

## **Brief snapshot of mental illness in Australia**

- In each year, approximately one in every five Australians will experience a mental illness.
- Mental illnesses are the third leading cause of disability burden in Australia, accounting for an estimated 27% of the total years lost due to disability.
- About 4% of people will experience a major depressive episode in a 12-month period, with 5% of women and 3% of men affected.
- Approximately 14 % of Australians will be affected by an anxiety disorder in any 12-month period.
- About 3% of Australians are affected by psychotic illness; such as schizophrenia, where there is a loss of contact with reality during episodes of illness.
- Approximately 2% of Australians will experience some type of eating disorder in their life, with women 9 times more likely than men.
- About 5% of Australians will experience substance abuse disorders in any 12-month period, with men more than twice as likely as women to have substance abuse disorders.
- Prevalence of mental illness decreases with age, with prevalence greatest among 18-24 year olds.
- Women are more likely than men to seek help for anxiety disorders (18% compared with 11%) and mood disorders (7.1% compared with 5.3%).
- A national survey showed that 35% of people with a mental disorder had used a health service and 29% consulted a GP within the 12 months before the survey.
- Women are more likely than men to use services for mental health problems.
- Limited research suggests that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience mental disorders at least as often as other Australians.
- In Australia, the prevalence of mental or behavioural disorders among people born overseas is similar to those born in Australia.
- Many violent people have no history of mental disorder and most people with mental illness (90%) have no history of violence.

## **Mental illness in the adult Australian population<sup>1</sup>**

In 2007, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) conducted the second National Survey of Mental Health and Well-being. The survey involved approximately 8,800 people aged over 16 years and living in private dwellings in all states and territories of Australia.

- Almost one in five Australians surveyed had experienced symptoms of a mental disorder during the 12 month period before the survey.

- Anxiety disorders were most common – 14.4%, followed by affective disorders - 6.2% (of which depression is 4.1%), and substance use disorders – 5.1% (of which 4.3% is alcohol related).
- The percentage of people meeting the criteria for diagnosis of a mental illness was highest in younger people, with the prevalence decreasing with age. Twenty-six per cent of 18-24 year olds had experienced a mental disorder, while only 5.9% of people aged 65 years and over had experienced a mental disorder.
- People unemployed or not in the paid workforce had the highest rates of mental disorder, a prevalence rate of 26% for unemployed men and 34% for unemployed women.
- Those with a mental disorder averaged three days out of role (i.e. unable to undertake normal activity because of health problems) over a four week period. This compared with one day out of role for people with no physical or mental condition.

### **Accessing mental health services / support<sup>2</sup>**

- Only 35% of people with a mental disorder had used a health service during the survey period.
- Hospital admissions for mental health problems were rare – less than 1% over the 12 month period.
- Women were more likely than men to use services for mental health problems.

### **The mental health of young Australians<sup>3</sup>**

- Adolescents with mental health problems reported a high rate of suicidal thoughts and other health-risk behaviours, including smoking, drinking and drug use.
- Twelve per cent of 13-17 year olds reported having thought about suicide, while 4.2% had actually made a suicide attempt. Females had higher rates of suicidal ideation than males.
- When it came to use of substances, 23.1% reported smoking, 36.7% reported drinking, and 18% said they had used marijuana.
- Fourteen per cent of Australian children and adolescents aged 4-17 have mental health or behavioural problems.
- This rate of mental health problems is found in all age and gender groups. Boys were slightly more likely to experience mental health problems than girls.
- There is a higher prevalence of child and adolescent mental health problems among those living in low-income, step/blended and sole-parent families.
- Mental health problems were experienced by 21.1% of males and 22.1% of females with weekly household incomes of less than \$580, compared to 8.9% of males and 9.1% of females living in households with a weekly income of more than \$1,030.

- For youth living in step / blended families (25% of males, 19.7% of females) and sole parent families (22.2% of males, 26.7% of females) reported experiencing mental health problems, compared to youth (11.3% of males, 10.7% of females) living with their original parents together.

- Only one out of every four young persons with mental health problems had received professional health care.

- Family doctors, school-based counsellors and paediatricians provide the services that are most frequently used by young people with mental health problems. Younger children (4-12) were more likely to visit paediatricians and family doctors, while older children were more likely to visit school-based counselling services.

- Even among young people with the most severe mental health problems, only 50% receive professional help. Parents reported that help was too expensive or they didn't know where to get it, and that they thought they could manage on their own.

See more at: <http://www.mindframe-media.info/for-media/reporting-mental-illness/facts-and-stats#AccessingServices>

Australia's Federal Government spending on Mental health has increased by about \$1.5 Billion in the past 7 years and equates to about 8 percent of the total health budget. Most of the other OECD countries spend 12% – 16% of their total health budget on Mental Health.

