



Million Minds Mental Health Research Mission



Roadmap



Theme
Research
missions

The Million Minds Mental Health Research Mission is an initiative of the Medical Research Future Fund. It is providing \$125 million over 10 years from 2018–19 to support innovative, participatory and intervention-focused research into the causes of mental illness and psychological distress, and the best early intervention, prevention and treatment strategies.

The impact of mental illness is considerable and continues to grow. Mental illness is the leading cause of both disability and premature death in Australia. Mental illness and suicide have a profound effect on individuals, carers, families and the community.

In Australia, about one in seven children and adolescents aged four to 17 years have experienced mental illness,¹ and more than two in five adults will experience a mental illness during their lifetime.²

Suicide was the leading cause of death for Australians aged 15 to 44 years in 2020.³ Suicide rates among First Nations peoples are substantially higher than those for all Australians.⁴ The COVID-19 pandemic has and continues to impact on Australians' mental health and wellbeing.

High-quality research is essential to inform evidence-based practice. Research is needed to improve knowledge of what causes or contributes to mental illness and psychological distress, and how we can effectively prevent, detect, diagnose and treat these issues.

Although mental illness contributed 17% of Australia's total burden of disease,⁵ the proportion of health research funding dedicated to mental health research is substantially less than this.

This mission highlights commitment to:

- boost the level of funding dedicated to mental health research
- complement existing mental health research initiatives
- align with the National Mental Health Research Strategy
- extend Australian Government support for the 5th National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan
- ensure all Australians have better access to the best possible mental health care, treatment, interventions and prevention strategies

Contributions from philanthropic organisations, other governments, industry and the private sector will be sought to increase the reach and long-term sustainability of the mission's activities.

1 AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) (2020). *Australia's children*.

2 ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) (2022). *National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing 2020–21*.

3 AIHW (2022). *Deaths in Australia*.

4 ABS (2021). *Causes of death, Australia, 2021*.

5 NMHC (National Mental Health Commission) (2022). *National Mental Health Research Strategy Appendices: Appendix D*.



Scope

The mission will invest in research to enhance the mental wellbeing of Australians by:

- improving understanding of the underlying mechanisms of mental illness and/or psychological distress
- supporting the development of new approaches for prevention, interventions, treatment and management
- reducing the stigma, prevalence and severity of mental illness and psychological distress
- identifying and supporting the implementation of appropriate and innovative intervention and care models to help people with mental illness and/or psychological distress
- supporting research to enhance the mental health system's capacity and capability to effectively respond to emerging health challenges and build an evidence-equipped workforce
- reducing inequity in mental health outcomes and access to treatment for priority populations such as Australia's First Nations peoples



Our goal

To improve the quality of life of an additional one million people, who might not otherwise benefit from mental health research, to be part of new approaches to prevention, detection, diagnosis, treatment and recovery developed from the work of the mission.



Our mission

The mission will contribute to measurable improvements in Australians' mental health and wellbeing, by concentrating research efforts into areas of critical importance and areas not already targeted through existing initiatives.

It will ensure that mental health research is translated into practice, by providing evidence to inform policy, systems and services. This will ensure evidenced-based interventions and treatments that:

- reduce the prevalence of mental illness and/or psychological distress
- reduce delays in diagnosis
- prevent suicide
- improve access to adequate and appropriate care
- reduce mortality associated with mental illness in Australia
- reduce the stigma, and build awareness and understanding, of mental illness and/or psychological distress



Funding principles

The following principles apply to activities funded under the mission:

- All Australians, irrespective of background, circumstances or geography, should have access to evidence-based, best-practice mental health and suicide prevention, treatment and care

- Research should focus on interventions that are co-designed, innovative and impactful, and that can transform current prevention and treatment without duplicating the efforts of existing initiatives

- Research should acknowledge, and aim to understand, what underlying shared and unique mechanisms are important to deliver better care for people with mental illness and/or psychological distress, and those at risk of suicide

- Research should be interdisciplinary, translational in nature, and responsive to emerging trends and challenges

- Research should incorporate data sharing and harmonisation into its design and use existing data and established frameworks, where possible

- Consumers, carers and families with a living or lived experience are partners and should be directly involved in all stages of research through a person-centred approach, be informed of the outcomes of research, and be provided with adequate training, mentoring and remuneration. Genuine co-design and participatory opportunities to help guide research is encouraged, and person-reported experience should be measured

- Research should encourage and support domestic and international collaboration, where possible, and should include people with cultural knowledge, researchers from other disciplines, industry, government and other key stakeholders. All stakeholders should be provided with support and have their contribution recognised

- Enhancing mental health research relies on increasing the capacity and resources of the sector, and on improving alignment of research with the needs of consumers, carers, families and clinicians

- Research should seek to identify, understand and address inequalities of access to, and outcomes of, mental health and care services. This includes, but is not limited to, considering and including:
 - First Nations peoples
 - people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
 - people who live in rural, regional or remote areas
 - people who are financially or socially disadvantaged
 - people who are veterans of the Australian Defence Force or an allied defence force, including spouses, widows or widowers of veterans
 - people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless
 - people who are care leavers (which includes Forgotten Australians, Former Child Migrants and Stolen Generations)
 - parents separated from their children by forced adoption or removal
 - people from lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans/transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) communities
 - prisoners and ex-prisoners

Priority areas for investment

Aim 1 Better understanding of the contributing factors of mental illness

- Understanding the shifts in society contributing to mental illness
- Understanding the factors that enhance the social and emotional wellbeing of people

Aim 2 Ensuring population wellbeing in the face of critical and emerging challenges

- Understanding and responding to the emerging challenges for people
- Addressing critical mental health challenges

Aim 3 Timely access to evidence-based treatment and prevention

- Improving access to, and delivery of, evidence-based treatment and prevention
- Creating innovative treatments and preventions