

## 3.12 Mental health

### Why this measure is included

Good mental health is an essential component of wellbeing and means that children and young people are more likely to have fulfilling relationships, cope with adverse circumstances and adapt to change.<sup>169</sup> Poor mental health for children and young people is associated with behavioural issues, a diminished sense of self-worth and a decreased ability to cope. This can affect their quality of life, emotional wellbeing and capacity to engage in school and community activities.<sup>170</sup>

Good mental health and wellbeing is important for children from infancy and early childhood through to adolescence and young adulthood.<sup>171 172</sup>

When a person experiences a mental health problem or disorder in childhood or adolescence, it can be a precursor to ongoing mental health issues in adulthood and increases the likelihood of alcohol and drug use, smoking, poorer physical health and social skills, and lower educational attainment.<sup>173</sup>

This measure contains data of a different nature than most other data in this report.

Most data of this report meets the following list of stringent criteria:

- Capable, as far as possible, of disaggregation by gender, by Aboriginal status and by region of WA.
- Meaningful for researchers and users and, where possible, young people.
- Based on consistent and repeatable data collections.
- Capable of being influenced by action.

The data in this measure may not meet each of these criteria but has been included in order to provide the best available information regarding this aspect of children and young people's wellbeing. The data should be used with caution, including considering the qualifications outlined within the content of this measure.

### What is this measure?

There is no adequate or reliable data which accurately reflects the mental health and wellbeing of Western Australian children and young people and the extent of mental health problems and disorders among them.

Data is available on hospital separations for children and young people with a mental health diagnosis. This data is not disaggregated and is for all children and young people aged 0 to 17 years. Therefore, the age-adjusted rates<sup>174</sup> (AARs) are low due to the inclusion of very young children whose rates of mental health problems are very low in comparison to the rates in young people aged 13 to 17 years.

Information from the WA Department of Health's Mental Health Information System provides data on the number of children and young people in WA who received a service from a child and adolescent mental health program. This information is disaggregated by age groups and gender but not by Aboriginal status or area of residence.

In information provided to the Commissioner for Children and Young People WA's Inquiry into the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people in Western Australia in 2011,<sup>175</sup> the Infant, Child, Adolescent and Youth Mental Health Executive Group estimated that the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service was only funded to provide a service to 20 per cent of the children and young people who required it.<sup>176</sup>

The Inquiry found that limited funding of many mental health services had resulted in stringent eligibility criteria being developed to manage demand.<sup>177</sup> The limited capacity of services had also resulted in lengthy waiting lists with a focus on 'crisis' response rather than comprehensive early intervention and treatment.<sup>178</sup> In regional and remote areas of WA, mental health assessment, early intervention and treatment services were especially limited.<sup>179</sup>

Therefore, the figures related to children and young people accessing treatment are likely to be a significant underrepresentation of the extent of mental health problems experienced by children and young people in the community.

Experiencing a mental health problem is also a risk factor for self-harm and suicide.<sup>180</sup> Further information on self-harm and suicide is available in measure 4.13.

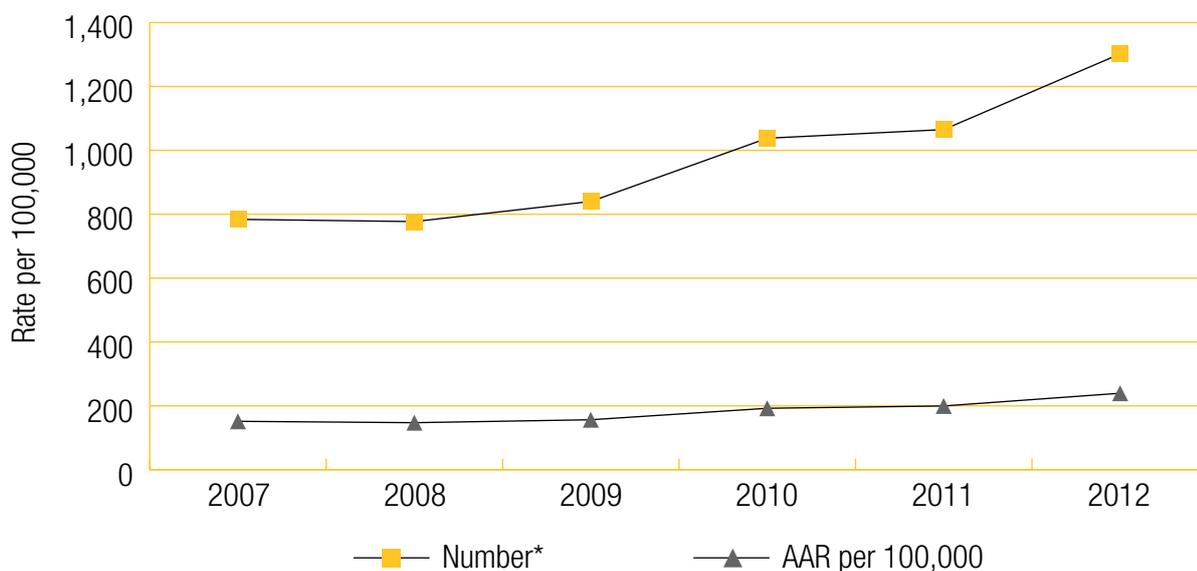
**Table 3.37: Children and young people 0 to 17 years who separated from a public or private hospital with a mental health diagnosis: number and age-adjusted rate (AAR) per 100,000, Western Australia, 2007 to 2012**

