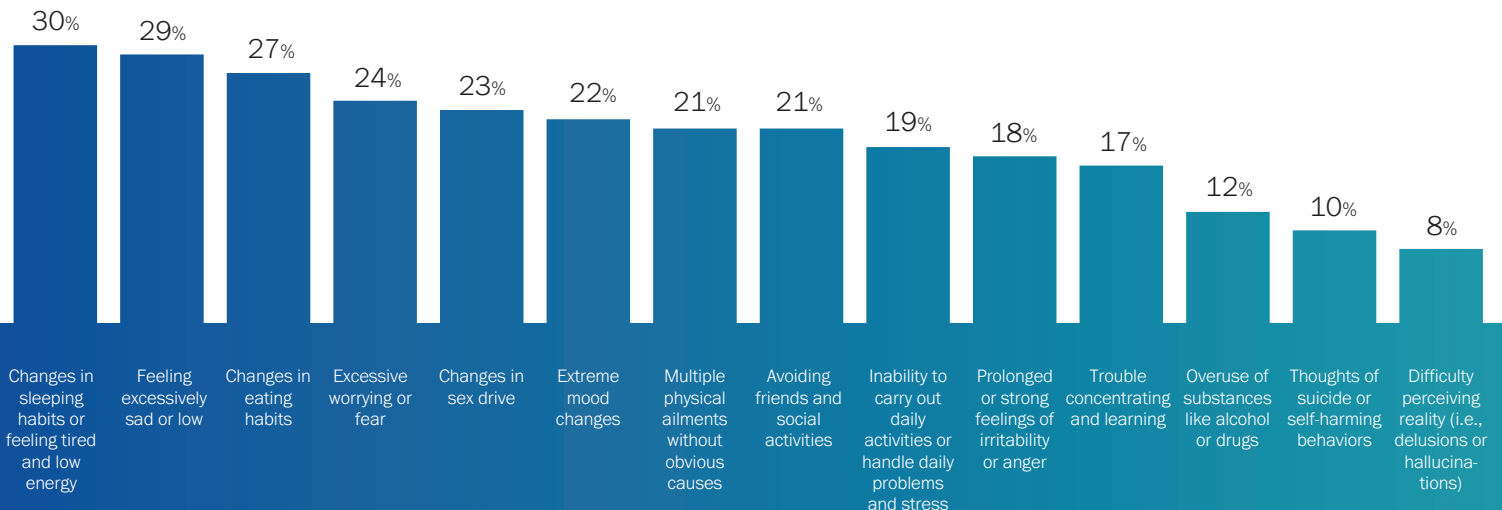
Encouragingly, many are beginning to take steps to support their own mental health. Most caregivers (73%) have been more open with others about their mental health since the COVID-19 pandemic started. And of the nearly half (47%) who currently receive mental health treatment, 73% started receiving it within the past year.

These findings highlight the struggles of caregivers and the intersection of caring for someone with a mood disorder while experiencing a mood disorder themselves. The experience is common as 28% of caregivers also report having their own mood disorder diagnosis. While many caregivers are reporting mental health challenges, those who also have a mood disorder may be in particular need of support.

