

Some Facts and Figures About Young People and Mental Illness

Source: www.responseability.org

See inside backcover for resources, references etc

- **The greatest number** of people with a mental illness are within the 18-24 year age group.
- Many people with **schizophrenia** first experience symptoms in their mid to late teen years.
- **One third** of people with a mental illness who are admitted to public hospitals are less than 30 years old.
- **Depression** is one of the most common health conditions in young people and increases during adolescence.
- **Drug use** can complicate diagnosis and exacerbate or trigger illness in vulnerable young people.
- Young people are **more likely** to experience a mental illness and prevalence of mental disorders declines with age. In 2007, 26% of 16-24 year olds had experienced a mental disorder in the previous 12 months, compared to only 5.9% of 75 year olds.
- In 2008 revealed that during a 12-month period, **7% of Australian children and adolescents** aged 0 - 17 were experiencing mental health problems. This rate of mental health problems was similar across both gender groups¹⁴.
- In 2004-2005, **one in 10 young Australians** had a long-term mental health or behavioural problem¹⁵.
- In 2003, **mental disorders were the leading contributor** to the total burden of disease among young Australians, accounting for 49% of that total¹⁶.
- There is a **higher prevalence** of child and adolescent mental health problems among those living in low-income, step/blended and sole-parent families.
- 25% of males and 19.7% of females living in **step/blended families**, and 22.2% of males and 26.7% of females living in sole-parent families experienced mental health problems, compared to 11.3% of males and 10.7% of females living with their original parents.
- **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, didn't know where to get it, and that they thought they could manage on their own.
- Adolescents with mental health problems report a **high rate of suicidal thoughts** and other health-risk behaviour, such as smoking, drinking and drug use.
- **12% of 13-17 year olds** reported having thought about suicide, while 4.2% had actually made a suicide attempt. Females had higher rates of suicide ideation than males.
- In 2004-2005, there were 8,013 hospitalisations among young people for mental and behavioural disorders due to **drug and alcohol use** (almost 2% of all hospitalisations among young people)

Resources

Visit the National Cannabis Prevention and Information Centre's website for comprehensive, evidence-based information on cannabis and its effects, cannabis information and resources, fact sheets and much more at: www.ncpic.org.au

The Cannabis Information and Helpline provides a nationally available free call service for people using cannabis themselves or those concerned about the cannabis use of a friend or family member: 1800 30 40 50.

Mental Health First Aid

www.mhfa.com.au

First Aid Guidelines for Problem Drug Use

First Aid Guidelines for Problem Cannabis Use

References

'Evidence-based answers to cannabis questions: a review of the literature', by the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, 2004.

http://www.ancd.org.au/publications/pdf/rp11_cannabis_questions.pdf

'Cannabis: answers to your questions', by the Australian National Council on Drugs, 2006.

http://www.ancd.org.au/publications/pdf/cannabis_qa.pdf

'Cannabis and mental health: Put into context', by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, National Drug Strategy, Monograph Series No. 68. www.health.gov.au

Sources of information on mental illness

Key research sources

The Australian Bureau of Statistics National Survey of Mental Health and Well-being (1997) provides the first national data on prevalence of mental illness in the adult population in Australia. This data is described and analysed in *The Mental Health of Australians* (1999)¹⁹. The child and adolescent component surveyed 4-17 year olds, and is reported in *The Mental Health of Young People in Australia* (2000)²⁰. These publications are available from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing publications page:

Other key sources of data on mental health and illness include:

Clearinghouses

Reports on Indigenous health and welfare, burden of disease and injury

- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare www.aihw.gov.au (02) 6244 1000
- Australian Institute of Family Studies www.aifs.org.au (03) 9214 7888
- Australian Indigenous Health Infonet www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au

Mental illness data

- Australian Bureau of Statistics www.abs.gov.au 1300 135 070

Independent Research Centres

Research on nature, origins and causes of mental illness, diagnosis and treatment

- The Mental Health Research Institute of Victoria www.mhri.edu.au
- Queensland Centre for Schizophrenia Research www.qcsr.uq.edu.au
- Clinical Research Unit for Anxiety Disorders www.crufad.com

Research and policy on mental illness

- State Health Departments (see the Contacts section of this website for details)
- Queensland Health www.health.qld.gov.au/forensicmentalhealth/
- Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing www.mentalhealth.gov.au
- Mental Health Council of Australia www.mhca.org.au

References

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2008). *National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing of Australians: Summary of Results*. Canberra: ABS.
2. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). (2008). *Australia's Health 2008*. Canberra: AIHW.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. ABS. (2008). Op cit.
6. Ibid.
7. AIHW. (2008). Op cit.
8. Ibid.
9. ABS. (2008). Op cit.
10. ABS. (2006). *Mental Health in Australia: A snapshot, 2004-2005*. Cat No. 4825.0.55.001. Canberra: ABS.
11. Ibid.
12. ABS. (2006). Op cit.
13. ABS. (2008). Op cit.
14. Ibid.
15. AIHW. (2008). Op cit.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. ABS. (2008). Op cit.
19. Andrews, G. et al. (1999). *The Mental Health of Australians*. Canberra: Mental Health Branch, Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing.
20. Sawyer, M. et al. (2000). *Mental Health of Young People in Australia*. Canberra, ACT: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare