

Emergency Department Use in California

April 15, 2019

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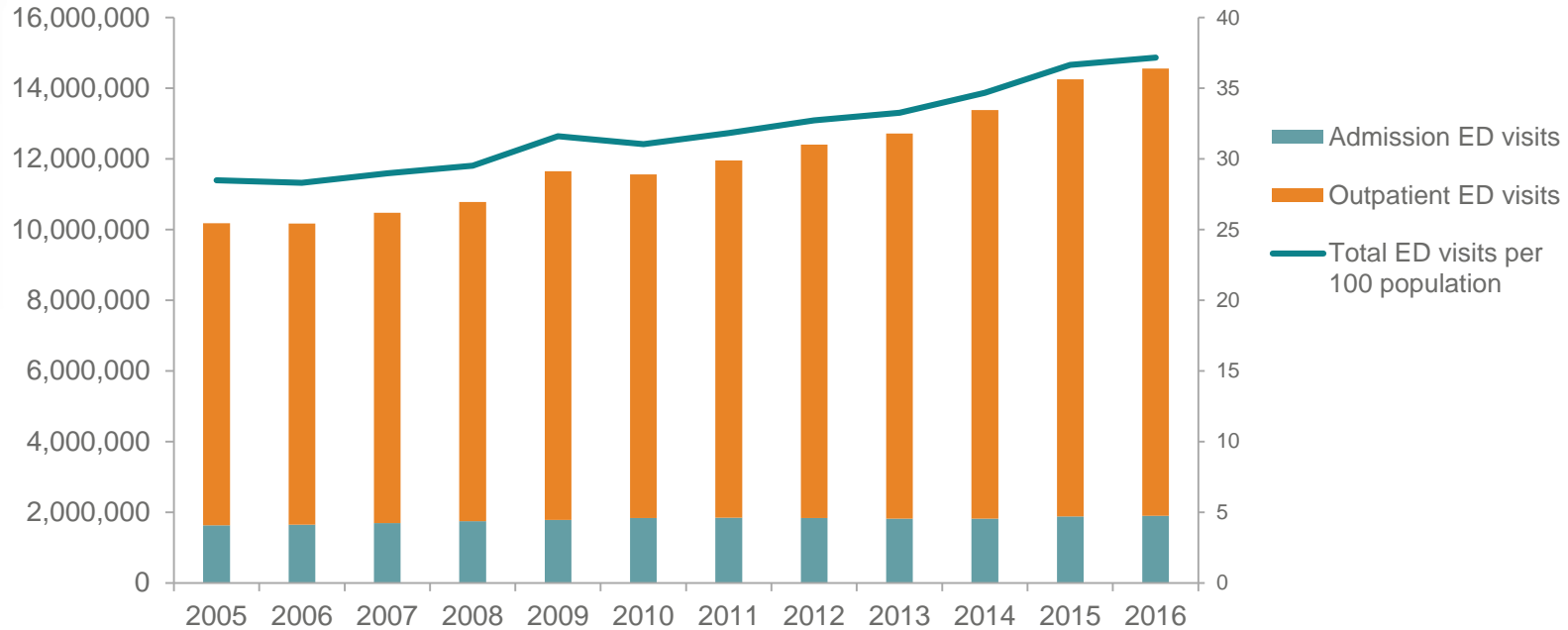
25 YEARS

Hospital emergency departments (EDs) are a vital component of California's health care system

