



## 19th ASEAN Japan High Level Officials Meeting on Caring Societies

Thursday 9 December 2021

*"Approaches to maintaining mental well-being in response to COVID-19".*

**Impact, support and Health Care Workers**

Mental Health and Substance use Unit  
Division of Programmes for Disease Control (DDC)  
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# Impact of COVID-19 on mental health

Direct and indirect impact of COVID-19 contributing to high levels of stress, increased symptoms of mental disorders

Cross-sectional and longitudinal studies finding high levels of psychological distress, higher than usual prevalence of anxiety and depression symptoms (Qiu et al, 2020; Wang et al, 2020; Lie et al, 2020)

Review findings from Asian countries reported 1 in 3 people experiencing at least mild to moderate symptoms of anxiety, depression or distress (Salari et al 2020)

In Australia, 1 in 4 experiencing mild to moderate symptoms of depression or anxiety (Fisher et al, 2020)

Investigation of the Prevalence of stress, anxiety, depression among the general population during the COVID-19 pandemic by different continents

Psychological disorders	continents	Number of articles	Sample Size	I <sup>2</sup> (%)	Egger's test	Prevalence (95% CI)
anxiety	Asia	13	54,596	99.2	0.136	32.9 (95% CI:28.2–37.9)
	Europe	3	8341	98.8	0.272	23.8 (95% CI:16.2–33.5)
depression	Asia	10	35,688	99.5	0.224	35.3 (95% CI:27.3–44.1)
	Europe	3	8341	99.2	0.104	32.4 (95% CI:21.6–45.5)
stress	Asia	3	2758	96.3	0.229	27.9 (95% CI:19.7–37.8)
	Europe	2	6316	98.5	–	31.9 (95% CI:23.1–42.2)

Salari et al 2020. Prevalence of stress, anxiety, depression among the general population during the COVID-19 pandemic: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Global Health* 16:57. doi: 10.1186/s12992-020-00589-w

# Impact of COVID-19 on mental health – young people

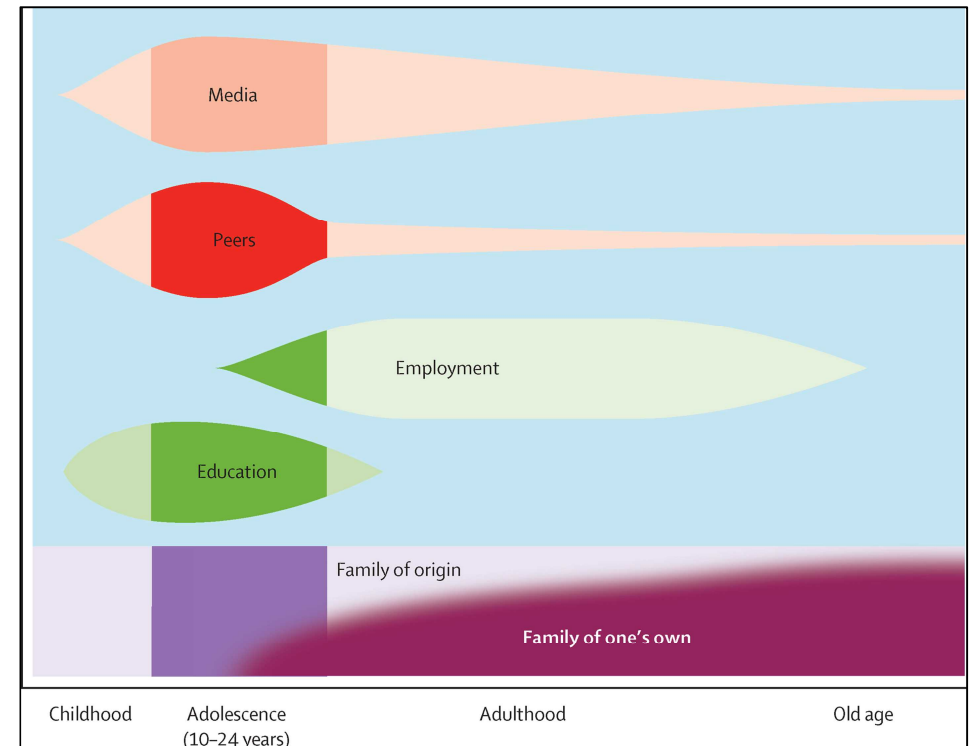
Studies from China and Australia finding highest levels of distress and symptomatology, greatest change in mental health status in young people aged 15-24 years