### How Well Caregivers Coped with Changes to Everyday Life During the COVID-19 Pandemic



### Mood Disorder Symptoms Experienced in the Past Two Weeks

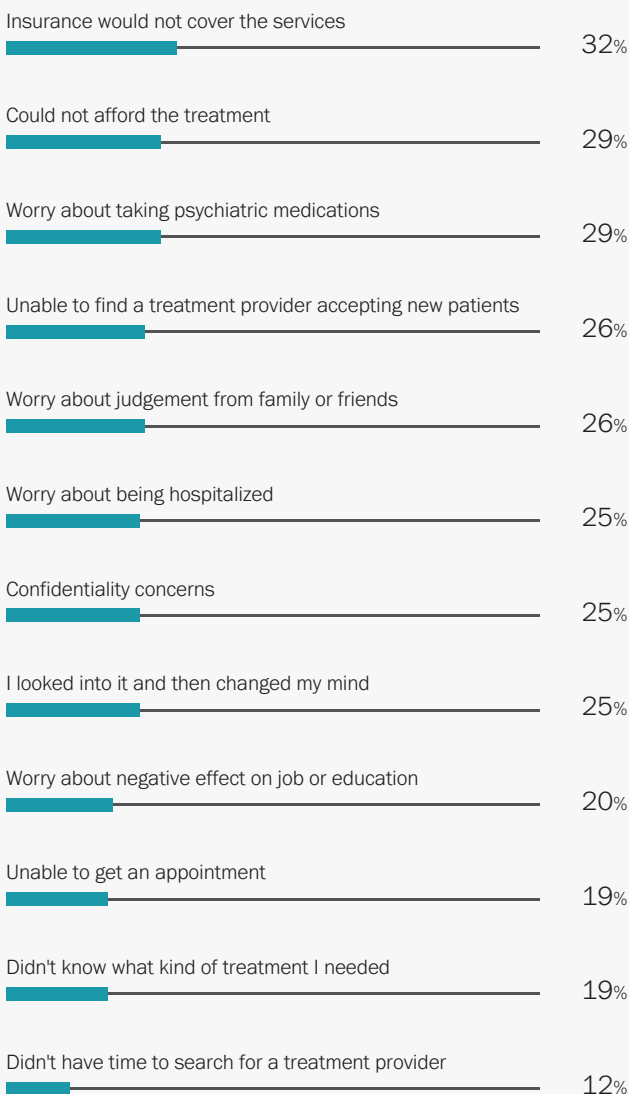




## Barriers to Care

Survey findings demonstrate that caregivers have their own mental health struggles. The findings also show that many caregivers' mental health needs are not being met. More than half (56%) have experienced a time when they wanted mental health treatment but did not receive it. The top reasons for this are that insurance wouldn't cover the services and they could not afford the treatment. In addition, many (54%) say they are unable to get the support they need for their mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Reasons Caregivers Did Not Receive Mental Health Treatment When They Wanted It

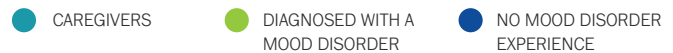


Beyond logistical barriers, there is also a knowledge gap that may be preventing caregivers from accessing their own mental health care. Caregivers are less likely to recognize facts and myths about mood disorder impacts and treatment than those diagnosed with a mood disorder and those with no mood disorder experience. Encouragingly, caregivers seem interested in learning more about mental health conditions in order to better support their family member's recovery – family education and support resources (35%) and education about mood disorders and treatment options (35%) are among the resources commonly cited as helpful in managing a family member's mood disorder.

The barriers to care are similar for caregivers as they are for those with a mood disorder. In each case, lack of financial resources and lack of understanding are obstacles for many as they experience mental health challenges.

### Knowledge of Mood Disorders

#### % CORRECT



Mood disorders can significantly interfere with thoughts, behavior, activity and physical health

[TRUE]



Only adults can be diagnosed with a mood disorder

[FALSE]



Psychotherapy and counseling are not effective treatments for people with serious mental health conditions

[FALSE]



Medication is the only way to effectively treat a mood disorder

[FALSE]



