

Societal pressures and mental health – living with uncertainties in a fragmented world

Dr Ledia Lazëri

Regional Adviser for Mental Health and Well-being

WHO Regional Office for Europe



European Region



Mental health **needs are high**

1 in 6

In WHO European Region, 1 in 6 people live with a **mental health condition**

1 in 4

In WHO European Region, 1 in 4 people with **psychosis** does not receive treatment

300+

suicides every day

2%

of **health budgets** go to mental health



The global prevalence of mental disorders

1.095 billion
people living with
mental disorders

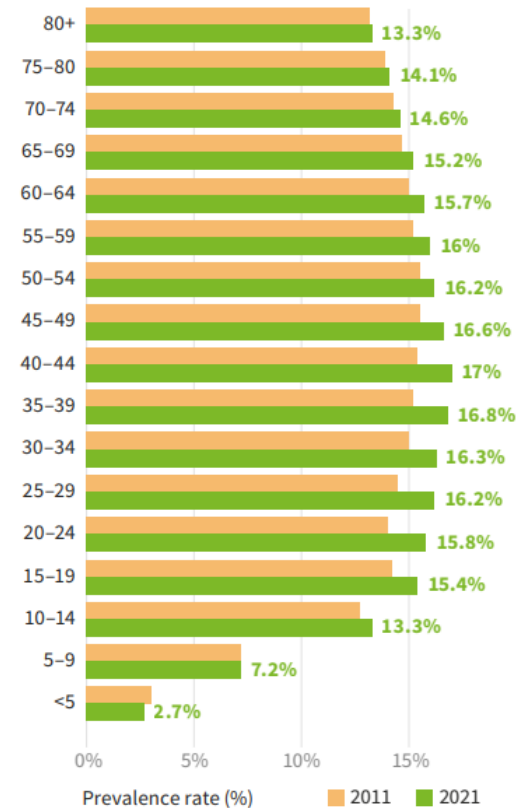
14.8%
of females



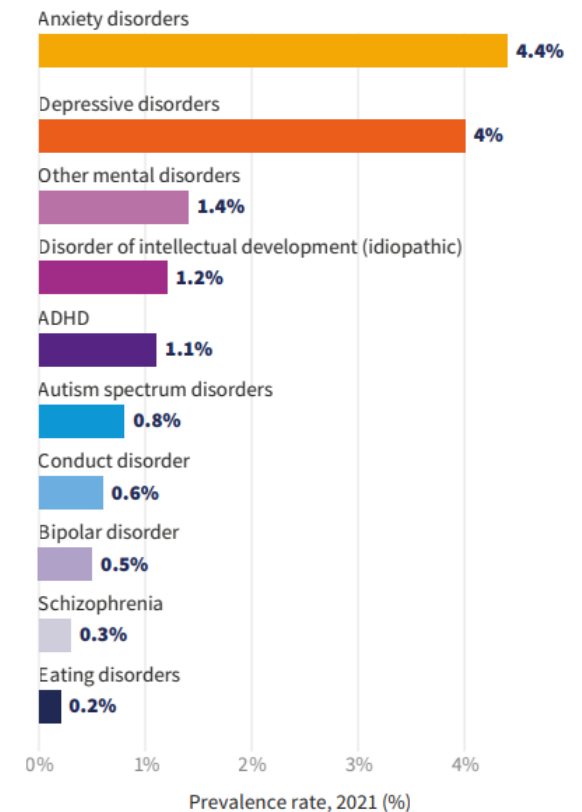
13.0%
of males



BY AGE GROUP (YEARS)

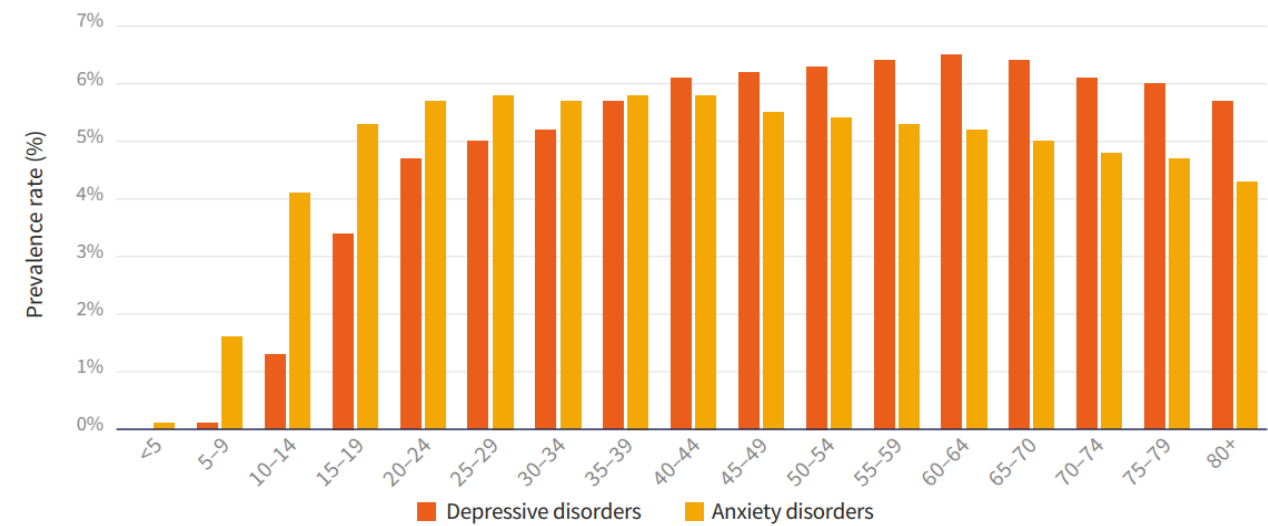


BY DISORDER

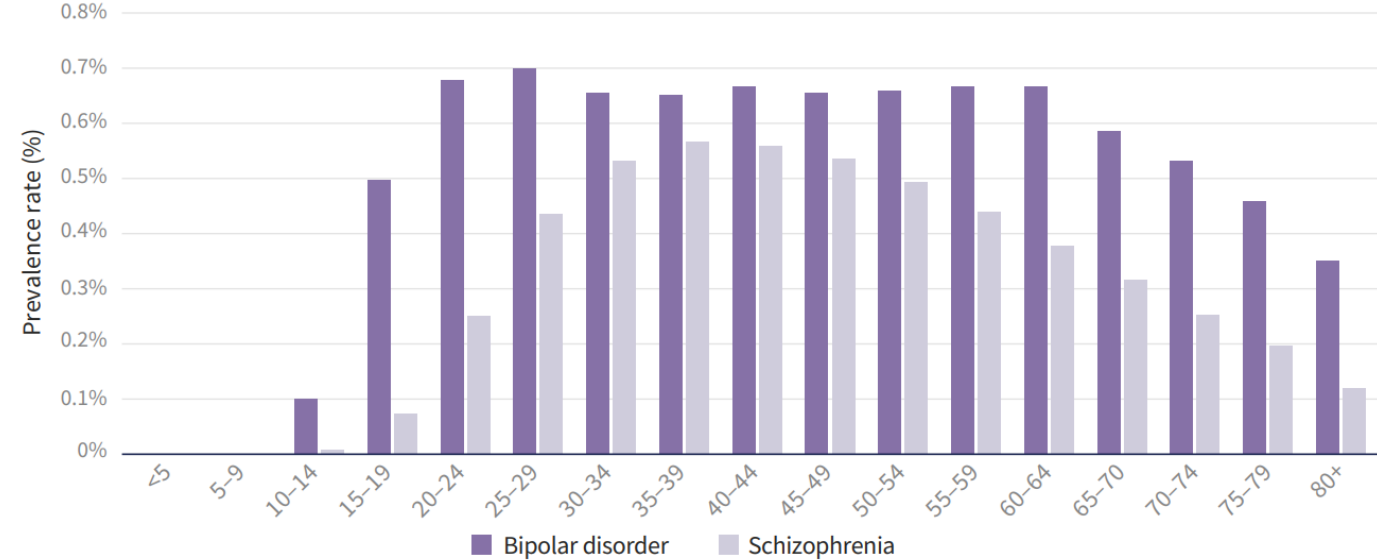


Source: IHME, 2024 (3).

