

EMBARGOED: 6AM Saturday 5th October

New Beyond Blue data reveals people struggle for years before getting mental health support

PEOPLE are grappling with high levels of distress and emerging mental health issues for up to ten years before reaching out for support, a major Beyond Blue survey has found.

Australia's 2024 Mental Health and Wellbeing Check, undertaken by Australian National University's Social Research Centre on behalf of Beyond Blue, is a representative survey that gives a reliable pulse check on the current state of mental health and wellbeing in Australia.

Researchers surveyed more than 5000 people around the country about the common causes of distress they've experienced in the past year and how they have supported their mental health.

This year, almost half (49 percent) of those who sought professional mental health support said they had waited until they were "very distressed" or "extremely distressed" before they reached out, compared to 30 percent who were moderately distressed.

Some people waited up to ten years before seeking support.

The top barriers to taking action included waitlists, affordability of treatment and people thinking their problem wasn't serious enough to seek support.

Shame is also getting worse – 22 percent of people say they aren't getting professional mental health support because they feel ashamed, up from 13 percent two years ago.

"The main reasons people don't seek support are well known – it can be expensive and the waitlists are long. What's important about this survey is that it's telling us mental health literacy and increasing feelings of shame are barriers too," Beyond Blue CEO Georgie Harman said.

"Feeling unsure about when to seek support seems to be causing as many delays in help-seeking as long waitlists," Ms Harman said.

"Increasingly, life feels more stressful and unpredictable. People are dealing with compounding and mounting pressures. They're strung out but muddling through. The pressures people face can often snowball to have a real and negative impact on our mental health and wellbeing,

"This data tells us that people are delaying asking for support or waiting until they are in severe distress. Beyond Blue is working to change this with our free, effective mental health support options. It's never too late and it's never too early to contact us."

The release of key survey findings coincides with the start of World Mental Health Month.

This is the second *Australia's Mental Health and Wellbeing Check* undertaken since it started in 2022, when cost of living pressures began to climb.

Nearly half of all respondents – 46 percent – named financial pressure as a key factor in their distress.

Housing affordability and personal relationship challenges were also identified as stress factors by 34 percent of respondents.

Just over a quarter of respondents who reported that they'd experienced a mental health challenge in the past 12 months did not seek any support for their mental health.

“Mental health issues, or experiences of situational distress, are easier to manage when we get onto them early, before they snowball,” Ms Harman said

“We want people to know that you don't need to be struggling for years before your problems are worth addressing – you don't have to be at crisis point to benefit from support.”

“Feeling constantly overwhelmed or worried, prolonged feelings of being flat or stuck, or having trouble sleeping are some of the signs you to look out for.”

“Our message this World Mental Health Month is that when it comes to your mental health, don't wait until things really get on top of you. Let people know how you're feeling or check in with someone you've noticed changes in. The earlier the better. You're not alone.”

“Beyond Blue offers free, 24/7 support right around Australia. There's the Beyond Blue Support Service, which offers support by phone, webchat and email, and there's our online community forums.”

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Beyond Blue's Support Service is available 24/7 on 1300 22 4636 and via web chat or email beyondblue.org.au/getsupport

Our online community forums are available on our website: forums.beyondblue.org.au

For interviews contact Communications Manager Sarah Farnsworth on 0428 645 457 or media@beyondblue.org.au