



MIND MEDICINE
A U S T R A L I A

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Covid-19 Significant Societal and Mental Health Impacts Highlights urgent need for innovation in treatments

Mind Medicine Australia exists to help alleviate the suffering caused by mental illness in Australia through expanding the treatment options available to medical practitioners and their patients. We already had a major mental health epidemic prior to this pandemic, and this is being severely exacerbated as noted below. New treatments are urgently needed to heal those who have and are being damaged by this major crisis.

www.mindmedicineaustralia.org

Modelling and Future Predictions

- Over the next five years, the additional cost to the Australian economy from those suffering from heightened psychological distress who remain employed but at reduced productivity is estimated at \$114bn (<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/politics/coronavirus-mental-health-crisis-bill-is-114bn/news-story/49af48cbd25820a6f4a6c2715544cd1e>)
- Modelling from the University of Sydney's Brain and Mind Centre (the centre) suggests the COVID-19 pandemic will contribute to a major surge – 25% – of suicides, with an increase of up to 30% among young people aged 15–25. (<https://www.sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2020/05/13/modelling-shows-path-to-suicide-prevention-in-covid-recovery.html>)
- The “tsunami of newly unemployed” and the disruption to -education and training for young people is forecast to deliver at least a \$4.5bn hit to economic productivity over the next five years and could lead to the greatest -decline in national wealth since the Great Depression. (<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/coronavirus-depression-a-5bn-hit-to-productivity/news-story/51c4690a2a0a99c444d9a971da4822c6>)
- Suicide rates in Australia are forecast to rise by up to 50 per cent due to the economic and social impacts of the coronavirus and tipped to outstrip deaths from the pandemic by up to 10 times. World-leading research by the country's top mental health experts- predicts the impact of the virus could result in an extra 1500 deaths a year over the next five years and a generational mental health crisis linked directly to the pandemic (<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/suicides-toll-far-higher-than-coronavirus/news-story/25a686904b67bdebdcd544b1cab7f96>)
- Former mental health commissioner and the head of the Brain and Mind Centre, Ian Hickie, told The Australian that the modelling showed the annual rate of suicide could rise from 3000 to up to 4500, with youth suicides making up almost- half.



<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/suicides-toll-far-higher-than-coronavirus/news-story/25a686904b67bdebdcd544b1cab7f96>

- Australian bosses who do not actively manage the mental health of their employees while they work from home will experience an unprecedented number of health and safety claims next year. (<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/the-deal-magazine/coping-with-covid19-why-mental-health-is-key-when-working-from-home/news-story/b0d8a0be424a1567989507443c563448>)

- Prior to the recent spike in cases in Victoria, our most conservative estimates were a 14% increase in overall suicide rates due to COVID-19 restrictions and the subsequent social dislocation and economic fall-out nationally. We also estimated at least a 25% increase in suicide rates in rural and regional areas with pre-existing high levels of unemployment and educational disadvantage. In Victoria. (<https://www.sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2020/08/04/mental-health-impact-of-lockdown-fatigue-requires-urgent-respons.html>)

- The authors modelled three scenarios:

a best-case scenario, which assumes unemployment reaches 11.7% and youth unemployment rises to 19%;

an extended-duration scenario, which retains the peak unemployment rates of the best-case scenario but extends the duration of high unemployment (ie, unemployment stays above 8.5% and youth unemployment above 15% until August 2022); and

A worst-case scenario which assumes unemployment reaches 17% and youth unemployment rises to 26.1%. (<https://insightplus.mja.com.au/2020/30/suicide-deaths-forecast-for-13-7-increase>)

- Because of the careful but slow work of classifying drug-related deaths, the empirical effects of COVID-19 on our overdose toll will not be seen until the OD Report 2022 – and for several years beyond that. But, as evidence from overseas shows, COVID-19 is accelerating trends and exacerbating risk factors which are already detectable in this year’s Report. (<https://www.penington.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Australias-Annual-Overdose-Report-2020.pdf>)
- As the number of cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2 rises exponentially in Australia with consequences for the health system and society at large, we need to remember that during this pandemic that necessary social distancing measures, effective school closures and rising unemployment levels may lead to an increased risk for child abuse and neglect. (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7283759/>)



Children and youth

- Demand for children's mental health has also skyrocketed in Victoria, with access to services jumping more than 30 per cent since September. According to the data, there were 3702 calls to the Kids Helpline by Victorians, a 61 per cent increase in just four weeks. – written 14th October 2020. (<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/politics/mental-health-crisis-one-million-lost-in-coronavirus-lockdown/news-story/fc8c1da341ca392166fce6aba9ca4f69>)
- In Melbourne's outer east, psychologist Sharon Patton is steering Headspace's mental health service for young people through the pandemic. Its Knox office sits between the major suburban hubs of Ringwood, Boronia and Glen Waverley and the more rural Dandenong Ranges. It has seen an estimated 50 per cent rise in referrals for young people who have been admitted to a hospital emergency department because of a mental health crisis. (<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-09-02/mental-health-crisis-coronavirus-victoria-lifeline-calls-rise/12588500>)
- Concern about the coronavirus is driving one Australian child to call the Kids Helpline every 69 seconds, new data shows. Kids Helpline data gathered in March showed the service has experienced a 40 per cent spike in calls compared with the same time last year. (<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/coronavirus-worries-have-australian-children-calling-kids-helpline-every-69-seconds>)
- Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) data shows Victoria has recorded a 33 per cent rise in children presenting to hospital with self-harm injuries over the past six weeks, compared to a year earlier.