Global prevalence of some common mental disorders over the life-course



Source: IHME, 2024 (3).



Source: IHME, 2024 (3).

Mental health and well-being of adolescents is in **decline** across multiple indicators

Life satisfaction, self-rated health, and social support declined since 2018, while health complaints increased.

Over **40%** of adolescents feel pressure from schoolwork.

16% of adolescents report being cyberbullied at least once or twice in the past 2 months.

1 in 5 adolescents report a lack of support from either family or friends.

1 in 4 girls at age 15 report feeling lonely.



Emerging concern: digital environments

1 in 10 adolescents show **problematic social media use**

16% report recent **cyberbullying**

Girls report higher problematic social media use (**13% vs 9%**) and constant online connectivity (**44% of 15-year-old girls**)

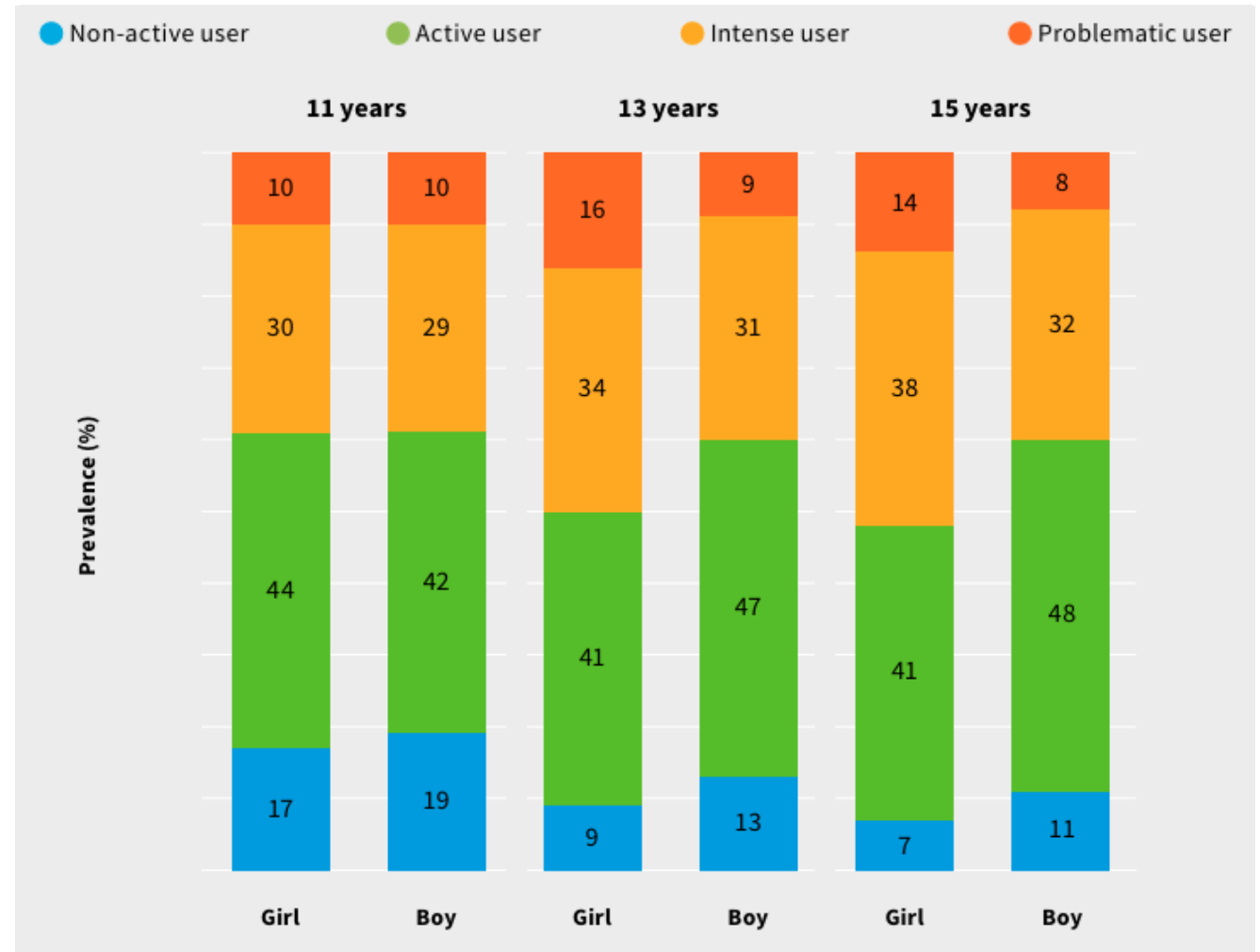
Boys report higher problematic gaming risks (**16% vs 7%**)

34% game daily, 22% playing 4 + hours



More than 1 in 10 adolescents show signs of problematic social media behaviour, struggling to control their use and experiencing negative consequences.

Up from 7% in 2017.



Social media use: Four categories by age and gender, HBSC average

Up to 1 in 3 older adults are socially isolated

- Higher risk of **dementia, Alzheimer's**, and memory problems from social disconnection.
- **Protective effects** of social connection on cognitive health.
- **Mixed effects** of online spaces depending on use:
 - **Positive:** useful for people with disabilities or those who can't leave home.
 - **Negative:** overuse and harmful online interactions.
- **Digital tools** like online therapy, chatbots, social media, and virtual reality are **increasingly used in interventions** (especially for isolated individuals).



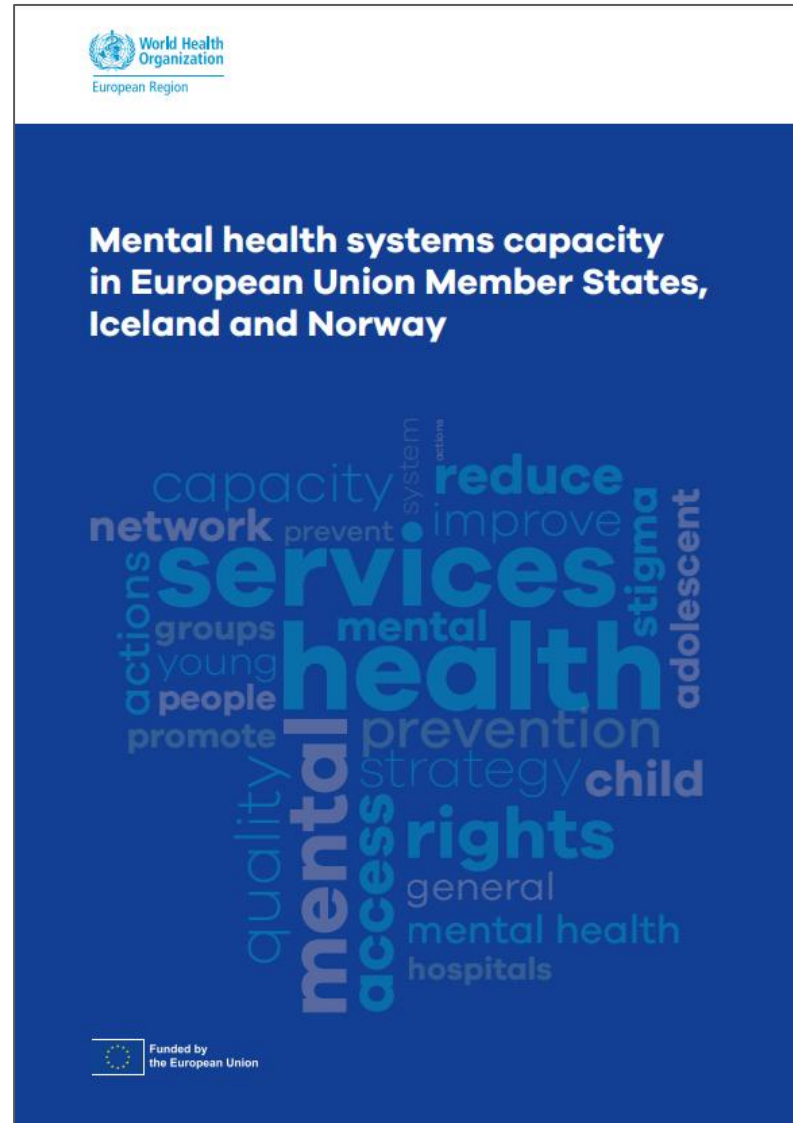
When emergencies strike, mental health is at risk

- **War and armed conflict:** Displacement, exposure to violence, loss of loved ones, moral injury, collapse of health and social services
- **Pandemics and compound crises:** Amplify fear, isolation, grief and uncertainty
- **Natural disasters and climate shocks:** Earthquakes, floods, heatwaves may cause displacement, overwhelm coping mechanisms and severely disrupt services
- **Sudden community crises:** Infrastructure failures, accidents, or violence can destabilise entire populations



1 in 5 people who have experienced war or conflict in the previous 10 years has depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, bipolar disorder or schizophrenia.

