

Mental Health Factsheet

Issues drawn from the report *Equal Minds* (SDCMH, 2005):

- people with mental health problems are *two times* more likely to die from coronary heart disease and *four times* more likely to die from respiratory disease than the general population;
- mental health problems affect more women than men, and a relatively greater number of women experience depression and anxiety – women, however, may be more prepared to acknowledge difficulties and may seek help more readily than men, who tend to under-report depression and anxiety;
- alcohol and drug misuse levels are higher in men, although rates of alcohol misuse among women are rising;
- the suicide rate among men is nearly three times that for women, and suicide is one of the leading causes of death among young men;
- the rate of depression among gay men is as much as eight times that found in the general population;
- up to two-thirds of lesbian women have been found to suffer from depression; bi-sexual and transgender people are also at particular risk of depression;
- young people who are gay, lesbian or bisexual are 6–11 times more likely to attempt to take their lives than their heterosexual peers

The issues below, however, mainly drawn from information gathered in England:

- disproportionately high numbers of people from minority ethnic communities are subject to compulsory treatment and admission to mental health hospital in-patient units;
- Afro-Caribbean people have a 60% higher rate of depression than white people, with Afro-Caribbean men at twice the rate for white men;
- the incidence of attempted suicide and self harm among young Asian women is higher than it is among their English counterparts;
- black and minority ethnic people who declare their mental health problems speak of experiencing racism and discrimination on a recurrent basis;
- Pakistani and Bangladeshi women have higher rates of common mental health disorders (anxiety and depression) than white women.

Ethnicity and mental health inequalities

Understandings of 'mental health' and mental health problems varies between cultures and individuals, as we all have different concepts of mental health and illness.

Minority ethnic disadvantage cuts across all aspects of deprivation. Taken as a whole, minority ethnic groups are more likely than the rest of the population to live in disadvantaged areas, be unemployed, have low incomes, live in poor housing, have poor health and be victims of crime.

As a document from the Department of Health in England, *Inside Outside* (DoH, 2003), puts it:

"There does not appear to be a single area of mental health care in this country in which black and minority ethnic groups fare as well as, or better than, the majority white community. Both in terms of service experience and the outcome of service interventions, they fare much worse than people from the ethnic majority."