

# Current Mental Health and Psychological Distress in South Australia: Summary of Results



## Assessment of the Determinants and Epidemiology of Psychological Distress (ADEPD) Study

August 2009

### 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 describes how the presence of mental health conditions is related to psychological distress and outlines factors associated with psychological distress among those diagnosed with anxiety, depression, stress related problems or other mental health problems. The report highlights these relationships in order to determine variables that would allow a reduction in the level of psychological distress in South Australia.

# Data source

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. SAMSS also includes questions about respondents' health as well as many socioeconomic and demographic factors. Univariate and multivariate logistic regression models were produced to determine if having a current mental health condition was associated with psychological distress.

## Mental health conditions

Participants were asked if had been told by a doctor in the last twelve months that they had any of the following conditions: anxiety, depression, a stress related problem or any other mental health problem. If the answer was positive regarding any of these conditions, a mental health condition was deemed to be present.

Among respondents aged 16 years and over interviewed between July 2003 and June 2007 (n=22,582), 87.2% did not report any current mental health condition during the past 12 months, 8.9% had one mental health condition while 3.9% had two or more mental health conditions. The most common mental health condition was depression, affecting 7.1% of the respondents, followed by stress related problems (5.6%), anxiety (5.1%), and another mental health problem (1.0%). The prevalence of each condition did not significantly change over the 2003-04 to 2006-07 period except for stress related problems, which decreased significantly (2003-2004: 6.1%; 2006-2007: 4.8%,  $\chi^2$  test linear by linear association=8.4, p=0.004).

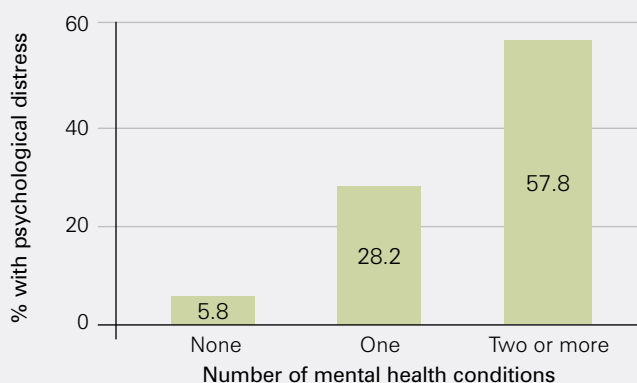
## Mental health conditions and psychological distress

The overall prevalence of psychological distress among respondents between July 2003 and June 2007 was 9.8%.

Those with two or more mental health conditions were significantly more likely to report high or very high levels of psychological distress compared to those with one or no mental health condition, while those with one mental health condition were also significantly more likely to report psychological distress than those without a mental health condition (Figure 1).

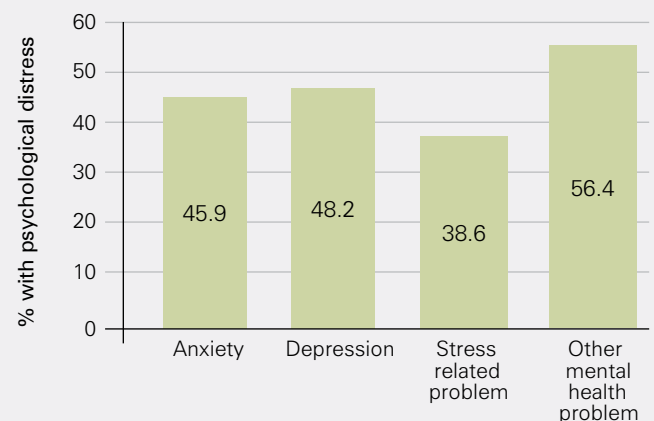
Those reporting 'other mental health problems' recorded the highest prevalence of psychological distress, while those with 'stress related problems' recorded the lowest prevalence (Figure 2). The prevalence of psychological distress among those with stress related problems was significantly lower than those with anxiety, depression or 'other mental health problems'.

Figure 1: Prevalence of psychological distress by number of mental health conditions



Source: South Australian Monitoring and Surveillance System, July 2003 to June 2007, ages 16+.

Figure 2: Prevalence of psychological distress among people with mental health conditions



Source: South Australian Monitoring and Surveillance System, July 2003 to June 2007, ages 16+.

# Mental health conditions, age and psychological distress

The prevalence of mental health conditions by age group is shown in Table 1.