What happens with mental health systems in Europe?



*Data from 29 EURO countries

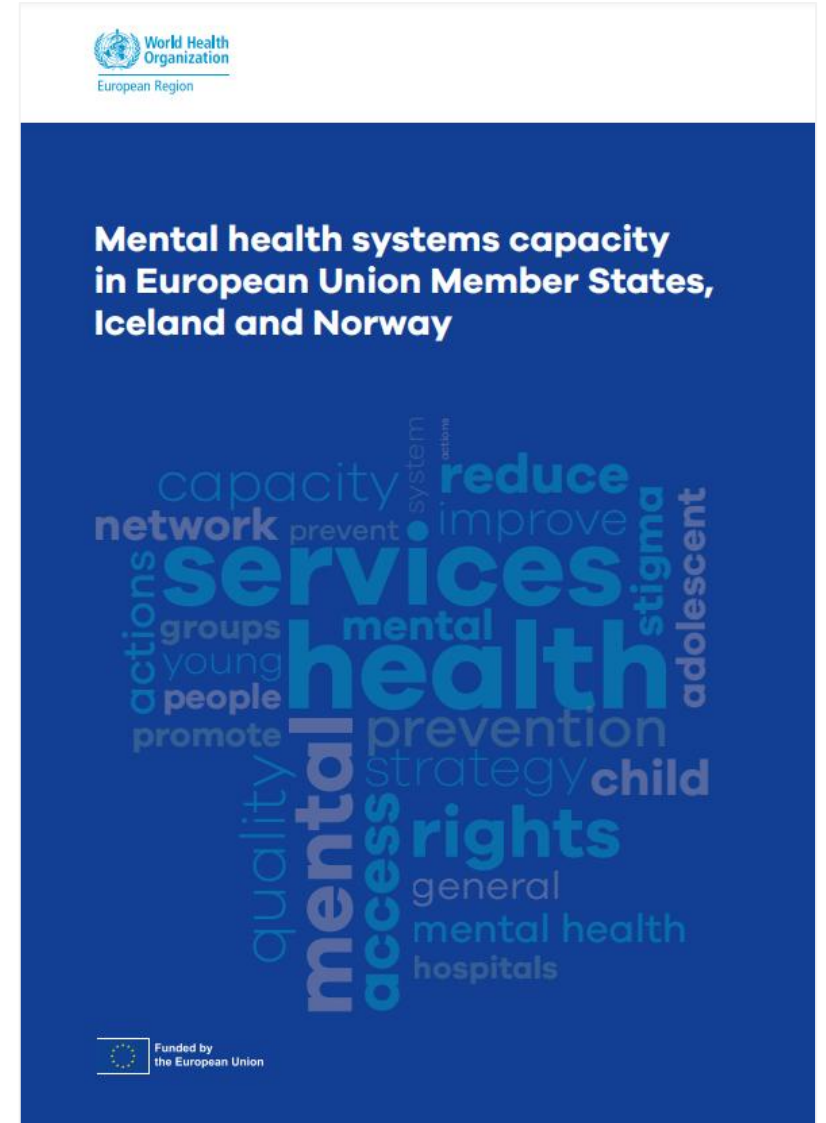
Mental health services

Only 6 countries have enabled mental health prevention, promotion and treatment of mental health conditions in **primary health care**.

11 countries deliver specialized mental health services at the **community level**.

7 countries are **transitioning from institutional** to community care.

15 countries deliver **acute psychiatric care in general hospitals.**



*Publication from 29 EU countries,

Mental Health of Nurses and Doctors
survey in the European Union, Iceland
and Norway