The total number of self-harm presentations to emergency departments across all ages increased by 9.3 per cent. - Aug 2020 (<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-08-08/young-people-self-harming-end-up-in-hospital-emergency-rooms/12532040>)

- Youth make up a significant portion of Australia's casualised and gig-economy workforce, and in those industries hardest hit by the pandemic, including retail and hospitality. Youth unemployment is currently sitting at 13.8%⁵. 'Under-employment' is another challenge that young people face - even if they have a job, they may not be able to work the number of hours they would like to earn an adequate income.
- Young Australians aged 16-34 are at the greatest risk of loneliness, with 42% reportedly feeling isolated and alone during the pandemic⁶. Young people are known to already be at higher risk of experiencing mental ill-health and are more vulnerable to the impacts of loneliness, joblessness and lack of social engagement post-COVID-19 - without an adequate support structure to manage through life's ups and downs. (<https://www.pwc.com.au/health/health-matters/why-mental-health-matters-covid-19.html>)



- A national survey of 2,208 young people aged 15-25 and 2,164 parents of young people aged 12-25 conducted at the height of the COVID-19 lockdown in Australia showed 40% of young respondents felt that the pandemic had impacted their confidence to achieve future goals - young women were more likely to feel this way (43%) than young men (38%).
(<https://headspace.org.au/blog/new-research-young-australians-fearful-and-uncertain-for-their-future/>)

- As the number of cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2 rises exponentially in Australia with consequences for the health system and society at large, we need to remember that during this pandemic that necessary social distancing measures, effective school closures and rising unemployment levels may lead to an increased risk for child abuse and neglect.
(<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7283759/>)

- Reports made by members of the public to the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation (ACCCE) increased by 122 per cent as the nation went into coronavirus lockdowns through April, May and June. (<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-09-11/child-sexual-exploitation-reports-jump-in-covid-lockdown-afp-say/12648260>)

- The number of reports received by the ACCCE in the 12 months to July 2020 was 21,000 up from 14,000 in the same period in the previous year.

It comes as reports to the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation (ACCCE) jumped by 123 per cent in 12 months.

The ACCCE's Child Protection Triage Unit said the average number of child exploitation reports it receives has increased from 776 per month to 1,731 per month. May 2020
(<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-05-20/afp-concerned-by-child-exploitation-spike-amid-coronavirus/12265544>)

- At least 7.4 million files of child abuse material were detected circulating on peer-to-peer networks in the state in May 2020 - a number that police believe is likely to be a significant under-estimate of the true level of activity. Victoria
(<https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/more-than-7-4-million-images-of-child-abuse-circulating-in-victoria-20200619-p554dy.html>)
- Three quarters of a million Australian children are likely to be experiencing employment stress in the family as a result of COVID-19. This is on top of around 615,000 children whose families were already dealing with employment stress, whose situation may have worsened.
- Latest figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics show 2.7 million people left their job or had their hours reduced between March and April. This means the jobs crisis is affecting 1.4 million Australian children, according to new modelling from the Mitchell Institute.



<https://theconversation.com/number-of-australias-vulnerable-children-is-set-to-double-as-covid-19-takes-its-toll-140057>)

- There has been a significant increase in anxiety, depression and eating disorders in young people aged up to 14 years old since Victoria's second coronavirus wave began, data analysis of 3 million patients across general practices in Victoria and New South Wales has found.
- But eating disorders also saw a significant and sustained increase from week 13 (25 March) onwards, with a doubling of diagnosis rates.
- By the week of 22 July onwards, anxiety-related diagnoses reached a peak for the year, comprising 2.4% of all consultations to general practitioners in the group aged zero to 19, compared with 1.1% in the same age group in 2019.
- In the same week, depression-related diagnoses comprised 1.5% of total consultations in the same age group in 2020, compared with less than 1% in the same week in 2019. (<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/sep/03/more-children-diagnosed-with-mental-illness-amid-victorias-second-covid-wave>)
- GP stating she has many 12-15 year olds who are 'so depressed' she had 'no other option' but to put them on antidepressants. (<https://origin.go.theaustralian.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/AN-OPEN-LETTER-TO-THE-PREMIER-OF-VICTORIA.pdf>)
- Camberwell GP Stacey Harris, who wrote the letter, says she's seen a large spike in the number of children and teenagers she is seeing who are depressed, and in some cases, are suicidal or self-harming. (<https://www.3aw.com.au/despairing-doctors-plea-premier-urged-to-ease-restrictions-as-youth-mental-health-crisis-builds/>)

Pornography

- After spending almost three months in lockdown and casual sex with strangers either outlawed or significantly discouraged Australian porn use has surged.

In April, Dr Paul J. Maginn from the University of Western Australia conducted an informal Twitter poll and found 60 per cent had increased their porn usage during the pandemic.

