

**Monograph Series Number 5**

**National Survey of Mental Health  
and  
Wellbeing of Adults 1997**

**Preliminary analysis of ACT data**



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# National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing of Adults 1997

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# National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing of Adults 1997

This survey was conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) from May to August 1997 as part of the National Mental Health Strategy. The ACT sample was extended by the ACT Department of Health and Community Care to include 604 subjects. This enhancement allows for some ‘drilling down’ analysis, but nevertheless, the sample is too small to allow for extensive disaggregation. Results should therefore be treated with caution. Diagnoses of mental disorders were based on ICD-10-CM classifications. Subjects were asked to comment on experiences in the past 12 months.

Initial analysis of ACT results shows similar trends to those found nationally, although there are some important exceptions. As a result of reported prevalence, estimations for the ACT population were made. Details of initial analysis and estimations follow.

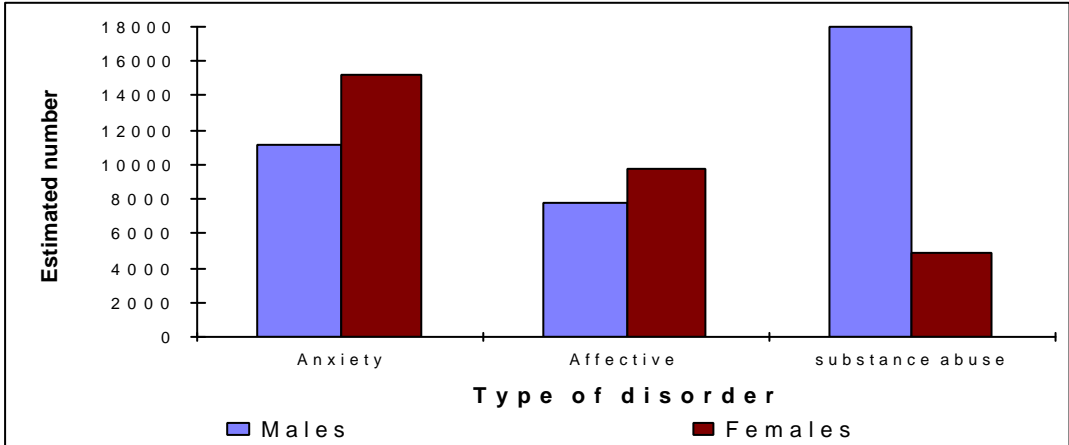
## 1. Prevalence of mental disorders

(Refer Table 1 at end). In the ACT, 52.6 percent of people aged 18 years and over were estimated to have no mental disorder or physical condition (115,200 people) and 21.1 percent some form of mental disorder (46,100 people). Although there was a slightly higher proportion of ACT people without mental or physical disorder than nationally (Australia 51.1%), there were more with some mental disorder (Australia 17.7%).

ACT results on prevalence of mental disorders showed that there was an estimated:

- 11,100 males and 15,200 females with anxiety disorders
- 7,800 males and 9,800 females with affective disorders
- 18,000 males and 4,900 females with substance abuse disorders
- of those with substance abuse, 3,500 males (all in 18-54 age group) and 1,000 females (age groups not shown due to rounding of small estimates) had another mental disorder

**Figure 1: Estimated prevalence of mental disorders, ACT, 1997**



Source: National Mental Health & Wellbeing Survey 1997, ABS Catalogue No.4326.0 (unpublished data)

Disorders where ACT residents reported *higher* proportional prevalence than nationally include:

- substance use disorder (persons and males, but not females)
- anxiety disorder (males, females and persons - especially in generalised anxiety disorder for all, social phobia for males, post traumatic stress disorder for females)
- affective disorder (males, females and persons - especially in depression for males which was double that of Australian males and for females, and dysthymia for females which was more than double than Australian females).

Agoraphobia was not a significant problem in the ACT (much lower than for Australia).

