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## New ABS data confirms the need for mental health system reform

Fundamental system reform, including a sharper focus on preventing mental health conditions, is vital if Australia is to reduce prevalence, Beyond Blue CEO Georgie Harman said.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics today released its landmark National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing, which provides the most authoritative picture of the prevalence of mental health conditions in Australia since its last release in 2007.

It found that 7.5 per cent of Australian adults – or one in 13 – experienced depression in the past year and 16.8 percent – one in six – experienced an anxiety condition.

The study also found three in five people took action to help manage their mental health including:

- 94.2 per cent of people aged 16-85 years did activities with family or friends;
- 37.5 per cent increased their level of exercise or physical activity;
- 28 per cent did more of what they enjoyed.
- 54.7 per cent of females and 37 per cent of males sought support

**Beyond Blue CEO Georgie Harman** said social connection, physical activity and making time for fun were vital for maintaining good mental health.

“It’s outstanding to see so many people are actively managing their own mental health as well as accessing supports and services because these strategies really work,” she said.

“The survey also confirms that young people are eager to access support through digital platforms - eight per cent of those aged 16 to 24 used online tools compared with 4.4 per cent of the general population, so there is a real need for evidence-based digital options that work alongside face-to-face support.”

Ms Harman said while the study shows higher support-seeking, the results confirm the case for a fundamentally reformed system that connects services, reduces duplication, grows new workforces, and is skewed more to prevention and early intervention.

“Right now, Australia’s mental health system is confusing to navigate, fragmented, unbalanced and often doesn’t work for the people it’s supposed to support,” Ms Harman said.

“In fact, it’s less like a system and more like a patchwork of services that don’t connect to each other.”

“We need governments, the sector, workplaces and the community working as one to build a functional, joined up system where people can access supports that best suits their needs no matter their level of distress. A system that provides mental health and wellbeing support early in illness, early in episode and early in life. And a system that’s always there for people in crisis, but doesn’t need people to be in crisis to get support.”

**ENDS**

**Beyond Blue Support Service:** 1300 22 4636 or [beyondblue.org.au/getsupport](https://beyondblue.org.au/getsupport)

**Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service:** 1800 512 348 or [coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au](https://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au)

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