(<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8338851/How-Australian-porn-habit-surged-coronavirus-lockdown-popular-search-terms.html>)

- Pornhub, the world's biggest porn site — with over 42 billion views in 2019 — is proving to be a beneficiary of the lockdowns that are taking place in numerous countries. By the end of March, and after the announcement of free access to "premium" content, traffic to the site had increased, on average, by almost 20 per cent worldwide compared to standard operating in February. In Italy, the increase was 57 per cent; in Spain, 61 per cent. And, in



Australia, traffic for men was up 34 per cent. (<https://www.abc.net.au/religion/coronavirus-pornography-and-the-pandemic-of-violence-against-wo/12131020>)

Domestic and family violence

- Australia is no different, with reports of increased calls to domestic violence helplines including an 11% increase in calls to 1800RESPECT and a 26% increase in calls to Mensline. In addition, Google reported a 75% increase in internet searches relating to support for domestic violence. It is likely that these increased calls and searches are the tip of the iceberg, as survivors socially isolating at home with their abusers are often unable to seek help. (<https://www1.racgp.org.au/ajgp/coronavirus/domestic-violence-and-covid-19>)
- Half the vulnerable women seeking legal assistance are getting turned away with services saying they need 123 more lawyers and a \$25 million funding boost to cope. (<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/incredible-pressure-thousands-of-women-turned-away-from-domestic-violence-legal-services-20200922-p55y22.html>)
- Frontline domestic violence specialists say the economic impacts of COVID-19 are disproportionately affecting victims, trapping them in situations of abuse due to financial dependence, unemployment and a lack of affordable accommodation.

A survey of specialists at 34 community services across NSW found rising rates of women experiencing domestic violence since the onset of the pandemic, with more than 85 per cent recording an increase in the complexity of client cases.

(<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/covid-19-recession-is-trapping-women-in-violent-households-20200912-p55uyn.html>)

- This study provides the strongest evidence available about the prevalence of domestic violence experienced by Australian women during the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. One in 20 women (4.6%) experienced physical or sexual violence over the last three months, 5.8 percent experienced coercive control, and one in 10 (11.6%) experienced at least one form of emotionally abusive, harassing or controlling behaviour perpetrated by a current or former cohabiting partner. Critically, the COVID-19 pandemic appears to have coincided with the onset of physical or sexual violence or coercive control for many women. For other women, it coincided with an increase in the frequency or severity of ongoing violence or abuse. Two-thirds of women who had experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or former cohabiting partner since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic said the violence had started or escalated in the three months prior to the survey. Similarly, more than half the women who experienced coercive control reported the onset or escalation of emotionally abusive, harassing or controlling behaviours during the COVID-19 pandemic. (https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-07/sb28_prevalence_of_domestic_violence_among_women_during_covid-19_pandemic.pdf)



- Almost one in 10 Australian women in a relationship have experienced domestic violence during the coronavirus crisis, with two-thirds saying the attacks started or became worse during the pandemic.

A survey by the Australian Institute of Criminology also reveals more than half of women who had experienced physical or sexual violence before the COVID-19 crisis said the violence had become more frequent or severe since the start of the pandemic.

(<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/domestic-violence-on-the-rise-during-pandemic-20200712-p55b8q.html>)

- According to our data, assault in the home increased from 118 presentations in May 2019 to 175 in May 2020: a 48% increase in frequency and a 91% increase relative to emergency department caseload. (<https://theconversation.com/victorian-emergency-departments-during-covid-19-overall-presentations-down-but-assault-diy-injuries-up-144071>)

- Between March and April 2020, 14 per cent of family violence calls to Victoria Police were attributed to circumstances surrounding the coronavirus.

(<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-05-09/victoria-family-violence-cases-double-at-melbourne-hospital/12227594>)

- The campaign comes as Melbourne's St Vincent's Hospital records a significant increase in the number of people experiencing family violence presenting to its emergency department.

The hospital's chief social worker, Lisa Braddy, said presentations to the hospital related to family violence had more than doubled in the first quarter of 2020 compared to 2019.

(<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-05-09/victoria-family-violence-cases-double-at-melbourne-hospital/12227594>)

- The national sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling service 1800 RESPECT said between March and April, the use of its online chat tool had increased by 38 per cent.

The organisation said the increase represented close to 1,000 people, with more than 4,000 people overall seeking help through its web chats in March and April.

The organisation said for online chats, March and April in 2020 had been the second-busiest two-month period in the organisation's history. (<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-05-23/coronavirus-lockdown-domestic-violence-spikes-in-australia/12238962>)

- Family violence workers are also reporting new forms of violence, including perpetrators demanding that women wash their hands and body excessively, to the point that they bled, and spreading rumours that victims had COVID-19 so no one would come near them.

Practitioners also reported perpetrators were not letting women out of their homes, "to protect them" from coronavirus, and were using the restrictions as an excuse to stay with ex-partners.



Perpetrators were also monitoring internet use and mobile phones more, forcing family violence workers to come up with stealth methods to combat this.

Google searches about domestic violence had increased by 75 per cent since the first recorded COVID-19 cases in the state, Attorney-General Mark Speakman revealed on Tuesday. - March 2020 (<https://7news.com.au/lifestyle/health-wellbeing/coronavirus-lockdown-results-in-75-per-cent-increase-in-domestic-violence-google-searches-c-901273>)

Divorce

- A study on the impacts of Covid-19 by Relationships Australia, the leading national provider of relationship support services, found that 42% of people had experienced a negative change in their relationship with their partner during the last few months. (Jun 2020) (<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/jun/18/post-lockdown-divorce-jump-in-number-of-australian-couples-seeking-help>)
- Google searches for the term 'divorce' surged to their highest point in 12 months at the end of June, surpassing the usual spike after Christmas and new year. (<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/breaking-news/covid-impact-to-send-divorce-rate-soaring-as-google-searches-reach-peak/news-story/2db1e28f24421c5b2cd1709c5cb43ab3>)