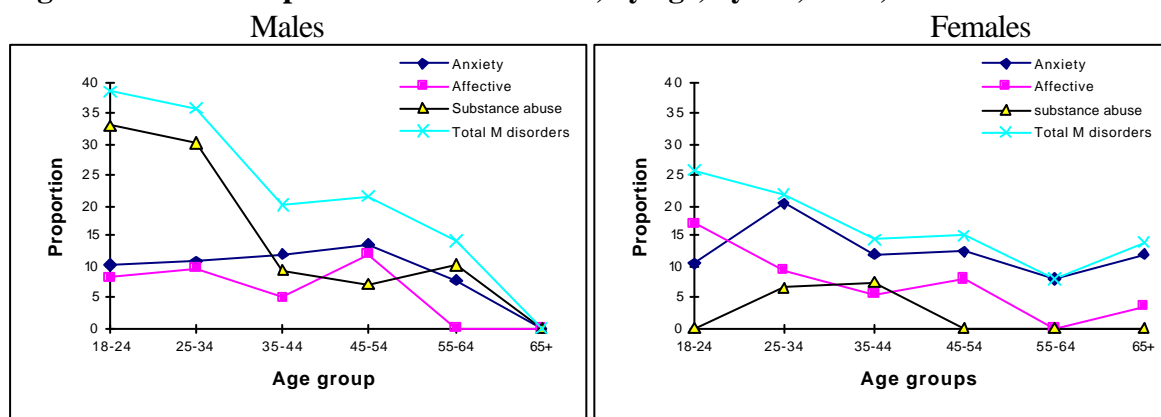
### 1.1 Prevalence of mental disorders by age

(Refer Table 2). The ACT reported less physical conditions than the national sample, although for the age group 18-24 years, the proportion of ACT males was higher than that of Australian males and for the 18-54 year group ACT female proportion was higher than that of Australian females.

With regard mental disorders, there were fluctuating trends. These are outlined below.

- All ACT male age groups except 65 and over, had higher proportions of people with anxiety disorder than for Australian male age groups. Female groups aged 25-34 and over 65 years had higher proportions than Australian female groups.
- For affective disorders, ACT males 35-44 years had a lower proportion than Australian males, but a higher proportion for 18-34 and 45-54 year olds. ACT females (18-34 years) had a higher proportion of people with anxiety disorders than Australian females in the same age group.
- For substance use disorders, ACT males nearly doubled the Australian proportion in the 18-34 and 55-64 year age groups, although sampling error precludes definite analysis. ACT females (35-44 years) possibly have a higher proportion than Australian females in the same age group (high sampling error).
- For all mental disorders (total), the proportion of ACT males affected is higher than Australian males in all age groups except the 65 years and over group. ACT females have similar proportions to Australian females with the exceptions of 35-64 group (less than Australian females) and 65 years and over (possibly higher - subject to sampling error).
- For people reporting no mental or physical condition, ACT males had higher proportions than Australian males in the 35-54 year group, but lower in the 55-64 and 18-34 year groups. For ACT females, they had a lower proportion in the 18-54 year group, but a higher proportion in the 55-64 year group.

**Figure 2: Estimated prevalence of disorders, by age, by sex, ACT, 1997**



Source: National Mental Health & Wellbeing Survey 1997, ABS Catalogue No.4326.0 (unpublished data)

## 2. Household composition

(Refer Table 3a). More people who reported mental disorders live with others than alone. A higher proportion of males reporting mental disorders live in households of 3 or more (approx. 58%) compared to females (approx. 54%). Only 16 percent of males and 12 percent of females with mental disorders live alone.