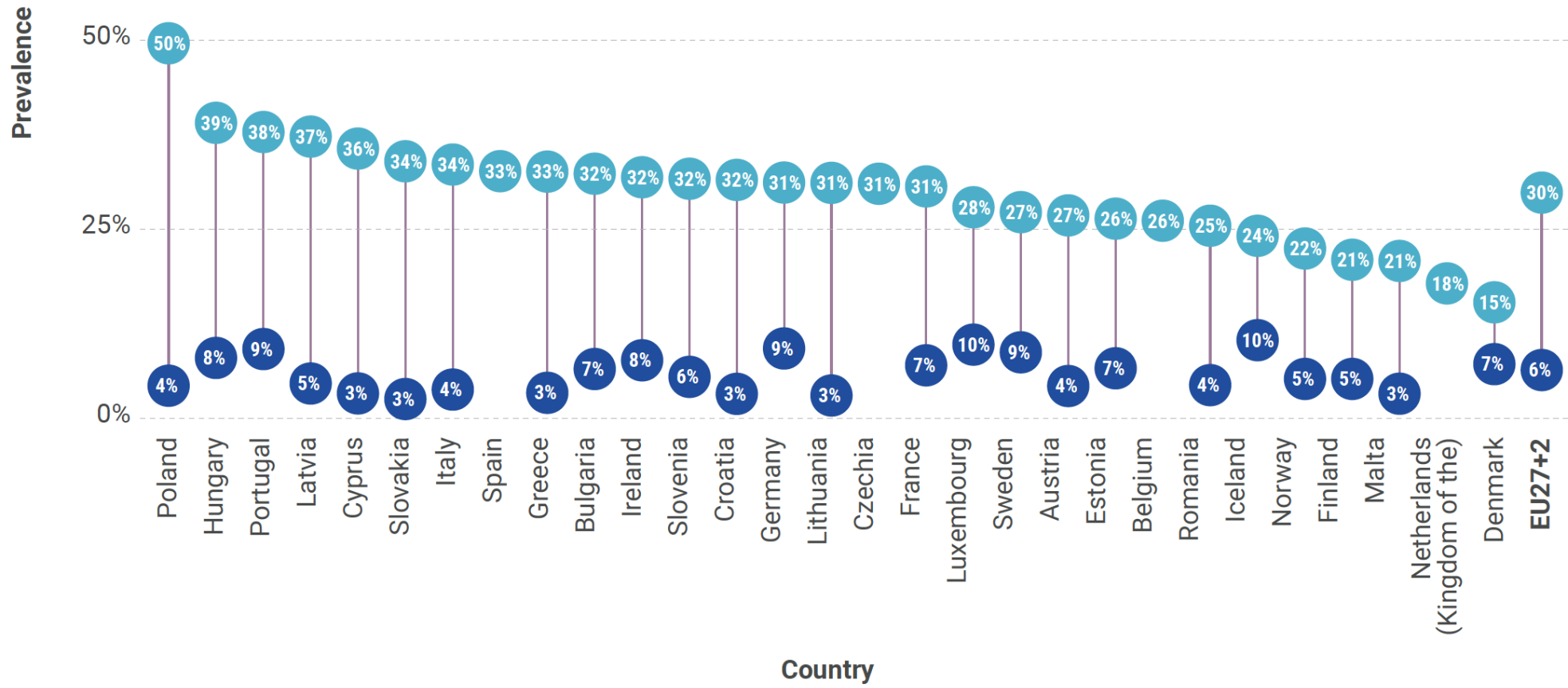
MOND

DOWNLOAD

SCAN NOW

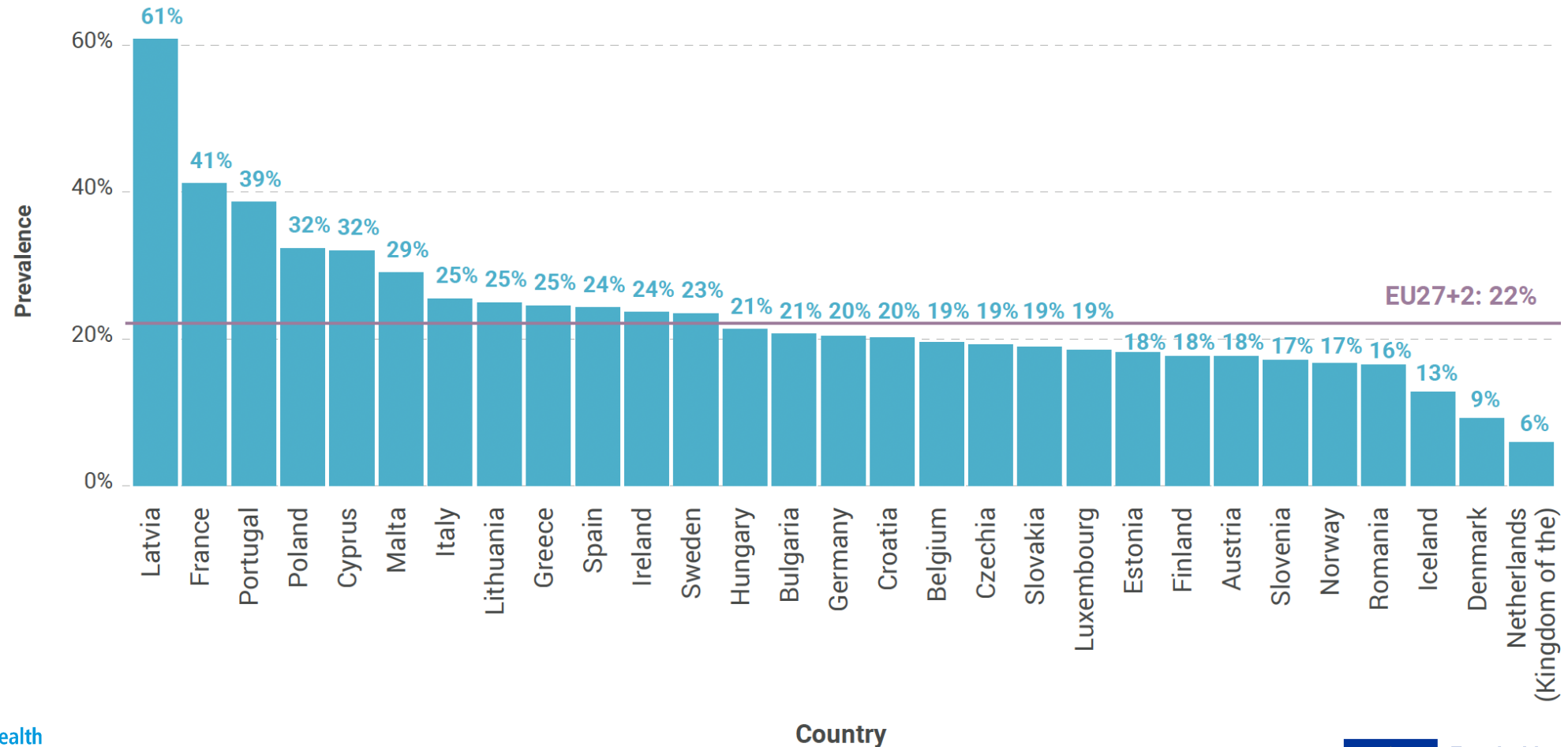


1 in 3 doctors and nurses report symptoms of depression



Population ● General Population ● WHO survey

1 in 4 doctors and nurses report symptoms of anxiety

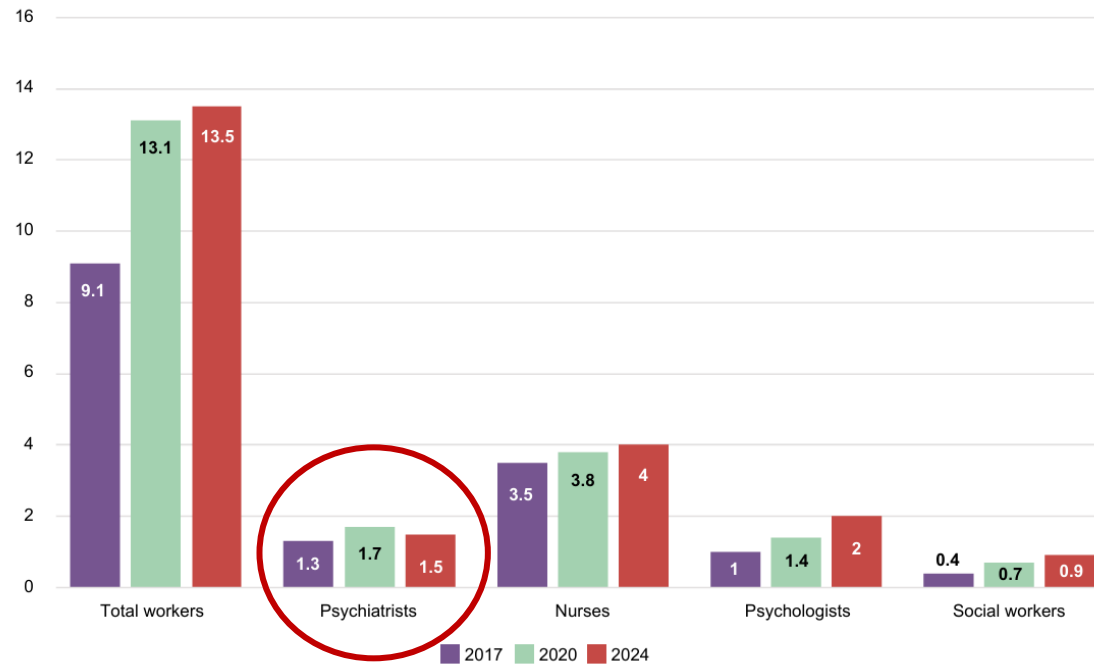


A close-up photograph of a healthcare worker wearing dark blue scrubs and light blue nitrile gloves. The worker's hands are visible, gently holding a patient's arm. The background is softly blurred, showing a clinical setting.

Over 10% of doctors and nurses report thoughts of ending their life or harming themselves

Can our mental health systems cope with the needs?

Figure 26. Mental health workforce, 2017–2024 (median number per 100 000 population)



Mental health atlas 2024. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2025

Can our mental health systems cope with the needs?

Figure 26. Mental health workforce, 2017–2024 (median number per 100 000 population)

