

Office of Health Equity

Veterans Health Administration

Department of Veterans Affairs



IMPROVING ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH CARE FOR HISPANIC/LATINO VETERANS

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INTRODUCTION

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) serves a Veteran population that is increasingly racially and ethnically diverse. Equitable access to high-quality care for all Veterans is a major tenet of the VA healthcare mission. The Office of Health Equity (OHE) champions the elimination of health disparities and achieving health equity for all Veterans.

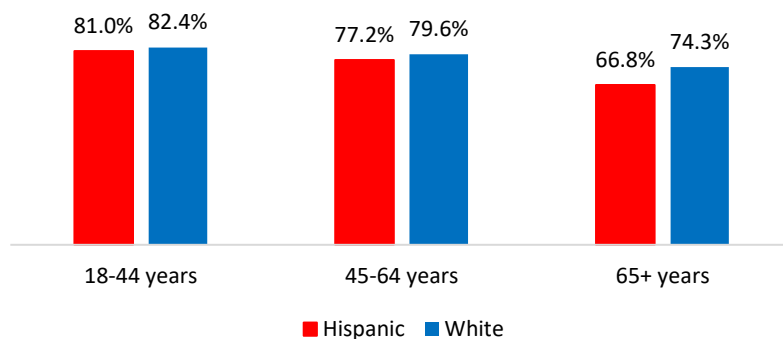
Hispanic Americans are one of the fastest growing racial or ethnic groups in America. Hispanic Veterans comprised 6.4% of all Veterans using VHA care in FY16-FY19. A higher proportion of women Veterans are Hispanic compared to male Veterans.

A higher proportion of Hispanic Veterans are women compared to non-Hispanic White Veterans. The National Veteran Health Equity Report 2021's Hispanic and Latino Veteran Chartbook provides comparative information on VHA patient experiences and health care quality by sociodemographic and health characteristics, including rates of depression screening in VHA users. This chartbook focuses on experiences of care and health care quality of Hispanic/Latino Veterans receiving care in VHA. Data in this report is from the fiscal year 2016 to fiscal year 2019

DIFFERENCES IN DEPRESSION SCREENING FOR HISPANIC AND WHITE VETERANS

The US Preventive Services Task Force recommends screening adults for depression in primary care because untreated depression causes emotional suffering, reduced productivity and lost wages, impaired relationships, and is often present with chronic diseases and illness. Hispanic Veterans ages 45 to 64 years and ages 65 years and older had meaningfully significant lower rates of screening for depression. However, similar rates of depression screening were reported by Hispanic and non-Hispanic White Veterans ages 18-44.

Percent of Veterans Screened for
Depression, FY16-19



From [The National Veteran Health Equity Report 2021's Hispanic and Latino Veteran Chartbook](#)



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TELEHEALTH USE FOR MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT AMONG HISPANIC VETERANS

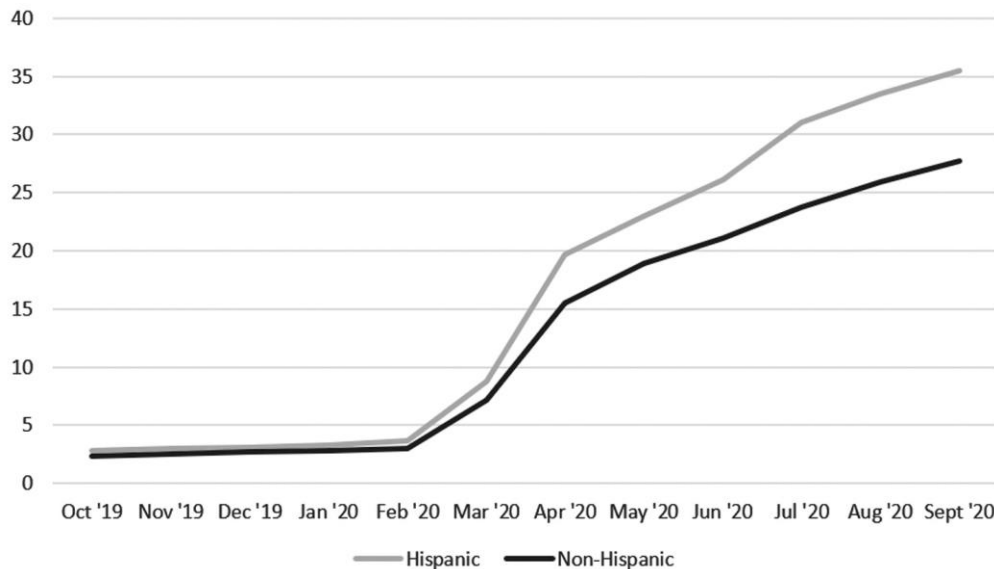
Hispanic Veterans experience higher rates of PTSD than Hispanic non-Veterans, and they may under-report stress and have higher rates of avoidant behaviors than White Veterans. Resources that increase Veterans' access to mental health treatment, such as telehealth, are, therefore, crucial to Hispanic Veterans. VA [Office of Connected Care](#) uses virtual technologies to expand Veterans' access to care. [VA Telehealth](#) allows Veterans to connect with their VA care team from home in addition to their local clinic or hospital.

[VA Video Connect](#) (VVC) is a secure video conferencing app that allows Veterans to have live, virtual visits with VA health care providers, including mental health providers, when a physical examination is not needed.

In a national cohort of Veterans who had completed at least one mental health encounter at a VA health care facility during Fiscal Year 2020 (FY20, October 2019–September 2020), Hispanic Veterans were more likely to use VVC to receive mental health treatment compared with non-Hispanic Veterans.

Specifically, Hispanic Veterans had 3.28% more mental health care delivered through VVC than non-Hispanic Veterans in FY20. Hispanic urban Veterans were more likely to use VCC than rural Hispanic Veterans. Hispanic female Veterans and Veterans younger than 55 years old were also more likely to use VVC for mental health treatment than their than Hispanic male and older Veteran counterparts, respectively. In short, Hispanic Veterans access video home telehealth at higher rates than their non-Hispanic counterparts.

Percentage of VA Video Connect Mental Health Encounters, by Ethnicity, FY20



From Guajardo et al. 2023

The National Veteran Health Equity Report – Hispanic and Latino Veteran Chartbook can be found [here](#).

For more information about the Office of Health Equity visit this [link](#).

References

Guajardo, E., Amspoker, A. B., Stanley, M. A., Hogan, J., Ecker, A. H., Lindsay, J. A. Patterns of Telehealth Use for Mental Health Treatment Among Hispanic Veterans. *Telemedicine and e-Health*. May 2023.788-792.