Mental health survey shows Aussies are struggling

Australian telehealth service InstantScripts has revealed the first installment of data from its new Mental Health Tracker.

Based on a survey of an independent panel of 1001 Australians, the data ranges from September 2021 to April 2022. It shows that 70 per cent of Aussies surveyed say they struggled with their mental health, while 72 per cent say their mental health is 'good' or 'fair.'

Survey participants were asked seven questions about their mental health over the past six months, including the identification of any mental health symptoms suffered.

The data showed that women were overwhelmingly represented in the suffering of symptoms, while some respondent groups saw large age differences.

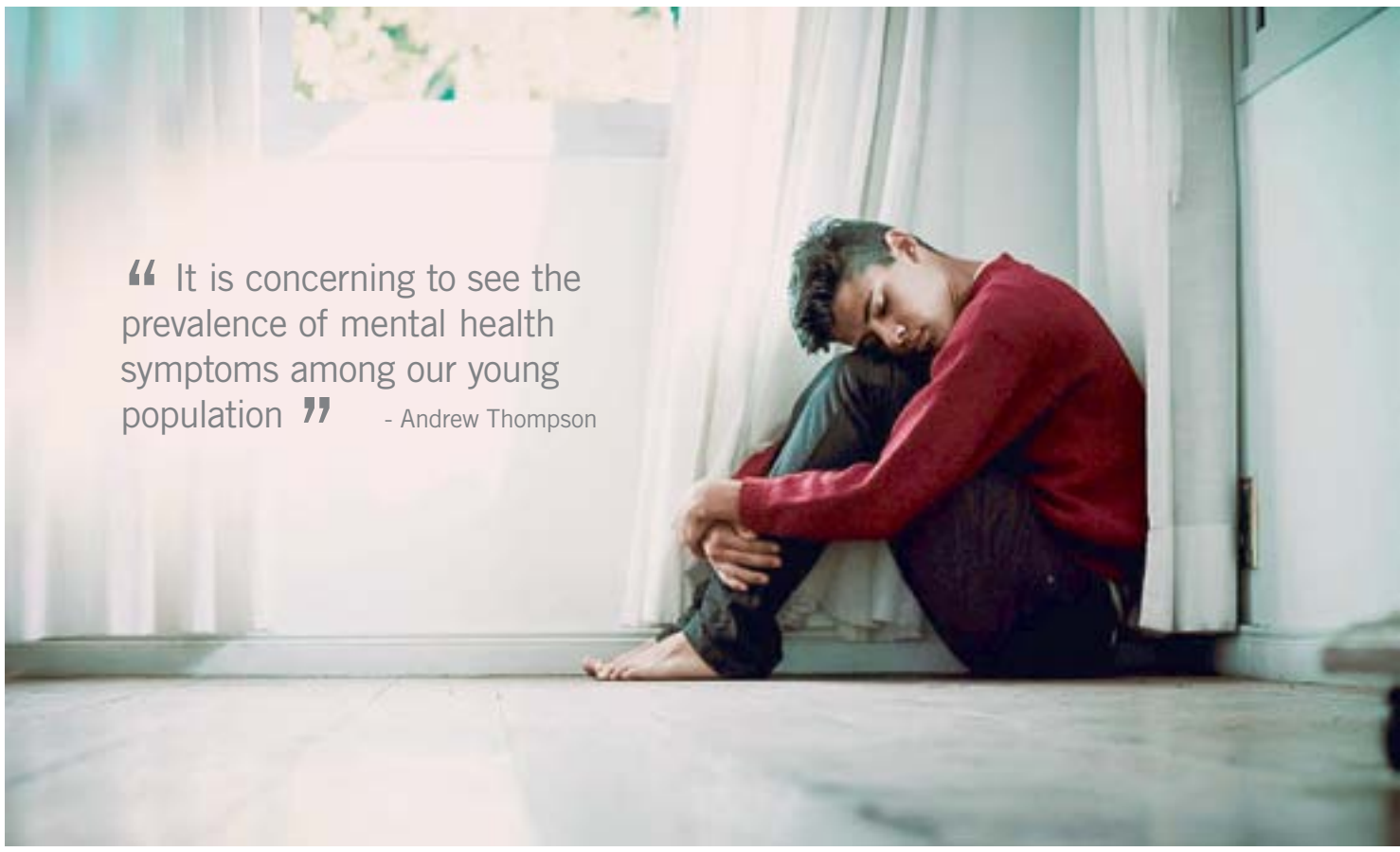
Thirty-six per cent of participants said they had felt sadness unrelated to depression or a particular incident. Notably, 59 per cent of this group were women.