Mental health

- The first official data revealing the depth of the mental health disaster in Victoria since the second wave outbreak reveals access to some crisis services has risen by up to 67 per cent in the space of four weeks. Commonwealth health department figures obtained by The Australian reveal that in September and October, 350,884 Victorians sought access to Medicare-funded GPs, psychiatrists, psychologists and counselling treatments. This was a 31 per cent increase on the same period last year and three times higher than the national average. Written 14th October 2020. (<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/politics/mental-health-crisis-one-million-lost-in-coronavirus-lockdown/news-story/fc8c1da341ca392166f6ce6aba9ca4f69>)
- Access to Beyond Blue services in Victoria was 77 per cent higher than the rest of the country. The total number of contacts to the mental health organisation was 6,472 over the same four weeks — a 67 per cent increase on the same time last year — compared with a 27 per cent increase in NSW and 8 per cent nationally. Victorian use of Lifeline services was 16 per cent higher than the rest of the country and Kids Helpline 24 per cent higher. Victoria's own data showed a 33 per cent spike in "child and youth contacts in community mental health services for eating disorders". Written 14th October 2020. (<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/politics/mental-health-crisis-one-million-lost-in-coronavirus-lockdown/news-story/fc8c1da341ca392166f6ce6aba9ca4f69>)



- GP stating they are seeing 15-20 mental health cases a day, as opposed to 3-5 at the same time last year (<https://origin.go.theaustralian.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/AN-OPEN-LETTER-TO-THE-PREMIER-OF-VICTORIA.pdf>)
- Nearly four in five Australians say their mental health has deteriorated since the COVID-19 pandemic began with financial stress being a significant driver. (<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/coronavirus-fears-for-the-future-as-financial-stress-impacts-the-nation/news-story/15a73949e71c4b7116e7de88504548ae>)
- A survey of 5000 Australians by mental health advocates the Black Dog Institute also finds 80 per cent of people feel highly uncertain about the future. And more worry about their loved ones catching coronavirus than getting sick themselves. (<https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/media-releases/three-quarters-of-australians-claim-their-mental-health-has-worsened-by-covid-19/>)
- Almost four in five participants reported that since the outbreak their mental health had worsened, with over half (55 per cent) saying it had worsened a little, and almost a quarter (23 per cent) saying it had worsened a lot," the soon-to-be-published paper says. "Many people are experiencing high levels of uncertainty about the future (80 percent), and half reported moderate to extreme loneliness and worry about their financial situation. Given loneliness, social isolation, and financial stress are significant risk factors for poor mental and physical health, and risk factors for suicidal ideation, these findings are concerning." (<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/coronavirus-fears-for-the-future-as-financial-stress-impacts-the-nation/news-story/15a73949e71c4b7116e7de88504548ae>)
- The survey, mostly conducted in early April, found people were turning to the bottle as a coping mechanism, consuming excessive amounts of alcohol. More than half (52.7 percent) admitted to drinking at hazardous levels. (<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/coronavirus-fears-for-the-future-as-financial-stress-impacts-the-nation/news-story/15a73949e71c4b7116e7de88504548ae>)
- Results showed that 78 percent of the participants reported that their mental health problems had worsened during the outbreak and its peak. One in four (25.9 percent) were very worried about getting infected, and one in two (52.7 percent) were worried their friends and family would be infected. Nearly half were worried about loneliness, financial troubles, and uncertainty. Psychological distress levels were higher, with 62 percent, 50 percent, and 64 percent of participants reporting raised levels of depression, anxiety, and stress, respectively. Health anxiety was raised in nearly a quarter of respondents. (<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20200729/Mental-health-problems-peak-alongside-COVID-19-in-Australia.aspx>)
- These data quantify the magnitude and severity of mental health problems in the first month of restrictions. They indicate a widespread change in usual psychological state with about a quarter of the whole population experiencing mild to moderate symptoms of



depression (26.5%) or anxiety (24.5%): substantially higher than the subthreshold depressive symptoms in an American national survey (16.97%) or in a systematic review of subthreshold generalised anxiety (2.2%-7.1%). Further, the point prevalence of clinically significant depressive symptoms (27.6%) is six times higher than the 3.7% found using the PHQ-9 with a randomly selected population of Australian adults in 2015 and two to three times higher than equivalent point-prevalence estimates (3.3%-10.8%) from other high-income countries. There is a similar difference in point prevalence of generalised anxiety symptoms (21.0% in this study, 5.9% to 10.6% in other population-based studies). There are few community point prevalence estimates of thoughts of being better off dead or of self-harm, but the 14.6% found in this survey is very much higher than the 1.8% found among adults in South Australia. (<https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2020/mental-health-people-australia-first-month-covid-19-restrictions-national-survey>)

- The number of counselling sessions used by Australian veterans and their families has spiked by more than 50 per cent during the coronavirus crisis, for example. (<https://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/health/mind/coronavirus-australia-mental-health-crisis-looms-as-covid19-impacts-all-aspects-of-life/news-story/7e5c3cafb13375ca0904c216569f6a8c>)
- Western Australia's miners may have kept their jobs during the lockdown but many are paying a high price in mental illness, with 40 percent of fly-in, fly-out workers reporting psychological distress — up from 33 per cent before the pandemic. As well as increased risk of suicide. (<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/fly-in-dont-fly-out-covid-rosters-take-toll-on-miners/news-story/d68823a9d14174ae81c60e58307aaf83>)
- Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Australia, known as PANDA, has recorded a 20 per cent increase in the number of calls to its free helpline since self-isolation and social-distancing policies to combat the spread of coronavirus were introduced across the country. (<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/coronavirus-mental-health-help-for-struggling-new-mums/news-story/f4a2aa87b45ec3c49bbe384da1304620>)
- Beyond Blue's 'Coping during the Coronavirus outbreak' thread on its online discussion forum had received a record average 2000 hits per day, Ms Harman said - seven times more than a similar thread set up during the summer bushfires. (<https://www.theage.com.au/politics/federal/coronavirus-impact-on-mental-health-seven-times-bushfire-anxiety-20200325-p54dwg.html>)
- Almost half (46%) of Australians felt nervous at least some of the time. Two in five (41%) felt restless or fidgety and that everything was an effort at least some of the time. Almost one in six people (17%) who reported feelings impacting their emotional and mental wellbeing in August had discussed these with a doctor or other health professional. (<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/household-impacts-covid-19-survey/latest-release#emotional-and-mental-wellbeing>)



