

Staying Deadly Survey – Findings

Background

The Staying Deadly Survey was a mental health survey conducted in 2022 that aimed to learn more about the mental health and mental health needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults in Southeast Queensland. Although there have been two national surveys on mental health, neither of them tells us enough information about the mental health services that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our region need, and what makes it easier or harder to access these services. The Staying Deadly Survey is the first time this kind of survey has been delivered for the urban community in Southeast Queensland. This summary gives an overview of the main findings from the Staying Deadly Survey.

Preparation

It was very important that The Staying Deadly survey was guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives to make sure the process was culturally appropriate and as safe as possible. The community consultation process lasted over five years - it started in 2018 and continued after the survey was finished. We developed our survey processes based on input from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experts, staff, and community members, gathered at steering committee meetings, round-table discussions, briefing meetings, preliminary testing feedback, and participant feedback. The survey was approved by two ethics boards with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation: the Townsville Human Research Ethics Committee and the University of Queensland Human Research Ethics Committee.

The Staying Deadly Survey

The survey was conducted between February and October of 2022. We spread word about the survey through health clinics, community centres, social media, and community events across key locations in Southeast Queensland. We also doorknocked in some areas. Our survey interviews were conducted by seven Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander interviewers. After 9 months of data-collection, we had just over 400 participants complete the survey.

Findings

Almost half of our participants were found to experience either a mental disorder or harmful substance use in the 12 months prior to the survey. Depression and post-traumatic stress disorder were the most common of these. Of these participants, over half had accessed a health service for their mental health in that time. Of the participants that did not access a health service for their mental health, almost half recognised that they needed that care. The most common reason that our participants did not get this care was that the type of help they asked for was not received.

People that reported needing medication and counselling for their mental health were more likely to have that need met than people that needed services such as social assistance. We also found that three-quarters of our participants preferred accessing Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services over mainstream services for all types of health concerns. Additionally, one in five participants said they needed more support for their mental health because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Flexible access options (such as telehealth or telephone services) made accessing mental health and substance use services easier.

What does this mean?

The findings from the Staying Deadly Survey show us that there are many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Southeast Queensland who need mental health support, and that there are gaps within mental health services and how they are accessed. Although this information may not seem new to people living and working in community, this is the first time a survey has collected information in enough detail and from a large enough group of people to present to mental health service policy makers and funders. Since the survey, Queensland Health has been quick to act by investing in the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled specialised mental health service hubs in Southeast Queensland. We hope these findings will continue making services better for those who most need it, and for the community more broadly.

Thank you

We would like to express a heartfelt thank you to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community who shared their yarns with us. We humbly respect the vulnerability, courage, and resilience in sharing their stories. Their stories have helped us to take one step further in our journey to improve community wellbeing.

We would also like to extend a special thank you to our seven Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interviewers who undertook their work with integrity, sensitivity and with a determination to improving the mental health outcomes of their community.

The Staying Deadly Survey was a collaboration between the Department of Health, Queensland Centre for Mental Health Research, the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health and its member services.

If you would like to find out more about the survey findings, the full report is available at <https://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:1c4e5ce>. For any other questions about the Staying Deadly survey, please email us at stayingdeadly@qcmhr.uq.edu.au.