

## 2007 NATIONAL SURVEY OF MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING HIGHLIGHTS

*The second National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing was conducted in 2007 to provide updated evidence on the prevalence of mental illness in the Australian population, the amount of associated disability, comorbidity of mental disorders and comorbidity of mental disorders and chronic physical conditions, and the use of health services by people with mental disorders.*

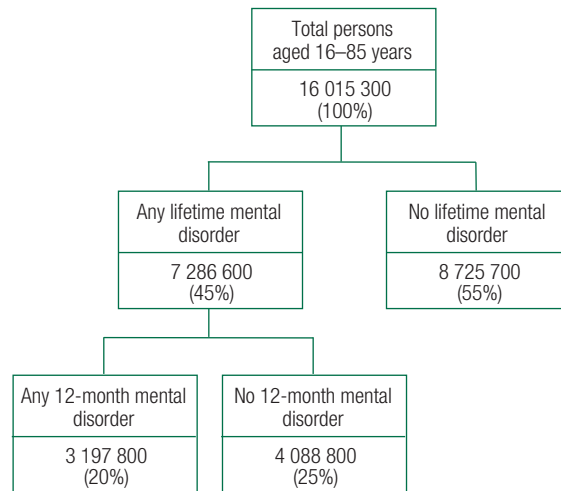
- The 2007 National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing is a general household survey of the adult population aged 16-85 years, which was conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics from August to December 2007.
- The three main questions the survey aimed to address were:
  1. How many Australians have which mental disorders?
  2. What impact do mental disorders have on people, their families and society?
  3. How many people have used services and what services have they used?
- The survey instrument was based on the latest version of the WMH-CIDI, used in 28 other countries. Modules were selected from this instrument, adapted or written specifically for the survey as appropriate to the survey aims and the Australian cultural context.
- The 2007 survey included a series of diagnostic modules that determined whether an individual was sufficiently unwell to be diagnosed with a mental disorder if he or she were to be assessed by a clinician using the ICD-10 or DSM-IV.
- The focus was on the more common or high prevalence mental disorders, namely:
  - Affective (mood) disorders**
    - Depressive episode
    - Dysthymia
    - Bipolar affective disorder
  - Anxiety disorders**
    - Panic disorder
    - Agoraphobia
    - Social phobia
    - Generalized anxiety disorder
    - Obsessive-compulsive disorder
    - Posttraumatic stress disorder
  - Substance use disorders**
    - Alcohol harmful use (abuse)
    - Alcohol dependence
    - Drug use disorders
- Information was collected on some 3,500 data items covering the following:
  - prevalence of mental disorders in the Australian population across people's lifetimes and in the previous 12 months;
  - socio-demographic characteristics of people who did and did not have mental disorders;
  - use of health services for mental health problems, both consultations with health practitioners and hospital admissions;
  - medications used for mental health problems;
  - extent of chronic physical conditions focussing on the National Health Priority Areas of diabetes, asthma, coronary heart disease, stroke, cancer and arthritis;
  - comorbidity of mental disorders and mental disorders comorbid with physical conditions;
  - social networks; and
  - caregiving.
- A number of scales were also included to determine the impact of mental disorders :
  - a composite severity measure of the impact on daily life of all mental disorders experienced by an individual;
  - levels of psychological distress as measured by the Kessler 10 (K10);
  - Sheehan Disability Scales measuring the interference with life across four domains (household maintenance, work or study, close relationships and social life); and
  - days out of role capturing the impact of mental and physical health conditions on people's ability to function in their day-to-day roles.
- This survey follows the first National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing conducted in 1997, which provided the first evidence of the prevalence of mental illness in the Australian population and directed government initiatives in mental health, particularly the focus on primary care.