Modifiable risk and protective factors for mental health highly associated with COVID impact

- Positive family functioning, supportive communities, physical activity, strong social connections (Sax Institute 2019)

Disruption to education of particular concern

- By April, 90% of young people unable to physically attend school – impacts greater on most vulnerable children without access to learning support or internet
- Transition from school to further study and/or employment disrupted - risk of early drop-out, unemployment, early marriage



Changing proximal social determinants of health across the life course  
(Our future: a *Lancet* commission on adolescent health and wellbeing, 2016)

# Stressors faced by healthcare workers under COVID-19

- High workloads, long hours
  - Changed work conditions
    - Changing protocols, physical distancing, PPE
  - Difficult decisions
    - Allocation of resources to patients
    - Balancing needs of self and family with needs of patients
    - ‘Moral dilemmas’
  - Fear of infection – self and family
    - Inadequate access to PPE
    - Underlying conditions
    - Guilt if infected or quarantined
    - Anxiety re return to work
- 
- A photograph showing healthcare workers in a clinical setting, wearing full personal protective equipment (PPE) including blue gowns, blue bouffant caps, and face masks. They are focused on their work, with one worker in the foreground adjusting their mask. The background shows a hospital room with medical equipment and a patient bed.
- Separation from family
  - Witnessing patient deaths, communicating with families
  - Social stigma

# Impact of COVID-19 on mental health – healthcare workers

## Prevalence of mental health problems

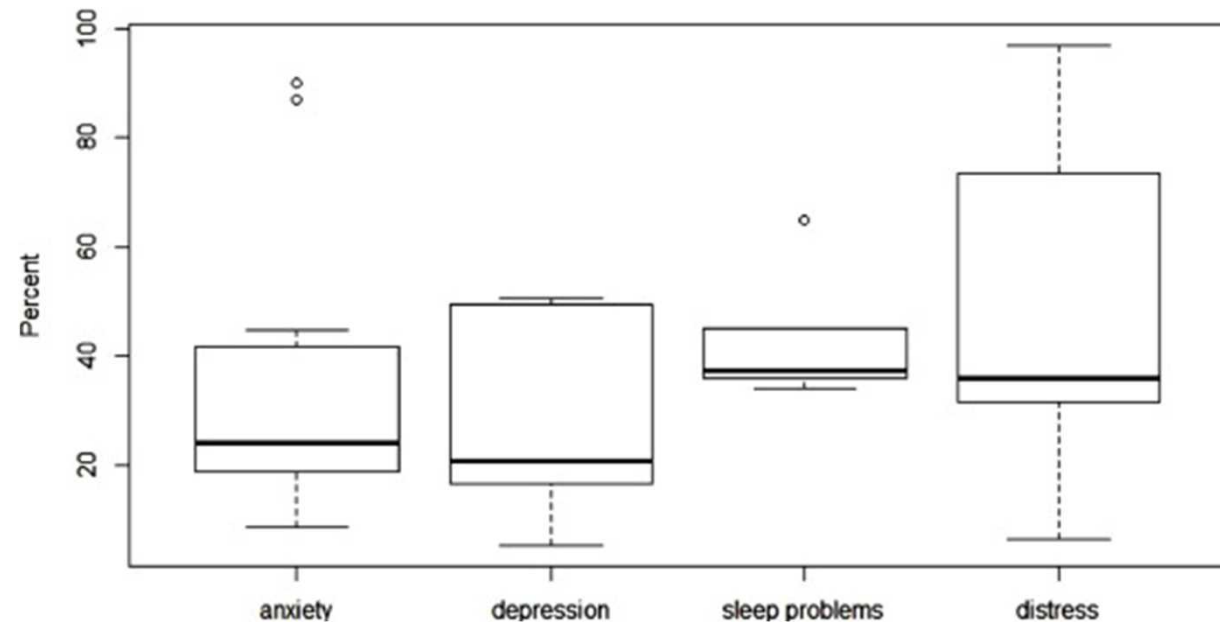
29 studies examined mood and sleep disturbance, distress