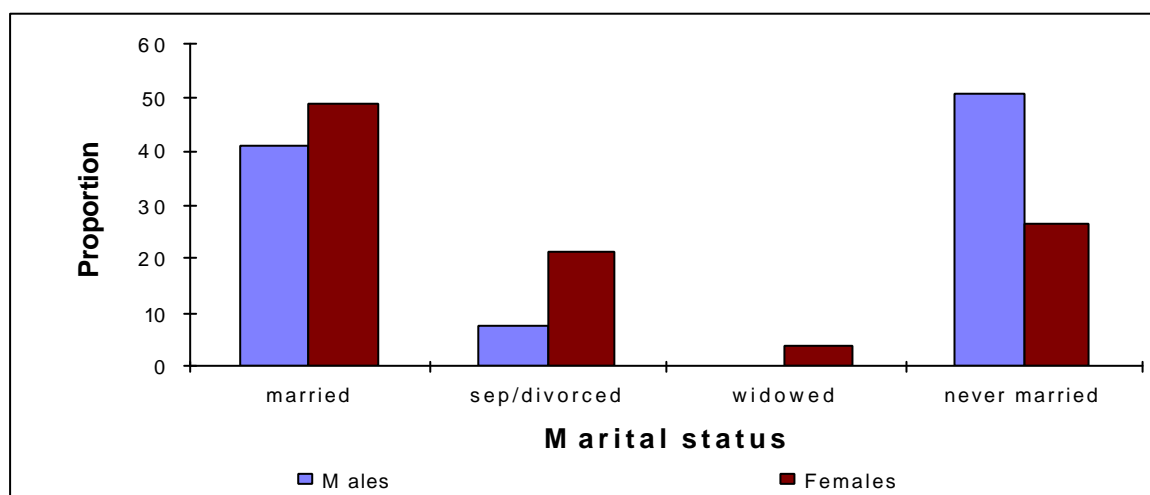
For people without a mental disorder or physical condition, a higher proportion of males live in households of 3 or more (approx. 64%) compared to females (approx. 57%). Only 9 percent of males and 10 percent of females without mental disorders or physical conditions live alone.

## 3. Marital status

(Refer Table 5a). For males reporting mental disorders, most had never married (50.6%). Forty one percent were married and 7.6 percent were separated or divorced. For Australia, the proportions were that most were married (58.2%), never married (32.0%), separated (8.5%). Differences in married status between the ACT and Australia may be caused by age differences between the areas.

For females however, those who reported mental disorders were more likely to be married (49%), compared to never married (26.3%) or separated or divorced (21.2%). National proportions for females were similar to those of the ACT.

**Figure 3: Estimated prevalence of mental disorders, by marital status, by sex, ACT 1997**



Source: National Mental Health & Wellbeing Survey 1997, ABS Catalogue No.4326.0 (unpublished data)

## 4. Labour force status

(Refer Table 7a). For ACT males reporting mental illness, 62.7 percent were in the full-time workforce, 15.6 percent were not in the labour force, and the remainder were part-time employed (11%) or unemployed (11%).

For ACT females reporting mental illness, 38.4 percent were in the full-time workforce, 34.8 percent were not in the labour force and 21.7 percent were working part-time.

**Figure 4: Estimated prevalence of mental disorders, by labour force status, by sex, ACT, 1997**



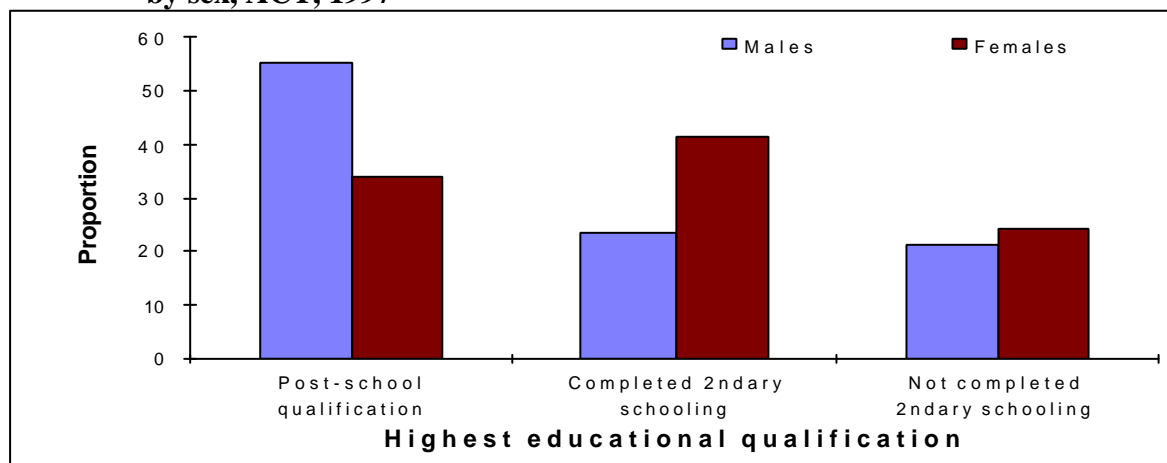
Source: National Mental Health & Wellbeing Survey 1997, ABS Catalogue No.4326.0 (unpublished data)