## PREVALENCE OF MENTAL DISORDERS IN THE AUSTRALIAN POPULATION

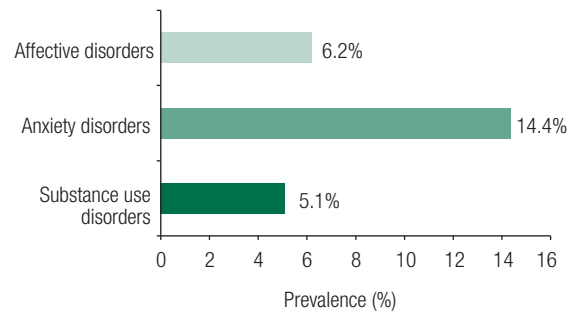
*The 2007 National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing provides information on the prevalence of mental disorders in the Australian population. The prevalence of mental disorders is the proportion of people in the population who meet criteria for a diagnosis of a mental disorder at a given point in time.*

- Almost half of the total population (45.5%) experienced a mental disorder at some point in their lifetime (Figure 1).
- One in five (20.0%) Australians aged 16-85 years experienced mental disorders in the previous 12 months (Figure 1). This is equivalent to almost 3.2 million Australians.
- One in 16 (6.2%) had affective (mood) disorders; one in seven (14.4%) had anxiety disorders; and one in 20 (5.1%) had substance use disorders (Figure 2).
- Based on these prevalence rates, it is estimated that nearly 1 million Australians had affective disorders, over 2.3 million had anxiety disorders and over 800,000 had substance use disorders in the previous 12 months.
- Females were more likely than males to have experienced mental disorders in the 12 months prior to the survey (22.3% compared to 17.6%) (Figure 3).
- Similarly, females were more likely than males to have experienced anxiety disorders (17.9% compared with 10.8%) and affective disorders (7.1% compared with 5.3%).
- However, males were more than twice as likely as females to have experienced substance use disorders (7.0% compared with 3.3%).
- The prevalence of mental disorders declines with age from more than one in four (26.4%) in the youngest age group (16-24 years) to around one in twenty (5.9%) in the oldest age group (75-85 years).
- A number of other social factors were strongly associated with having mental disorders in the previous 12 months, including not being married or in a de facto relationship, level of education and not being in the labour force.

**Figure 1: Overall mental health status of Australians aged 16-85 years**



**Figure 2: Proportion of the Australian population with anxiety, affective and substance use disorders in the previous 12 months**



**Figure 3: Prevalence of mental disorders in the previous 12 months by age and sex**

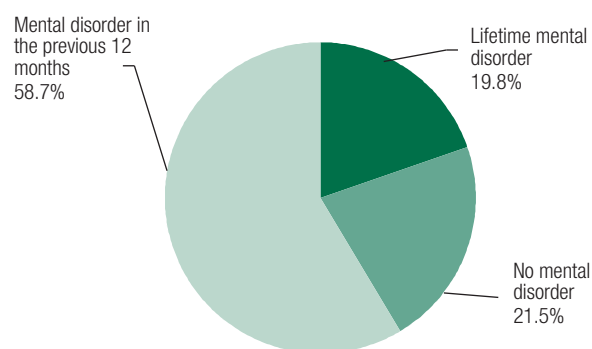


## SERVICE USE IN THE AUSTRALIAN POPULATION

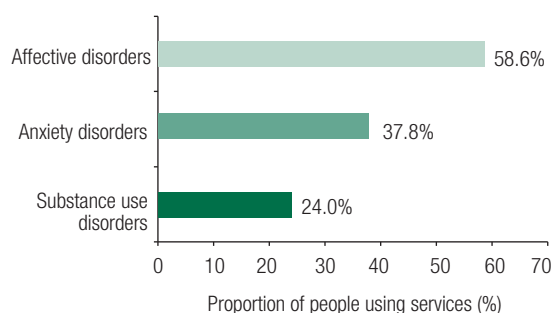
*Mental health care in Australia is provided through a combination of primary health care services principally by general practitioners, specialised public mental health services managed by states and territories, private sector services delivered by psychiatrists and psychologists, and hospital services.*

