



Supporting information ahead of debate on World Mental Health Day 2021 (Sunday 10 October): Mental Health in an Unequal World

Who we are?

[Scotland's Mental Health Partnership](#) is made up of seventeen professional bodies and mental health third sector organisations. Our members represent those with lived experience, providers, professionals, carers and the wider third sector. Each contributes its unique perspective to create an informed collective voice on mental health.

Why 'Mental Health in an Unequal World'?

- **World Mental Health Day** - Established by the [World Federation for Mental Health](#), it provides the opportunity for policy makers, organisations and people across the world to highlight mental health education, awareness-raising and advocacy efforts.
- **The theme** - Chosen through a public vote by the Federation, the theme emerged as a direct response to the past 18 months. The Covid-19 pandemic has, across all societies, been seen to exacerbate pre-existing inequalities and mental health is no different. The theme was therefore chosen to shine a light on these inequalities, and the factors which perpetuate them.

What do those inequalities look like globally?

Based on data from the [Mental Health Foundation](#) and the [WHO](#):

- **Impact of mental ill health** - Mental ill health is one of the main causes of the overall disease burden worldwide. Mental health and behavioural problems (e.g. depression, anxiety and drug use) are reported to be the primary drivers of disability worldwide, causing over 40 million disability-affected life years in 20 to 29-year-olds. The WHO also reports a person dies from suicide every 40 seconds.
- **Gaps between countries** - Access to mental health services remains unequal, with between 75% to 95% of people with mental disorders in low- and middle-income countries unable to access mental health services at all. The rates of mental health workers vary from below 2 per 100 000 population in low-income countries to over 70 per 100 000 in high-income countries.
- **Impact of conflicts** - It is estimated that around 1 in 9 people in countries affected by conflict develop a moderate or severe mental disorder.

- **Impact of Covid** - the [WHO's survey of countries](#) during the pandemic found over 60% reported disruptions to mental health services for vulnerable people, including children and adolescents (72%), older adults (70%), and women requiring perinatal services (61%).

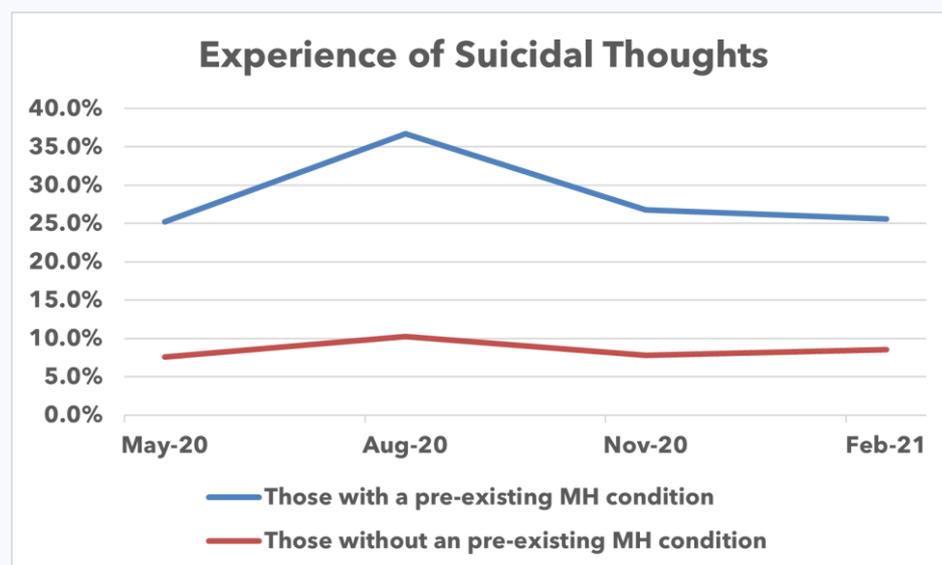
A Scottish context?

