

Depression and Racial Trauma in the African American Community

In 2021, the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) reported that **6.7%** of Black adults over the age of 18 experienced a major depressive episode in the past 12 months

NSDUH explains that a major depressive episode is classified as a period of at least two weeks with depressed mood, loss of interest or pleasure in daily activities, and other specified symptoms

Many Black Americans experience microaggressions, a term that describes the many small, subtle, often unconscious slights and insults that can have “macro” effects as they accumulate over time

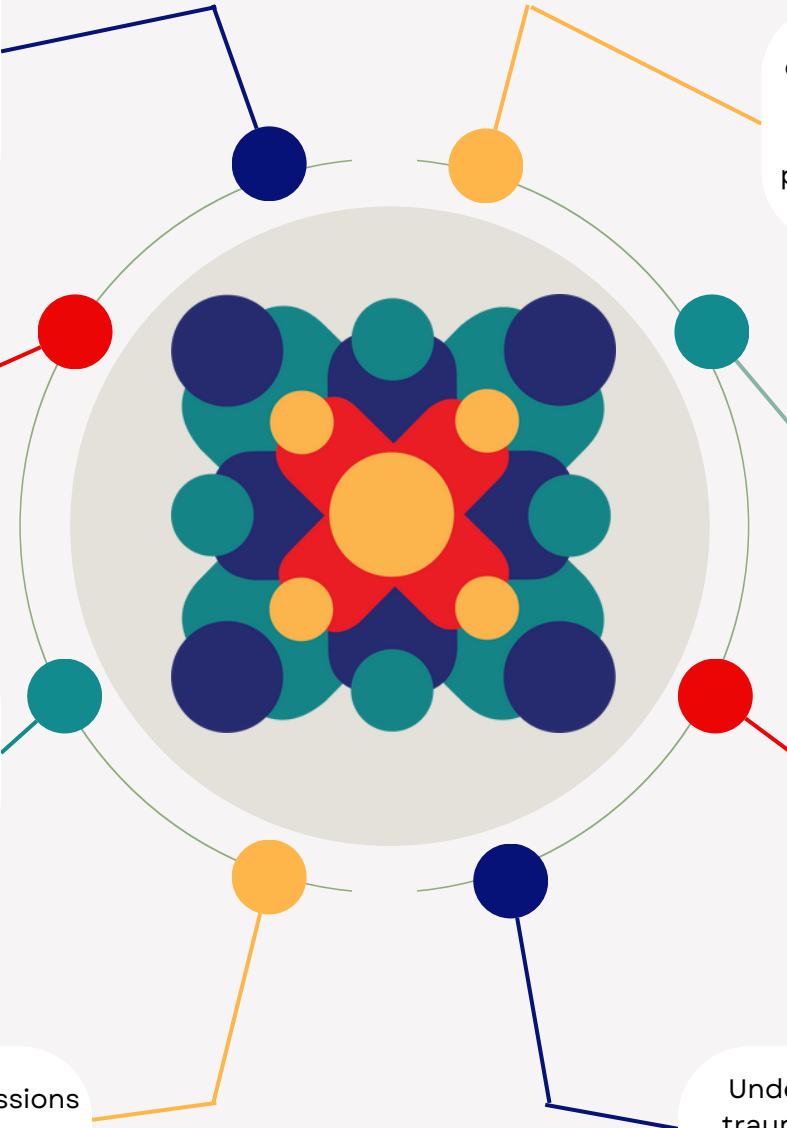
Microaggressions may induce levels on physical or emotional trauma that have lasting adverse effects on physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being

Researchers have found that posttraumatic stress symptoms (PTSS) may occur among individuals who experience repeated acts or even a single act of racism

In 2021, **21%** of Black adults experienced mental illnesses or serious mental illnesses, which includes any mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder within a 12-month period

PTSS associated with microaggressions can lead to depressive symptoms

Understanding the impact of racial trauma on Black adults can improve retention in behavioral health care



Auguste, E. E., Cruise, K. R., & Jimenez, M. C. (2021). The effects of microaggressions on depression in young adults of color: Investigating the impact of traumatic event exposures and trauma reactions. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 34(5), 985-994.

Carroll, L., & Gonzalez, M. L. (2014). Out of place: Racial stereotypes and the ecology of frisks and searches following traffic stops. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 51(5), 559-584.

Helms, J. E., Nicolas, G., & Green, C. E. (2010). Racism and ethnoviolence as trauma: Enhancing professional training. *Traumatology*, 16(4), 53-62.

National Survey on Drug Use and Health (2023). 2021 NSDUH Annual National Report. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Pierce C., Carew J., Pierce-Gonzalez D., Willis D. (1978). An experiment in racism: TV commercials. In Pierce C. (Ed.), *Television and education* (pp. 62-88). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Washington, H. A. (2006). *Medical apartheid: The dark history of medical experimentation on Black Americans from colonial times to the present*. Doubleday Books.

Williams, M. T., Printz, D., & DeLapp, R. C. (2018). Assessing racial trauma with the Trauma Symptoms of Discrimination Scale. *Psychology of Violence*, 8(6), 735.



This publication was supported by SAMHSA of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$3,750,000 with 100 percent funded by SAMHSA/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by SAMHSA/HHS, or the U.S. Government.