

## Employment and Mental Health

The links between employment and mental health are well established.

- Working can give people a sense of identity and provide regular interaction and shared experiences with people outside of their immediate family
- It can provide a sense of personal achievement
- Structured routines help give direction to the day and promote the need for prioritisation and planning
- Employing people with mental illness can reduce stigma in the workforce

Unfortunately, people with mental illness are less likely to hold stable employment. Approximately 37 per cent of people with lived experience of mental illness, or 67 per cent with severe mental illness, are not in the workforce compared to 22 per cent of people without mental health conditions.

Employment programs that help people with mental illness reintegrate into the workforce form a crucial part of the recovery journey. On this page you will find links to the large body of evidence supporting these programs.

## Resource Links

- **After the Fires Survey Report**

[After-the-Fires-Survey-Report-Final-Report.pdf \(pcdn.co\)](#)

The final After the Fires report led by Curtin University has highlighted the mental health struggles of first responders in the aftermath of the devastating Black Summer Bushfires. The study found that reducing stigma associated with accessing mental health services, creating opportunities for time out and scaling up support services are key.

- **Unemployment and Underemployment are Causes of Suicide**

[Unemployment and underemployment are causes of suicide | Science Advances](#)

Even though the suicide rate is higher among the unemployed, we have never been able to say definitely that unemployment directly leads to suicide. Until now. Using advanced analytic techniques borrowed from ecology, researchers have found clear evidence of a causal relationship, with estimates based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data indicating that unemployment and underemployment in the 13 years from 2004 to 2016 directly resulted in more than 3,000 Australians dying by suicide – an average of 230 deaths a year. These findings have profound political, economic, social and legal implications, particularly in light of government and central bank policies that “require” unemployment.

- **The Significance of Psychological Safety in the Community Services Industry**

[The significance of psychological safety in the Community Services Industry - CSIA \(csialtd.com.au\)](https://csialtd.com.au)

Psychological safety refers to an environment where individuals feel safe to express themselves, take risks, and contribute their ideas without fear of negative consequences. This article from Community Services Industry Alliance (CSIA) looks at why employers in the Community Services Industry should focus on creating a work environment that fosters psychological safety as a strategy to attract and retain top talent and meet new regulations on managing psychosocial risks and hazards at work which came into effect in Queensland in April 2023.

- **Employment and Mental Health – Position Statement**

[Employment and Mental Health - Position Statement 2022 | Mental Health Australia \(mhaustralia.org\)](https://mhaustralia.org)

Mental Health Australia have published a position statement titled *Employment and Mental Health* where they explore the bi-directional relationship between meaningful work and positive mental wellbeing. Their priority reforms include strategies to ensure mentally healthy workplaces, personalising employment support for people with mental health challenges, and further measures to support the lived experience workforce. QAMH participated in MHA's consultation process and supports the statement.

- **Relationships Between Financial Wellbeing and Mental Health in Australia**

[Money and Mental Health \(beyondblue.org.au\)](https://beyondblue.org.au)

This report commissioned by ASIC and Beyond Blue dissects the relationships between financial wellbeing and mental health in Australia. It finds that there is substantial evidence to support the inter-connectedness of financial wellbeing and mental health and provides some recommendations for supporting people struggling with co-existing financial difficulties and mental illness.

- **Employment is a Critical Mental Health Intervention**

Drake, R.E., & Wallach, W.A. (2020). Employment is a critical mental health intervention. *Epidemiology and Psychiatric Sciences*, 29, 178. doi:10.1017/S2045796020000906

[Employment is a critical mental health intervention | Epidemiology and Psychiatric Sciences | Cambridge Core](https://www.cambridge.org/core)

Employment is critically important in mental health care. Unemployment worsens mental health while gaining employment can improve mental health, even for people with the most

serious mental illnesses. This editorial argues for a new treatment paradigm in mental health that emphasises the need for supported employment as an evidence-based intervention that can help the majority of people with mental illness.

