



The Hon. Mark Butler MP
Minister for Health and Aged Care

The Hon. Emma McBride MP
Assistant Minister for Rural and Regional Health

MEDIA RELEASE

MAJOR MENTAL HEALTH STUDY RELEASED

More than two in five Australians experience a mental health issue in their lifetime. In 2020–21 more than 3.4 million Australians sought help from a health care professional for their mental health.

These sobering statistics are from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' *National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing*, with in-depth data from more than 5,500 people aged 16 to 85 years old.

The study found that during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, 21.4 per cent of Australians had experienced a mental health disorder in the previous 12 months, with anxiety the most common disorder.

Almost half (47.1 per cent) of those who had a mental health disorder in 2020–21 sought support, an increase since the last study in 2007.

Across their entire lifetime around one in six (16.7 per cent) Australians reported having had suicidal thoughts or behaviour, with females (18.7 per cent) having a higher rate than males (14.5 per cent).

Thirty-eight per cent of Australians were close to someone who has attempted or

died by suicide, a tragedy which impacts family, friends and communities.

Around 1.1 million (39.6 per cent) of young people aged 16 to 24 years were found to have experienced a mental disorder in the previous 12 months, which is higher than older age groups and is consistent with other recent studies.

More than half (54.4 per cent) of people who identified as Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual or who used a different term such as Asexual, Pansexual or Queer, experienced a mental disorder in 2020–21, with anxiety disorders the most prevalent.

The study is published at <https://abs.gov.au/statistics/health/mental-health/national-study-mental-health-and-wellbeing/2020-21>

Further data and more results from a larger group of study participants, including location-based prevalence data, will be released in 2023.

Anyone experiencing distress can seek immediate advice and support through:

- Lifeline (13 11 14)
- Kids Helpline (1800 55 1800)
- Head to Health National Phone Service (1800 595 212, www.headtohealth.gov.au)
- Head to Health Adult Mental Health Centres (www.headtohealth.gov.au/supporting-yourself/adult-mental-health-centres)
- QLife – phone peer support service by LGBTIQ+ peers for all ages. 3pm-midnight. 1800 184 527 or webchat [www.qlife.org.au](http://www qlife.org.au)

If you are concerned about suicide, living with someone who is considering suicide or bereaved by suicide - the Suicide Call Back Service is available at 1300 659 467 or www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au.

Quotes attributable to Minister Butler:

The Black Summer bushfires, east coast floods and the COVID-19 pandemic all had a major impact on the mental health of Australians during 2020–21.

We need to make sure we have the right resources in place for people to get the care they need, and it is encouraging to see more people getting support than the

previous report.

The Albanese Government understands the importance of mental health care for Australians, highlighted by our decision to reverse cuts to regional mental telehealth services.

We know that ease of access is essential to people seeking support and Telehealth mental health services continue to be delivered to regional and remote Australians.

Our Government is developing a free mental health check tool to prompt more people to have the important first conversation with their GP or health care provider to respond to mental ill health earlier.

These findings will contribute to significant reforms to Australia's mental health system and support improved access to appropriate mental health supports.

Attributable to Assistant Minister McBride:

Overall prevalence of mental health disorders has remained relatively stable since the last survey, unfortunately this was not the case for younger people, particularly for females aged 16 to 34.

Demand for mental health support has surged to record levels across the country, particularly for young Australians.

That's why the Albanese Government is working to deliver a range of mental health support measures including a \$200 million Student Wellbeing Boost to help school kids bounce back from the pandemic.

We have also delivered \$44 million to improve headspace services across Australia so young people can get the care they need when they need it.

Attributable to Deputy Chief Medical Officer for Mental Health, Dr Ruth Vine:

This is such an important insight into the state of mental health in Australia and will

make a significant contribution to ongoing mental health reforms, including in service planning and workforce development.

Improving access to quality mental health care for priority populations of Australians experiencing higher rates of mental health disorders is central to improving and saving lives.

Counselling and support services, including suicide prevention services are available, and programs are already underway to improve the skills of mental health providers to address the specific needs of the LGBTIQ+ community.

Friday, 22 July 2022

MEDIA CONTACT:

Lucy Caruso: 0408 803 428 (Butler)

Sarah Baronowski: 02 4353 0127 (McBride)