

Actions to manage mental health concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic

Vinsensia Maharani Kanya Dhira Pradipta (ID: 32575785)

Supervised by Dr Daniel Griffiths and Prof Alex Collie
School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Monash University



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How were people managing their mental health concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- Who were performing particular actions to manage their mental health?

BACKGROUND

- 1 in 5 Australians suffers from mental illness every year ¹
- Mental distress rate increased: Pre-pandemic 10%, April 2020 22%, November 2020 24% ²
- Government increased funding for mental health services ³
 - More telephone support lines
 - More access to psychological services
 - Funding focused on treatment
 - Less on prevention
- Public health measures such as restrictions resulted in reduction of viral transmission but also led to
 - Work loss and unemployment
 - Loneliness and isolation ⁴
 - Disruption in the way people live

METHODS

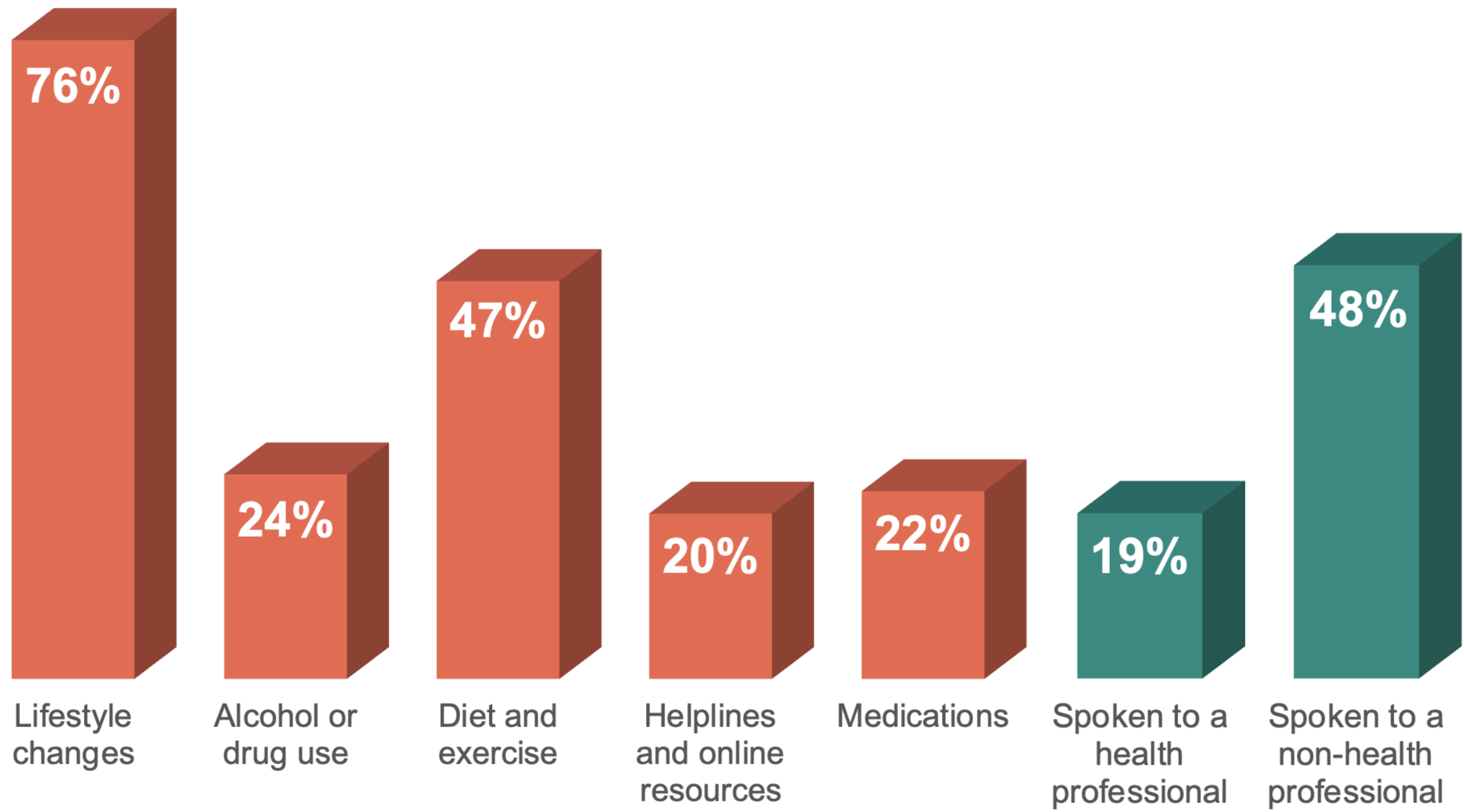
- Location: All of Australia
- Study population: Working-age Australians (focused on people losing work)
- Part of the COVID-19 Work and Health study (online and telephone survey)
- Timeline: ⁵
 - Baseline survey 27 Mar – 12 Jun 2020 (2603)
 - 1-month survey 27 Apr – 26 Jul 2020 (1646)
 - 3-month survey 1 Jul – 30 Sep 2020 (1383)
 - 6-month survey 30 Sep – 28 Dec 2020 (1227)
- Measured outcomes
 - Lifestyle changes
 - Alcohol and drug use
 - Diet and exercise
 - Helplines and online resources
 - Medications
 - Spoken to non-health professional
 - Spoken to health professional
- Data analysis
 - Summary statistics for each actions
 - Longitudinal cohort study (1, 3, 6 months after baseline survey)
 - Binary regression modelling (single time-point)
 - Outcome is binary (yes/no answer)
 - Covariates: Gender, age group, current work status and health