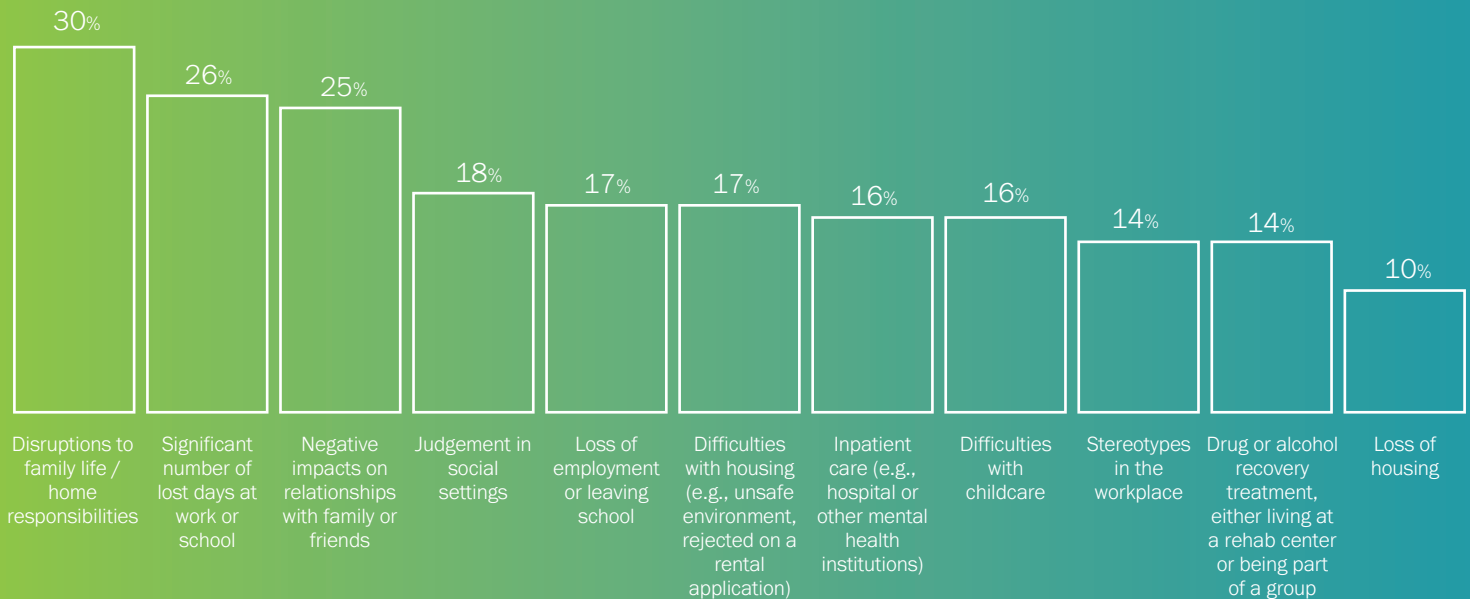
## Impact of Providing Care

In tandem with managing and prioritizing their own mental health, caregivers are helping someone else, often a loved one, meet their mental health needs. As a result of providing this essential care, caregivers' lives have been impacted. The majority (83%) report some type of negative impact on their life; most commonly, caregivers have experienced disruptions to family life/home responsibilities, a significant number of lost days at work or school, and negative impacts on relationships with family or friends.

Those who provide care for someone age 65+ are twice as likely to report daily life disruptions compared to those whose care recipient is under the age of 24 (43% vs. 21%). These findings again point to caregivers' need for support – whether it is because they are struggling with a mood disorder themselves, symptoms of a mood disorder or even the challenges associated with aging.



### Experiences as a Result of Providing Care for Someone with a Mood Disorder



## Care Recipients' Treatment and Support

Caregivers have a positive outlook about their care recipients' use of treatment and supports. Nearly 9 in 10 (89%) say their care recipient is satisfied with their current treatment. Further, they report high treatment usage and are more likely than those diagnosed with a mood disorder to say routine/maintenance psychiatric medication, guidance and support from other people with lived experience and counseling from someone other than a mental health professional have been helpful.

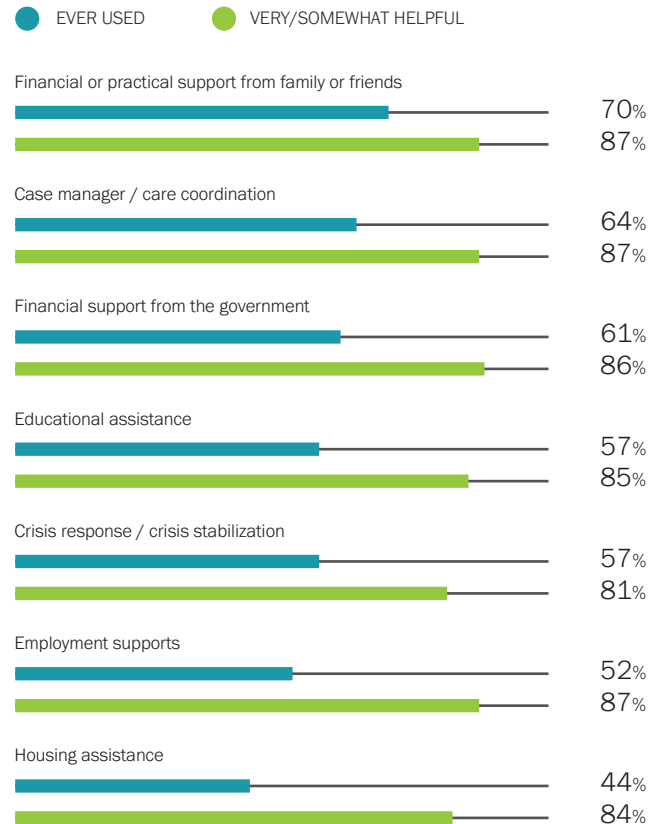
Compared to individuals with a mood disorder, caregivers are around twice as likely to say that their care recipient has received each service and support (e.g., financial support from the government, case manager/care coordination, housing assistance, etc.). The strong majority say the services and supports received have been helpful, which is generally on par with sentiments from those who have been diagnosed with a mood disorder.