- Of the total population, 11.9% used health services for mental health problems in the previous 12 months. Three-fifths of users had mental disorders in the previous 12 months and one-fifth had lifetime disorders (Figure 4).
- Not all people who used services were assessed as having a mental disorder. Many will have sought care for mental health problems, but were not sufficiently unwell to be diagnosed with a mental disorder. Others will have had disorders not covered by the survey, such as schizophrenia or personality disorders.
- One third (34.9%) of people with 12-month mental disorders used health services for mental health problems in the previous 12 months. This is equivalent to 1.1 million Australians seeking help for mental health problems.
- By contrast about two thirds or 2.2 million people with mental disorders did not report using services for their mental health problems. Around 90% of these reported that they did not need services.
- People with affective disorders (including depression) were more likely than people with anxiety or substance use disorders to use services for their mental health problems (Figure 5).
- Females were more likely to use services for mental health problems than males (40.7% compared with 27.5%) and this was true for all age groups (Figure 6).
- Among those with 12-month mental disorders who used services, general practitioners were the most commonly consulted group of health care professionals (70.8%), followed by psychologists (37.7%).
- 28.9% of people with 12-month mental disorders who used services saw a general practitioner only, but two thirds (64.2%) saw a mental health professional alone or in combination with a general practitioner.

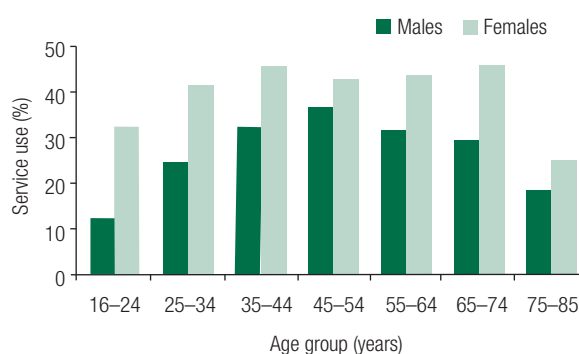
**Figure 4: Proportion of population who used services for mental health problems in the previous 12 months by mental disorder status**



**Figure 5: Proportion of people who used services for mental health problems by mental disorder class**



**Figure 6: Service use among people with 12-month mental disorders by sex and age**



## AFFECTIVE, ANXIETY AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS IN THE AUSTRALIAN POPULATION

The survey was designed to estimate the prevalence of common mental disorders defined according to the International Classification of Diseases 10th Revision (ICD-10). Three broad groups or classes of mental disorders were included in the survey – affective, anxiety and substance use disorders.

- The survey found that one in 16 Australians aged 16-85 years (6.2%) had an affective disorder; one in seven (14.4%) had an anxiety disorder and one in 20 (5.1%) had a substance use disorder in the previous 12 months.
- It should be noted that people may experience more than one class of mental disorder and more than one disorder within a class.
- One in 20 people in the Australian population had depressive disorders (depressive episode and dysthymia) in the previous year (Figure 7).
- Females were more likely to have affective disorders (7.1% compared to 5.3% for males).
- Posttraumatic stress disorder (6.4%) and social phobia (4.7%) were the most common anxiety disorders (Figure 8).
- Females experienced a much higher rate of anxiety disorders compared to males (17.9% and 10.8%) and this was true for most types of anxiety disorders.
- Alcohol harmful use disorder was the most common form of substance use disorder (2.9%) (Figure 9).
- Males were almost twice as likely as females to have alcohol harmful use disorder (3.8% compared to 2.1%).
- People with affective disorders were more likely to be categorised with a severe mental disorder. Of those with affective disorders 51.1% were classified severe, compared to 22.2% with anxiety disorders and 20.5% with substance use disorders.
- People with affective disorders had the greatest number of days out of role (6.2 days out of the previous 30 days) compared to those with anxiety disorders (4.4 days) and substance use disorders (3.3 days).

