The ADEPD Study

The Assessment of the Determinants and Epidemiology of Psychological Distress (ADEPD) Study was established to provide information about the relationship between psychological distress and a range of demographic, social, economic, and health-related characteristics in the South Australian population. This report presents maps which demonstrate the prevalence of psychological distress in South Australia.
The South Australian Monitoring and Surveillance System (SAMSS) is a continuous telephone data collection system that interviews a representative sample of South Australians of all ages each month. SAMSS monitors the prevalence of mental health conditions, risk factors and related determinants in the South Australian population. Psychological distress was measured for respondents aged 16 years and over using the Kessler 10 scale. The survey included these ten questions relating to psychological distress over the four weeks prior to the interview. The scoring system used is based on the method developed by the Clinical Research Unit for Anxiety and Depression (CRUFAD). Those with psychological distress were defined as those with a score of 22 – 501.


The proportion of respondents with psychological distress for the country areas of South Australia is also shown by Statistical Local Areas in Figure 2. The highest levels of psychological distress are along the River Murray and in the Mid North regions.

Analysing the spatial distribution of the prevalence of psychological distress is useful because:

(a) It permits us to identify areas where particular local circumstances may be causing psychological distress. For example, the high prevalence of psychological distress along the River Murray may be associated with the reductions in river flow affecting irrigation based agriculture and dairying.

(b) It facilitates focussing intervention activities in areas where they are most needed.

There appears to be a negative correlation between the socioeconomic status of areas and the prevalence of psychological distress. This reflects the complexity of the pressures and difficulties of poorer groups and the multi-dimensional nature of the problems they face. Interventions to promote greater social inclusion in such areas need to include consideration of these psychological distress dimensions.

The results of these analyses must however be interpreted with caution. Sample size may be an issue particularly in rural areas, with the resulting large confidence interval around prevalence estimates indicating that caution with interpretation is required. The use of different geographical boundaries also will impact on the ability to accurately define areas of high or low psychological distress. Further analysis of issues such as access to services is required in order to clarify the results.


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Figure 1: Psychological distress in metropolitan Adelaide

SAMSS ~ SA Monitoring & Surveillance System
Adelaide Statistical Division
Psychological Distress byABS Statistical Local Area

SLA Name
1. Gawler (T)
2. Playford (C) - East Central
3. Playford (C) - Elizabeth
4. Playford (C) - Hills
5. Playford (C) - West
6. Playford (C) - West Central
7. Port Adel Enfield (C) - East
8. Port Adel Enfield (C) - Inner
9. Salisbury (C) - Central
10. Salisbury (C) - Inner North
11. Salisbury (C) - North East
12. Salisbury (C) - South East
13. Salisbury (C) - Bal
14. Tea Tree Gully (C) - Central
15. Tea Tree Gully (C) - Hills
16. Tea Tree Gully (C) - North
17. Tea Tree Gully (C) - South
18. Charles Sturt (C) - Coastal
19. Charles Sturt (C) - Inner East
20. Charles Sturt (C) - Inner West
21. Charles Sturt (C) - North East
22. Port Adel Enfield (C) - Coast
23. Port Adel Enfield (C) - Park
24. Port Adel Enfield (C) - Port
25. West Torrens (C) - East
26. West Torrens (C) - West
27. Adelaide (C)
28. Adelaide Hills (DC) - Central
29. Adelaide Hills (DC) - Ranges
30. Burnside (C) - North East
31. Burnside (C) - South West
32. Campbelltown (C) - East
33. Campbelltown (C) - West
34. Morphett Vale (C) - East
35. Morphett Vale (C) - West
36. Morphett Vale (C) - North East
37. Morphett Vale (C) - North West
38. Morphett Vale (C) - South East
39. Morphett Vale (C) - South West
40. Morphett Vale (C) - West
41. Mt Pleasant (M)
42. Morphett Vale (C) - North
43. Marion (C) - Central
44. Marion (C) - North
45. Marion (C) - South
46. Mitcham (C) - Hills
47. Mitcham (C) - North East
48. Mitcham (C) - West
49. Onkaparinga (C) - Hackham
50. Onkaparinga (C) - Hills
51. Onkaparinga (C) - Morphett
52. Onkaparinga (C) - North Coast
53. Onkaparinga (C) - Reservoir
54. Onkaparinga (C) - South Coast
55. Onkaparinga (C) - Woodcroft

Psychological Distress as % of Study Population within each SLA
- 0 - 7.61
- 7.61 - 9.31
- 9.31 - 10.51
- 10.51 - 12.94
- 12.94 - 24.02

Data source: ABS 2006 Census & SA Health Dept SAMSS database
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