In conjunction with these existing treatments and supports, improving family education could have a major impact. Caregivers are twice as likely as those who have a mood disorder to say family education and support resources have been helpful to their care recipient in the management of their mood disorder and recovery process (35% vs. 18%).

### Care Recipients' Mood Disorder Treatments Used and Helpfulness of Each



### Care Recipients' Supports Received and Helpfulness of Each



# Youth and Young Adults

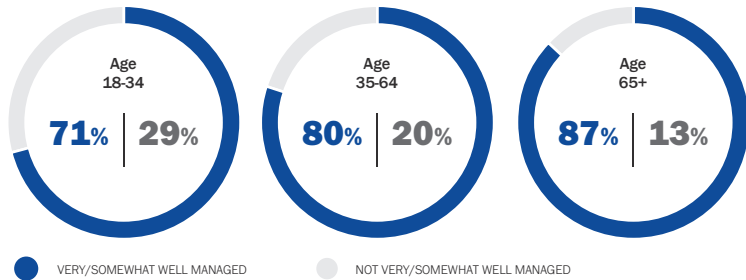
Younger adults ages 18-34 who are diagnosed with a mood disorder particularly face mental health challenges and hardships in the treatment journey. They are more likely than older adults to say the symptoms of their mood disorder are not well managed and that they have not coped well with changes to everyday life during the COVID-19 pandemic. The youngest adults ages 18-24 are particularly likely to report negative impacts as a result of living with a mood disorder (93% vs. 66%-83% for other age ranges).

Further, younger adults are particularly struggling to have their care needs met. More than two-thirds of younger adults have ever experienced a time when they wanted mental health treatment but did not receive it (68%). More than half have been unable to get the support they need for their mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic (57%). One barrier to care affecting this group is stigma. Younger adults are most likely to say worry about stigma or judgement has prevented them from trying a treatment they're interested in or a support they think would be helpful.

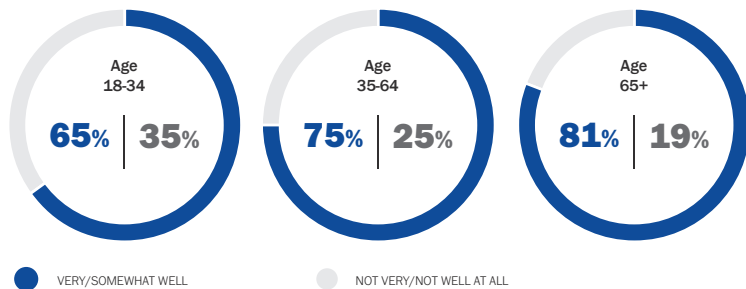
With the experience of a mood disorder being more prevalent among younger adults, it is somewhat surprising that stigma persists among this cohort. Similar to what was seen with the broader group of adults with a mood disorder, access is also a widespread barrier. These two issues signal a need for continued improvement in both attitudes toward mood disorders and resources to help people experiencing mood disorders access care.



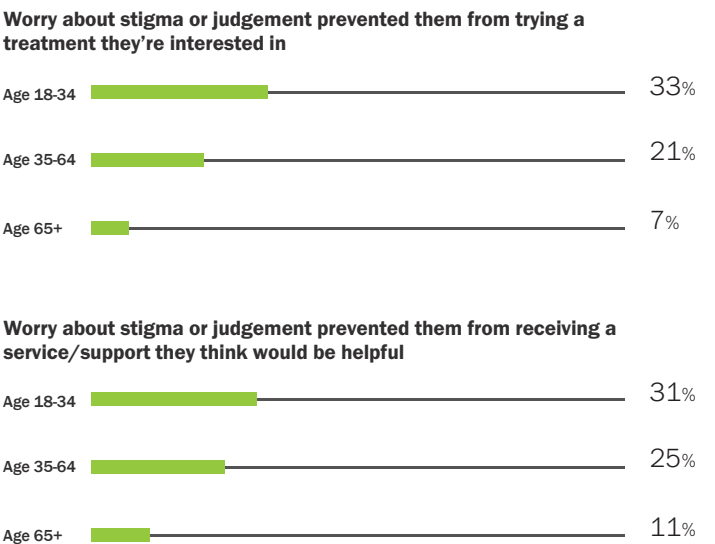
## Symptoms of Mood Disorder Are Not Well Managed