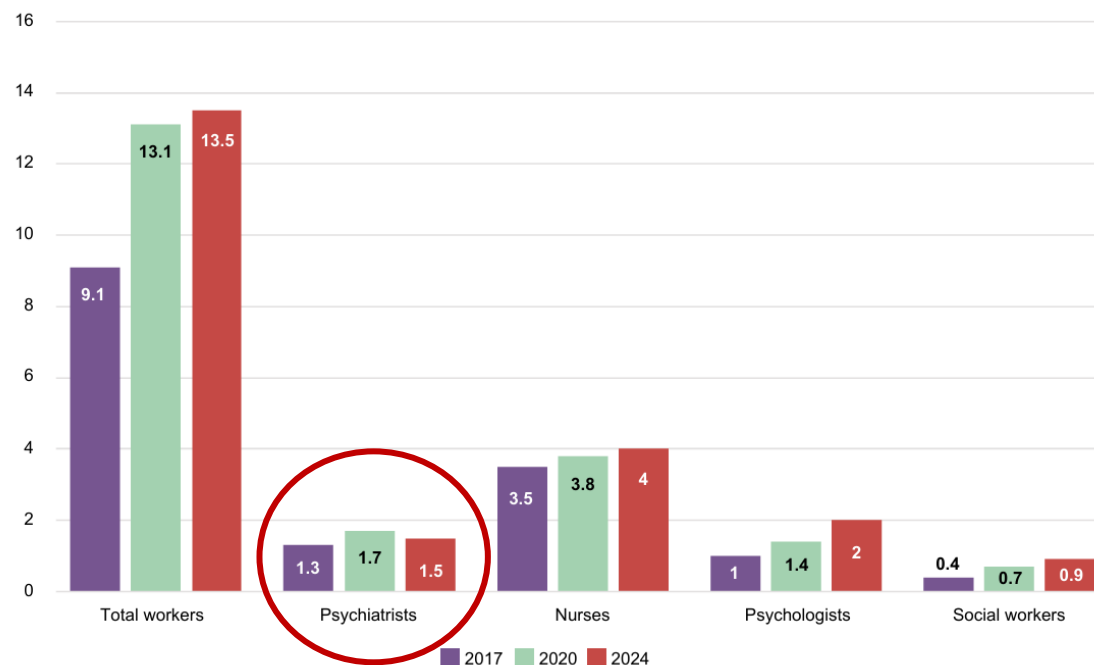


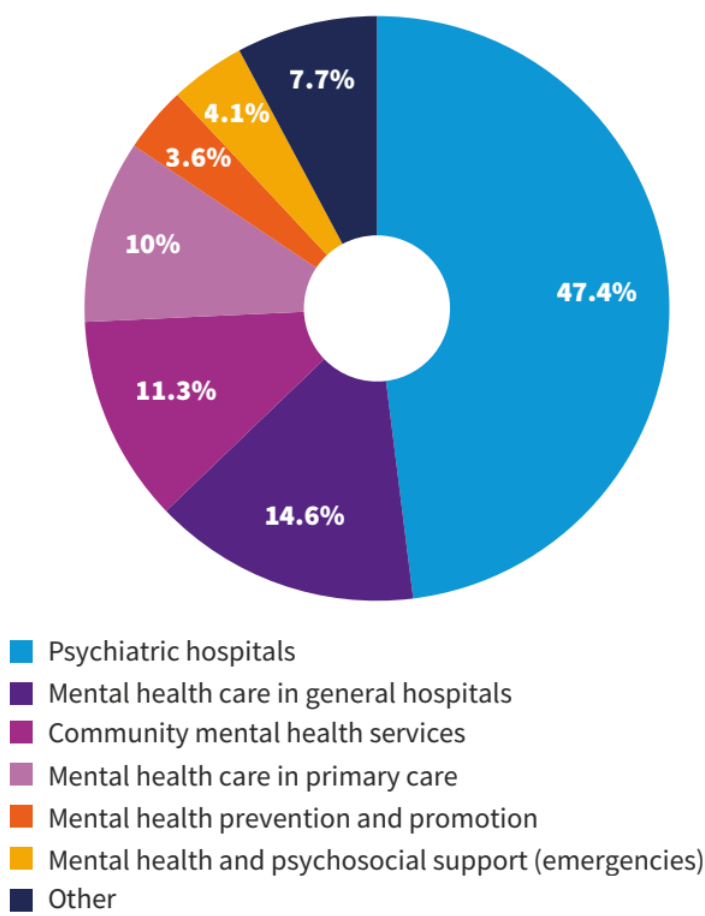
Table 20. Numbers of mental health workers globally, by occupational category, World Bank income group and WHO region (median per 100 000 population)

	Psychiatrists	Mental health nurses	Psychologists	Social workers	Occupational therapists	Other specialized mental health workers	Peer-support workers
Globally (n=132)	1.5	4.1	2.0	0.9	0.2	0.8	0.0
By World Bank income group							
LIC (n=18)	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0
LMIC (n=35)	0.3	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.0
UMIC (n=38)	1.7	5.4	4.0	1.2	0.4	1.5	0.0
HIC (n=41)	7.0	27.0	9.0	4.1	2.8	2.7	0.0
By WHO region							
AFR (n=33)	0.1	0.6	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0
AMR (n=28)	1.7	3.6	6.4	1.7	0.2	1.5	0.0
SEAR (n=7)	0.5	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.2	2.6
EUR (n=27)	9.9	28.4	9.3	3.6	4.4	1.9	0.4
EMR (n=19)	1.3	3.2	1.0	0.4	0.1	0.2	0.1
WPR (n=18)	2.2	12.9	0.4	0.2	0.0	1.9	0.0

Mental health atlas 2024. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2025

Mental health resources

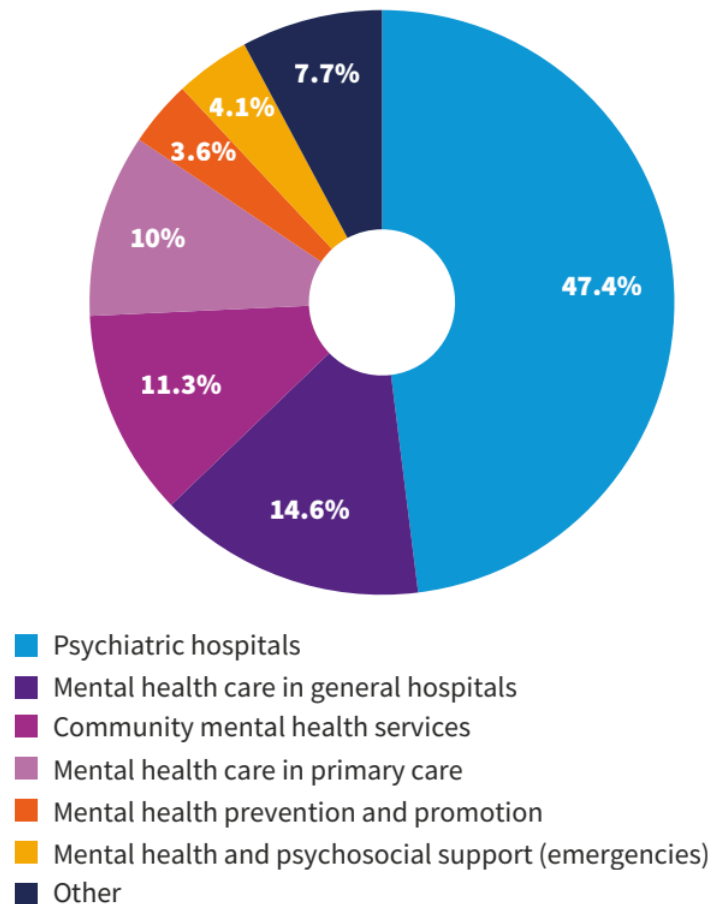
Average government spending on mental health (2024)



Source: WHO, 2025 (2).

