

Understanding the National Mental Health Report Card 2024 for the NGO Mental Health Sector

Overview of the Report

The National Mental Health Commission has published its 2024 **National Report Card**, offering the second year of data-driven insights into how well Australia's mental health system is supporting the mental health of its communities. It provides trends and updates across three core domains: Mental health, Social Determinants, and System Inputs and Activities.

Snapshot of the Current State

The following table is a snapshot of the data collected to determine what is working well and where the system needs improvement.

	Areas of concern	Areas faring well
Mental Health	— Life satisfaction and psychological distress remain steady	
	✗ Slight decline in people's sense of control	
Social Determinants	✗ Steady rise in levels of financial stress	
	— Loneliness and experiences of discrimination have not improved	
System Inputs and Activities	✗ Steady rise in the proportion of people delaying mental health care due to cost	✓ Continuing reduction in the use of seclusion and physical restraint in MH units
	— Positive experience of public mental health care and number of people showing improvement in clinical mental health outcomes remain steady	✓ More people with a mental disorder accessing care compared to the last decade

Key Insights for the Sector

- People presenting to the Emergency Department for **mental health** related care are experiencing **longer wait times** than those presenting with non-mental health reasons and were **less likely to be seen** within the recommended wait times for their triage category.
 - This is not an acceptable state for those experiencing significant mental distress, and there is an urgency to create **alternative crisis care** services.

- The report has established the difference in outcomes for people with a **mental health condition** in that they are more likely to be **without a permanent place to live** and experience financial stress, loneliness and discrimination.
 - The finding demands an intersectional approach to housing and social determinants of health that combines funding of the related portfolios.
- There is a lack of data availability and clarity into why some people are **not accessing** community mental health care **post discharge** from hospital.
 - There is a need to look at what the barriers may be to post-discharge care in the community.

Opportunities for the Sector

Drawing on Data to Advocate for the Needs and Value of the Sector

The data provided in the report on the current state of Australia's mental health, particularly the Infographics document (see in Further Reading), can be used in policy work to advocate for **funding and policy reform**, with an emphasis on frontline needs and addressing the gaps in mainstream health services.

It is vital that the NGO mental health sector continue to promote the need for accessible, prevention and early intervention focused supports in our communities in response to rising demand, and public health care and outcomes that are not improving. We see first-hand where the public system is failing to keep up with the needs of vulnerable Australians and those closest to the scene, face the growing responsibility to voice how the NGO sector can be better supported to ensure care for all.

Calling the Sector to Make our Voice Heard

The Commission has acknowledged certain gaps in the data and knowledge available to better understand the bigger picture of the mental health system's performance, namely data of:

- NGO community-based mental health services including housing, justice, employment and education, as well as psychosocial supports outside the NDIS
- the number of lived experience and peer workers
- the experiences and outcomes of carers and kin

Now is the time for the NGO mental health sector to make our voice heard and shape the system to what is right for the people and communities we support. The Commission is actively looking to hold consultation with a wide range of stakeholders in these areas to expand their understanding of the data landscape and improve inclusion in future reports.

The Commission Report Card's propensity to drive change is limited by the quality of data collection and fact-finding that reflect national experiences. For organisations and individuals wanting to contribute to information sharing that drives this much needed change in the mental health system, please contact Mental Health Australia at policy@mentalhealthaustralia.org.au.

Further Reading

[National Report Card 2024 – Main report](#)

[National Report Card 2024 – Technical report](#)

[National report Card 2024 Infographics](#)