## 5. Education status

(Refer Table 9a) For ACT males reporting a mental disorder, 55.1 percent had post school qualifications, 23.6 percent had completed secondary school only and 21.3 percent had not completed secondary school.

For ACT females reporting a mental disorder however, 41.4 percent had completed secondary school only, 34.3 percent had post school qualifications and 24.2 percent had not completed secondary schooling.

**Figure 5: Estimated prevalence of mental disorders, by highest educational qualification, by sex, ACT, 1997**



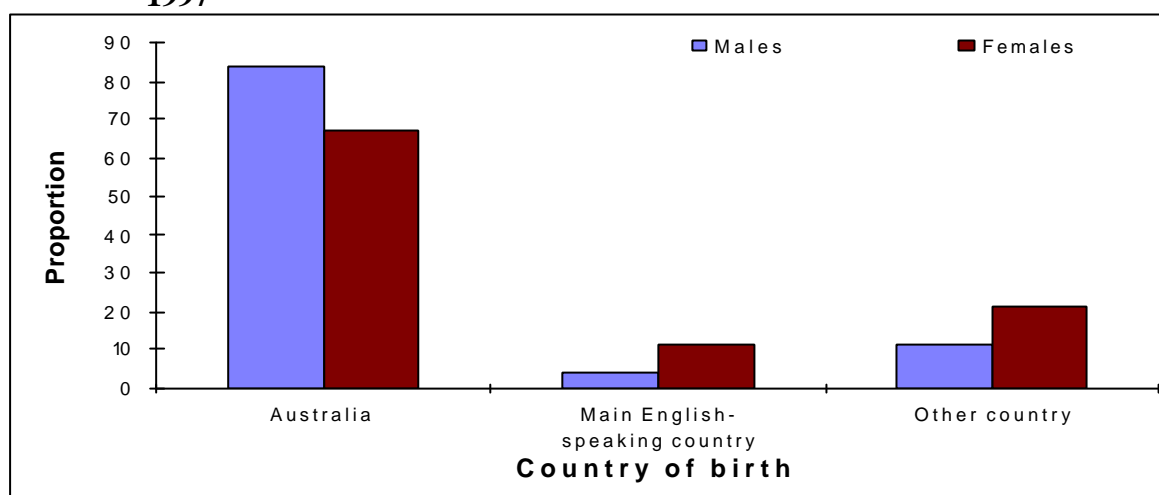
Source: National Mental Health & Wellbeing Survey 1997, ABS Catalogue No.4326.0 (unpublished data)

## 6. Country of birth

(Refer Table 10a) For ACT males with a mental disorder, 84 percent were Australian born, 11.4 percent were from 'other countries' (non-English speaking) and 4.2 percent from main English-speaking countries.

For ACT females with a mental disorder, only 67.2 percent were born in Australia with 21.2 percent from 'other countries' and 11.6 percent from main English-speaking countries.

**Figure 6: Estimated prevalence of mental disorders, by country of birth, by sex, ACT, 1997**



Source: National Mental Health & Wellbeing Survey 1997, ABS Catalogue No.4326.0 (unpublished data)

## 7. Comorbidities

(Refer Table 12). Of the 103,700 ACT people estimated to have some mental disorder or physical condition, 57,600 have physical disorders only, 29,200 have a mental disorder only and the remainder have both mental disorder and/or physical condition.

