

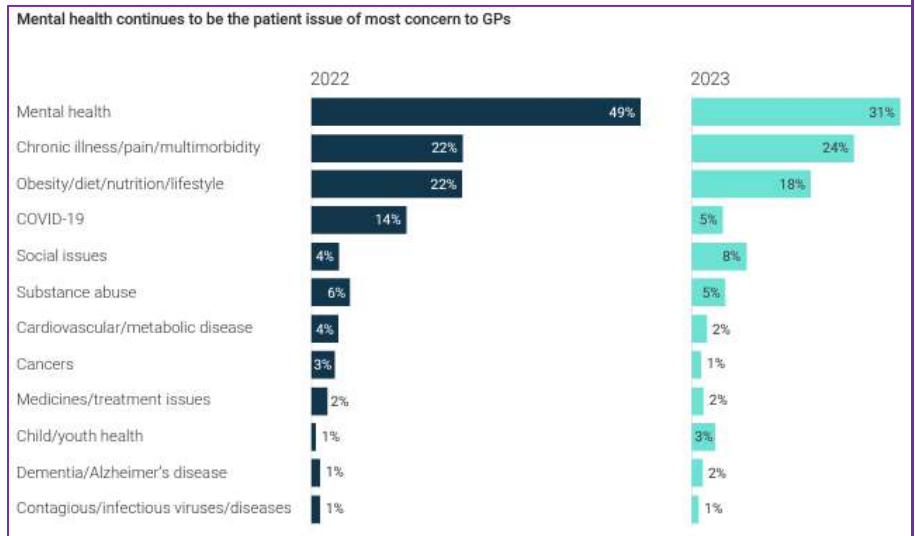
Media Comment - Wednesday November 15th 2023

RACGP “Health of the Nation 2023” report released

Today, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP), Australia’s governing body for GPs, released its seventh annual “Health of the Nation Report 2023.”

Mental health issues form a significant part of the report findings. 31% of GPs identify mental health issues as the number one area of patient concern.

RACGP president Dr Nicole Higgins states in her foreword that “*mental health (is) the leading reason for patient attendances*” providing yet more evidence of the need for increased funding and reform of the mental health sector to deliver better outcomes for consumers, and now it seems, to protect the health of doctors.



Since the survey began, mental health has always been, and remains the most prominent health issue causing GPs concern for the future. The number of GPs reporting that psychological issues are among the top three reasons for patient presentations in the last year has increased by 11% from 61% to 72%. GPs now report that **38% of ALL their consultations include a mental health component**.



Mental health has remained the most prominent health issue causing GPs concern for the future.


There has been a steady increase in the proportion of GPs reporting psychological issues in their top three reasons for patient presentations, from 61% in 2017 to 72% in 2023.

11%

BEING Mental Health Consumers is very concerned about this sharp increase in people with mental health challenges. It demonstrates the importance of having GPs with a good understanding of the wide variety of mental health challenges that people experience, and the need for more specialist mental health GPs.

The report also refers to information previously published reminding us that almost half of Australians (42.9% of those aged 16-85) experienced mental health issues in their lifetime and that one in five Australians (21.5% or 2.3 million people) experienced a mental health issue in the last 12 months.

GPs express concerns about access to healthcare generally recognising that rising costs have resulted in the average cost of a standard GP consultation increasing from \$64 to \$75 in the last 12 months.



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Mental health and behavioural conditions effect almost half of all Australians

38%

A significant proportion of GP consultations in a typical week include a mental health component

Additionally, the number of GPs bulk-billing their patients has HALVED in the last 12 months from 24% to 12%. This is extremely concerning to BEING, as we have been advocating for greater accessibility for all mental health services.

Emerging healthcare issues causing the most concern for GPs



The report expresses particular concern about patients’ access to mental health care. The number of GPs concerned about their patients getting the specialist mental health care they need has increased by 2% (from 5% to 7%) making it GP’s second greatest area of concern.

“This report is another reminder, as if we needed it, that mental health needs to be made the priority focus of our healthcare system right now, a system which is currently letting mental health consumers down,” Priscilla Brice, CEO of BEING – Mental Health Consumers said. “We need urgent and meaningful reform to the system to better address consumer needs and to support the critical work of our frontline GPs who are clearly at breaking point.”

NOTE: Charts reproduced from the RACGP “Health of the Nation Report 2023.” Click here to [Link to full report](#)