

Trends in mental health service utilisation by Australia's older population

Purpose of the study

To understand the use of Medicare-funded mental health services (delivered by GPs, psychiatrists, and allied health professionals) by the older population in Australia over the past decade.

Method

A large population-based study using publicly available Medical Benefits Schedule data, was undertaken. Time period was between 1 July 2009 and 30 June 2019. Study cohort was Australians aged 65 years and older (2009/10 N = 2,963,692 and 2018/19 N = 4,008,474).

What does this study do?



Provides a snapshot of Medicare-funded mental health service use across the population of older Australians.



Identified that Australians aged over 85 years and older men, are less likely to access mental health services than other groups.

Key findings from the study



The use of Medicare-funded mental health services by Australians aged 65 years and older, has significantly increased over the last 10 years.



Medicare-funded mental health services are least used by people aged 85 years and over.



Men are less likely to access Medicare-funded mental health services than women.



Efforts to increase access to and use of mental health services by older people are having positive effects. However, more work is needed to target groups for which uptake remains low.