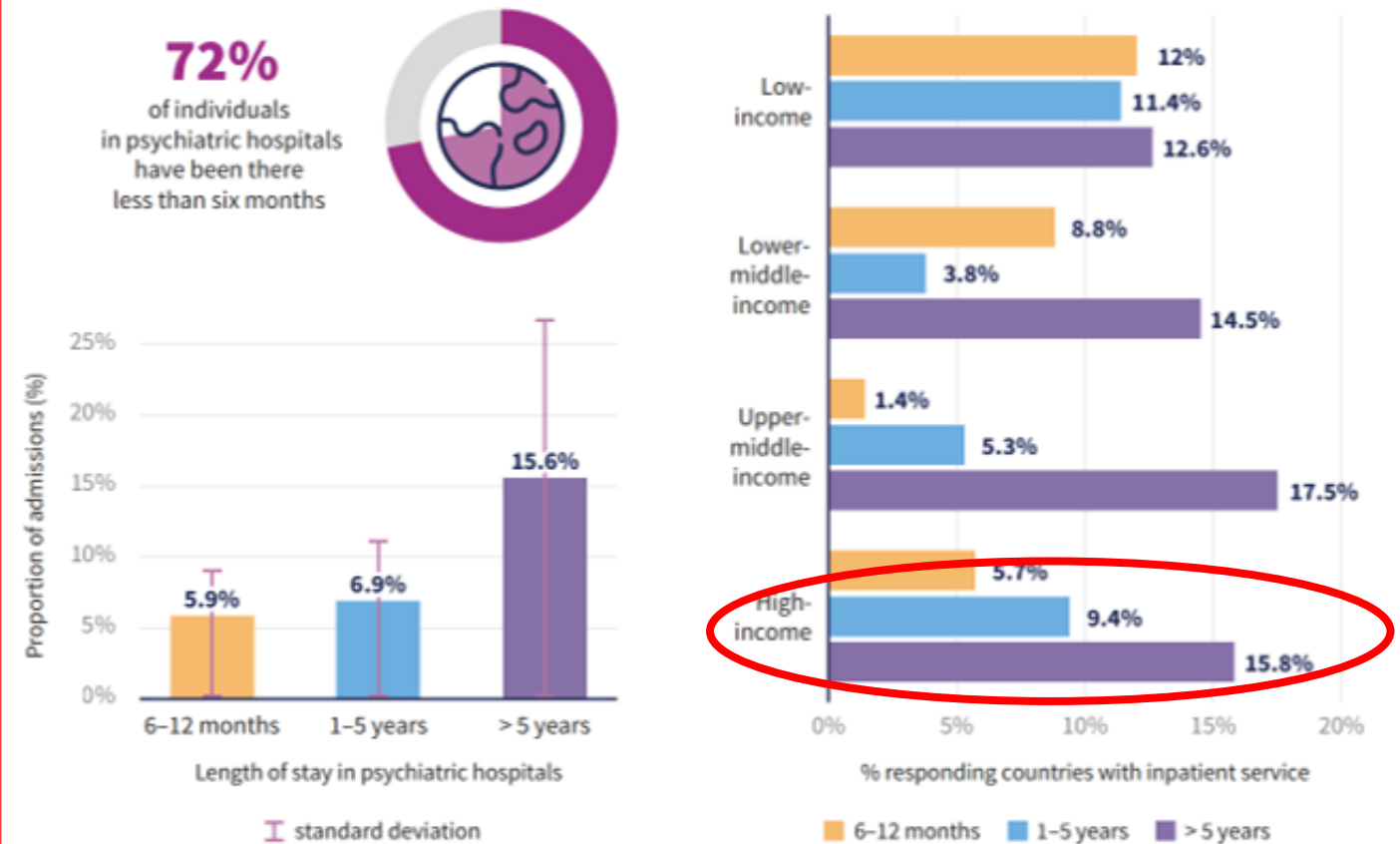
Mental health resources

Average government spending on mental health (2024)



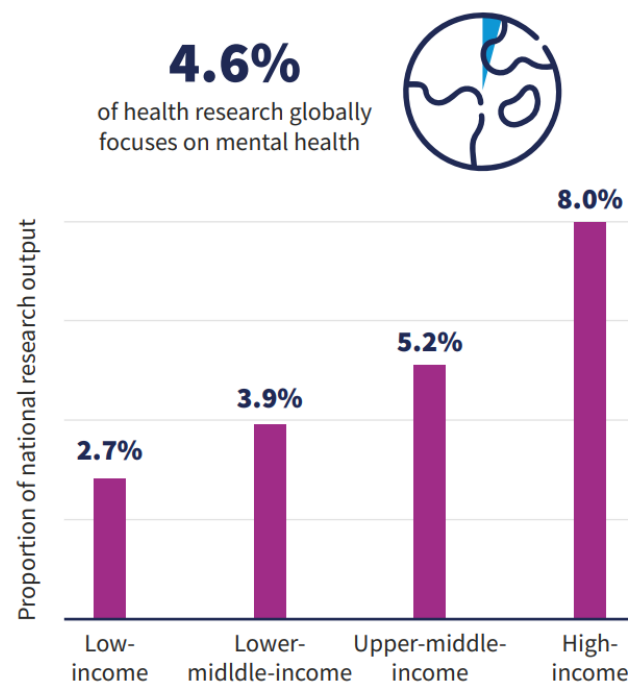
Source: WHO, 2025 (2).

Long stays in psychiatric hospitals (2024)



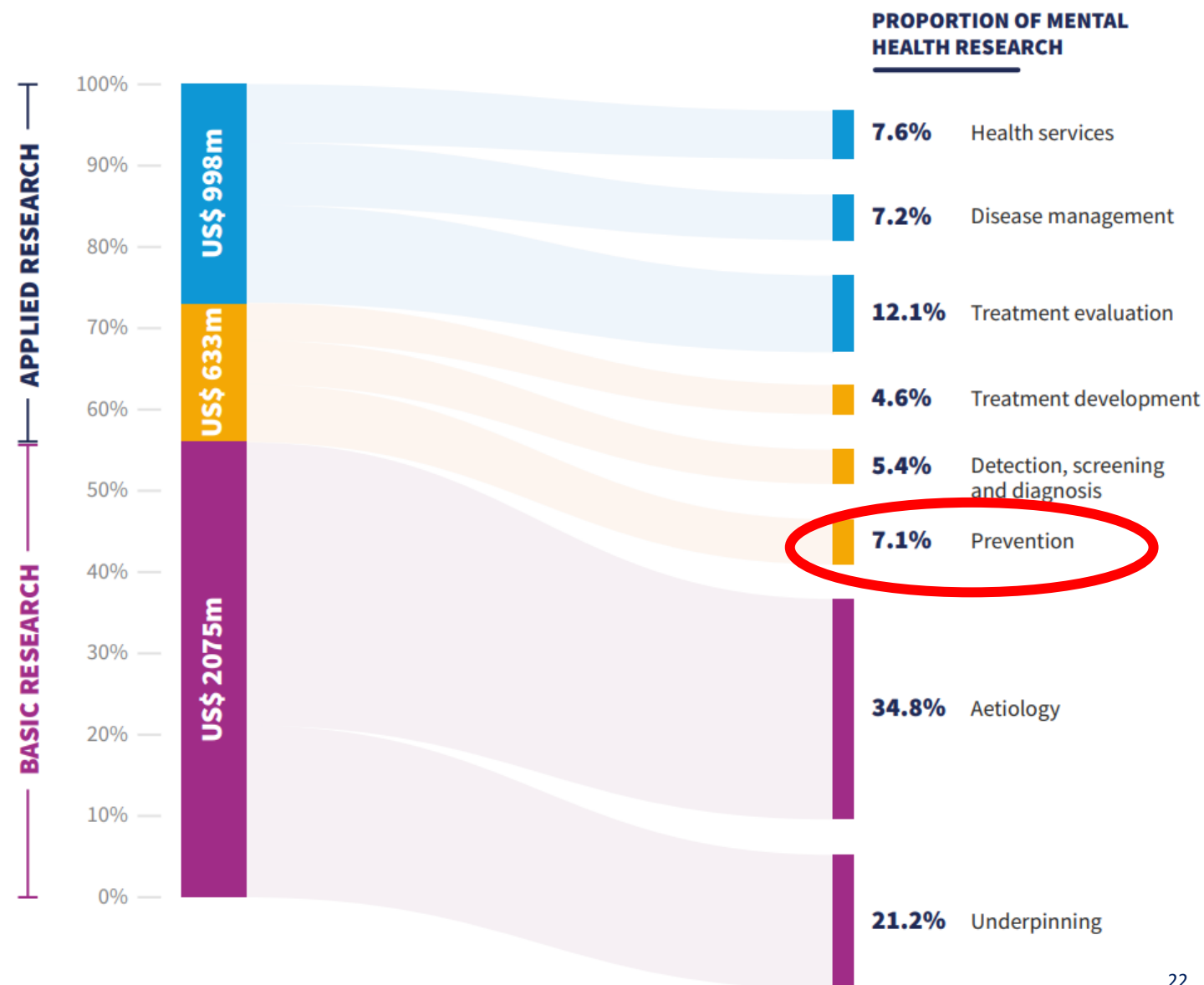
And, what are we trying to find out?

Proportion of national health research focused on mental health across income group



Source: WHO, 2021 (61).

More than half of mental health research is focused on the basic end of the spectrum



Source: Woelbert et al, 2020 (63).

Stigma & discrimination in mental health:

A major barrier to advance policies, transform services, maximize investments

Most people living with a mental health condition consider the stigma associated with it to be **worse than the condition itself** - *The Lancet Commission 2022*



Globally...

People with severe mental health conditions die

10 to 20 years

earlier than the general population.