## How Well They Coped with Changes to Everyday Life During the COVID-19 Pandemic



## Stigma or Judgement Has Prevented Access to Treatments or Services/Supports (Among those interested in a treatment they have not tried/think a support they have not received would be helpful)



## People of Color

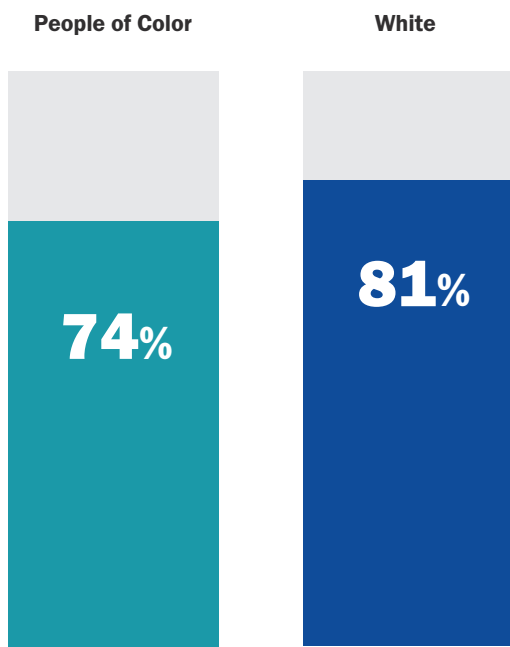
People of color who are diagnosed with a mood disorder are more likely than white adults to have opened up about their mental health during the pandemic. However, they generally report more difficulty sharing their experiences with others, indicating that openness during the pandemic does not translate to improvements in everyday life.

People of color, particularly Hispanic and Asian adults, are more likely to say they did not cope well with changes to everyday life during the pandemic and nearly half (49%) have been unable to get the support they need for their mental health during the pandemic (compared with 43% of white adults). The majority of people of color (64%) have experienced a time when they wanted mental health treatment but did not receive it, including 70% of Hispanic adults; only 54% of white adults say the same. When people of color receive care, they are less likely than white adults to have positive experiences with health care professionals.

The racial disparities are clear. People of color are more likely to report struggles coping with a mood disorder and finding support. These results highlight how health disparities have real impacts on individuals and consistently disadvantage people of color.

### Have Had Positive Experiences with Health Care Professionals During Their Experience with a Mood Disorder

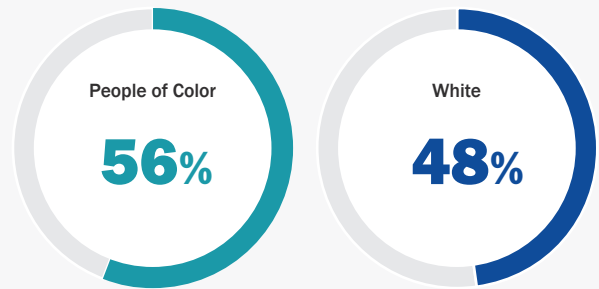
% AGREE



## Openness About Mental Health

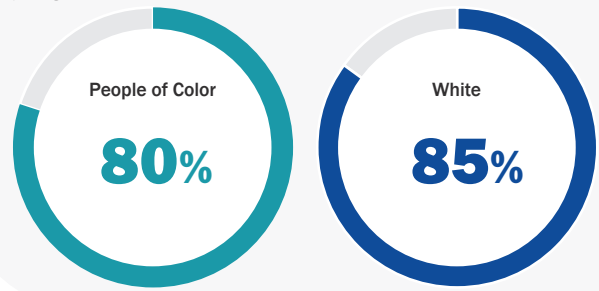
I have been more open with others about my mental health since the COVID-19 pandemic started

% AGREE



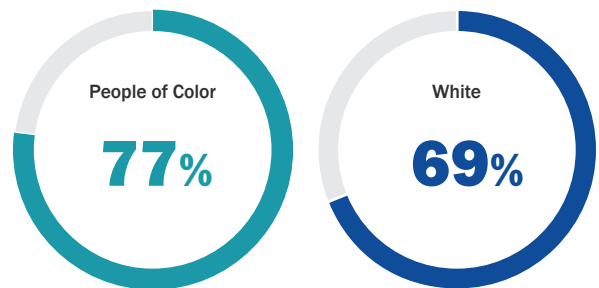
Have told someone about their mood disorder diagnosis