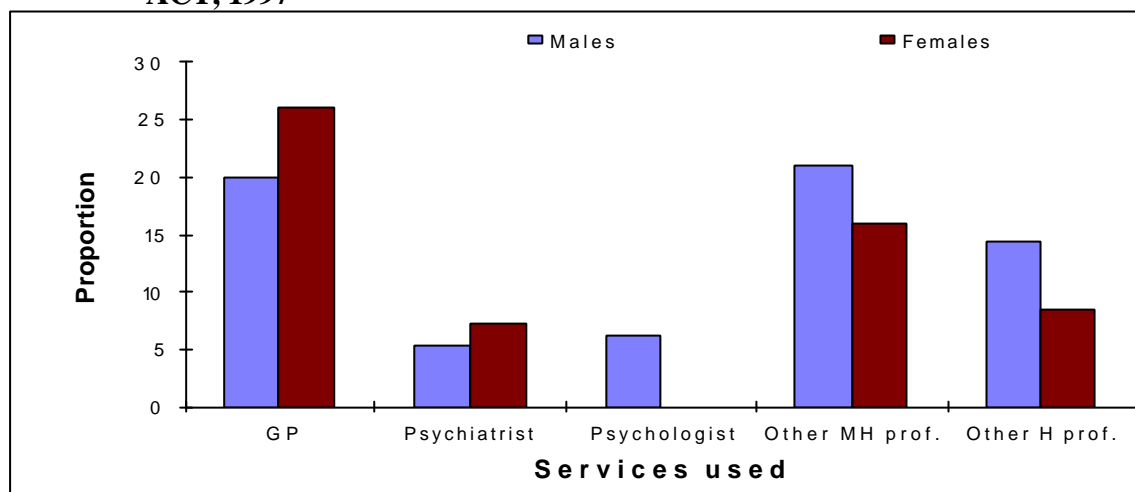
(Refer Table 14). Most males with a mental disorder did not have a disability (76.2%). Those who did mostly had a mild disability only. For females with a mental disorder, 51.8 percent did not have a disability, approximately 18 percent had a moderate disability, approximately 18 percent had a severe disability and approximately 12 percent had a mild disability. These percentages are subject to high sampling error however and should be treated with caution.

The average days out of role for people with comorbidities indicates the severity of conditions. Males with both physical and either substance abuse, anxiety or affective disorder had an average of 11 days out of role compared to 6 days for females. Both averages are subject to high sampling error however.

## 8. Services used for mental health problems

(Refer Table 16). Only 33.8 percent of males and 51.5 percent of females with mental disorders use health services for mental health problems. Most of these people (21.2% males, 37.9% females) use medical practitioners followed by 'other' mental health professionals (17.1% males, 24.2% females) and other health professionals (14.1% males, 20.4% females). Most people did not use psychiatrists or psychologists for treatment for their mental disorders.

**Figure 7: Estimated services used by people with mental health problems, by sex, ACT, 1997**



Source: National Mental Health & Wellbeing Survey 1997, ABS Catalogue No.4326.0 (unpublished data)

(Refer Tables 17 & 18). When these data are examined by age, people with a mental disorder aged 18-34 years do not use health services as often as other groups (34% compared to 41.4% for all groups). Over half of people 35-64 years use services (54.5%). Of people with mental disorder, who used health services, 48.2 percent had some form of disability.

### 8.1 Level of need met

(Refer Tables 21 & 22). Subjects were asked about perceived needs concerning their mental disorder and whether those needs were met. In the various categories, needs were not perceived to be met for counselling (21.6% of people with a mental disorder), social intervention (26%), and skills training (16.5%). These percentages contrasted with the perceptions of people with no mental disorder, who generally thought that their personal needs were being met fully.

## 9. Tables

*Tables referenced in brackets refer to tables generated by the ABS for the ACT Department of Health and Community Care, held in the Health Status Monitoring Unit. They are attached for reference.*