- Anxiety 9-90%, median 24%
- Depression 5-51%, median 21%
- Insomnia 34-65%, median 37%
- Stress disorder/distress 7-97%, median 37%

## Majority report mild-moderate symptoms

- Aligns with data from earlier review papers and from previous viral outbreaks: Meta-analyses of studies during SARS reported a 46% prevalence of anxiety, 37% depression, 41% distress, and 30% insomnia; during MERS, 32% distress

(Rapid systematic review – Muller et al, Sept 2020 - 54 studies, 54 707 participants)



Muller, A.E., et al. 2020. The mental health impact of the covid-19 pandemic on healthcare workers, and interventions to help them: A rapid systematic review. *Psychiatric Research*, vol293, 113441 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2020.113441>

## Medium-long term implications

Interplay of mental health, economic and psychosocial factors significant in the medium to long term

- Economic downturn and high unemployment risk factors for psychological distress and mental disorders, substance use, suicide and self harm (Frasquilho et al, 2016)
- 2008-09 GFC demonstrated both immediate and longer term impact, particularly on young people (Bubonya et al, 2019; Gray et al, 2009; Kalil et al, 2013)
  - Mental health impact via family experience of job loss/ instability, financial distress, residential relocation, family violence
  - Long-term impacts on vocational and educational potential and productivity

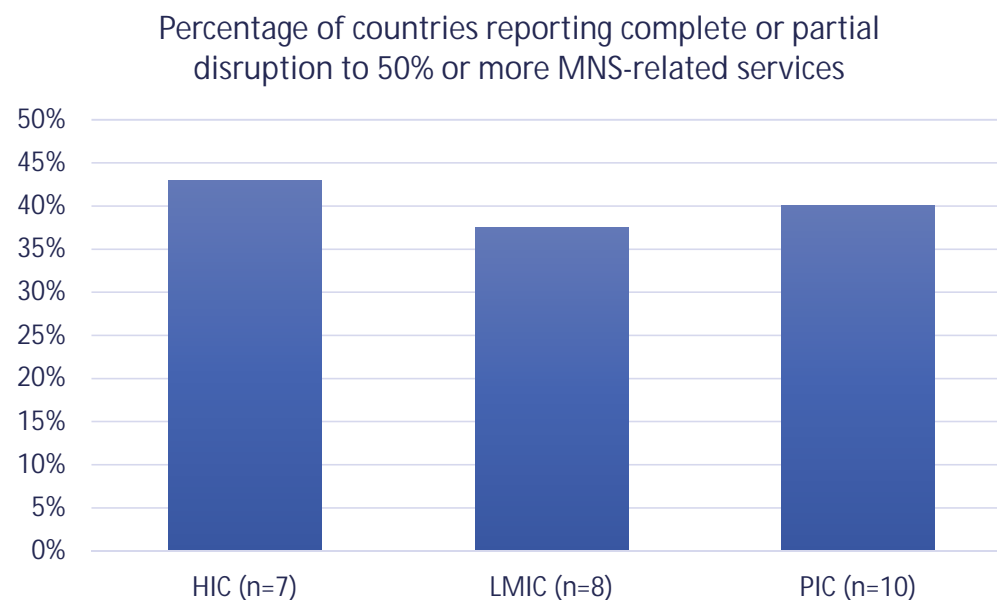
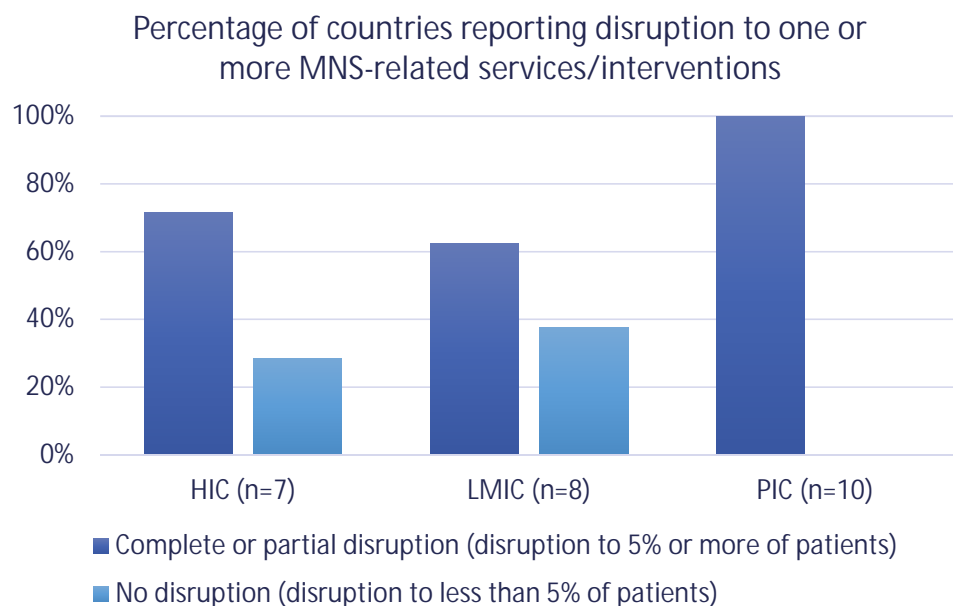
## Medium-long term implications