	Number*	AAR
2007	784	151.7
2008	777	147.4
2009	840	156.6
2010	1,038	192.5
2011	1,065	199.8
2012	1,302	239.6

Source: WA Department of Health, Mental Health Information System 2013, custom report

\* Figures only include patients who were diagnosed with ICD10-AM Primary Diagnosis Code Mental Health or discharged from a designated psychiatric ward.

**Figure 3.16: Children and young people 0 to 17 years who separated from a public or private hospital with a mental health diagnosis: number and age-adjusted rate (AAR) per 100,000, Western Australia, 2007 to 2012**



Source: WA Department of Health, Mental Health Information System 2013, custom report

\* Figures only include patients who were diagnosed with ICD10-AM Primary Diagnosis Code Mental Health or discharged from a designated psychiatric ward.

**Table 3.38: Children and young people 0 to 17 years who received service from a child and adolescent mental health program: number and age-specific rate (ASR) per 100,000, Western Australia, 2007 to 2012**

Year	0 to 4 years		5 to 12 years		13 to 17 years		Total	
	Number	ASR	Number	ASR	Number	ASR	Numbers	ASR
2007	220	162.9	2,296	1,030.5	2,997	2,032.5	5,371	1,082.3
2008	221	154.5	2,214	982.0	3,080	2,051.6	5,359	1,063.6
2009	248	166.1	2,337	1,020.6	3,394	2,222.5	5,801	1,132.5
2010	261	169.1	2,532	1,096.5	3,585	2,340.0	6,221	1,200.6
2011	254	162.5	2,922	1,245.0	4,057	2,691.5	7,007	1,365.1
2012	243	148.3	2,900	1,206.1	4,535	2,909.5	7,508	1,405.5

Source: WA Department of Health, Mental Health Information System 2013, custom report

**Table 3.39: Children and young people 0 to 17 years who received service from a child and adolescent mental health program: number and age-specific rate (ASR) per 100,000, by gender, Western Australia, 2007 to 2012**

Year	Male						Female					
	0 to 4 years		5 to 12 years		13 to 17 years		0 to 4 years		5 to 12 years		13 to 17 years	
	Number	ASR	Number	ASR	Number	ASR	Number	ASR	Number	ASR	Number	ASR
2007	125	180.1	1,549	1,345.0	1,388	1,820.9	95	144.7	747	694.1	1,609	2,258.9
2008	128	173.9	1,495	1,284.8	1,448	1,866.2	93	133.9	719	659.0	1,632	2,249.8
2009	139	181.7	1,581	1,337.2	1,631	2,066.3	109	149.8	756	682.6	1,763	2,389.6
2010	154	194.8	1,683	1,411.7	1,685	2,128.6	107	142.1	849	760.0	1,900	2,566.0
2011	158	197.8	1,941	1,623.6	1,828	2,374.0	96	125.6	981	851.9	2,229	3,023.1
2012	144	171.1	1,889	1,527.1	1,891	2,357.7	99	124.3	1011	865.9	2,644	3,494.4

Source: WA Department of Health, Mental Health Information System 2013, custom report

## Commentary

It is generally accepted that around 20 per cent of Australians will suffer from a mental health problem in their lifetime.<sup>181</sup> A number of studies have examined the prevalence of mental health problems and disorders in Australian children and young people and have found rates of mental health problems at between 14 and 24 per cent.<sup>182 183 184 185</sup>

Hospital separation data shows a significant increase in the age-adjusted rate<sup>186</sup> (AAR) for children and young people aged 0 to 17 years who separated from a public or private hospital with a mental health diagnosis between 2007 (151.7) and 2012 (239.6) (Table 3.37). This information has not been disaggregated further.

The number of children and young people aged 0 to 17 years who received a service from a child and adolescent mental health program also increased in this period with the age-specific rate<sup>187</sup> (ASR) increasing from 1,082.3 in 2007 to 1,405.5 in 2012 (Table 3.38).