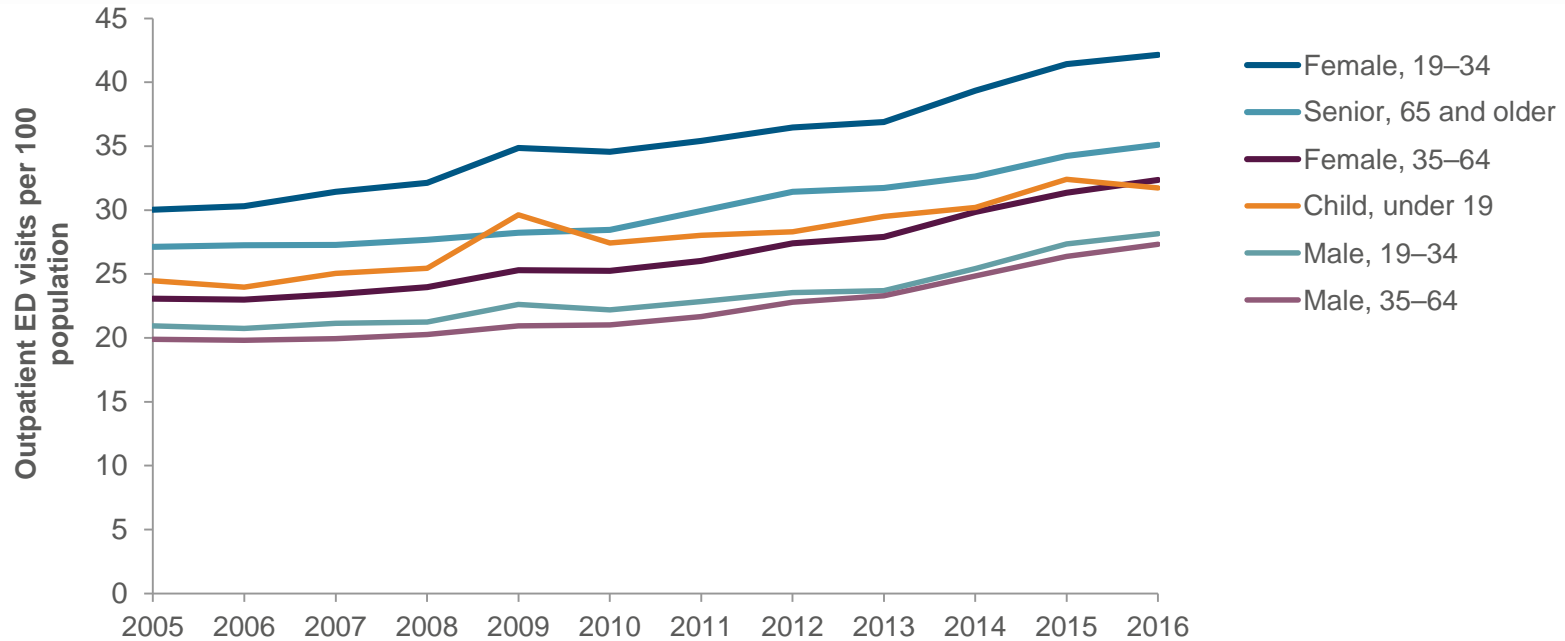
- EDs provide necessary medical care to all
- ED use is a focus of policymakers, payers, and providers
 - High cost relative to other settings
 - Serves as proxy for lack of access to primary care
 - Policy responses often focus on avoidable visits and “frequent flyers”
- ACA coverage expansions have raised questions about ED use
 - Medi-Cal beneficiaries have high ED usage rates