The costs of widespread poor mental health are high

- Combined direct and indirect costs estimated at 3.5% of GDP (OECD)
- Those with mild-moderate mental illness 2-3x more likely to be unemployed, 6-7x for severe mental illness, higher risk of poverty and social exclusion (OECD)
- For those employed - poor mental health associated with absenteeism, reduced productivity
- Pre-COVID, estimated \$1 trillion every year lost in productivity due to depression and anxiety (World Bank)
- **Modelling by University of Sydney** forecasts that 'best case scenario' over next 5 years in Australia will see 40% prevalence of psychological distress, 13.7% increase in suicide deaths (approx. 20,000 deaths)
  - Strategies effective at 'bending' mental health curve combination of employment and education programs + expansion of community-based MH services (Atkinson et al, 2020)

# Impact of COVID-19 on mental health service delivery

80% of countries experienced some level of service disruption

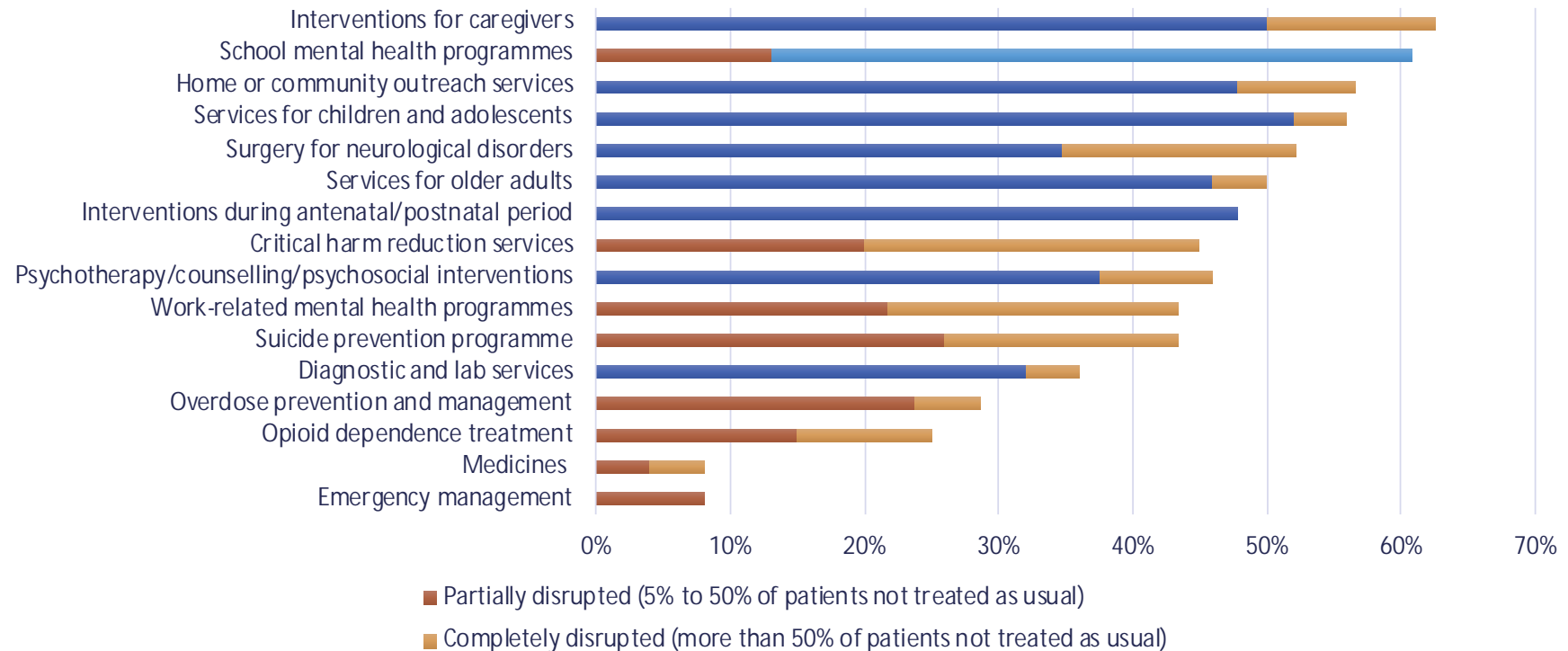




# Impact of COVID-19 on mental health service delivery

## Greatest disruption to community-based activities and services for vulnerable groups

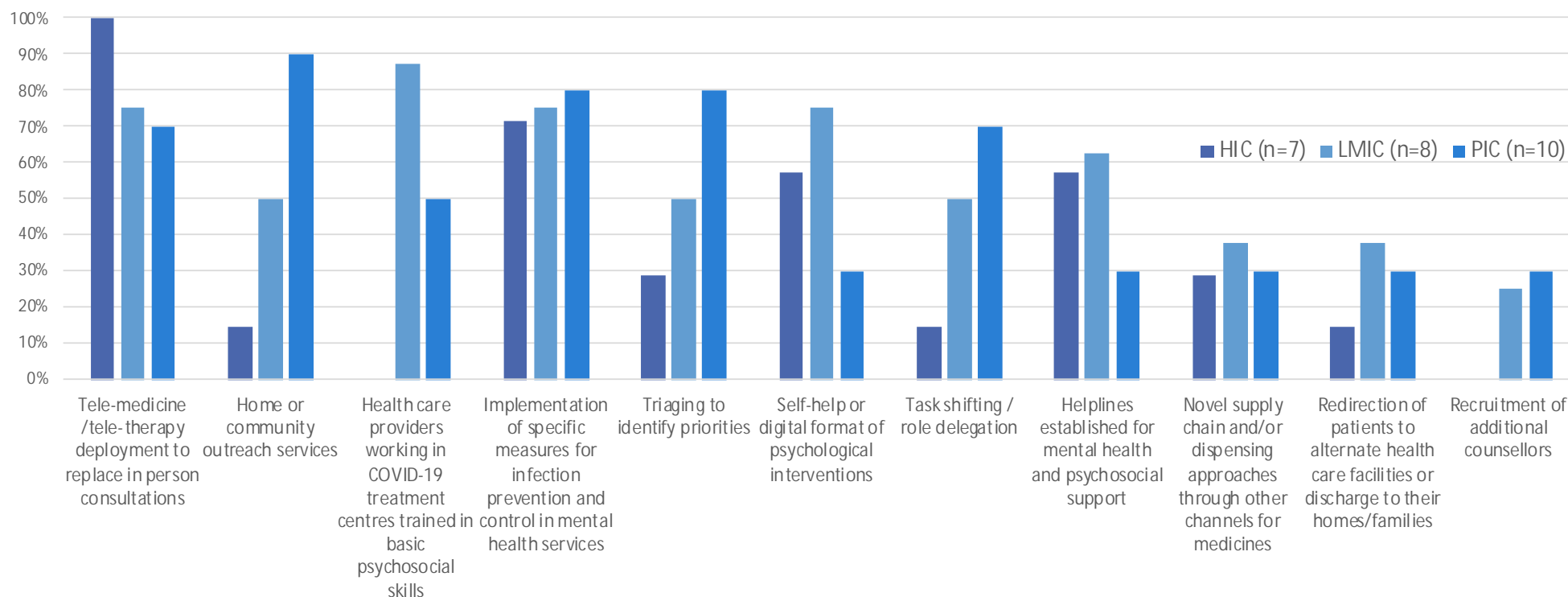
Percentage of countries reporting disruption to mental health services, by service type