Use of child and adolescent mental health programs increased with age. Children aged 0 to four years have the lowest ASR and young people aged 13 to 17 years have substantially higher rates (Table 3.38).

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Differences between males and females show that males have substantially higher rates of service in the 0 to four age group and the five to 12 age group. However this trend is reversed in the 13 to 17 age group where females have substantially higher ASRs than males (Table 3.39).

The data has not been further disaggregated for Aboriginal status or by area of residence.

## Strategies

### **Mental Health 2020: Making it personal and everybody's business, Government of Western Australia (released 2010)**

The Mental Health Commission has responsibility for mental health strategic policy, planning, procurement and performance monitoring and evaluation of services. The Commission is currently involved in strategic planning and short and long-term projects for infants, children, adolescents and young people. The strategic policy is available at [www.mentalhealth.wa.gov.au/about\\_mentalhealthcommission/Mental\\_Health2020\\_strategic\\_policy.aspx](http://www.mentalhealth.wa.gov.au/about_mentalhealthcommission/Mental_Health2020_strategic_policy.aspx)

### **National Mental Health Policy 2008, Commonwealth Government**

This policy provides an overarching vision and intent for the mental health system in Australia and is available at [www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/mental-pubs-n-pol08](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/mental-pubs-n-pol08)

### **Fourth National Mental Health Plan 2009–2014, Commonwealth Government**

This plan has been developed to further guide reform and identifies key actions for progress towards fulfilling the vision of the policy and is available at [www.health.gov.au/internet/publications/publishing.nsf/Content/mental-pubs-f-plan09-toc](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/publications/publishing.nsf/Content/mental-pubs-f-plan09-toc)

Further information is available at [www.mentalhealth.wa.gov.au/Homepage.aspx](http://www.mentalhealth.wa.gov.au/Homepage.aspx)

## Want to know more?

### **Research, reports and articles**

The Commissioner for Children and Young People's *Report of the Inquiry into the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people in Western Australia* is available at [www.cyp.wa.gov.au/files/MentalWellbeingInquiry/CCYP%20Mental%20Health%20Inquiry%20-%20Report%20to%20Parliament.pdf](http://www.cyp.wa.gov.au/files/MentalWellbeingInquiry/CCYP%20Mental%20Health%20Inquiry%20-%20Report%20to%20Parliament.pdf)

### **Other information**

The Mental Health Advisory Council provides high level, independent advice and guidance to the WA Mental Health Commissioner regarding major issues affecting people with mental health problems, their families and service providers. More information is available at [www.mentalhealth.wa.gov.au/about\\_mentalhealthcommission/mental\\_health\\_advisory\\_council.aspx](http://www.mentalhealth.wa.gov.au/about_mentalhealthcommission/mental_health_advisory_council.aspx)

The National Mental Health Commission reports to the Prime Minister. It provides independent expert advice based on evidence of the mental health system's performance across all areas that promote mental health and prevent mental illness and suicide. They provide an annual report card on mental health and suicide prevention. More information is available at [www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/](http://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/)



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The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatry sets the professional standards for psychiatrists in Australia and provides training and information on mental health treatment. More information is available at [www.ranzcp.org](http://www.ranzcp.org)

The Ministerial Council for Suicide Prevention monitors and extends suicide prevention initiatives across the State for all high risk populations, regardless of age. More information is available at [www.onelifewa.com.au/one-life-strategy/mcsp/](http://www.onelifewa.com.au/one-life-strategy/mcsp/)

The Specialist Aboriginal Mental Health Service supports both Aboriginal consumers and carers in accessing mainstream mental health services, and in better meeting the needs of Aboriginal people. More information is available at [www.mentalhealth.wa.gov.au/ournewapproach/Aboriginal.aspx](http://www.mentalhealth.wa.gov.au/ournewapproach/Aboriginal.aspx)

The Children of Parents with a Mental Illness (COPMI) promotes better health outcomes for children of parents with a mental illness. More information is available at [www.copmi.net.au/clearinghouse/clearinghouse-items.html](http://www.copmi.net.au/clearinghouse/clearinghouse-items.html)

Organisations providing help for children and young people needing advice or with a mental health problem include:

- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services [www.pmh.health.wa.gov.au/general/CAMHS/](http://www.pmh.health.wa.gov.au/general/CAMHS/)
- Kids Helpline [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au)
- Lifeline [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)
- ReachOut.com <http://au.reachout.com>
- youth beyondblue [www.youthbeyondblue.com/](http://www.youthbeyondblue.com/)
- YouthFocus <http://youthfocus.com.au/>
- headspace [www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)