- Data provided by hospitals and support services showed a national surge of between 25 and 50 per cent in presentations for eating disorders across the public health system.
(<https://www.smh.com.au/national/surge-in-eating-disorders-reveals-tragedy-of-lockdown-20201212-p56mwy.html>)

Contacting Support Services

- Right now, Australians are turning to crisis hotline Lifeline more than ever before, with calls increasing by 25 per cent compared to last year. “Lifeline is Australia’s largest crisis line – we will receive well over one million calls this year, so a 25 per cent increase is significant,” a spokesperson said. In March, Lifeline received almost 90,000 calls for help – a record for the organisation over its 57-year history.
(<https://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/health/mind/coronavirus-australia-mental-health-crisis-looms-as-covid19-impacts-all-aspects-of-life/news-story/7e5c3cafb13375ca0904c216569f6a8c>)
- In Victoria, where a second wave has claimed hundreds of lives and seen thousands of people infected, the mental health toll has been pronounced. When the Victorian Government locked down several public housing towers, Lifeline saw a 22 per cent increase in calls from the state. When stage 4 restrictions were announced, the calls from Victorians jumped by 30 per cent. (<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-09-02/mental-health-crisis-coronavirus-victoria-lifeline-calls-rise/12588500>)
- Eating Disorders Victoria has reported a 30 per cent increase in calls to its helpline. Chief executive Belinda Caldwell said services had been increased to serve demand, with 10 support groups a month now, up from just three.
(<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/coronavirus-isolation-fuelling-eating-disorders/news-story/7dd1aa0bca6fcaa68f8ad45b6558f3de>)
- Concern about the coronavirus is driving one Australian child to call the Kids Helpline every 69 seconds, new data shows. Kids Helpline data gathered in March showed the service has experienced a 40 per cent spike in calls compared with the same time last year.
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(<https://www.theage.com.au/politics/federal/coronavirus-impact-on-mental-health-seven-times-bushfire-anxiety-20200325-p54dwg.html>)
- Statistics from Lifeline also show people across the country are struggling with their mental health. The hotline received 25 per cent more calls than this time last year, the equivalent of



one call every 30 seconds. - Aug 2020 (<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-08-08/young-people-self-harming-end-up-in-hospital-emergency-rooms/12532040>)

- Butterfly's National Helpline logged 15,835 calls and web chats about eating disorders and body image problems from March to August, 43 per cent higher than the same time a year ago. Contacts during March, April and May - the height of the national lockdown - were 24 per cent higher than the previous three months. (<https://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/health-and-wellness/eating-disorders-thrive-in-isolation-pandemic-triggers-spike-in-cases-20200910-p55ugn.html>)
- The national sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling service 1800 RESPECT said between March and April, the use of its online chat tool had increased by 38 per cent.
- The organisation said the increase represented close to 1,000 people, with more than 4,000 people overall seeking help through its webchats in March and April. (<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-05-23/coronavirus-lockdown-domestic-violence-spikes-in-australia/12238962>)
- The organisation said for online chats, March and April in 2020 had been the second-busiest two-month period in the organisation's history.

Over the past week, there has been a 30 per cent increase in calls and emails to Beyond Blue's existing 24/7 Support Service and one in three contacts were from people directly impacted by the coronavirus. March 2020 (<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/media/media-releases/media-releases/beyond-blue-welcomes-funding-for-new-covid-19-support-service>)

Hospitalisations and Emergency Department

- Early August, a week into stage 4 lockdown, the Victorian Government revealed there'd been a 33 per cent increase in young people presenting to emergency departments because of intentional self-harm, compared to the same time in 2019. During this second lockdown, Sharon has noticed an overall 20 per cent rise in people needing help. (<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-09-02/mental-health-crisis-coronavirus-victoria-lifeline-calls-rise/12588500>)
- Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) data shows Victoria has recorded a 33 per cent rise in children presenting to hospital with self-harm injuries over the past six weeks, compared to a year earlier.

The total number of self-harm presentations to emergency departments across all ages increased by 9.3 per cent. - Aug 2020 (<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-08-08/young-people-self-harming-end-up-in-hospital-emergency-rooms/12532040>)

- According to our data, assault in the home increased from 118 presentations in May 2019 to 175 in May 2020: a 48% increase in frequency and a 91% increase relative to emergency



department caseload. (<https://theconversation.com/victorian-emergency-departments-during-covid-19-overall-presentations-down-but-assault-diy-injuries-up-144071>)

- While there has been a 9.5 per cent rise in the number of overall hospital admissions for self-harm in the past six weeks, the biggest spike was among young Victorians – a 33 per cent increase compared to the same period last year. There has also been a 23.3 per cent increase in people presenting at hospitals because of mental illness, as well as a 29 per cent increase in mental health support issued by telephone. Aug 2020 (<https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/victoria-records-394-new-covid-19-case-17-deaths-20200809-p55jz4.html>)
- The campaign comes as Melbourne's St Vincent's Hospital records a significant increase in the number of people experiencing family violence presenting to its emergency department.