% YES

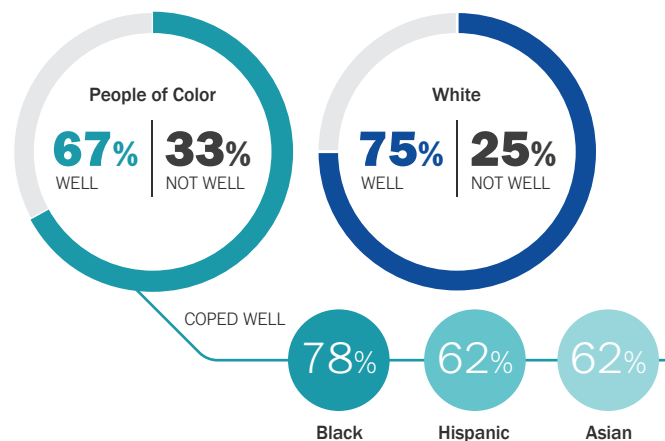


It is hard for me to open up to others about my mood disorder

% AGREE



### How They Coped with Changes to Everyday Life During the Pandemic



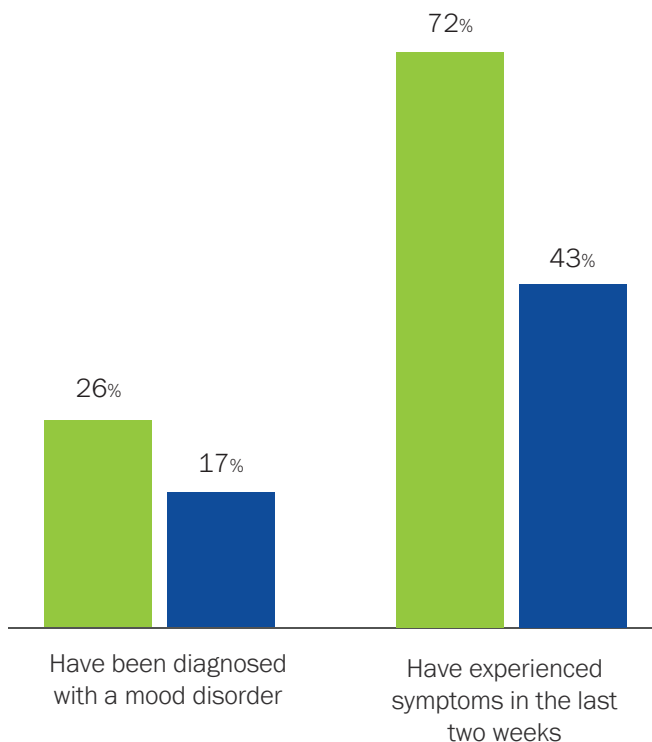


## Frontline Professionals

Due to the nature of their jobs, frontline health care or public safety professionals (e.g., first responders, medical professionals, law enforcement or other public safety professionals) have had a different experience during the COVID-19 pandemic than other workers. Survey findings revealed that these different experiences may have had an impact on their mental health – frontline professionals are more likely than those who are not frontline professionals to be diagnosed with a mood disorder and to have experienced symptoms within the last two weeks. Among the frontline professionals diagnosed with a mood disorder, nearly three-quarters (74%) have experienced a time when they wanted mental health treatment but did not end up receiving it (compared with 53% of those diagnosed with a mood disorder who are not frontline professionals). The top barriers to care for frontline professionals are being unable to afford the treatment (33%) and worry about being hospitalized (31%).

### Experiences with a Mood Disorder

● FRONTLINE PROFESSIONALS ● NON-FRONTLINE PROFESSIONALS



There are also significant misperceptions among this population. Nearly two-thirds of frontline professionals (65%) don't tell others about their mood disorder because they would think they are weak, compared with 47% of those who are not frontline professionals. The perception that you can "snap out of" a mood disorder is also very prevalent.

Given their unique struggles, and knowing that frontline professionals may not be sharing their experiences due to a misunderstanding about mood disorders, more information and support for these workers is needed.

