

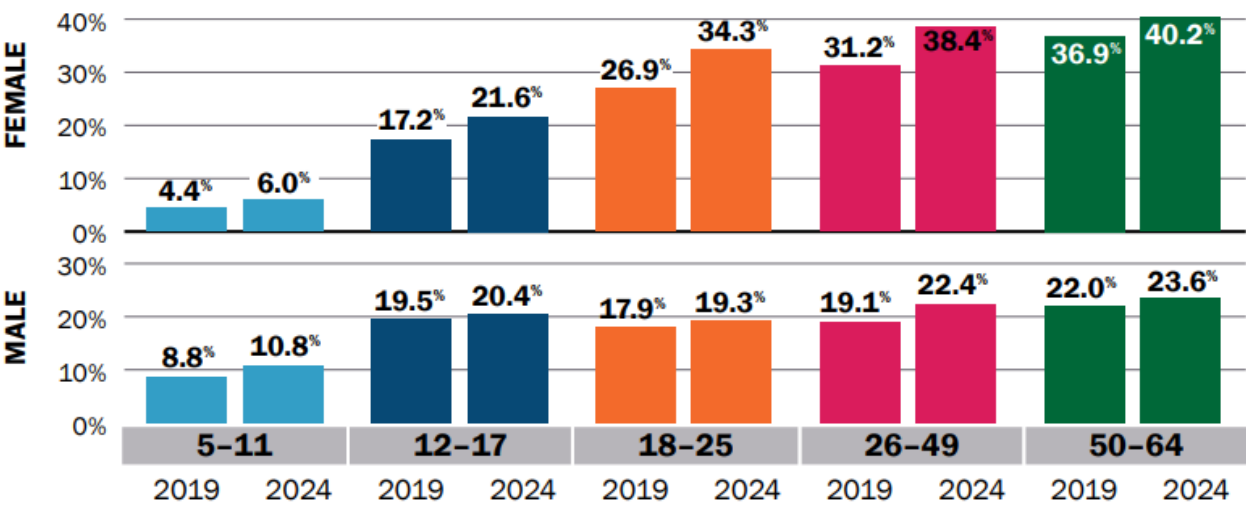
https://www.statehousenews.com/news/healthcare/behavioral-health-prescriptions-climbing-especially-among-women/article_8a0600ec-e93e-49ce-a131-188d1dae4ea5.html

Behavioral health prescriptions climbing, especially among women

Almost 20% on commercial insurance filled an antidepressant

Alison Kuznitz
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Exhibit 3. Percent of commercially-insured members with at least one BH drug prescription by age and sex, 2019 and 2024



A new Health Policy Commission report released on Thursday, June 11 examines the increasing usage of behavioral health drugs.

Screenshot: HPC

STATE HOUSE, BOSTON, June 11, 2026.....Nearly 30% of Massachusetts residents on commercial insurance filled a prescription to treat a behavioral health condition in 2024, according to a new analysis from state health researchers.

As the volume of behavioral health diagnoses and prescriptions climbed from 2020 to 2024 for all individuals, medication usage among female patients was more pronounced than males, the Health Policy Commission report found.

The HPC said 28% of Bay Staters with commercial insurance filled at least one behavioral health prescription in 2024, a jump of 4 percentage points over 2019. The upward trend comes as the percentage of individuals with at least one behavioral health diagnosis increased from 29% in 2019 to 35% in 2024.

Just over 19% of commercially insured members filled at least one antidepressant prescription, with "adult females using these drugs at twice the rate of males," the report said.

Female patients posted the highest behavioral health drug usage in 2019, and certain age cohorts logged the largest increases in 2024. The HPC said 26.9% of females ages 18 to 25 had a prescription in 2019, which grew to 34.3% in 2024. For females ages 26 to 49, 31.2% had a prescription in 2019, compared to 38.4% in 2024.

In 2024, the HPC said 19.3% of males ages 18 to 25 and 22.4% of males ages 26 to 49 had a behavioral health prescription.

About one in five individuals ages 12 to 17 had at least one behavioral health prescription. Male children ages 5 to 11 were twice as likely as their female counterparts to fill a stimulant prescription, often used to treat conditions like attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

"These findings confirm a growing need for behavioral health services across all demographics in Massachusetts and highlight the role of behavioral health medications, underscoring the need for continued research in this area to ensure that residents are able to access the care they need," HPC Executive Director David Seltz said.

Seltz said the agency will continue to analyze utilization trends and use the data to "inform actionable policy interventions that can bring us closer to a more resilient, equitable, and accessible behavioral health care system for all of our residents."

The report suggests the heightened use of prescriptions could be a sign of increased access to behavioral healthcare. Still, the 2025 Massachusetts Health Insurance Survey found one in 10 residents had an unmet behavioral healthcare need.

The majority of behavioral health prescriptions are for generic drugs, which the HPC attributes to "relatively little innovation" in the past decade and "relatively few new drugs on market."

"While generics generally cost significantly less than branded drugs and do not have a large impact on overall spending, there was a small increase in per member per year cost sharing, or out-of-pocket patient spending, associated with increasing psychotropic prescriptions," the report said. "Cost sharing increased from \$34.18 per member in 2019 to \$42.33 in 2024."

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