CONCLUSIONS

- People are more likely to take **easier, simpler, and more direct actions** to manage their mental health such as changing their lifestyle, talking to friends and doing diet and exercise
- The result of our study may assist health practitioners and policymakers in the development of **more accessible mental health education** or relevant interventions to help those who are more vulnerable or potentially at-risk groups

RESULTS

1. What were people doing to manage their mental health?



2. Who were performing particular actions to manage their mental health?

Who are performing these actions?	Lifestyle changes	Alcohol or drug use	Diet and exercise	Helplines and online resources	Medications
Women	✓		✓	✓	
Young people (18-34)			✓		
People out of work	✓			✓	
People with anxiety	✓			✓	✓
People with depression			✓	✓	✓
People in high distress	✓	✓		✓	✓
	1263 (78%)	441 (27%)	764 (47%)	328 (20%)	357 (22%)

Who are performing these actions?	Speaking to	
	Non-health professional	Health professional
Women	✓	
Young people (18-34)	✓	
People out of work	✓	
People with anxiety		✓
People with depression	✓	✓
People in high distress	✓	✓
	848 (52%)	303 (19%)

✓ = more common

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Future work will focus on understanding the relationship between taking actions to manage mental health concerns and changes in levels of psychological distress. Understanding the efficacy of preventative actions to manage mental health will help to inform policies and workplace supports to help reduce the mental health burden for people of working age.

REFERENCES

1. Australia's Health 2020 report shows one in five Australians have a mental health condition. UNSW Sydney. Sydney: Australia, 2020 Jul 23 [cited 2021 Sep 13]. Available from: <https://newsroom.unsw.edu.au/news/health/australia's-health-2020-report-shows-one-five-australians-have-mental-health-condition>

2. Mental health impact of COVID-19. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. p. 11. 2021 Jul 14 [updated 2021 Jul 20; cited 2021 Sep 10]. Available from: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/0e4b78e-5ec2-4c00-93b4-52e29203b53f/Mental-health-impact-of-COVID-19.pdf.aspx>

3. Stanton R, To QG, Khalesi S, Williams SL, Alley SJ, Thwaites TL, et al. Depression, Anxiety and Stress during COVID-19: Associations with Changes in Physical Activity, Sleep, Tobacco and Alcohol Use in Australian Adults. Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2020;17(11).

4. Carey A. Coronavirus: CBA report reveals what we're buying during pandemic: News.com.au; 2020 [updated 2020 Mar 31; cited 2021 Apr 7]. Available from: <https://www.news.com.au/finance/business/retail/coronavirus-cba-report-reveals-what-were-buying-during-pandemic/news-story/5004b6810d69cdbc73ac7789e24460d>

5. Griffiths, D., Sheehan, L., van Vreden, C. et al. The Impact of Work Loss on Mental and Physical Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Baseline Findings from a Prospective Cohort Study. J Occup Rehabil 31, 455–462 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10926-021-09958-7>



Scan the QR Code to access a copy of the full study report.