



The Big Mental Health Report 2025: Wales Briefing

October 2025

Mind's Big Mental Health Report provides an annual overview of data and insights relating to mental health in Wales and England. This report is published at a time of change following the publication of the Welsh Government's new mental health strategy in April 2025 and the upcoming elections to an expanded Senedd in May 2026.

This year's report is split into four themes:

- **The current state of mental health**
- **What's driving poor mental health?**
- **Experiences of support**
- **Mental health stigma and discrimination**

This briefing will cover the key areas in relation to Wales in each of these themes.

The current state of mental health

Whilst there is not a large amount of published data available in Wales, an issue we raised in the last report, we have continued to see a decline in the overall mental wellbeing of the population in Wales. Recently the Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey (APMS) was published in England, the trends identified are a useful indicator for what is happening in Wales to population level mental health in the absence of such a survey here.

The survey found that 1 in 5 adults (20.2%) in England are living with a common mental health condition, with rates higher in women (24.2%) than men (15.4%). Prevalence has increased steadily, with those aged 16-24 being particularly affected rising from 17.5% in

2007 to 25.8% in 2023-24. Adults living in the most deprived areas have higher levels of mental health problems (26.2%) than those living in less deprived areas (16%) and people with problem debt were more than twice as likely to experience a mental health problem (39%) than those without (18.4%). These high prevalence figures were also true of those who were unemployed (40%) and those who were economically inactive (38.8%), with men more affected. Given the nature of poverty in Wales it is likely that these figures from England are indicative of a wider experience of poor mental health in Welsh communities.

We have already identified young people as a group that have been particularly impacted by a rise in prevalence of poor mental health. In England the increase has gone from 1 in 7 living with a probable mental health problem in 2017 to 1 in 5 in 2023. Again, we have no reason to believe that this increase is not reflective of the situation we are seeing in Wales.

The report does not include the latest ONS suicide data which highlighted a worrying increase in the suicide rate in Wales to 15.7 per 100,000 compared to just over 11 per 100,000 in England, with 77% of those cases in Wales being men. However, the report does highlight the impact of poverty with the suicide rate in deprived areas being higher and those experiencing unemployment being most at risk.

There is a clear link between mental and physical health with the APMS finding a third of adults in England (33.9%) with a physical health condition also having a common mental health problem. We know through our work with the [Stroke Association](#) that too often emotional support is not routinely provided for people with a long term physical illness

What's driving poor mental health?

Mental health problems are not experienced equally. People living in the most deprived areas were found to be twice as likely to experience high levels of psychological distress and women reported poorer mental health outcomes than men.

Patterns of young people's mental health are showing a decline across the world, with more young people struggling and support not keeping up with demand. Young people with mental health problems are nearly five times more likely to be economically inactive compared to those without a mental health problem. A Welsh Government commissioned report identified unmet mental health needs as the most common reason parents gave for children missing school. A recent report by the Youth Future Foundation into ten potential drivers behind worsening mental health outcomes for 14–25-year-olds identified four factors that stood out: declining sleep quality, financial

insecurity, lack of access to early support and rapid shifts in social media and smartphone use.

The impacts of cuts to public services have chipped away at the support available to people but also reducing the protective factors within communities such as leisure provision, libraries and community centred support. This has been evidenced in Wales through our [Together Through Tough Times](#) report which identified how important these non-health protective factors are in creating mentally health communities

The pandemic had an unequal impact on the mental health of the nation, with those of us experiencing poverty, women and young people being more at risk of poor mental health during this period. Mental health services that were already stretched before the pandemic have struggled to recover and are faced with a growing level of complex need.

Rising distress and mental ill health in Wales is caused by a mix of connected factors, with experiencing poverty and insecure employment continuing to be the common factor in increasing the risk of experiencing poor mental health

Experiences of support

As part of this year's report in January to March 2025 we ran our Big Mental Health Survey, asking people for their experiences of accessing primary care. This section provides an overview of the 1,570 people from Wales who responded to the survey (18,000 across both nations)¹

Overall, 67% of respondents in Wales saw their GP within the last year about their mental health. A further 20% answered that they had not seen their GP but wished that they had. When asked why they did not access GP support for their mental health, people gave several reasons:

- **35% did not believe their mental health problem was serious enough**
- **33% were put off by a previous experience**

¹ **Note:** All statistics refer to Wales unless otherwise stated. The sample size for Wales was 1,570 people. Not every question had 1,570 answers, so sample sizes will vary. The sample size for people from racialised communities was limited, so definitive conclusions were hard to draw.

The Big Mental Health Survey ran from January to March 2025, so questions asking for people's experiences over the last year may cover anything from January 2024 to January 2025, to March 2024 to March 2025.

- **33% did not think this support would do them any good**
- **24% did not think they would be able to get an appointment in time**
- 24% were not sure that this was the right service to approach for their needs
- 21% were worried about what healthcare professionals or staff might say
- 17% sought support from another source
- 17% were worried what their friends or family might say
- 9% were worried what their employer might say

These findings indicate that barriers to seeking help continue to be a significant factor for some people and that the initial experience when seeking help is an important moment that determines whether someone will continue to seek support.

88% were asked the reason for booking their GP appointment. 40% were comfortable with this and 48% were not, further demonstrating the importance of having an approach that is compassionate, trauma informed and non-stigmatising.

