

Diverse Needs: People who live with disability and mental illness

Around 5.5 million Australians have a disability, with physical, mental and behavioural conditions. Disability becomes more common with age, where half of those over 65 years have a disability and 5% have dementia. About 4 million people experience mental illness and 9% are over 65 years of age.

Experience of disadvantage

Older people with disabilities or mental illness can face daily struggles. Many experience pain, distress and isolation. Those with disabilities and mental illness often have lower education and fewer job opportunities, leading to financial hardship.

Complex overlaps

Older people with mental illness may develop other physical conditions like stroke or heart disease. Those with disabilities face mental health concerns and financial and social barriers. Both groups may experience homelessness. Some carry war trauma or childhood adversity. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders often live with disabilities due to chronic illness or accidents.

The impact on end-of-life care

People with disabilities and mental illness may struggle to access aged care or end-of-life support. Some delay seeking help to avoid stigma and loss of independence. Working with services that understand their needs can improve access to flexible care.

Find out more about this from the [National Disability Services](#).

Practical information from [CareSearch](#) here.

