

Mental distress prejudice and discrimination in Aotearoa

Key statistics 2022

Me mahi tahi tātou, hei oranga mō te katoa.

We must work together for the wellbeing of the people.

Although almost one in every two New Zealanders will experience mental distress or illness in their lifetime, people with mental distress are still judged and discriminated against – and this carries real consequences. Being discriminated against can affect people's access to employment, housing, healthcare opportunities and even insurance claims.

Together, we can highlight mental distress discrimination when we see it, show how it affects New Zealanders and represent those living with mental distress in a hopeful and inspiring way. Below are some facts and stats to support your reporting on mental distress, and the impacts of discrimination.

How many New Zealanders live with mental distress or illness?



- Almost one in two New Zealanders (47%) will experience it in their lifetime
- Almost a third (31%) of people have already experienced it
- Most people (77%) know someone who has experienced it.¹



Who is most likely to experience mental distress or illness?

- Māori (38%)
- Pasifika (25%)
- People aged between 18-24 years old (36%)
- Rainbow communities (57%)²
- People living with disabilities (65%)³.

How many people with mental distress or illness are discriminated against?



- In a recent survey almost **one-fifth** of people with mental distress reported being **discriminated against because of their mental distress experiences**
- Discrimination was most common in the **workplace (50%) and among whānau, family or friends (33%)**, but also occurs in the justice system and other settings
- **89% of recent mental health service users** reported at least “a little” unfair treatment due to their mental distress experiences
- Those who were currently experiencing high levels of mental distress were **2.4x more likely** than those experiencing low levels of mental distress to report being discriminated against.⁴

What are the effects of mental distress discrimination?



- One in five people who had experienced mental distress reported either **avoiding, or being afraid** to do something because they anticipated being discriminated against
- **Those who had previously experienced discrimination were 5.3x more likely** to avoid doing something because of anticipated discrimination
- 57% of people with mental distress or illness had **concealed their mental distress from others**
- **33% had not applied for work** because of anticipated discrimination.⁴

Why should we care about ending mental distress discrimination?



- **Discrimination deters people from seeking help** when they most need it, as people are afraid of being labelled or judged by others
- Discrimination **prevents** people with mental distress from accessing **opportunities** most of us take for granted, such as finding and keeping a job, renting a flat or entering a romantic relationship⁶
- **We can do something about it** – read our [media guidelines](#), and our other infographics for tips on how to reduce these inequities via best-practice reporting.

What is double discrimination?



- Double discrimination occurs when a person experiences discrimination for more than one reason**, i.e. their gender and their race, or their race and their disability. We know discrimination has negative impacts on wellbeing and can further impact opportunities available in the workplace, healthcare and wider community settings. We know Māori and Pasifika are far more likely to experience racial discrimination, with reports showing:
- Māori are 27% more likely to experience discrimination
 - Pasifika are 23% more likely to experience discrimination⁷.
- The likelihood of Maori and Pasifika being discriminated against increases largely when someone also experiences mental distress.

- 1 Flett, J., Lucas, N., Kingstone, S., & Stevenson, B. (2020). Mental distress and discrimination in Aotearoa New Zealand: Results from 2015–2018 Mental Health Monitor and 2018 Health and Lifestyles Survey. Te Hiringa Hauora/Health Promotion Agency. <https://www.hpa.org.nz/sites/default/files/Mental%20distress%20and%20discrimination%20in%20Aotearoa%20New%20Zealand%20-%20report.pdf>
- 2 Flett, J., Lucas, N., Kingstone, S., & Stevenson, B. (2020). Mental distress and discrimination in Aotearoa New Zealand: Results from 2015–2018 Mental Health Monitor and 2018 Health and Lifestyles Survey. Te Hiringa Hauora/Health Promotion Agency. <https://www.hpa.org.nz/sites/default/files/Mental%20distress%20and%20discrimination%20in%20Aotearoa%20New%20Zealand%20-%20report.pdf>
- 3 Statistics New Zealand. (2020). Wellbeing statistics: June 2020 quarter. Stats NZ. <https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/wellbeing-statistics-june-2020-quarter>
- 4 Flett, J., Lucas, N., Kingstone, S., & Stevenson, B. (2020). Mental distress and discrimination in Aotearoa New Zealand: Results from 2015–2018 Mental Health Monitor and 2018 Health and Lifestyles Survey. Te Hiringa Hauora/Health Promotion Agency. <https://www.hpa.org.nz/sites/default/files/Mental%20distress%20and%20discrimination%20in%20Aotearoa%20New%20Zealand%20-%20report.pdf>
- 5 Thornicroft, C., Wyllie, A., Thornicroft, G., & Mehta, N. (2014). Impact of the “Like Minds, Like Mine” anti-stigma and discrimination campaign in New Zealand on anticipated and experienced discrimination. Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, 48(4), 360–370. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0004867413512687>
- 6 Flett, J., Lucas, N., Kingstone, S., & Stevenson, B. (2020). Mental distress and discrimination in Aotearoa New Zealand: Results from 2015–2018 Mental Health Monitor and 2018 Health and Lifestyles Survey. Te Hiringa Hauora/Health Promotion Agency. <https://www.hpa.org.nz/sites/default/files/Mental%20distress%20and%20discrimination%20in%20Aotearoa%20New%20Zealand%20-%20report.pdf>
- 7 Statistics New Zealand. (2020). Wellbeing statistics: June 2020 quarter. Stats NZ. <https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/wellbeing-statistics-june-2020-quarter>