

# Mental Distress Survey Overview

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# **Background, Objectives and Method**



## **Background**

This survey represents one of the initial steps to understanding mental health, and provisions to support mental health, in a place of study.

In addition to informing the work of NUS in this area, the outcomes will be used by the press and PR team during Mental Health Week 2013







## **Objectives**

- 1.To increase NUS' understanding of mental health issues among students (briefly)
- 2. To understand the level and standard of support services offered to students who suffer mental health issues (i.e. mental illness or symptoms of mental illness) by their institution / place of study.





# Methodology

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Method	Online quantitative questionnaire (approx. 10 minutes) sent out via email, with cash prize incentive	
Sample	Students (from NUS extra database AND promotion via NUS officers)	

#### **Key timelines**

Activity	Timing	
Questionnaire finalised	Wednesday1st May 2013	
Fieldwork Start (first sample send – 30k)	Tuesday 7 <sup>th</sup> May 2013	
Second sample send - 30k)	Friday 10 <sup>th</sup> May 2013	
Fieldwork End	Monday 10am 13th May	
Delivery (excel file and summary)	Wednesday15th May 2013	







Overview for students in Higher Education.



### Sample profile of diagnosed/self-diagnosed mental health

67% (893)	I have never been diagnosed with a mental health problem
6% (82)	I have previously been diagnosed with a mental health problem, but I don't believe this diagnosis currently applies to me
8% (109)	I believe I have a mental health problem, but am not seeking a diagnosis
2% (20)	I am currently seeking a diagnosis for a mental health problem
10% (134)	I have been diagnosed with a mental health problem, and I believe this diagnosis still applies to me
7% (98)	Prefer not to specify

Please note that due to the nature of the promotion of the survey (incl. the involvement of NUS officers and the invitation text which stated that the questionnaire was about mental distress) it is likely that the proportion of students stating that they experience symptoms of mental illness or a mental illness will be higher than the actual incidence in the population





# Profile of diagnosed/self-diagnosed mental health problem – Differences by student demographic.

67% (893)

#### I have never been diagnosed with a mental health problem

NOTE: comparisons are made to the above stat only – so where a % is shown in brackets, it is the proportion of the students who fit the demographic/student demographic criteria mentioned that stated that they 'have never been diagnosed with a mental health problem'. Please note, as mentioned, the proportion experiencing a mental health problem is likely to be overstated here, however the differences stated below are likely to be true.

#### KEY:

More likely to have been diagnosed with a mental health problem (i.e. lower % of above statement) Less likely to have been diagnosed with a mental health problem (i.e. higher% of above statement)

- <u>Subject of study</u> → History and/or philosophy (49% of n=56) and the written arts (50% of n=54) students are slightly less likely to state that they have *never* been diagnosed with a mental health problem (so they are more likely to have experienced one).
- Whereas students on medical & dentistry courses (78% of n=73uw) or business related subjects (77% of n=149uw) are more likely to state that they have *never* been diagnosed with a mental health problem.
- <u>International students</u> → <u>International students</u> (77% of n=231uw) are more likely to state that they have *never* been diagnosed with a mental health problem compared with <u>students</u> that are UK citizens (64% of n=1054uw)
- There is no difference by <u>year of study.</u>





# Profile of diagnosed/self-diagnosed mental health problem – Differences by demographic.

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KEY:

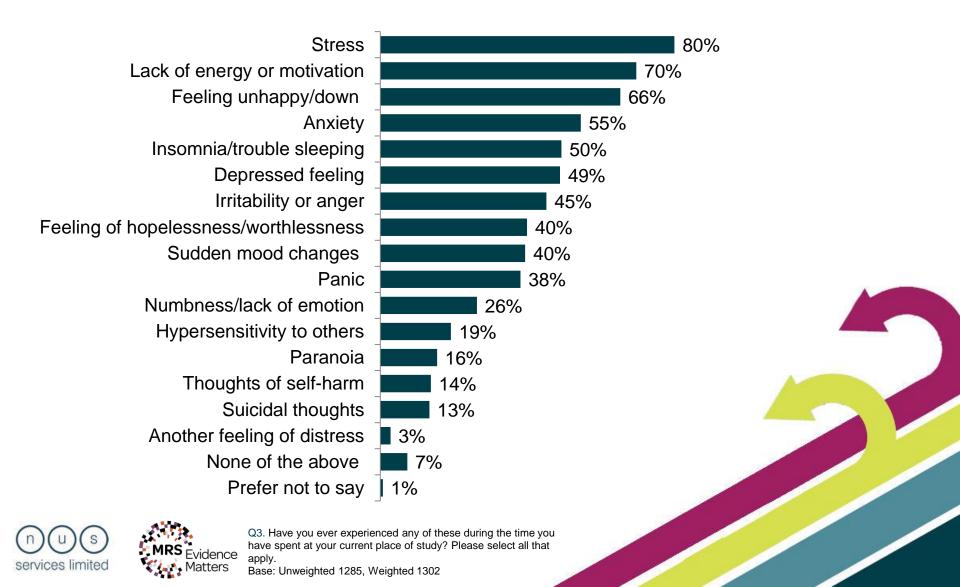
More likely to state that they have been diagnosed with a mental health problem (i.e. lower % of above statement) Less likely to state that they have been diagnosed with a mental health problem (i.e. higher% of above statement)