Figure 7: Prevalence of affective disorders in the previous 12 months

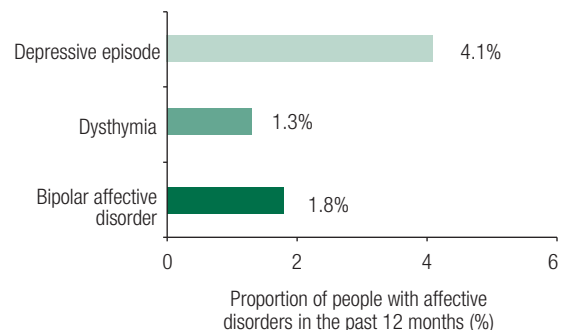


Figure 8: Prevalence of anxiety disorders in the previous 12 months

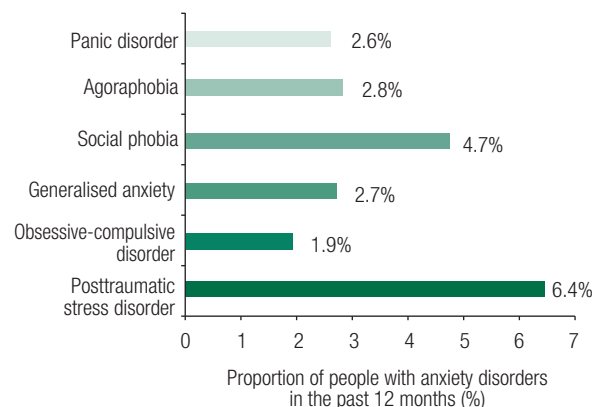
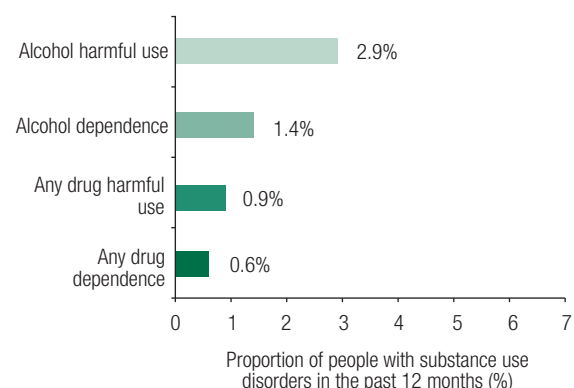


Figure 9: Prevalence of substance use disorders in the previous 12 months

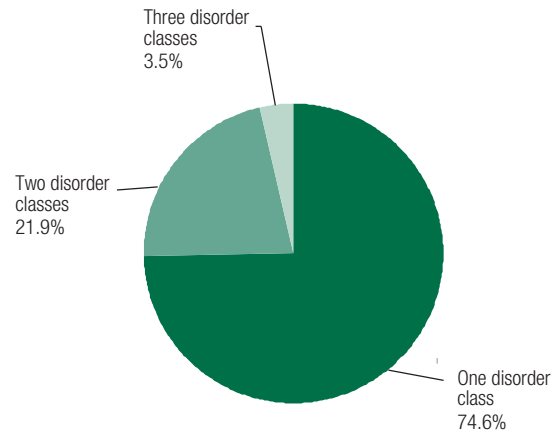


## MENTAL DISORDER COMORBIDITY

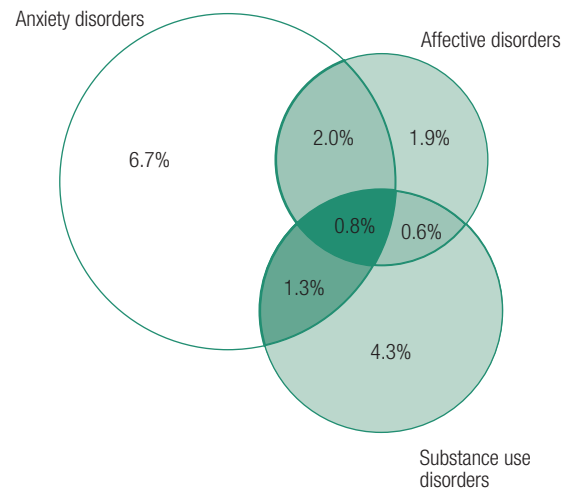
*Comorbidity refers to the occurrence of more than one disorder at the same time. It may refer to co-occurring mental disorders or co-occurring mental disorders and physical conditions.*

