

# Differences in Mental Health Care Needs Among Latinx Ethnic Groups in California



The **Latinx** population – the largest racial and ethnic group in California – is diverse, with unique experiences, cultural backgrounds, and demographic profiles, yet is often treated as a single homogeneous population. A new UCLA Center for Health Policy Research study examines **mental health distress, perceived need, and unmet need**, focusing on the variations among Latinx ethnic groups in California.

Mental health needs are measured in two different ways:

**Perceived need** asks adults whether they felt they needed help with mental, emotional, alcohol, or drug problems.



**Serious psychological distress (SPD) or moderate psychological distress (MPD)** is based on reporting symptoms related to depression and anxiety.

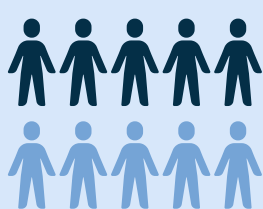


All Latinx and some ethnic groups were **more likely to report SPD/MPD**, which shows a need for mental health care, **than they were to think that they needed mental health care**. That could indicate a **mental health literacy gap**.

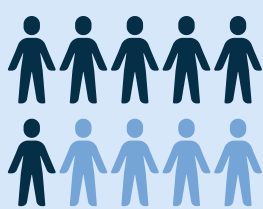


	All Latinx	Mexican	Other Central American*
SPD/MPD	20%	19%	20%
Perceived Need	17%	16%	13%

## Unmet Mental Health Needs Among Latinx Adults with Perceived Need vs. Latinx Adults with SPD or MPD



Nearly **5 out of 10** of all Latinx adults who **felt they needed mental health services** experienced unmet need for mental health care, however,



**6 out of 10** Latinx adults with **SPD or MPD** experienced unmet need for mental health care.

### What is unmet need?

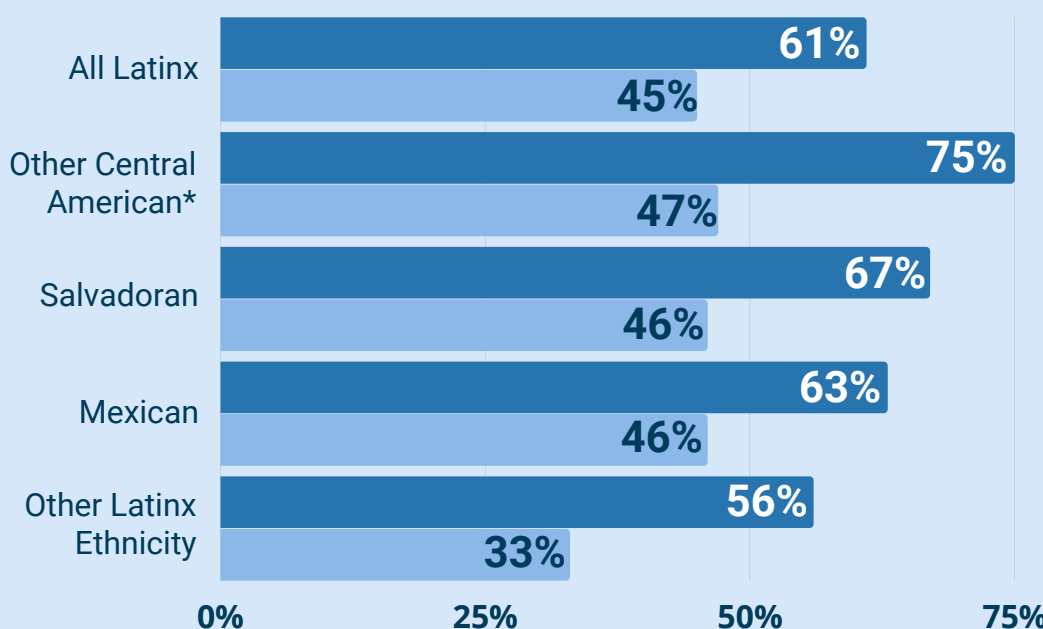
"Unmet need is adults with an identified need who did not receive the care they needed."

### What kind of unmet need was measured in the study?

"Latinx adults with SPD/MPD" and "Latinx adults who perceived they needed mental health services."



All Latinos and some ethnic groups with SPD or MPD were **more likely to have an unmet** need than their counterparts with a perceived need, which could also indicate a **mental health literacy gap**.



### Legend

- SPD or MPD
- Perceived Need

\*Other Central American includes Panamanian, Costa Rican, Nicaraguan, Honduran, Guatemalan, and Belizean

Source: 2015–2019 California Health Interview Survey (CHIS)

## Policy Recommendations

- Promote mental health literacy.
- Increase access to culturally and linguistically appropriate mental health services.
- Support policies on collecting and reporting disaggregated data.

Read the policy brief: <https://ucla.in/2UxPSnX>