The hospital's chief social worker, Lisa Braddy, said presentations to the hospital related to family violence had more than doubled in the first quarter of 2020 compared to 2019. (<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-05-09/victoria-family-violence-cases-double-at-melbourne-hospital/12227594>)

Unemployment

- In May 2020, 2.3 million Australians (one in five employed people) were either unemployed or had work hours reduced for economic reasons, resulting in the steepest rise in rates of unemployment on record — a change from 5.2% in March to 7.4% in Jun 2020 and is now down to 6.8% in Aug 2020 (<https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2020/213/4/unemployment-suicide-and-covid-19-using-evidence-plan-prevention>)
- The actual unemployment number is estimated to have been 11.6% in May, which is different to statistical unemployment (<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-08-13/unemployment-jobs-coronavirus-abs-july-2020/12553936#:~:text=Key%20points%3A,and%2071%2C200%20part%2Dtime%20jobs>)
- Unemployment alone is associated with a two- to threefold increased relative risk of death by suicide compared with being employed, and sudden spikes in unemployment are associated with corresponding surges in the population rates of suicide. (<https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2020/213/4/unemployment-suicide-and-covid-19-using-evidence-plan-prevention>)
- The recently released April 2020 Labour Force Statistics reveals that the COVID-19 crisis had the largest one-month impact on employment that we have ever seen in Australia. A close look at the statistics indicates that Australia's youth (aged 15-24) are bearing the brunt of the economic contraction resulting from our COVID-19 response.



The April Labour Force data shows that in one month alone, an estimated 213,000 young people aged 15-24 lost their jobs (seasonally adjusted estimates). This represents 35% of the close to 600,000 Australians that lost work in April. 1 Dhillon, Z., and N. Cassidy (2018), Labour Market Outcomes for Younger People, RBA Bulletin, June, (<https://www.rba.gov.au/publications/bulletin/2018/jun/labour-market-outcomes-for-younger-people.html>)

- The youth employment-to-population ratio dropped dramatically from 60.5% in March to 54.0% in April 2020. The fall in employment would have been greater had it not been for the JobKeeper payment. However, it is clear from the disproportionate adverse impact experienced by young people that JobKeeper arrangements failed to protect many young people, but had a stronger effect for workers over the age of 25. ● The youth unemployment rate rose from 11.5% to 13.8% in April. (https://www.csi.edu.au/media/uploads/csi_fact_sheet_social_covid-19_youth_unemployment.pdf)
- Underemployment rate went from 8.6% March 2020 to 13.7% April 2020. (<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia/apr-2020>)
- This study provides the strongest evidence available about the prevalence of domestic violence experienced by Australian women during the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. One in 20 women (4.6%) experienced physical or sexual violence over the last three months, 5.8 percent experienced coercive control, and one in 10 (11.6%) experienced at least one form of emotionally abusive, harassing or controlling behaviour perpetrated by a current or former cohabiting partner. (https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-07/sb28_prevalence_of_domestic_violence_among_women_during_covid-19_pandemic.pdf)
- Overall, this means that 65.4 percent of women who experienced physical or sexual violence from a current or former cohabiting partner in the three months prior to the survey had experienced either violence for the first time by that partner or an escalation in the frequency and severity of prior violence. Similarly, 54.8 percent of women who experienced coercive control from a current or former cohabiting partner in the three months prior to the survey said either that they had experienced emotionally abusive, harassing or controlling behaviour by that partner for the first time, or that the abuse had escalated since February 2020. (https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-07/sb28_prevalence_of_domestic_violence_among_women_during_covid-19_pandemic.pdf)
- Almost 60 per cent of practitioners said the COVID-19 pandemic had increased the frequency of violence against women.
Half of respondents said the severity of violence had increased.
The number of first-time family violence reports had gone up for 42 per cent of practitioners



surveyed.

Practitioners themselves were struggling working from home, which was "wreaking havoc" on their boundaries and mental health. (<https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/new-reports-of-family-violence-spike-in-covid-19-lockdown-study-finds-20200607-p55096.html>)

- Women and youth will be disproportionately impacted by an economic downturn. Women are more likely to work part time and on casual contracts with no paid leave entitlements. They are also more likely to pick up increased schooling and childcare responsibilities, making it difficult to search for, and return to, work. 325,000 women became unemployed in April 2020, making up 55% of all the jobs lost⁴. Similarly, youth make up a significant portion of Australia's casualised and gig-economy workforce, and in those industries hardest hit by the pandemic, including retail and hospitality. Youth unemployment is currently sitting at 13.8%⁵. 'Under-employment' is another challenge that young people face - even if they have a job, they may not be able to work the number of hours they would like to earn an adequate income. (<https://www.pwc.com.au/health/health-matters/why-mental-health-matters-covid-19.html>)
- Suicide risk is linked to unemployment rates. In the 2008 GFC, suicide rates increased by between 20-30% from pre-GFC levels as unemployment rates increased⁷. Current day unemployment rates are rising - from 5.2% pre COVID-19 to almost 6.2% in June 2020 - with the total economy expected to contract by 8% in 2020⁹. With the JobKeeper and JobSeeker stimulus currently in place, the true impact of the economic crisis on individuals and households may not be known for some time. (<https://www.pwc.com.au/health/health-matters/why-mental-health-matters-covid-19.html>)

