

22 July 2022

Urgent action needed following release of National Mental Health and Wellbeing Survey

The Australian Psychological Society (APS) is calling for the Federal Government to commit to urgently funding more mental health services following harrowing figures revealed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in their National Mental Health and Wellbeing Survey released today.

Conducted in 2020-21, the ABS revealed shocking levels of mental ill-health sweeping the nation, with almost a quarter (21.4%) of Australian's suffering a mental disorder during 2020-21. Anxiety was the most common group of mental disorders (16.8%) followed by affective disorders like depression (7.5%) and substance abuse (3.3%).

The study also showed that around 1.1 million (39.6%) young adults aged 16-24 years experienced a mental health disorder in 2020-21. Almost half (46.6%) were young females and one third (31.2%) young males.

APS President Tamara Cavenett said this comprehensive survey underlined the need to act urgently to save lives saying *“these shocking figures confirm what psychologists on the ground are telling us every day. Millions of people are in crisis and there isn't enough support”*.

“There is no doubt that the situation has gotten far worse since the completion of the survey over a year ago.”

“As a society we can't afford to have millions of people spiralling into under or untreated mental health disorders that have the potential to change trajectory of their lives and ours forever.”

“We are talking about less teachers, doctors, judges and firefighters because untreated mental disorders stopped people achieving their dreams”.

Shockingly, less than half of people with mental health disorders had at least one consultation with a health professional about their mental health, highlighting the need for the Federal Government to radically intervene on the workforce issues plaguing the sector.

Recent APS research found nationally 1 in 3 psychologists are unable to take new patients due to overwhelming demand. Before the pandemic this was 1 in 100. The Federal Government is only meeting 35% of its psychology workforce target, the lowest of any mental health profession.

“It’s not too late to turn the tide but we have to heed the moment and act decisively”.

To fix this crisis the APS is strongly advocating for the federal government to:

- Close the current workforce gap by bringing university funding for psychology in line with medicine, dentistry and veterinarian studies
- Replicate GP regional relocation incentives for psychologists, including wiping off HECS-HELP debt
- Introduce higher regional Medicare rebates
- Invest in paid opportunities for provisional psychologists to work in supervised positions
- Ensure regional communities have sufficient internet access to utilise telehealth
- Make the temporary 10 additional Medicare subsidised sessions permanent, and
- Invest in regional perinatal and digital health services.

For more information, or to arrange an interview call the APS Media team on **03 8662 3358 / 0435 896 444**, or [email](#). Find the APS Media team on Twitter: [@AustPsych](#)