The survey found that waiting for an appointment to speak to a GP about mental health needs is having a negative impact on people's lives with over 1 in 3 reporting a deterioration in their mental health while waiting for an appointment with their GP (35%). This was similar to the experience of waiting for a voluntary sector service (29%).

Of those that indicated this the impact on them was significant:

- **80% felt hopeless**
- **69% found their social life affected**
- **67% experienced a physical impact**
- **54% in relationships more generally**
- **43% felt they did not deserve support**
- 37% saw their work affected
- 36% in their family

- 27% in romantic relationships
- 23% sought support from elsewhere
- 23% experienced a financial impact
- 23% found their study affected

The 23% of people who sought support from elsewhere included A&E and crisis services, suggesting that people's mental health may have deteriorated to the point of needing help from crisis services.

When asked 61% felt their latest appointment with their GP about their mental health met their needs ("definitely" or "to some extent"), with 79% saying this about their latest appointment with the voluntary or third sector.

When asked what their appointment with the GP was like, people answered positively on the whole with high response rates for the GP listening carefully (85%, providing understandable explanations (81%) and taking their concerns seriously (80%). The lower scores in relation to experience started to highlight the challenges facing GPs in having the time to get to know people with 56% reporting the GP took time to understand them as individuals and only 52% felt the appointment helped them feel optimistic or hopeful.

32% of people reported experiencing unfair treatment from their GP due to their mental health ("definitely" or "to some extent"). This figure was 18% for the third and voluntary sectors. 76% of people who experienced unfair treatment from their GP said they would be less likely to seek mental health support in the future.

Following appointments 15% of people were given feedback opportunities after their GP appointment, with 44% not being given the opportunity but would have liked to. This is similar to the findings of our last survey in 2019, which continues to indicate that patient's voices are not being regularly heard in decisions about their own care.

When asked what would improve experiences of their experience 55% of respondents indicated having the same health professional, 47% longer appointments, 45% shorter waiting times and also 45% being easier to communicate with the practice.

Overall, the findings from the survey paint a picture of professionals trying their best to support people but not necessarily having the time or resources to give everyone the support they need. The move to open access, non-referral, mental health support is a

crucial step in ensuring people get the support that they need when they need it and the voluntary sector is already providing people with the space and time to explore their feelings.

Digital Platforms:

As part of the survey, we asked people about their use of technology to support their mental health. 35% of respondents reported using a digital platform over the last 12 months. 30% of people found out about these apps through social media, 26% through online searches and 17% were told about it through their GP.

87% of the apps used were free to download or use, with 26% needing payment.

The type of apps used were:

- 52% used mindfulness apps
- 18% used self-help CBT apps
- 15% used mood trackers
- 5% used professional therapy apps
- 5% used peer support apps

22% of people used it for up to a month, 33% for up to a year, 14% up to 2 years and 9% up to 3 years.

When asked why they used the app, people said:

- 28% needed immediate support
- 26% liked the convenience and accessibility of the app
- 21% needed support while waiting for other treatment
- 9% preferred to self-manage their mental health
- 12% liked the privacy

55% found the app used helped their mental health a little. 20% found it helped a lot. 25% found it did not help.

Whilst there is not a significant number of respondents using technology to support their mental health, there is a definite indication that this is a growing area that needs to be considered when looking at future models of support.

Mental health stigma and discrimination

In 2024 the Time to Change Wales campaign ran the latest version of the Attitudes to Mental Illness survey in Wales. Despite the progress made around society being more

open about mental health the report found a general trend of a decline in attitudes towards mental health and a rise in stigma. Overall, the report found:

- Public understanding declining
- Fear based stigma growing
- Workplace discrimination being evident
- Stigma continued for less understood conditions such as schizophrenia

The declines in Wales have brought attitudes to mental health in line with attitudes in England. It is important to note that the Time to Change campaign ended in England in 2021, with Time to Change Wales funding ending in March 2025. Whilst we cannot draw direct comparisons with the lifespans of these campaigns, we can identify that they certainly provided a focal point for discussions and contributed to a more open and safer environment for people to talk about their mental health.

In Wales knowledge scores were lower for men than women, higher in those aged 25-34 compared to the overall mean score and lower for those in socio-economic group C2DE than those in ABC1. Worryingly we have seen a decline in response to the question "*In the future, I would be willing to work with someone with a mental health problem*" from 82% in 2021 to 76% in 2024.

Whilst attitudes towards mental health will be impacted by a range of societal factors, the findings demonstrate the need to continue to raise awareness and understanding around mental health in our communities. The hard-won changes in attitudes led by campaigns such as Time to Change Wales are fragile and need continued messaging in order to maintain a compassionate and supportive environment.

Conclusion

What is clear from the report is that living with a mental health problem cuts across multiple areas of someone's life – from healthcare and education, to benefits and employment. As such, this will require a multi-faceted approach from the UK and Welsh Governments to truly address the challenges within mental health. Change is possible, and this is why we believe that the next Welsh Government needs to:

- **Make mental health a clear priority within the next Programme for Government**
- **Commit to transforming the mental health system to improve access and experiences of mental health support for all**
- **Prioritise children and young people through a clear strategic response to rising mental health need**

- **Improve relationships between statutory and voluntary sectors with enhanced coproduction to reach those most in need of support**

You can find out more detail about our priorities for the next Welsh Government [here](#)

Simon Jones
Head of Policy, Campaigns and Communications
Mind Cymru
s.jones@mind.org.uk