

The Impact of mental disorders on the general population and the healthcare system in Germany

1. Introduction

Mental health conditions are a significant public health concern in Germany, affecting millions of people across all age groups. These conditions not only impact the individuals themselves but also place a substantial burden on the German healthcare system and the national economy. Despite growing awareness, many mental health disorders remain underdiagnosed or untreated, leading to even higher actual prevalence rates and serious consequences for the society.

2. Definition of mental disorders

A mental disorder is defined as a syndrome characterized by clinically significant disturbances in thinking, emotional regulation, or behavior. These disturbances reflect underlying psychological, biological, or development processes and cause significant distress or impairment in key areas of life, such as social interactions, work and education.

3. Impact on the German population

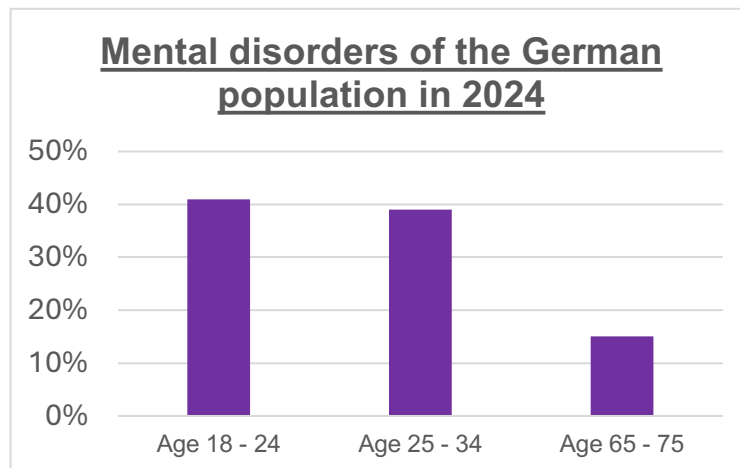
In Germany, mental disorders are widespread: 27.8% of adults are affected by a mental health condition each year, which correspond to 17.8 million people. Mental disorders are among the four leading causes of lost healthy life years, with a particularly high burden due to anxiety and affective disorders. Tragically, individuals with mental disorders have a life expectancy around 10 years shorter than the general population.

The most common mental disorders in Germany are:

- Anxiety disorders (15.4%)
- Affective disorders (9.8%)
- Substance related disorders (5.7%)

Age differences in prevalence

The fourth AXA Mental Health Report, published in 2024, conducted a representative survey of individuals aged 18 and over. This survey was carried out in Germany as well as in 15 other countries and focused on the mental health of the population.



4. Impact on the German healthcare system

Inpatient care

- 57,011 psychiatric beds in 403 hospitals in 2022
- 46,000 inpatient cases in 2022
- Average stay: 24 days

Outpatient care

- 2.3 million insured patients treated each quarter
- 3,438 specialized psychiatrists and neurologists in outpatient practices
- 500 psychiatric outpatient clinics ~2 million annual cases
- 1.76 million insured patients treated by outpatient psychotherapists each quarter

Health economics

- €56.4 billion direct costs of mental illnesses in 2022
- Significant increase from €42.7 billion in 2015
- 14.6% of all sick leave days in 2022 caused by mental illnesses
- 42% of early retirements in 2023 due to mental illnesses
- €147 billion total annual costs (direct, indirect, social costs)

5. Current strategies in Germany

Mental health
awareness

Mental health
surveillance

Mental health
alliance

6. Important vocabulary

English word	Translation
Awareness	Bewusstsein/Aufmerksamkeit
Disturbance	Störung/Beeinträchtigung
Inpatient	Stationäre Versorgung
Outpatient	Ambulante Versorgung
Prevalence	Prävalenz
Surveillance	Überwachung/Beobachtung

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