- One in five (20.0%) Australians aged 16-85 years experienced mental disorders in the previous 12 months. One in four of these people experienced more than one class of mental disorder. This is equivalent to over 800,000 Australians (Figure 10).
- Affective and anxiety disorders were the most common comorbidity for both sexes (3.9% in females and 2.0% in males) (Figures 11 and 12).
- The next most common comorbidity for both sexes was substance use disorders in combination with anxiety disorders (0.8% in females and 1.3% in males).
- There were 0.8% of males and 0.6% of females who experienced mental disorders from all three classes in the previous 12 months.
- Service use was higher for people with two or more classes of mental disorder with 57.2% using services compared with one quarter (27.3%) of those with mental disorders from only one class.
- Just over a half (54.0%) of people who experienced more than one class of mental disorder experienced severe levels of impairment, compared to 7.5% of people with one mental disorder class.
- The survey also asked about chronic physical conditions. Those covered were the Australian National Health Priority Areas, namely diabetes, asthma, coronary heart disease, stroke, cancer and arthritis.
- One third (34.0%) of people with 12-month mental disorders had a comorbid physical condition. This is similar to the rate of these physical conditions in the population (32.2%).
- Mental disorders were more common among people with chronic physical conditions (28.0%) when compared to people who did not have a chronic physical condition (17.6%).

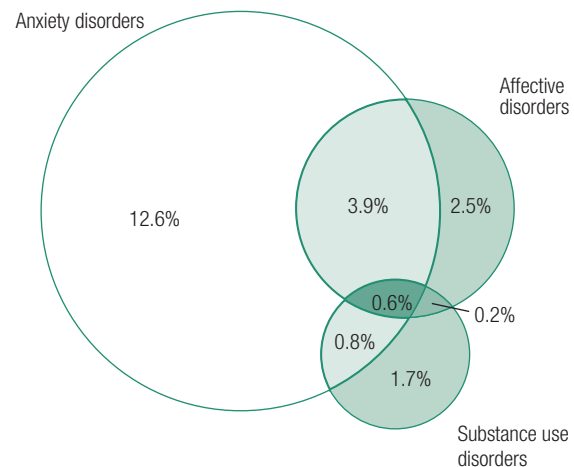
**Figure 10: Mental disorder comorbidity among people who experienced mental disorders in the previous 12 months**



**Figure 11 Prevalence of single and comorbid mental disorders in males in the previous 12 months**



**Figure 12: Prevalence of single and comorbid mental disorders in females in the previous 12 months**

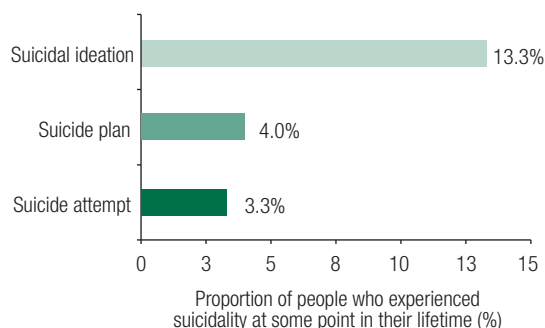


## SUICIDALITY

*The term suicidality covers suicidal ideation (serious thoughts about taking one’s own life), suicide plans and suicide attempts. People who experience suicidal ideation and make suicide plans are at increased risk of suicide attempts, and people who experience all forms of suicidal thoughts and behaviours are at greater risk of completing suicide.*

- At some point in their lifetime, over 2.1 million Australians aged 16-85 years had serious thoughts about taking their own life; over 600,000 made a suicide plan; and over 500,000 attempted suicide (Figure 13).
- Females were more likely to be suicidal than males, with significantly higher rates of suicidal ideation in the previous 12 months (2.7% and 1.9%). Suicide plans and attempts also tended to be higher for females.
- These findings are in contrast to the data on completed suicides, which show that males are three to four times more likely than females to die by suicide.
- Young females were most suicidal (5.1% of females aged 16-24 years) and the prevalence of suicidality decreased significantly with age.
- There was little variation in suicidality across the age groups for males (Figure 14).
- Almost one in ten (8.6%) people with 12-month mental disorders reported being suicidal in the previous 12 months. This is over three times the rate in the general population (8.3% compared to 2.3%).
- People experiencing affective disorders were at greater risk of suicidality than people experiencing anxiety or substance use disorders (17.4% compared with 9.1% and 10.9%) (Figure 15).
- Service use was relatively high among people who attempted suicide in the previous 12 months (73.4%) and by people who made a suicide plan (68%).
- Although service use was high for those who reported suicidality, one in four people who made a suicide attempt did not access services for mental health problems in the previous 12 months.

