

Depression and Other Common Mental Disorders

Global Health Estimates



**World Health
Organization**

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Overview

Reliable, up-to-date estimates of the proportion of a general population affected by different diseases or health conditions is a key ingredient of effective health policy, planning and evaluation. This booklet provides latest available estimates of the prevalence of depression and other common mental disorders at the global and regional level, together with data concerning the consequences of these disorders in terms of lost health.

Globally, the total number of people with depression was estimated to exceed 300 million in 2015. Nearly that number again suffers from a

range of anxiety disorders. Since many people experience both conditions simultaneously (comorbidity), it is inappropriate to simply add these two figures together to arrive at a total for common mental disorders.

The consequences of these disorders in terms of lost health are huge. Depression is ranked by WHO as the single largest contributor to global disability (7.5% of all years lived with disability in 2015); anxiety disorders are ranked 6th (3.4%). Depression is also the major contributor to suicide deaths, which number close to 800 000 per year.

Frequently asked questions

1. What are common mental disorders? What is depression?

Common mental disorders refer to two main diagnostic categories: depressive disorders and anxiety disorders. These disorders are highly prevalent in the population (hence why they are considered 'common'), and impact on the mood or feelings of affected persons; symptoms range in terms of their severity (from mild to severe) and duration (from months to years). These disorders are diagnosable health conditions, and are distinct from feelings of sadness, stress or fear that anyone can experience from time to time in their lives.

2. How many people are affected by depression?

At a global level, over 300 million people are estimated to suffer from depression, equivalent to 4.4% of the world's population.

3. Is the number of people with common mental disorders increasing?

The number of persons with common mental disorders globally is going up, particularly in lower-income countries, because the population is growing and more people are living to the age when depression and anxiety most commonly occurs.

4. Who is most likely to get depressed?

Although depression can and does affect people of all ages, from all walks of life, the risk of becoming depressed is increased by poverty, unemployment, life events such as the death of a loved one or a relationship break-up, physical illness and problems caused by alcohol and drug use.

Introduction

Reliable, up-to-date estimates of the proportion of a general population affected by different diseases or health conditions is a critical ingredient of effective health policy, planning and evaluation. Epidemiological studies of the prevalence and incidence of a range of psychiatric disorders have now been undertaken in a wide range of low-, middle- and high-income countries, which have contributed greatly to a better understanding of how common these disorders are across the world. Advances in measuring the fatal and non-fatal consequences of these diseases – including quantification of time spent in a state of ill-health – has also enabled a more systematic comparison of the relative contribution that different diseases and their underlying risk factors make to the overall toll of death and disability.

This booklet provides latest available estimates of the prevalence of depression and other common mental disorders at the global and regional level, together with data concerning the consequences of these disorders in terms of lost health. Country-specific estimates are also provided (see [Appendix](#)). It offers complementary information to that provided in other information products developed by WHO and others on the appropriate public health response to these disorders, including their treatment and prevention (<http://www.who.int/topics/depression>; http://www.who.int/mental_health/mhgap).

Common mental disorders refer to two main diagnostic categories: depressive disorders and anxiety disorders; a definition of these disorders is provided in the [Box](#) on page 7.

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