AMONG THOSE DIAGNOSED WITH A MOOD DISORDER

**57%**

OF FRONTLINE PROFESSIONALS

Agree people diagnosed with a mood disorder could just "snap out of it" if they tried

**18%**

OF NON-FRONTLINE PROFESSIONALS

Agree people diagnosed with a mood disorder could just "snap out of it" if they tried

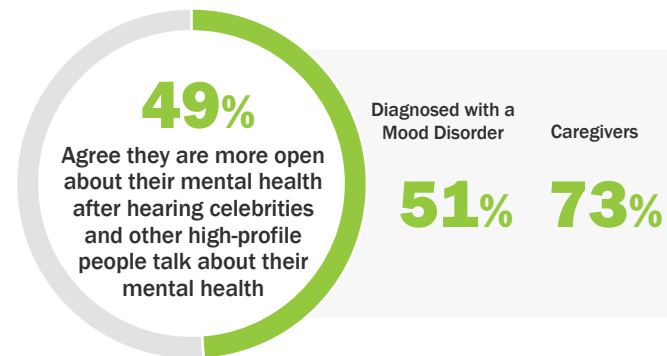
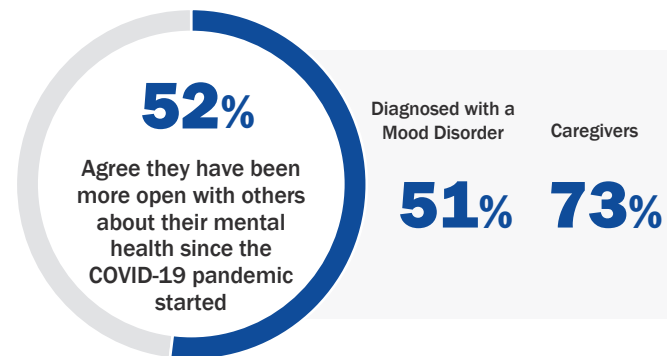
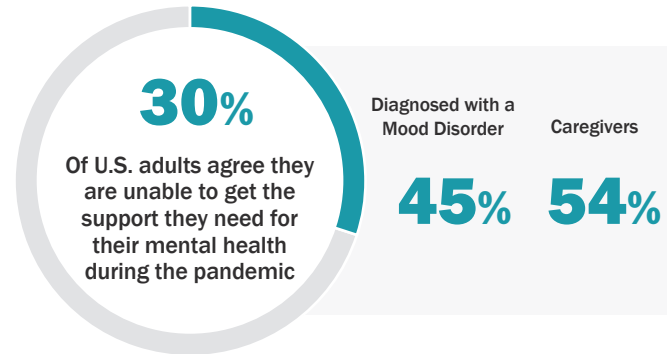
## Experiences During the COVID-19 Pandemic

With the pandemic continuing, during Spring 2021, nearly half of U.S. adults (47%) said that they experienced symptoms of a mood disorder, and most adults who have been diagnosed with a mood disorder (89%) or are caregivers (87%) experienced symptoms. Further, many are unable to get necessary mental health support during the pandemic.

Although the pandemic has presented new challenges, it has also been a period of openness and shared experiences. Around half of U.S. adults have been more open about their mental health during the pandemic and are more open after hearing celebrities talk about their mental health. These open conversations are one way to reduce the harmful stigma around mood disorders.

To this point, slightly more than half of those currently receiving mental health treatment indicated that they started receiving it within the last year. Notably, caregivers of those diagnosed with a mood disorder have made significant improvements during the pandemic in terms of openness and mental health treatment.

While these findings on openness and treatment are positive, those about stigma and access demonstrate more progress needs to be made, especially in light of the pandemic's continual impacts.



### Started Receiving Mental Health Treatment Within the Past Year

(Among those who receive treatment)



Total



Diagnosed with a Mood Disorder



Caregivers

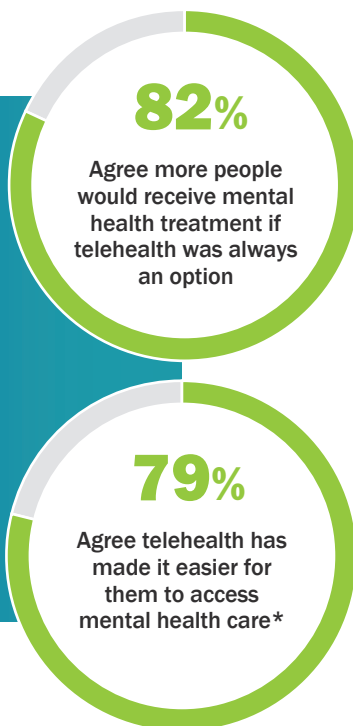
## Telehealth

Telehealth has grown in popularity and availability during the pandemic, and this has proven valuable to those seeking care. This tool may increase treatment use and access to care. Among people who have a mood disorder, nearly half (49%) are currently using telehealth for treatment for their mood disorder, and 61% have ever used it – of those, more than 8 in 10 (83%) have been satisfied with telehealth.