Thirty-two per cent of participants felt isolated, with women making up 62 per cent of this group, while 33 per cent said they had found it difficult to stay focused on tasks, a group of which women made up 58 per cent.

Twenty-nine per cent of participants highlighted that they had felt hopeless, with 61 per cent of this group being women.

"Apart from our research showing how prevalent mental health struggles have been for the public, what I find very concerning is that half (46 per cent) of respondents have never sought support from a mental health professional, while only a fifth (17 per cent) said they were currently seeing one," InstantScripts registered doctor Andrew Thompson says.

"I urge those struggling with their mental health to speak to their doctor, access the myriad mental health support services available, and talk to supportive friends or family – particularly during times of extreme stress, worry, fear or anxiety."



Seventy per cent of Aussies say they struggled with their mental health during the past six months. (iStock)

More than a quarter of participants said they suffered at least once per day, while 33 per cent reported feeling symptoms once a week.

There is also a higher percentage of mental health symptoms present in young Australians, with 26 per cent of 18 to 30 year olds reporting symptoms, as opposed to 13 per cent of Aussies aged 50 and above.

"It is concerning to see the prevalence of mental health symptoms among our young population and, while suicide rates have decreased slightly, better access to preventative healthcare and treatment remains important," Dr Thompson says.

"Fortunately, the recent federal budget includes a $547 million investment into mental health and suicide prevention, and I hope to see accessibility and affordability of services improve as a result.

"The silver lining in our mental health survey is that, for a large proportion, much of these symptoms seem to be temporary, based on the current pandemic circumstances."

Feeling the cold this winter? Dr Kavanagh from Foot and Leg Pain Clinics may know why. (Supplied)

Foot, leg pain in winter?

Whether it's daily soreness or lingering injuries, you may have noticed your foot or leg pain feeling worse in winter.

Musculoskeletal podiatrist Dr David Kavanagh is from Foot and Leg Pain Clinics – one of Australia's leading lower limb pain and injury clinics. He provides some insight into why things can feel worse during the colder months.

1. Cold temperatures can cause the tissues in your joints to contract and pull on nerve endings, which can contribute to stiffness and joint pain.

2. The cold can contribute to less blood supply to joints and tissues which can restrict movement and exacerbate underlying soft tissue injuries or degeneration which you might not even be aware of.

3. We're often less active in winter, so like any muscles in the body, the muscles in the feet and legs can become less conditioned and therefore weaker, less malleable and more prone to stress and injury.

4. We usually spend more time at home with winter's shorter, colder days, often resulting in extended periods in unsupportive footwear like slippers or socks. This can strain foot and leg muscles, joints and tissues resulting in pain and injuries.

Some tips to try and prevent winter foot and leg pain include:

- Wearing supportive shoes even if you're spending extended periods at home and inside;
- If you have orthotics wear them around the home, even in your slippers;
- Keep exercising – the benefits a simple daily brisk walk can have on muscles, joints and tissues are amazing; and
- If you have sudden onset pain, recurring or consistent soreness, get it checked by an experienced musculoskeletal podiatrist to help prevent a worsening of the condition.

You can schedule an appointment with Dr Kavanagh at Foot and Leg Pain Clinics in Geelong West by calling 1300 328 300.