Financial Insecurity

- According to a report – *Brand New Australia* – by research agencies The Lab and Nature, 48 per cent of Australians expect the next few years to be financially difficult, 44 per cent won't be able to relax until there is a vaccine, 65 per cent believe the COVID-19 pandemic is the reset needed to re-evaluate how we live our lives and 58 per cent want a simpler life when the health crisis is over. (<https://www.afr.com/companies/media-and-marketing/half-of-australians-expect-to-struggle-financially-due-to-covid-19-20200717-p55d2l>)

Alcohol and tobacco

- The survey, mostly conducted in early April, found people were turning to the bottle as a coping mechanism, consuming excessive amounts of alcohol. More than half (52.7 per cent) admitted to drinking at hazardous levels.
- In terms of proximal factors, it was predicted that disrupted lifestyle factors, negative mood, and loss of employment would predict increased drinking post-pandemic onset. As hypothesized, those who had lost their job as a result of COVID-19 reported drinking more



than those who had not. Health behaviors, including eating a lot more than normal and both sleeping a lot more than normal and a lot less than normal were associated with increased drinking. Higher levels of depression and stress were associated with increased drinking as predicted (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7436134/>)

- The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) conducted a poll of 1,045 Australians aged 18 years and over during the period 3–5 April 2020

70 % report drinking more alcohol than usual since the COVID-19 outbreak in Australia
32 % are concerned with the amount of alcohol either they or someone in their household is drinking. Over a third (34 %) say they are now drinking alcohol daily

28 % report drinking alcohol to cope with anxiety and stress.

28 % have been drinking alcohol on their own more often

24 % have started drinking alcohol and ended up drinking more than they thought they would have

20 % report having started drinking alcohol earlier in the day.

(<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/alcohol/alcohol-tobacco-other-drugs-australia/contents/impacts/impact-of-covid-19-on-alcohol-and-other-drug-use>)

- The Burnet Institute conducted interviews with 60 members of their Melbourne Injecting Drug User Cohort Study (SuperMIX) between 29 March and 1 May 2020. A modified questionnaire was used which included new questions specifically related to COVID-19 restrictions and also allowed comparisons to be made with data collected from interviews conducted with different participants before COVID-19 restrictions were implemented. While this initial study of people who inject/use drugs found that COVID-19 restrictions have had limited impacts on drug purchase and use:

11% reported an increase in the frequency of alcohol consumption.

13% of the people who smoked reported smoking more (Dietze et al. 2020).

(<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/alcohol/alcohol-tobacco-other-drugs-australia/contents/summary-of-main-data-sources-used-in-this-report/data-quality>)

- A new Alcohol and Drug Foundation survey has found one in eight Australians have been drinking every day since the coronavirus outbreak began

One in 10 people reported consuming more than 10 standard drinks per week, increasing the risk of alcohol-related injury and diseases such as cancer.

Nearly one in five people said they wished they'd drunk less during the Covid-19 lockdown, with half hoping to cut down in the future.

(<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/aug/09/one-in-12-australians-drinking-alcohol-every-day-during-coronavirus-outbreak-survey-finds>)



Eating Disorders

- Eating Disorders Victoria has reported a 30 per cent increase in calls to its helpline. Chief executive Belinda Caldwell said services had been increased to serve demand, with 10 support groups a month now, up from just three.
(<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/coronavirus-isolation-fuelling-eating-disorders/news-story/7dd1aa0bca6fcaa68f8ad45b6558f3de>)
- Butterfly's National Helpline logged 15,835 calls and web chats about eating disorders and body image problems from March to August, 43 per cent higher than the same time a year ago. Contacts during March, April and May - the height of the national lockdown - were 24 per cent higher than the previous three months. (<https://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/health-and-wellness/eating-disorders-thrive-in-isolation-pandemic-triggers-spike-in-cases-20200910-p55ugn.html>)

Refugee and migrant issues

- Three-quarters of temporary migrants seeking support for domestic and family violence during the coronavirus pandemic have said they feared for their lives, service provider case files reveal, as advocates warn of an influx of calls for help. - Monash University Report in Victoria (<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/three-quarters-of-temporary-migrants-reporting-domestic-violence-during-coronavirus-lockdown-fear-for-their-lives>)
- Given the limited data available on BV/SHEV/TPV holders, we used data on permanently resettled refugees as a reference group to establish socioeconomic benchmarks. Based on this analysis, we estimate that:

Nearly 22,000 asylum seekers, SHEV and TPV holders stand to lose their jobs as a result of the coronavirus outbreak

Extending income support to 22,000 out of work asylum seekers and refugees will cost the government just 2% over the forward estimates on top of existing budget measures to extend Jobseeker and the Coronavirus supplement

Without a job or any income support, this spike in unemployment will cost the government \$700,000 per week in lost tax revenue, or nearly \$43 million over the forward estimates (to 2020-21)

Total loss of household income will take over \$10 million per week out of the economy until these incomes are replaced or supplemented

91% of this group are renters, who, if unable to pay their rent, will potentially cost private landlords up to \$21.5 million per month in foregone rental income



Nearly 74,000 people in this group are also on short-term leases or do not have a rental agreement/contract, leaving those unemployed highly vulnerable to eviction

Inability to pay rent could increase the rate of overcrowded dwellings for this group from 22% to almost 75% (<https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/covid-19-impact-briefing-1/>)

