

# Mental health conditions diagnosis and treatment

Mental health conditions are usually diagnosed by a mental health professional, based on the person's symptoms reported over a period of time in alignment with specific diagnostic criterion as well as any pre-existing medical history.

The diagnosis may consider a person's responses to an evidence-based assessment, which takes on a holistic view of the person's mood, thoughts, behaviours and how these impact them.

In the same way that health evolves over time, mental health conditions are not static. These signs and symptoms may change over time, especially where there might be more than one condition, either mental or physical, present.

## Common mental health conditions

Some of the most common conditions impacting people are depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and bipolar disorder.



According to the Black Dog Institute<sup>1</sup>, of the **20% of Australians** living with a mental health condition in any one year, 8.5% have two or more mental health conditions.

## Undiagnosed and untreated conditions

### Undiagnosed:

Those who have a lived experience of symptoms without a formal diagnosis.

### Untreated:

Those who may have received a diagnosis but may not be receiving optimal treatment.

Many people manage symptoms on their own, but this can carry the risk of inadequate care and worsening symptoms. Seeking help ensures people can access appropriate support and treatment. While a diagnosis isn't always needed, it can open the door to evidence-based, best-practice care.

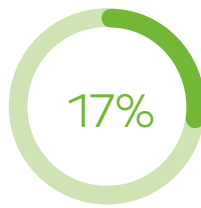


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## 12-month mental health prevalence in Australia based on a 2020–2022 national study<sup>2</sup>



**1.5 million people** experience a mood disorder like depression each year



**3.4 million people** experience an anxiety disorder each year



**396,000 people** experience bipolar disorder each year



**1.1 million people** experience PTSD each year

These conditions are prevalent within the Australian population, yet their impact varies from person to person. For further information, visit [SANE Australia](https://www.sane.org.au).



### Living with a mental health condition

Just like a physical condition, mental health conditions can be treated to help minimise the effects of the condition and promote recovery. This could include a combination of psychological support and/or medication, community support, and self-help strategies.

### Treatment and support strategies



#### Psychotherapy:

A health professional speaks with the person about their symptoms and concerns and applies evidence-based practices to provide them with new ways of thinking.



#### Pharmaco-therapy:

Some people are helped by taking medication for a short term, while others require ongoing treatment. A prescription is needed, and regular follow-ups are important, as people respond differently to medicines.



#### Community support:

Support goes beyond psychosocial rehab or peer groups to having strong networks through community, friends or family. Social support is a known protective factor, associated with a 55% lower risk of depression<sup>3</sup>.

1. Black Dog Institute (n.d.). Facts & figures about mental health. [online] Black Dog Institute, Black Dog Institute, p.1. Available at: [https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/1-facts\\_figures.pdf](https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/1-facts_figures.pdf) [Accessed August 2025].
2. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2023). National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing. Available at: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/mental-health/national-study-mental-health-and-wellbeing/latest-release> [Accessed August 2025].
3. Nature Mental Health (2023). Social support and depression during a global crisis. Available at: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s44220-023-00078-0> [Accessed August 2025].

\* This has been rounded up to the nearest whole number