

General Prevalence of Mental Illness in New Zealand

Te Rau Hinengaro: The New Zealand Mental Health Survey

The Ministry of Health published the first national survey of mental health in the New Zealand population September 2006 . Te Rau Hinengaro is collaborating in the WMH Survey Initiative, which was developed out of the findings of the WHO Global Burden of Disease Study (Murray and Lopez 1996). This study showed that mental and substance use disorders are among the most burdensome in the world, and this burden is projected to increase. More than 28 countries are undertaking or have undertaken nationally or regionally representative surveys and are contributing to the initiative.

- 47% of New Zealanders will experience a mental illness and/or an addiction at some time in their lives, with one in five people affected within one year.
- Te Rau Hinengaro confirms the Like Minds, Like Mine message that one in five (20.7%) of those people surveyed have experienced a mental disorder in the last 12 months. The survey also estimates that the lifetime risk (up to 75 years of age) of experiencing any common mental disorder such as depression, anxiety or an alcohol or drug disorder is 46.4%, namely nearly half of the population.
- Mental disorder is common in New Zealand: 46.6% of the population are predicted to meet criteria for a disorder at some time in their lives, with 39.5% having already done so and 20.7% having a disorder in the past 12 months.
- New Zealand has high prevalences of anxiety, mood and substance abuse disorders.
- Younger people have a higher prevalence of disorder in the past 12 months and are more likely to report having ever had a disorder by any particular age.
- Females have higher prevalences of anxiety disorder, major depression and eating disorders than males, whereas males have substantially higher prevalences for substance use disorders than females.
- Prevalences are higher for people who are disadvantaged, whether measured by educational qualification, equivalised household income or using the small area index of deprivation (NZDep2001).
- The prevalence of disorder in any period is higher for Maori and Pacific people than for the Other composite ethnic group.
- Comorbidity of mental disorders (the co-occurrence of two or more disorders) is common
- There is also comorbidity between mental and physical disorder.

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