With the current level of resources & current status of services

MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEMS NEED TO INNOVATE



Low levels of mental health literacy

Frontline workers have limited knowledge about youth mental health or service pathways



Poor supply of accessible and acceptable services

Lack of specialists
Services are high cost, far away, or open at inconvenient times



Lack of inclusive services

Services exclude people without diagnoses, and neurodevelopmental conditions or disabilities



Stigma and discrimination

Stigma deters young people and families from seeking help



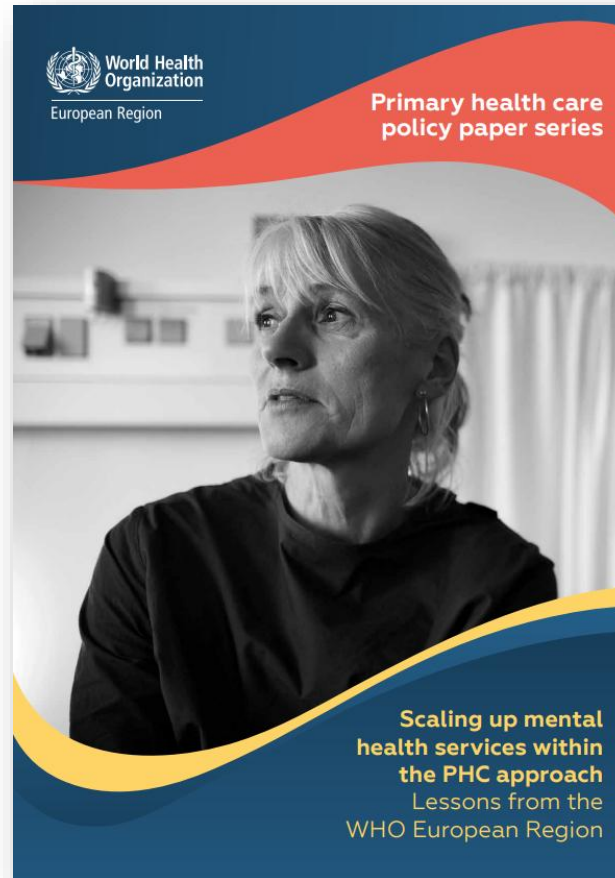
Poor coordination of services

Lack of coordination between services at transition points and between system

Scale up mental health services at the primary health care

"We are convinced that strengthening primary health care (PHC) is the most inclusive, effective and efficient approach to enhance people's physical and mental health, as well as social well-being..."

Astana Declaration on PHC, 2018



Promoting well-being for all through public mental health



EUPHA
EUROPEAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

World Health Organization
European Region

PUBLIC HEALTH PROFESSIONALS
APPLY NOW

An accredited programme to **strengthen mental health promotion and prevention**

→

Funded by the European Union



Shift to **low threshold, accessible early interventions** for children and young people

There is no single best model for organizing mental health services for children and young people that applies to all contexts.



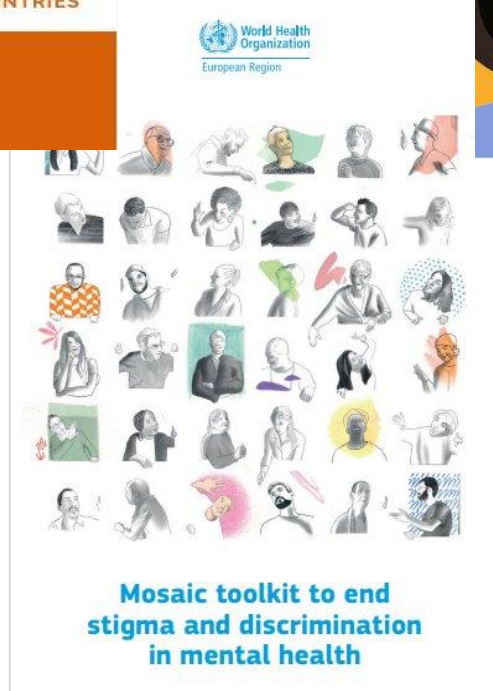
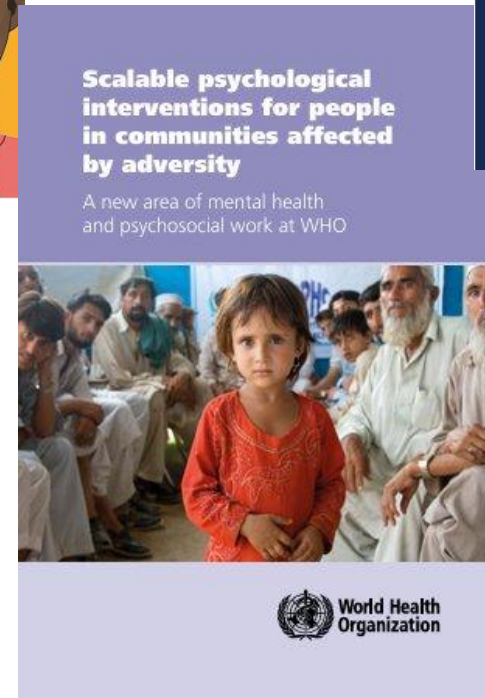
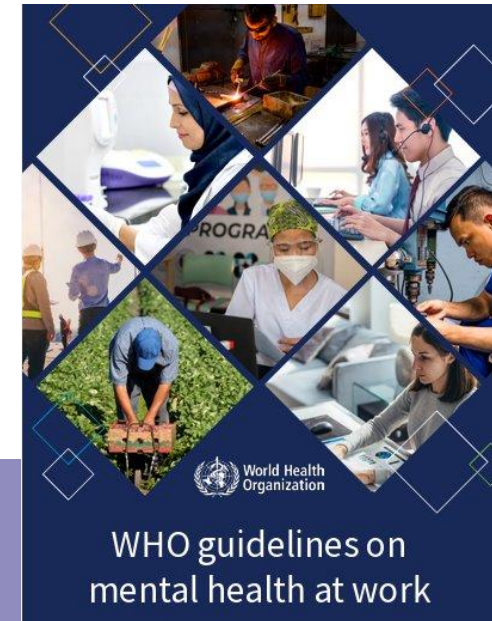
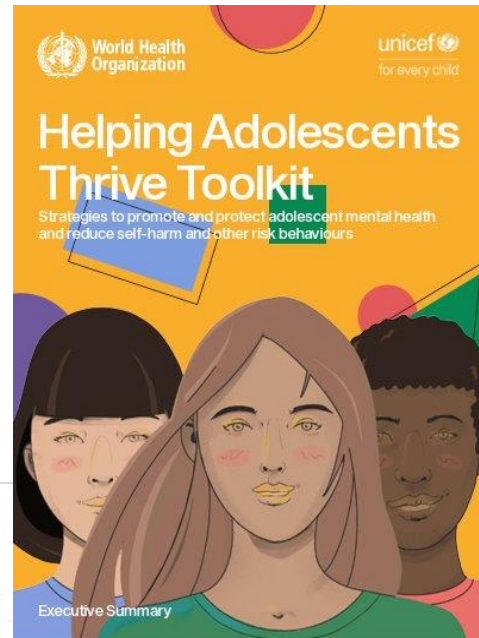
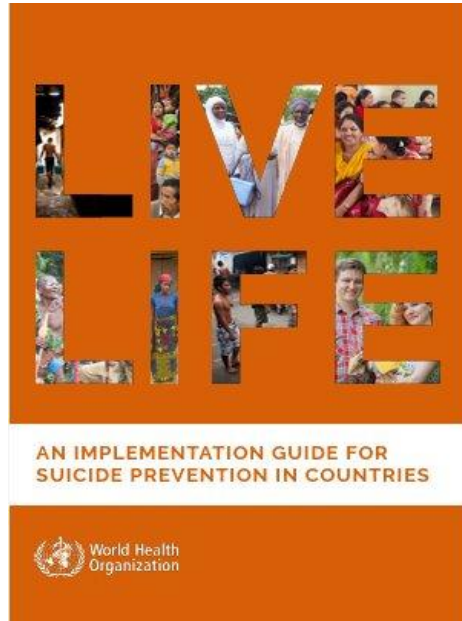
Address the **digital determinants** of youth mental health

8 priorities for policy action

- Drawing on an evidence review, policy mapping and expert consultations
- Addressing **health ministries and public health agencies**, acknowledging need for **multisectoral action**