- **Interventions for Obtaining and Maintaining Employment in Adults with Severe Mental Illness**

Suijkerbuijk, Y.B., Schaafsma, F.G., van Mechelen, J.C., Ojajarvi, A., Corbiere, M., & Anema, J.R. (2017). Interventions for obtaining and maintaining employment in adults with severe mental illness: a network meta-analysis. *Cochrane Database Systematic Review*, 2017(9). <https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD011867>

- **Interventions for Obtaining and Maintaining Employment in Adults with Severe Mental Illness cont'd**

[Interventions for obtaining and maintaining employment in adults with severe mental illness, a network meta-analysis - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)

People with severe mental illness show high rates of unemployment, however they often have a desire to participate in employment. People with severe mental illness used to be placed in sheltered employment or were enrolled in prevocational training to facilitate transition to a competitive job. Now, there are interventions focusing on rapid search for a competitive job with ongoing support to keep the job, known as supported employment. The aim of this study is to assess the comparative effectiveness of various types of vocational rehabilitation interventions and to rank these interventions according to their effectiveness.

- **Supported Employment for People with Severe Mental Illness**

Modini, M., Tan, L., Brinchmann, B., Wang, M., Killackey, E., Glozier, N., Mykletun, A., & Harvey, S.B. (2016). Supported employment for people with severe mental illness: Systematic review and meta-analysis of the international evidence. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 209(1), 14-22. <https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.bp.115.165092>

[Supported employment for people with severe mental illness: Systematic review and meta-analysis of the international evidence | The British Journal of Psychiatry | Cambridge Core](#)

Individual placement and support (IPS) is a vocational rehabilitation program that was developed in the United States to improve employment outcomes for people with severe mental illness. This study aims to investigate whether IPS is effective across international settings and in different economic conditions.

- **Assessing the Effectiveness of Evidence-Based Supported Employment for Adults with Severe and Persistent Mental Illness**

Waghorn, G., Dias, S., Gladman, B., Harris, M., & Saha, Sukanta. (2014). A multi-site randomised controlled trial of evidence-based supported employment for adults with severe and persistent mental illness. *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal*, 61(6), 424-436. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1440-1630.12148>

[A multi-site randomised controlled trial of evidence-based supported employment for adults with severe and persistent mental illness - Waghorn - 2014 - Australian Occupational Therapy Journal - Wiley Online Library](#)

The Individual Placement and Support (IPS) approach is an evidence-based form of supported employment for people with severe and persistent mental illness. This approach is not yet widely available in Australia even though there is mounting evidence of its application outside the United States. One previous Australian randomised controlled trial found that IPS is effective for young people with first episode psychosis. The aim of the current trial was to assess the effectiveness of evidence-based supported employment when implemented for Australian adult consumers of public mental health services by utilising existing service systems.

- **Economically inactive, unemployed and employed suicides in Australia by age and sex over a 10-year period**

Milner, A., Morrell, S., & LaMontagne, A.D. (2014). Economically inactive, unemployed and employed suicides in Australia by age and sex over a 10-year period: what was the impact of the 2007 economic recession? *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 43(5). 1500-1507.

[Economically inactive, unemployed and employed suicides in Australia by age and sex over a 10-year period: what was the impact of the 2007 economic recession? - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)

Suicide is higher among economically inactive and unemployed persons than employed persons. This paper investigates differences in this relationship by sex and age over the period 2001 to 2010 in Australia. It also examines changes in suicide among employed, unemployed and economically inactive persons during the recession of 2007-09.

- **Employment of People with Mental Illness Report**

Waghorn, G., & Lloyd, Chris. (2005). The employment of people with mental illness. *Australian e-Journal for the Advancement of Mental Health*, 4(2), 129-171.  
<link to above study><https://doi.org/10.5172/jamh.4.2.129>

[72284\\_1.pdf \(griffith.edu.au\)](#)

People with mental illness are among the most socially and economically marginalised

members of the community. They also experience high levels of unemployment, which exacerbates their exclusion from the wider community. This report aims to:

- Collect relevant data on labour force participation of people with mental illness in Australia and overseas
- Identify the potential benefits of employment
- Identify how mental illness can cause barriers to employment
- Identify the evidence base for employment assistance programs
- Suggest strategies to improve employment outcomes for people with mental illness.