ED use has increased over the past decade

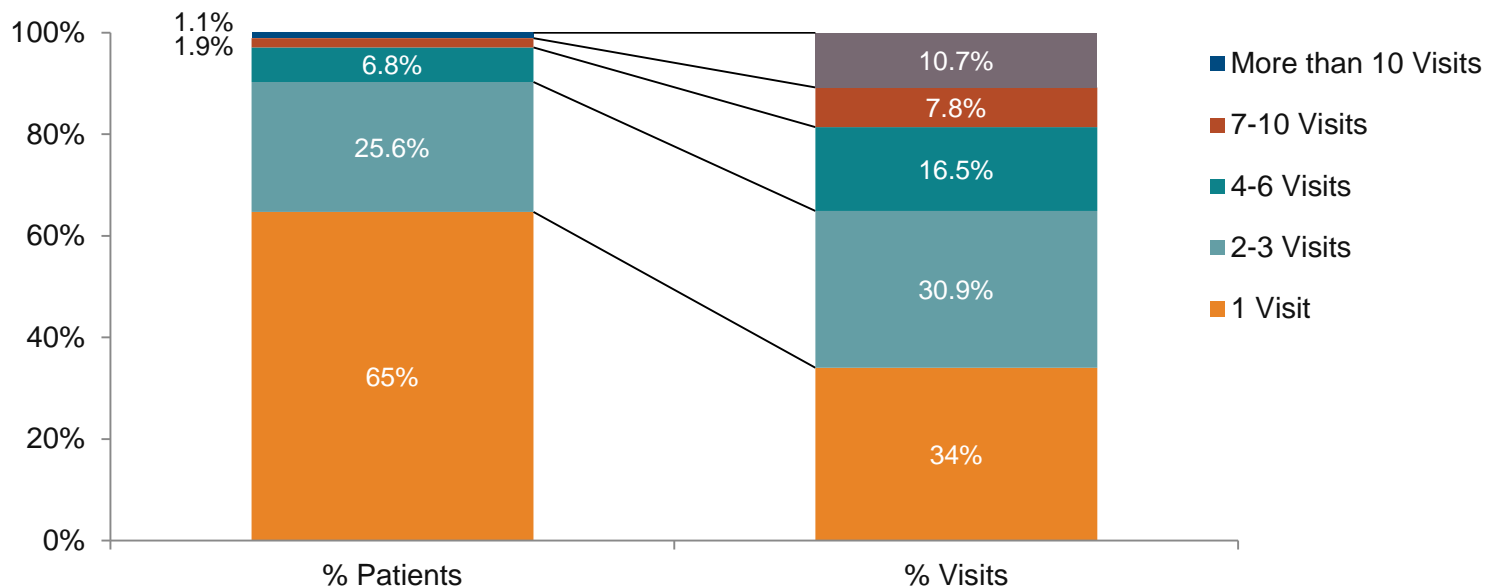


Outpatient ED use increased across all groups



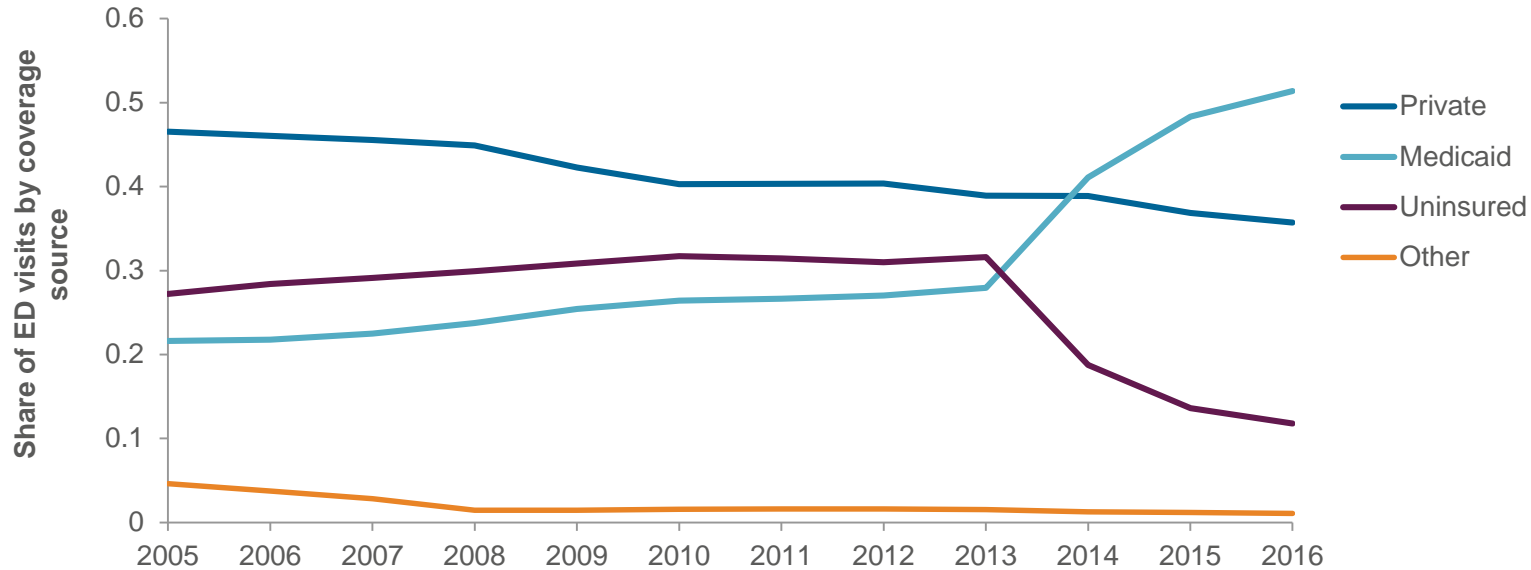
Many never visit an ED—others make a disproportionate share of visits

Distribution of ED visits by frequency of ED use, adults under age 65, 2016



Medi-Cal now covers half of outpatient ED visits for adults under 65

Payer source for outpatient ED visits made by non-elderly adults, 2005–2016



Did the ACA coverage expansions contribute to increasing ED use?

- Trends of increasing ED use pre-date the ACA
- We find no evidence that ACA coverage expansions contributed to increased ED use
- Analysis of all 58 counties suggests ED use would have been higher if not for the ACA coverage expansions
 - Counties most affected by coverage expansions saw less of an increase in ED visits than would be expected



Looking forward

- Continued growth in ED use raises concerns
- Medi-Cal program and managed care plans play a key role in slowing the upward trend in ED use
- Policy initiatives focus on heavy users, addressing behavioral health and other social factors
 - Whole Person Care Pilots
 - Health homes
 - Drug Medi-Cal redesign and behavioral health integration efforts



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Notes on the use of these slides

These slides were created to accompany a presentation. They do not include full documentation of sources, data samples, methods, and interpretations. To avoid misinterpretations, please contact:

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Thank you for your interest in this work.