# MHPSS response to COVID-19

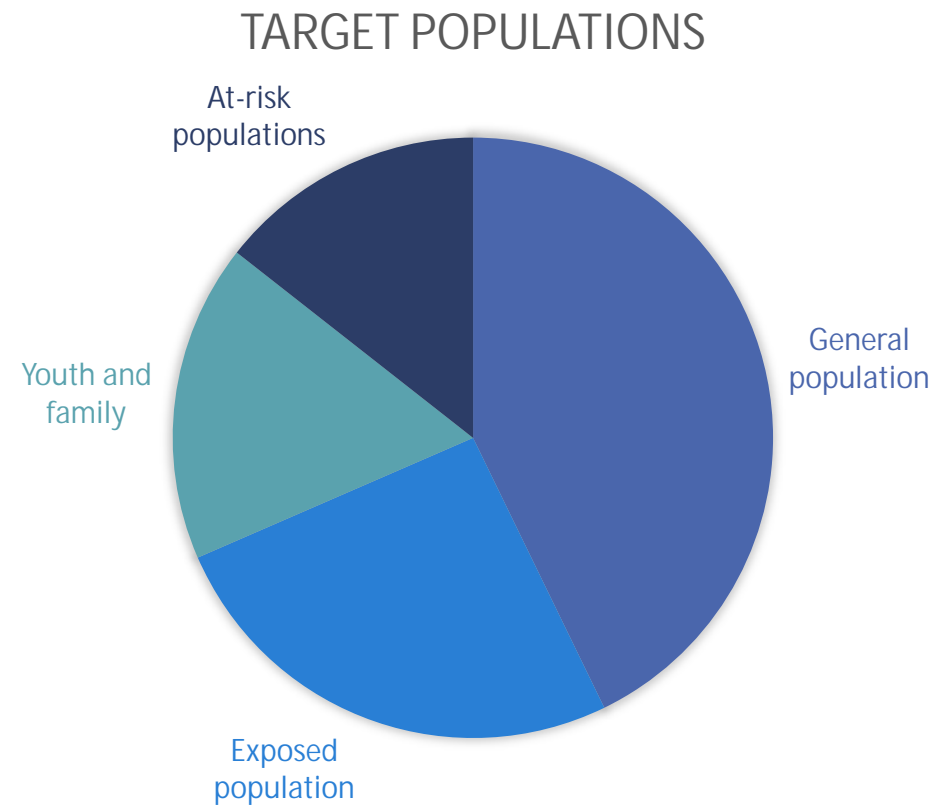
Overall, tele-medicine most frequently reported strategy to overcome service disruptions