- Age → Students aged 18-20 are more likely to state that they have never been diagnosed with a mental health problem (73% of n=487uw) than older students
- <u>Gender</u> → Females (64% of n=824uw) are less likely to state that they have *never* been diagnosed with a mental health problem compared with males (72% of n=444uw) so females are more likely to have experienced one.
- <u>Ethnicity</u> → students of a <u>white</u>: <u>British</u> ethnicity are less likely to state that they have *never* been diagnosed with a mental health problem (62% of n=806uw). Those who define themselves as <u>black</u> are more likely to state that they have *never* experienced one (87% of n=108uw).
- <u>Sexuality</u> → Heterosexual students are (70% of n=1102uw) are more likely to state that they have *never* been diagnosed with a mental health problem than gay/lesbian/bisexual students.
- <u>Caring responsibilities</u> → whether you are a student caring for children or an adult or neither, there appears to be no impact on whether you self-define or have been diagnosed with a mental health problem.
- <u>Students with a disability, impairment or long-term health condition</u> → Students with a disability, impairment or long-term health condition are less likely to state that they have *never* been diagnosed with a mental health problem (39% of n=215uw)





# Symptoms of mental distress experienced by students For HE students, stress is the most often felt feeling of mental distress, followed by demotivation and 'feeling down'.



### Frequency of experiencing symptoms of mental distress

The more 'common' feelings of mental distress are experienced less often. And vice versa – those feelings that are experienced by fewer students are experienced more often, highlighting their severity.

■Once an academic year ■Once a term ■Once a month ■Once a week ■More often than once a week ■Daily ■All the time ■Prefer not to say Average (1302) 19% 10% 4% 3%2% 23% 13% Stress (1074) 21% 25% 20% 10% 14% 4% 3% % Lack of energy or motivation (935) 21% 11% 15% **5%** 3%1% 20% 24% Feeling unhappy/down (876) 19% 21% 12% **5%** 4%1% 22% 15% Anxiety (732) 16% 22% 13% 17% **6%** 4%1% 21% Insomnia/trouble sleeping (661) 19% 13% **6%** 5%1% 16% 21% 18% 5%1% Depressed feeling (656) 14% 21% 13% 19% Irritability or anger (606) 5%1% 16% 21% 13% 17% 20% 6% Feeling of hopelessness/worthlessness (536) 6%1% 10% 23% 14% 22% 8% Sudden mood changes (529) 5%2% 11% 20% 15% 21% 7% 19% Panic (512) 15% 20% 13% 19% 5%2% 21% Numbness/lack of emotion (352) 23% 10% 16% 12% 19% 10% 8% 1% Hypersensitivity to others (258) 8% 1% 24% 12% 20% 11% 16% 2% Paranoia (207) 9% 8% 18% 12% 22% 11% 17% Thoughts of self-harm (185) 25% 9% 1% 8% 18% 15% 15% 11% 1% Suicidal thoughts (179) 8% 16% 13% 25% 18% Another feeling of distress (37) 8% 0% 10% 0% 11% 28% 22% 20%





Q4. How often, if at all have you experienced any kind of mental distress during the time you have spent at your current place of study? BY Q3. Have you ever experienced any of these during the time you have spent at your current place of study? Please select all that apply. Base: Unweighted 1285, Weighted 1302

### Mental distress triggers

The contributors to feelings of mental distress are primarily course and work related. These are key triggers across all symptoms/feelings. Those experiencing the more 'severe' symptoms/feelings are more likely to have more triggers.