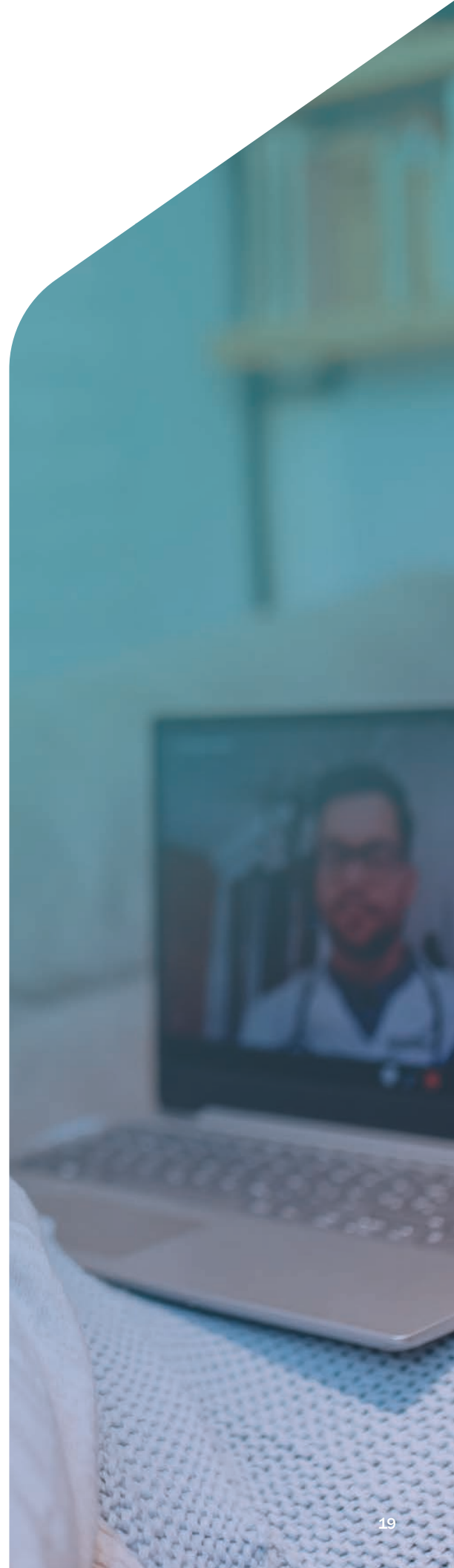
In addition to convenience, telehealth can also minimize common barriers to care like transportation to appointments, finding a provider in your local community, and worry about going to in-person appointments. To this point, the majority of those who have used telehealth for treatment say it made it easier for them to access care.

As the pandemic continues, the use of telehealth likely won't decrease. Considering that many find it helpful, this is positive progress, but it is progress that necessitates policies that support it as an effective form of treatment.

### Impact of Telehealth on Access to Care for Those Diagnosed with a Mood Disorder



\*Among those who have used telehealth for treatment for their mood disorder.





YOU ARE  
**NOT**  
ALONE

## Next Steps

Through this survey, we hope to reassure people with mood disorders that you are not alone and that you don't have to hide your challenges with mental health. In fact, talking with family and friends about mental health and acknowledging your shared experiences can help improve your symptoms as well as minimize feelings of stigma or judgment you may be holding on to. Most important, we want you to keep in mind that your mental health is a priority – **physically**, **emotionally** and **spiritually**.

We also want all people, whether you have experience with mood disorders or not, to know that increasing the understanding of mental health conditions is essential. Greater awareness and openness can foster a sense of inclusion and shared experiences for everyone. This not only helps reduce stigma and misperceptions, it also allows people with mental illness to get the care and support they need.

With that in mind, here are a few ways you can make a difference moving forward:

**1**

**Learn more about mental health conditions and spread awareness in your social circle.**

**2**

**Use non-stigmatizing language when talking about mental health.**

**3**

**Advocate for quality, affordable mental health care in your community.**

Together, we can break the silence on mood disorders, support one another and build communities that care about mental health.







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