

MEDIA RELEASE

Untreated and deteriorating mental health increases your chances of experiencing financial hardship and being forced to move, new report finds

People who experienced severe psychological distress had an 89% increased likelihood of financial hardship within one year and were 28% more likely to be forced to move from their existing accommodation, according to new research from the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) and Mind Australia.

The research, *Trajectories: the interplay between mental health and housing pathways*, is one of the first national studies to examine the relationship between the housing and mental health pathways of people with lived experience of mental ill-health.

The report highlights the impact mental health issues have on a person's financial situation, and therefore their housing situation.

People whose mental health deteriorated to the point where they experienced symptoms of anxiety and depression and who did not see a health specialist were 65 per cent more likely to face financial hardship, such as going hungry, having to sell possessions or not be able to pay housing costs, than people who don't experience deteriorating mental health issues.

The report also highlights how financial hardship and poor housing in turn can exacerbate a person's mental health issues. It found that people who experienced financial hardship in the past year had a 23% increased likelihood of their mental health deteriorating to the point where they experienced symptoms.

Conversely, good social support reduced the likelihood of deteriorating mental health to the point where a person experienced symptoms of anxiety and depression by 33% and shortened the length of time a person was unwell by 6%.

'Our analysis of housing outcomes for people experiencing mental health issues showed that mediating factors, such as social support, having good general health, and accessing mental health and other health services, can reduce the likelihood of housing instability and shorten the length of time a person experiences mental ill-health,' says lead author of the research, Dr Nicola Brackertz, from AHURI.

Importantly, the research identified five housing and mental health trajectories people commonly experience:

- the **excluded from help required trajectory** is characterised by a lack of access to housing or mental health care
- people on the **stuck without adequate support trajectory** are trapped in inappropriate housing, institutions or services due to a lack of options
- the **cycling trajectory** is marked by a downward spiral in which people enter into and drop out of supports repeatedly, which progressively erodes their resources

- people on the **stabilising trajectory** have access to secure, appropriate, safe and affordable housing, ongoing mental health support and the social and financial resources necessary to focus on recovery
- people on the **well supported trajectory** have the have the type of housing and level of care that is right for them and can achieve their ambitions beyond housing and mental health.

'Our research finds that having access to safe, secure, affordable and appropriate housing is the foundation to recovering from mental ill health,' says report co-author Dr Sarah Pollock from Mind Australia.

'For people with mental ill health, appropriate housing is housing which allows for control of space; is in a safe neighbourhood close to family and friends; and has good access to public transport, services, and opportunities for work, volunteering or study.'

The report can be downloaded from the AHURI website at www.ahuri.edu.au/research/trajectories

The report will be officially launched at the AHURI Conference: 'Housing: the foundation for mental health' in Sydney on Wednesday 19 February 2020.

For media enquiries, to arrange interviews with the lead researchers or for a media pass to the conference, please contact:

Anthony Smeaton
Head of Marketing and Communications, AHURI
Ph: 0404 544 101 or 03 9660 2312
Email anthony.smeaton@ahuri.edu.au