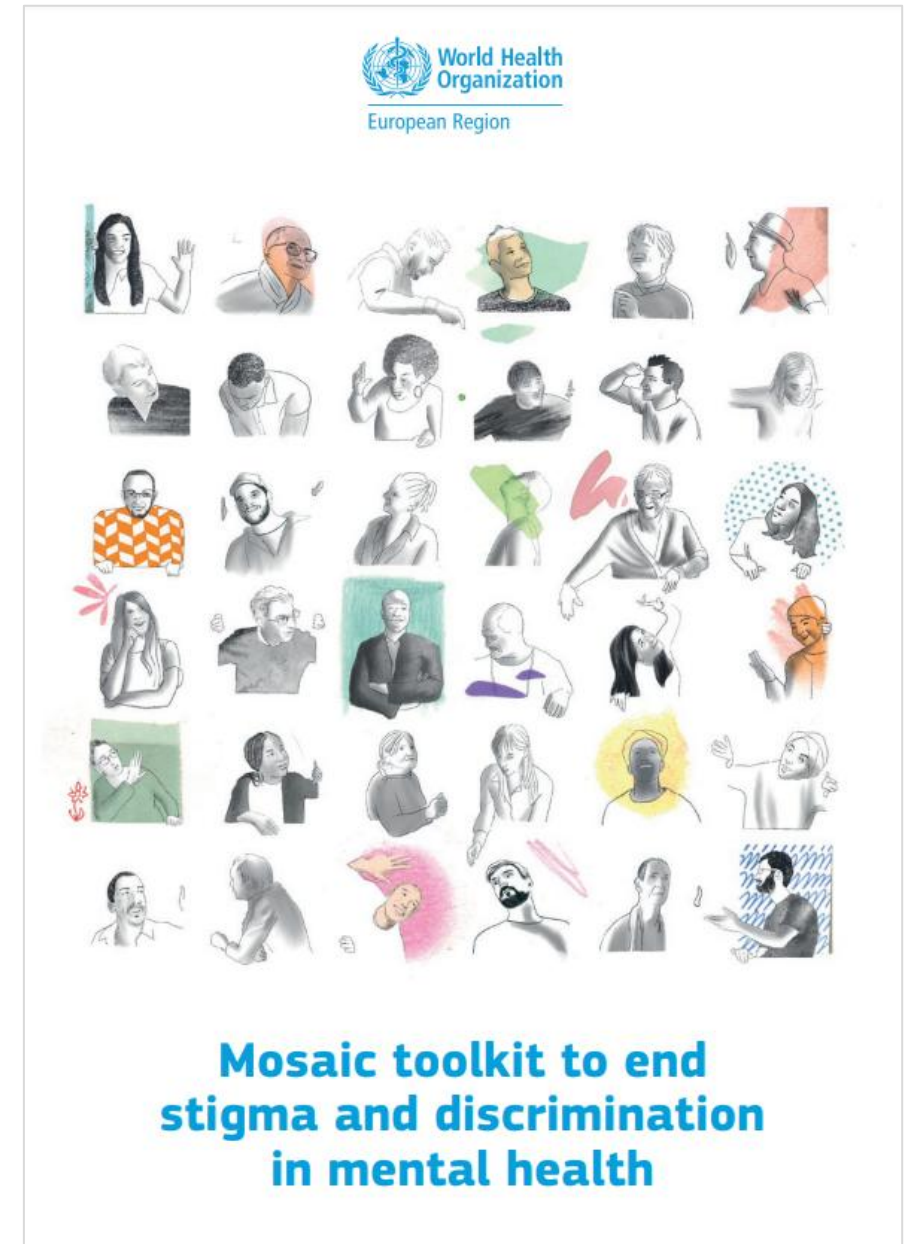


Scalable interventions



Reduce stigma & discrimination in mental health

Most people living with a mental health condition consider the stigma associated with it to be **worse than the condition itself** - *The Lancet Commission*



Co-create with persons with lived and living experience



Mainstream mental health in all policies.



Mental health is a responsibility for the whole of society

- ✓ Align **funding** streams
- ✓ Foster social **connections**
- ✓ **Engage** schools, higher education, research institutions, prisons, workplaces, media, non governmental organizations, agricultural/farming, and health and social care
- ✓ Involve, through **co-creation**, people with lived experience
- ✓ **Reshape** community environments
- ✓ Ensure **equitable access** to community-based services
- ✓ Ensure **safe online spaces** and digital resources
- ✓ Facilitate **access to social rights** for people living with mental health conditions,
- ✓ Ensure **adherence** to the UNCRPD and UN Charter on the Rights of the Child

 World Health Organization
European Region

 MINISTÈRE
CHARGÉ DE LA SANTÉ
ET DE L'ACCÈS AUX SOINS
*Liberté
Égalité
Fraternité*

Outcome statement of the regional high-level conference on mental health in all policies: address challenges and design shared solutions

16-17 June 2025
Paris, France



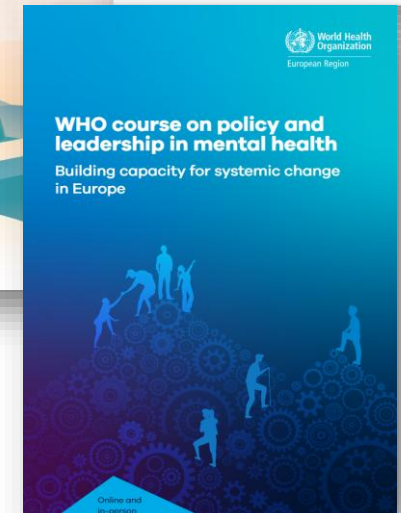
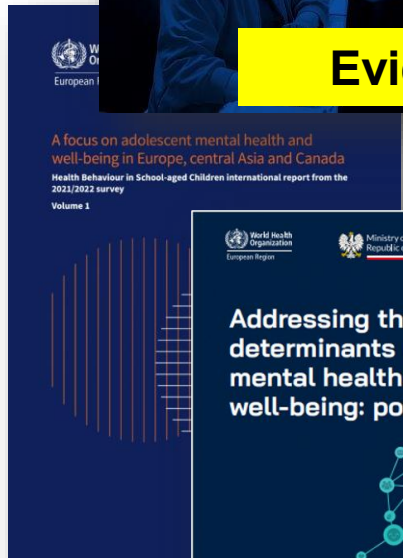
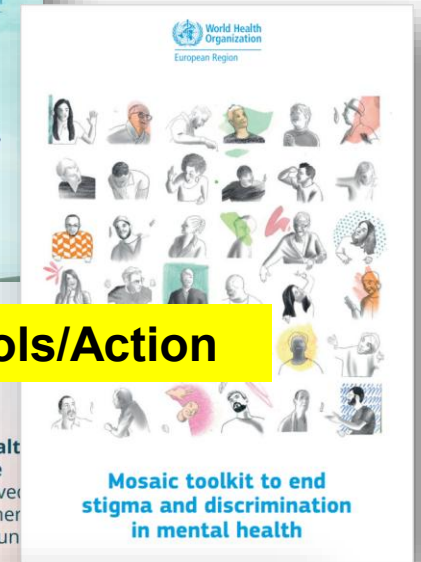
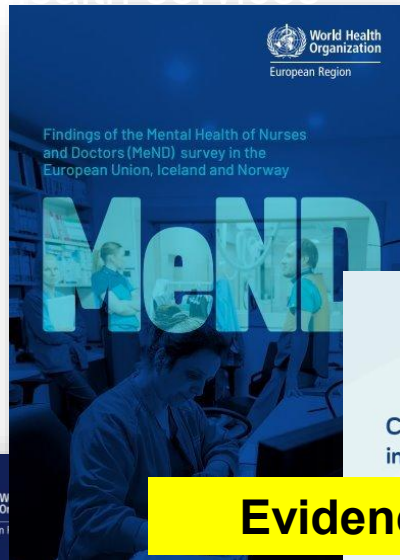
36  Confunded by the European Union

Supporting countries in using evidence for policy-making and for taking action to transform mental

Evidence

Policies

Tools/Action



Thank you!

Dr Ledia Lazëri

lazeril@who.int



European Region