Course workload deadlines 65% Exams (including revision) 54% Balancing study and other commitments 52% Grades/academic performance 52% Personal, family or relationship problems 49% Financial difficulties 47% Looking for a job for during my studies 28% Accommodation/housing 28% Social pressures/fitting in 27% Graduate employment 26% Feelings of homesickness 22% Insensitivity of fellow student/s 16% Insensitivity of lecturer or other teacher 15% Not knowing where to seek support 12% Bullying or harassment by fellow student/s 5% Substance misuse e.g. alcohol, drugs 5% Bullying or harassment by a lecturer/teacher 3% Other 3% Prefer not to say Q6B Do you think that any of the following elements of the student experience have contributed to your feelings of mental distress (whilst at your current place of study)?





Base INCLUDES ONLY THOSE EXPERIENCING SYMPTOM OF

MENTAL DISTRESS: Unweighted 1134 Weighted 1172

### Who do students confide in about their feelings of mental distress

The majority of students will tell their friends and family about their feelings of mental distress. The other possible places to share these feelings are used with much lower incidence.

Just over one-quarter do not tell anyone

26%	Did not tell anyone about their feelings of distress		
58%	Told friends		
45%	Told family		
15%	Told doctor / GP		
14%	Told an academic member of staff*	*21% of stu	*21% of students shared their
10%	Told counselling services at place of study*	feelings of mental distress with their place of study and/or their students' union	
5%	Told advice/support services at place of study*		
5%	Told disability services at my place of study*		
3%	Told other health professional		
2%	Told mentor or peer support group		
2%	Told my students' union advice centre*		
1%	Told other helpline service		
0%	Told nightline		1





### Formal services used regarding feelings of mental distress

In terms of using services, 64% do not use any formal service for advice / support in relation to their mental distress. Of all the services available, a doctor/GP is the services most used.

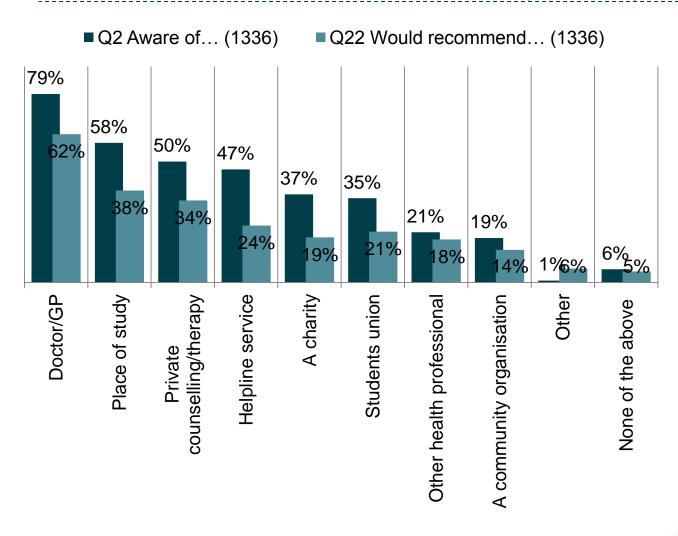
64%	Did not use any 'formal' services for advice/support in relation to their mental distres	SS	
23%	Rec'd advice/support from doctor/GP		
15%	Rec'd advice/support from place of study*	*17% of students used the	
9%	Rec'd advice/support from private counselling/therapy	advice / support services from their place of study and/or their	
4%	Rec'd advice/support from other health professional	students' union	
3%	Rec'd advice/support from students union*		
3%	Rec'd advice/support from services offered by a charity		
3%	Rec'd advice/support from helpline service		
2%	Rec'd advice/support from services offered by a community organisation		
3%	Rec'd advice/support from <b>other</b>		





# Level of awareness and potential recommendation of advice / support services for mental distress

Students are most likely to be aware of and recommend their GP/Doctor. This is followed by their place of study and private counselling / therapy.



\*68% of students are aware of advice / support services from their place of study and/or their students' union

\*47% of students would recommend advice / support services from their place of study and/or their students' union to someone who they thought needed it.





Q2 Are you aware of any of the below organisations, or types of organisations offering mental health advice and support services? Q12. If you or someone you knew needed advice or support on mental health issues, who/where would you recommend that they should seek support?

Base: Unweighted 1285, Weighted 1302





