

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Latest data shows mental health care remains underfunded**

The peak body for all psychologists, the Australian Association of Psychologists, said the [latest health data](#), along with today's mental health round table in Canberra, were further reminders that mental health care is still woefully underfunded.

AAPi Executive Director Tegan Carrison said mental health was the second highest burden of disease, with 43% of Australians experiencing a mental illness at some point and impacting growing numbers of young people.

"We commend all parties for their representation in Canberra today and hope their collective calls make an impact. We need a coordinated approach and realistic investment that matches the mental health burden in our communities.

"In reality, this means following an evidence-based approach by allowing more Medicare rebated psychology sessions. This is particularly important for the 'missing middle' and those with complex care needs. We need Medicare to be funded appropriately. Current rebates remain inadequate and result in a barrier for people to access the care they need.

"We need to rebuild our public sector, with psychologists front and centre. And we urgently need funding for the 8000 plus provisional psychologists to allow them to offer their clients Medicare rebates and to extend rural and regional incentives, currently available to GPs and psychiatrists to psychologists so that people can stop playing the postcode lottery. All Australians deserve appropriate, accessible and timely mental healthcare.

"We also need to focus on solutions for the future and ensure greater investment in university places that will flow into a larger workforce, and Commonwealth funding for paid practical placements to reduce students dropping out before they can complete their studies."

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's July bulletin found that mental and substance use disorders were estimated to be responsible for 15% of the total [burden of disease](#), placing it second as a broad disease group after cancer (17%).

Based on their data collection, they shared that of Australians aged 16–85, an estimated: 8.5 million had experienced a mental illness at some time in their life (43% of the population); and 4.3 million had experienced a mental illness in the previous 12 months (22% of the population).

The most common mental illnesses in Australia, in the 12 months prior to the study, were:

- Anxiety disorders (3.4 million people, or 17% of the population)
- Affective disorders (1.5 million, or 8%)
- Substance use disorders (650,000, or 3%)

According to the 2022 National Health Survey, 26% of Australians aged 15 and over were estimated to have a mental illness during the collection period (January 2022 to April 2023).

Strikingly, 11% of people who usually reside in Tasmania have been told by a doctor or nurse that they have a mental illness, the highest proportion of any state or territory.