Approaches for overcoming disruptions to mental health services



# MHPSS response to COVID-19

- Hotlines and chatlines the most common interventions
- 20% of interventions tele-mental health
  - Remote therapy with professional therapists
- 12% of interventions self-help
  - Digital apps
  - Online psychoeducation
  - Referral information
- Almost 90% of interventions targeting general mental health and common mental disorders



# MHPSS response to COVID-19

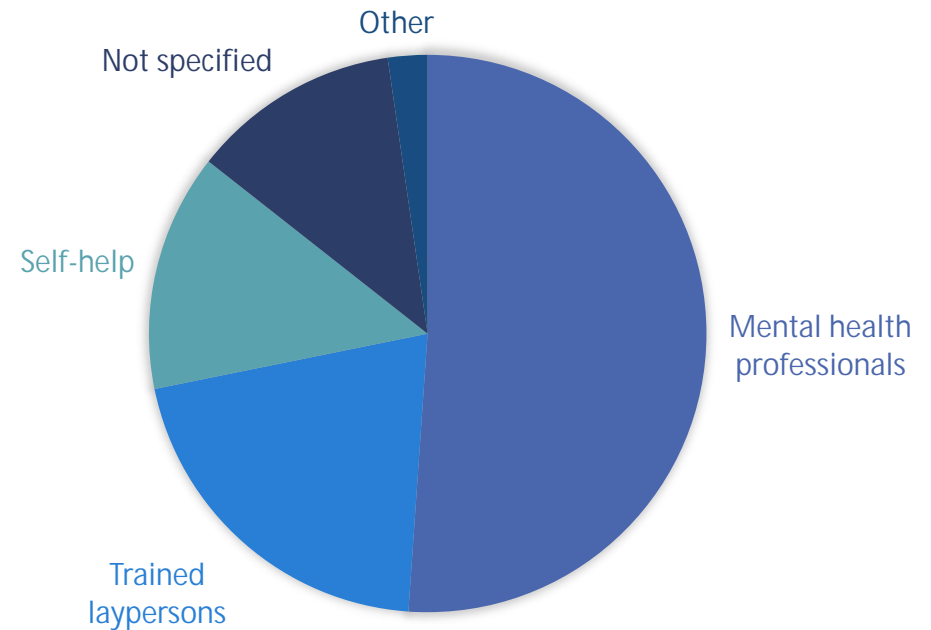
## Delivery organisations

- Government departments responsible for coordination and delivery of a third of interventions
- Universities and university partnerships played key role in delivery of interventions
- 20% of interventions delivered by NGOs / MH Organizations