- **An unequal society** - despite the best efforts of policy makers, Scotland remains a society with significant inequalities. These extend to mental health and wellbeing.
- **Prior to the pandemic** - as detailed in studies like [the Scottish Health Survey](#) pre-Covid, the likelihood of a person experiencing poor mental wellbeing and mental ill health was partly linked to their socio-economic status. This includes people in our most deprived communities being:
 - Around three times likelier to experience depression than someone from our least deprived communities, and;
 - twice as likely to experience anxiety;
 - nearly four times likelier to have attempted suicide

The pandemic's impact

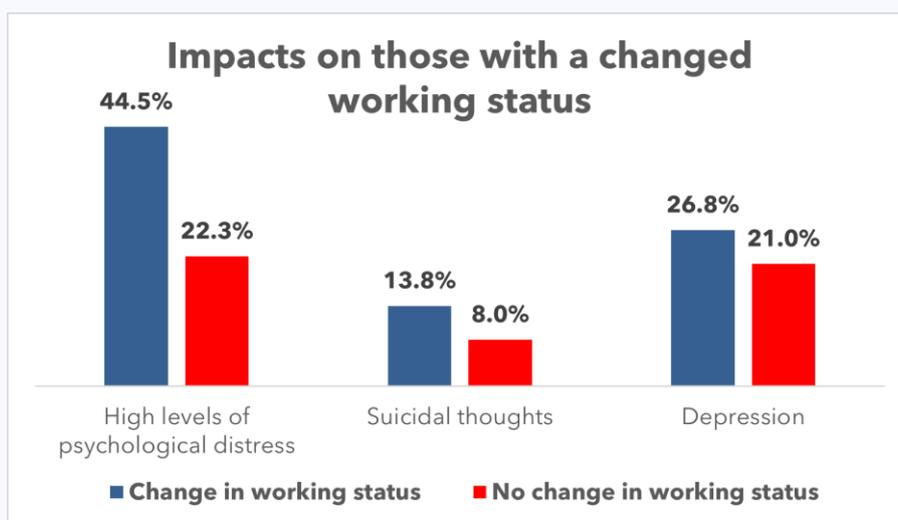
- **Impacted us all** - as detailed in the accompanying analysis to this briefing, the pandemic has meant Scots are likelier now than pre-pandemic to be experiencing high levels of psychological distress¹, anxiety and depression.
- **Exacerbating inequalities** - our analysis also shows that the burden has fallen hardest on particular groups. This includes:

1. **Those with pre-existing mental health conditions, who are consistently two to three times likelier to have seen their mental health suffer.**



¹ Indicative of a possible psychiatric disorder

2. Those who have had a change in working status (including losing their job or being furloughed) were consistently likelier to have been affected



3. Our ethnically diverse communities and women aged 18-29 were also likelier to have been impacted

Mental health impacts	Woman aged 18-29	'Ethnic minority'	Wider population
Suicidal thoughts	19.9%	26%	10.4%
Depression	42.1%	27.9%	23.5%
Anxiety	37%	22.1%	16.2%
High psychological distress	59%	33.7%	32.2%

What needs to happen now?

- **Recognise what's been done** - through rolling out initiatives which worked during the pandemic like Distress Brief Interventions, committing to greater investment in mental health and recognising the importance of promoting good mental health and preventing poor mental wellbeing and mental ill health, we welcome initial efforts by the Scottish Government to address the pandemic's impacts on mental health.
- **More to do** - nonetheless, this analysis illustrates the need for actions to address the countless inequalities in our society and their implications for our mental health and wellbeing.
- **Put inequalities at the heart of the Mental Health Strategy** - Following advocacy by the Partnership, the Scottish Government is now committed to a refresh of its Mental Health Strategy. We would urge the Scottish Government to make this a radical refresh of its vision and actions, recognising the impacts of the pandemic and the need to address the fundamental and sustained inequalities many of our fellow citizens face.

That's why we're calling on all MSPs speaking in this debate to support our call for the Scottish Government to commit to and deliver

- 1. a radical refresh of its Mental Health Strategy when it is reviewed next year**
- 2. A commitment to exploring the need to mental health-proof policy decisions across government.**

Promote, Prevent, Provide?

Prior to the Scottish Parliament election, [we proposed to all the political parties](#) a vision of a Scotland where good mental health and wellbeing is enjoyed by all. We called for actions that will:

- **Promote** better mental health and wellbeing for the whole population.
- **Prevent** mental ill health and distress in communities and groups at highest risk.
- **Provide** an appropriate choice of support, care and treatment in the right place and at the right time for those experiencing severe mental ill health.

These actions must be delivered through this Strategy refresh. This can be done using a human rights-based approach, supported principles such as: lived experience led, reducing inequality, no wrong door approach, meeting community need, early intervention, recovery focused, anti-stigma, real parity, and choice.

We believe these principles can be the basis of this radical refresh of the Strategy, and [would be happy to discuss these](#) with any interested MSP.

This analysis of the Tracker sits alongside the wider work of our members to track and highlight the experiences and outcomes of Scots with mental ill health and poor mental wellbeing. These are [signposted on our website](#).