

Answers to questions on notice: The Mentally Healthy Futures Project, The Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use, The University of Sydney

Timely and representative data on the mental health of New South Wales residents is unfortunately lacking at present. While the National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing provides some useful data, it is conducted infrequently (currently less than once per decade). Similarly, the NSW Population Health Survey is only conducted every two years. Our understanding is that the National General Social Survey announced within the recent Federal budget will be conducted annually, and with a large sample size, so hopefully this survey will also cover NSW-level data. The HILDA survey does include a measure of psychological distress, so this is one option for a general measure of mental health.

Associate Professor Matthew Sunderland of the Matilda Centre is currently leading a NHMRC-funded study harmonising 40 years of data to revolutionise Australia's response to increases in psychological distress. As part of this study A/Prof Sunderland and team are currently harmonising 271 datasets and intend the harmonised dataset to be available by December 2025. This data will be an invaluable resource for the NSW government and would lead to an ability to harness current NSW prevalence in the context of longer-term trends.