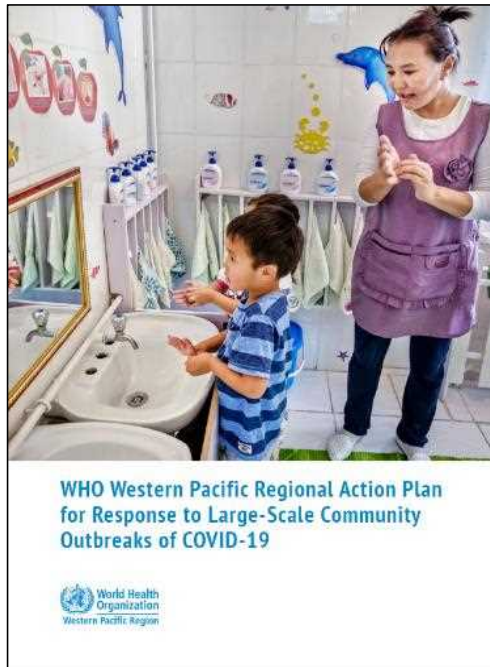


Counselling hotline set up by Tsinghua University in collaboration with partners

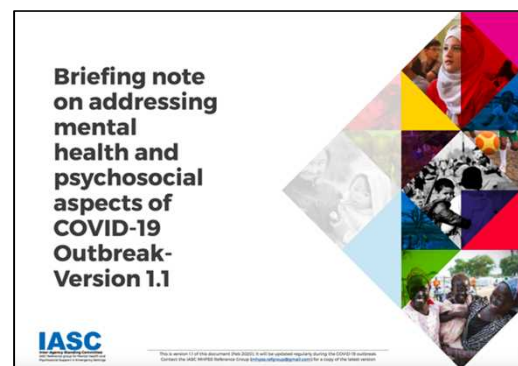
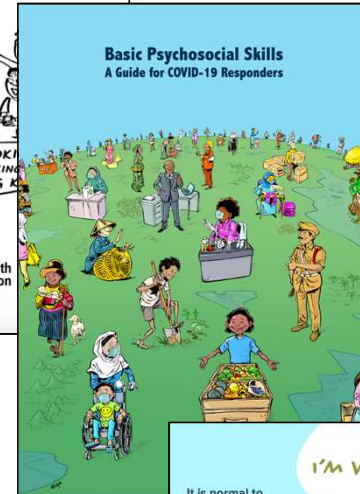
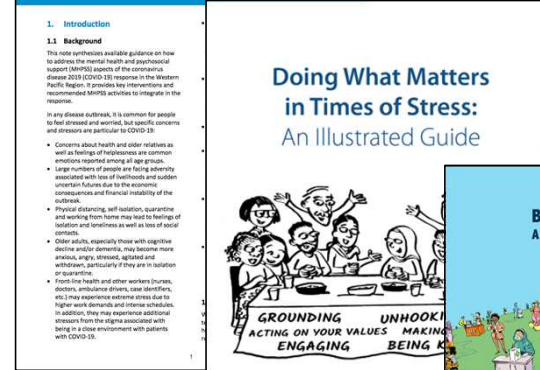
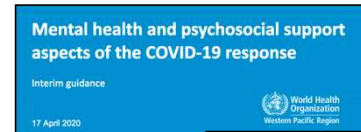
## SERVICE PROVIDERS



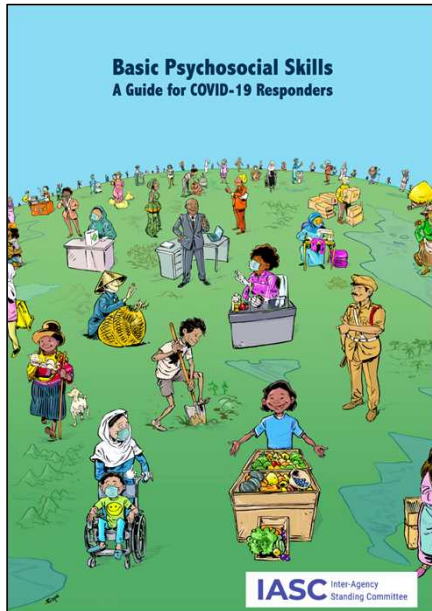
# Responding to mental health during COVID-19



- ✓ Strategic communication
- ✓ Care pathways
- ✓ Non-Pharmacological Intervention
- ✓ Health-care delivery




# Country activities – Pacific Islands



- Adaptation of Basic Psychosocial Skills guide and development of training materials for use in Pacific Island Countries & Territories  
<https://www.who.int/westernpacific/about/how-we-work/pacific-support/news/detail/15-06-2021-basic-psychosocial-skills-online-course-for-pacific-covid-19-responders-released>
- Developed in collaboration with WHO CC at UTS Sydney and Working Group of PICT representatives
- In final stages of development, plan for pilot testing with mental health workers in Cook Islands

Module 1



### Your Wellbeing

Why it is important to look after yourself, and ways to look after yourself.

### When someone is experiencing stress

Encourage the person to think of something they can do to feel better.

- “What has helped you previously when you have felt this way?”
- “What do you currently do to help yourself feel better?”
- “Is there anyone who can help you?”
- “Are there any activities you used to do that you could do now?”



A counselor in Wuhan, China, responds to mental health needs during the pandemic

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=53a5\\_xeL4dg&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=53a5_xeL4dg&feature=youtu.be)

Thank you!