Racism

- In February, the Commission recorded more complaints under the Racial Discrimination Act than at any time over the past twelve months. Since then the rate of complaints has been within the usual range, albeit towards the high end.
- One third of all racism complaints made to the Commission since the start of February have been related to COVID-19. (<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-05-09/coronavirus-covid-19-racist-attacks-data-collection-strategy/12229162?nw=0>)
- The COVID-19 Racism Incident Report Survey was launched on April 2 nd 2020 and, to date, has collected over 410 reports of COVID-19-related racism. This report analyses quantitative and qualitative data from the first two months of the survey (April 2nd - June 2nd). There were 377 reports over this period. (<http://diversityarts.org.au/app/uploads/COVID19-racism-incident-report-Preliminary-Official.pdf>)
- A database of racist incidents against Asian Australians has received 178 responses in two weeks, as Queensland police also condemned a rise in anti-Asian racism during the Covid-19 pandemic. (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/17/survey-of-covid-19-racism-against-asian-australians-records-178-incidents-in-two-weeks>)
- The state anti-discrimination body has received 241 official complaints in the four months between 1 January to 30 April this year. Of those, 62 were on the grounds of race – an average of four complaints a week just in one state. (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/01/anti-asian-racism-surges-in-nsw-during-coronavirus-pandemic>)

Crime and Cyber Abuse

- Commercial break-ins increased 41 per cent in the first month of coronavirus restrictions in South Australia, according to new crime statistics. (<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-05-16/shop-break-ins-up-driving-offences-down-under-coronavirus/12248972>)
- One in six Australians experienced cyber crime during the COVID-19 lockdown, according to new research from NortonLifeLock. (<https://itbrief.com.au/story/australian-cyber-crime-on-the-rise-during-covid-lockdown>)



- received more than 95 cybercrime reports about Australians losing money or personal information to COVID-19 themed scams and online frauds,
- responded to 20 cyber security incidents affecting COVID-19 response services and/or major national suppliers in the current climate, and
- disrupted over 150 malicious COVID-19 themed websites, with assistance from Australia's major telecommunications providers, as well as Google and Microsoft.
- (<https://www.cyber.gov.au/acsc/view-all-content/news/covid-19-cyber-scams-mount-against-australians>)
- ACCC's Scamwatch reported \$443,981 lost to identity theft scams in April, more than double the totals for February and March combined, but Ms Rickard said the impact of the phishing blitz will be felt for quite some time to come. (<https://www.smh.com.au/technology/super-scams-fake-puppies-covid-19-isolation-triggers-jump-in-cybercrime-20200519-p54ued.html>)
- Check Point Research recently showed a 30% increase in COVID-19 related cyber-attacks over the first two weeks of May, many of which involved email scams. On average, there were 192,000 coronavirus-related cyber-attacks documented per week. (<https://www.hcamag.com/au/specialisation/hr-technology/covid-19-malicious-emails-are-driving-a-cyber-crime-pandemic/224664>)
- The Australian Cyber Security Centre's Scamwatch has reported an increase in COVID-19 themed SMS, email campaigns and other cyber-related scams since March 2020, with over 1,100 reports about COVID-19 scams, and almost \$130,000 in losses reported. The ACSC has also received more than 115 cybercrime and cyber security incident reports from individuals and businesses. These figures, however, only capture the incidents that have been reported – it is believed that the numbers of cyber victims are actually far greater. (<https://aca.org.au/article/cyber-crime-in-the-age-of-covid-19>)
- According to Australia's eSafety Commissioner, it received more than 1,000 reports of image-based abuse between March and May 2020. This represents a 210% increase on the average weekly number of reports they received in 2019.

There was also a huge spike over the Easter weekend, where there was an almost 600% increase on usual reporting figures. (<https://www.rmit.edu.au/news/all-news/2020/jun/revenge-porn-during-covid>)

- More time online at home is -bringing out the worst in some Australians, with reports of cyber abuse up by 50 per cent since -social--distancing measures were introduced last month, federal Communications Minister Paul Fletcher has revealed.

New figures from the office of the eSafety Commissioner reveal the significant spike in complaints of adults abusing each other online, which sit alongside increased reports of cyber bullying of children, up 21 per cent, and image-based abuse,



up 86 per cent. (<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/technology/coronavirus-huge-rise-cases-of-in-online-abuse-and-bullying/news-story/ad0e9629feb547d5526415ea62064c9e>)

Social media

- A dramatic surge in social media use during the pandemic is fuelling the nation's mental health crisis, increasing calls for Facebook and Twitter to deal with false and misleading information. (<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/politics/coronavirus-social-media-fuels-mental-crisis/news-story/afdd4d7dc4f12f329cd3156efb93bcd1>)

Mind Medicine Australia is a registered charity (DGR-1 status) working to develop evidence-based and regulated psychedelic-assisted treatments for mental illness in Australia. Mind Medicine Australia is wholly focused on the clinical application of psychedelics, and provides a nexus between medical practitioners, academia, government, regulatory bodies, philanthropists and other partners. We support research, and develop therapist training, ethical guidelines, and educational material and events.

Mind Medicine Australia is focused specifically on the clinical application of psilocybin-assisted therapy and MDMA-assisted therapy for the treatment of mental illness. We do not advocate for non-clinical use of psychedelics or any other prohibited substances, nor do we advocate for any change to the law with respect to non-clinical use.

Mind Medicine Australia's Board, Management team, Ambassadors, and Advisory Panel members consist of leading practitioners in the applied treatment of mental illness, psychedelic medical research, health strategy, ethics, and other relevant fields from both Australia and overseas.

Please visit **mindmedicineaustralia.org** for more information about our mission to introduce Medicine-Assisted Therapy to Australia: website www.mindmedicineaustralia.org.au

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