The prevalence of psychological distress by age group increased according to number of mental health conditions. Within each age group, those with no mental health condition had significantly lower levels of psychological distress than those with one mental health condition. Similarly those with one mental health condition had lower levels of psychological distress compared to those with two or more mental health conditions (Table 2).

Table 1: Prevalence of number of mental health conditions by age group

	None	One	Two or more
16 to 34 years	88.3	8.0	3.8
35 to 49 years	85.4	9.8	4.8
50 to 64 years	84.8	10.4	4.7
65 years plus	91.0	7.2	1.8

Source: South Australian Monitoring and Surveillance System, July 2003 to June 2007, ages 16+

Table 2: Prevalence of psychological distress by number of mental health conditions and age group

	None	One	Two or more
16 to 34 years	7.6	30.3	56.6
35 to 49 years	5.6	26.1	55.2
50 to 64 years	4.8	26.7	62.5
65 years plus	4.0	30.8	57.9

Source: South Australian Monitoring and Surveillance System, July 2003 to June 2007, ages 16+

## Factors associated with psychological distress among those with a current mental health condition

Multivariate analysis was then undertaken to determine variables associated with psychological distress among those with a current mental health condition, defined as having and/or receiving treatment for at least one existing mental health condition.

This modelling allowed a range of factors to be examined, including demographic factors such as age, sex, marital status, country of birth and Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander status; socioeconomic factors including employment status, level of education and income; as well as health factors such as blood pressure, smoking status, risk of harm from alcohol and physical activity.

### Demographic factors

For those with a current mental health condition, younger age (16 to 34 years) was significantly associated with higher levels of psychological distress.

Those that reported a current mental health condition and were born outside Australia, the United Kingdom or Ireland had significantly higher levels of psychological distress (Table 3).

### Socioeconomic factors

Among those respondents with a current mental health condition with a university degree or higher there was a significantly lower prevalence of psychological distress compared to those without a degree.

Employment status was a significant factor related to psychological distress for those with a mental health condition. In particular, respondents that were unemployed, or unable to work, or were engaged in home duties had significantly higher levels of psychological distress.

Income was significantly associated with psychological distress for those with a mental health condition. Respondents who had a household income of more than \$80,000 had significantly lower levels of psychological distress (Table 3).

## Health-related factors

Health-related factors among those with a current mental health condition, which were significantly associated with psychological distress, were physical activity, smoking status, consumption of vegetables and chronic conditions.

The level of psychological distress was significantly higher for those with a current mental health condition who were not engaged in any physical activity or who were a current or ex-smoker.

Among respondents with a mental health condition who consumed two or more serves of vegetables, there was a significantly lower level of psychological distress.

Having a chronic condition other than a current mental condition was a significant factor related to psychological distress. Respondents who had one or more chronic conditions (self reported arthritis, osteoporosis, asthma, diabetes or cardiovascular disease) had significantly higher levels of psychological distress (Table 3).

**Table 3: Multivariate analysis of demographic, socioeconomic and health-related variables associated with psychological distress among those with a mental health condition**

Age – 16-34 year olds	↑
Born in country outside Australia, UK or Ireland	↑
Highest education level – Bachelor degree or higher	↓
Employment status – Unemployed or unable to work	↑
Employment status – Engaged in home duties	↑
Income – more than \$80,000	↓
Daily serves of vegetables – 2 or more	↓
Smokers or ex-smokers	↑
No physical activity	↑
One or more chronic conditions	↑

## Conclusions

- The higher the number of mental health conditions a person had, the greater the level of psychological distress.
- All four of the mental health conditions studied: anxiety, depression, stress related problem and other mental health problems were independently associated with higher levels of psychological distress.
- Multivariate logistic regression examined the factors associated with psychological distress among those with a mental health condition.
- Amongst those with a current mental health condition, respondents aged 16 to 34 years, born outside Australia, UK or Ireland, unemployed, unable to work, or engaged in home duties, who were smokers or ex-smokers, not undertaking physical activity or had a chronic condition were significantly more likely to report higher levels of psychological distress.
- Overall, having a self-reported mental health condition may be considered to increase the likelihood of reporting of psychological distress.

For further information visit:  
[www.health.sa.gov.au/pros/default.aspx?tabid=120](http://www.health.sa.gov.au/pros/default.aspx?tabid=120)

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