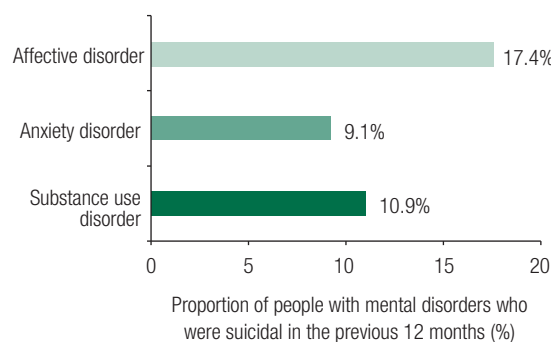
**Figure 13: Lifetime prevalence of suicidality in Australians aged 16-85 years**



**Figure 14: Prevalence of suicidality in the previous 12 months by sex and age**



**Figure 15: Suicidality among people experiencing mental disorders in the previous 12 month**



## SOCIAL NETWORKS AND CAREGIVING

*Social relationships and networks can act as protective factors against the onset or recurrence of mental health problems and enhance recovery from mental disorders. People who participated in the 2007 National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing were asked about the regularity of their contact with family and friends. The survey also collected information on the care that they gave to family with mental and physical health problems.*

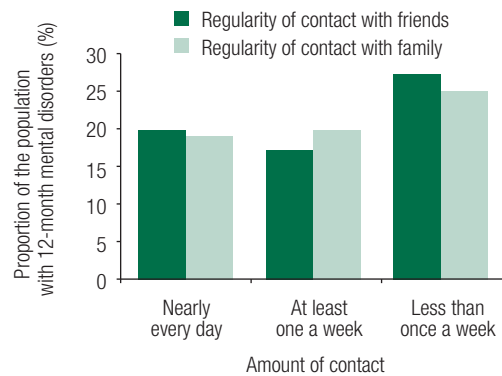
### Social networks

- Almost two thirds (64.4%) of Australians aged 16-85 years are in contact with their families nearly every day. One quarter of the population (26.2%) were in contact with family at least once a week (Figure 16).
- The prevalence of mental disorders in females with less than weekly contact with family was one and a half times greater than for males (33.9% and 20.0%).
- Most people have family members and friends they can rely on and confide in should they have a serious problem.
- People with no family members on whom they could rely were more likely to have experienced mental disorders in the previous 12 months (33.4%) than people with 1-4 family members (21.0%).
- A greater proportion of people were in contact with family nearly every day (64.4%) than were in contact with friends on a daily basis (42.7%). About two-fifths of people had contact with friends at least once a week (42.8%).

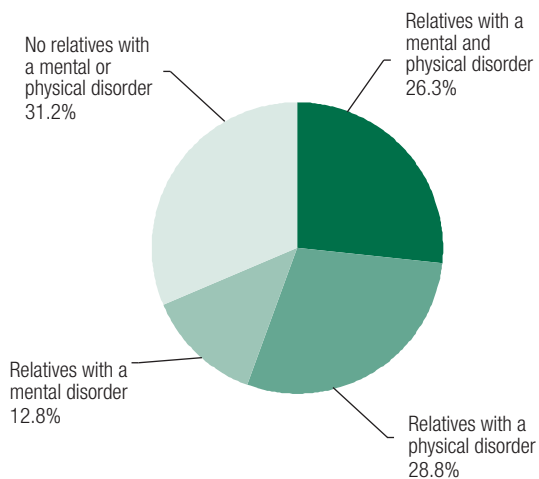
### Caregiving

- Of the total population, 12.8% of people had a relative with a mental disorder; 28.8% had a relative with a chronic physical health condition; and 26.3% had a relative with both a mental disorder and a chronic physical condition (Figure 17).
- Among people who have relatives with both a mental disorder and chronic physical condition, about two-fifths (40.6%) were in a caregiving role (Figure 18).
- The prevalence of mental disorders was higher in people who provided care to relatives with a mental disorder and a chronic physical condition (35.9%) and a mental disorder alone (35.1%), than people who provided care to relatives with a chronic physical condition only (19.3%).

**Figure 16: Prevalence of 12-month mental disorders in people with different amounts of contact with family and friends**



**Figure 17: Proportion of population with a relative with a mental and/or physical disorder**



**Figure 18: Proportion of population in a caregiving role by the health status of the relative**

