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mentalhealthonline

Annual Report 2024

Directors' year in review

2024 has been a momentous year for MHO with two significant achievements. The first is that we became one of the first digital mental health services to achieve accreditation with the National Safety and Quality Digital Mental Health Standards. MHO received accreditation against all standards with no recommended actions, a testament to the extensive work conducted by the MHO team to put in place processes that ensure safe and high quality digital mental health provision.

The second key achievement has been the full transition of programs onto our new software platform, providing an improved user journey, easier navigation, and a more engaging user experience.

Completing these major pieces of work now enables us to focus our energies on updating and expanding program content. We look forward to continuing our delivery of comprehensive specialist programs for the most common anxiety disorders and depression, while building in further enhancements and developing specialist programs for new populations.

Prof Neil Thomas

Director, National eTherapy Centre



About Mental Health Online

Our evolution

For 17 years, Mental Health Online (MHO) has remained dedicated to providing Australians with evidence-based, and effective digital mental health support, whenever and wherever they need it.

Originally launched in 2008 as Anxiety Online, our platform was one of the first in the world to offer online therapy. Since then, we have continually evolved to meet the changing needs of our community. Today, as Mental Health Online, we provide a comprehensive suite of self-guided and therapist-supported programs, helping individuals and healthcare professionals manage mental health conditions.

As part of the National eTherapy Centre at Swinburne University of Technology, MHO has led innovation in digital mental health. We've introduced virtual reality therapy, developed the ePASS self-assessment tool, expanded our Therapist Assist model, and contributed to the training of future psychologists through postgraduate programs and clinical research.

Recent years have focused on deepening our commitment to quality, safety, and accessibility. In 2023, we launched a redesigned website that was co-created with our users using a human-centred design approach, with the aim of making it more effective and user-friendly for both individuals and professionals. In 2024, we proudly achieved the status of Accredited for Compliance with the National Safety and Quality Digital Mental Health (NSQDMH) Standards and convened our Consumer Advisory Group, further embedding consumer voices into our service delivery.

As we look ahead to 2025 and beyond, we remain focused on innovation, accessibility, and excellence in digital mental health care.

Evidence-based programs for Australia's most common mental health conditions

Our programs are specifically developed to address Australia's most prevalent mental health conditions, ensuring we deliver meaningful support to the greatest number of Australians.

Through a combination of evidence-based programs, therapist support, and comprehensive educational resources, we empower individuals to better understand and enhance their wellbeing.



1. Self-guided treatment programs

Evidence-based treatment programs designed to help with symptoms associated with:



Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD)

Affecting **3.8%** of Australians



Panic Disorder & Agoraphobia

Impacting **3.7%** and **4.5%** of the population respectively



Social Anxiety Disorder

Experienced by **7.3%** of adults

Depression
– with two dedicated programs addressing this condition

Affects **5.3%** of Australians



Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Impacting **5.6%** of adults

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

Affecting **3.6%** of adults



Mixed Anxiety-Depressive Disorder

Estimated to affect up to **8.8%** of adults

2. ePASS self-assessment

ePASS helps users understand their mental health through a personalised, evidence-based self-assessment. ePASS builds confidence by offering clear feedback and guiding users to the most relevant programs, helping them make informed decisions about their next steps toward support.

3. Therapist assist (TA)

TA combines self-guided programs with free, personalised support from an MHO therapist. Users choose how they connect; via video, email, or live chat, making expert guidance more accessible and tailored to individual needs.

4. Educational resources

Our growing library of trusted, evidence-based resources supports individuals and healthcare professionals with reliable information and practical strategies to improve mental health literacy and enhance engagement with our programs.



2024 Fast Facts


In 2024, Mental Health Online (MHO) continued to connect Australians to free, evidence-based digital mental health care.

Throughout 2024, we welcomed  **76,445** Website Visitors  **6%** increase from the previous year

Of those,  **7,714**  took the next step by creating an account, becoming registered users

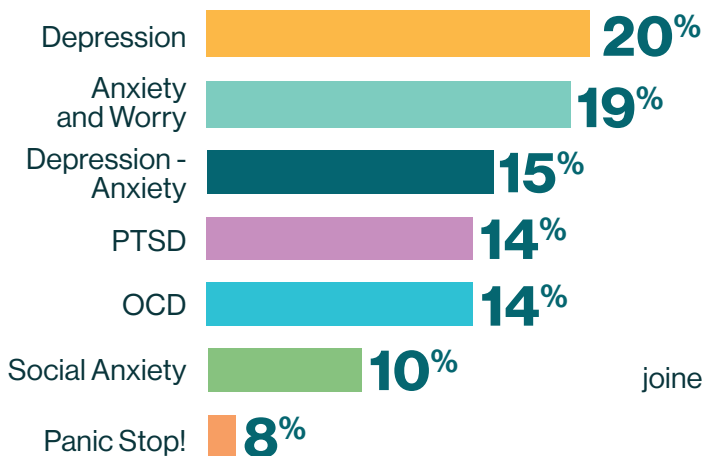
Once registered, users had access to our mental health resources and engaged in the following ways:

Therapist Assist registrations  **370** Users signed to a TA  **43%** increase from 2023

Self-guided program registrations  **4,858** users who created an account in 2024 signed up for at least one self-guided mental health program


Across both new and existing users, there were a total of  **5,837** program registrations in 2024


2024 total self-guided program registrations breakdown



 **2,658** individuals completed the ePASS self-assessment.

Healthcare professionals registrations more than doubled, increasing  **108%** to 490 registrations

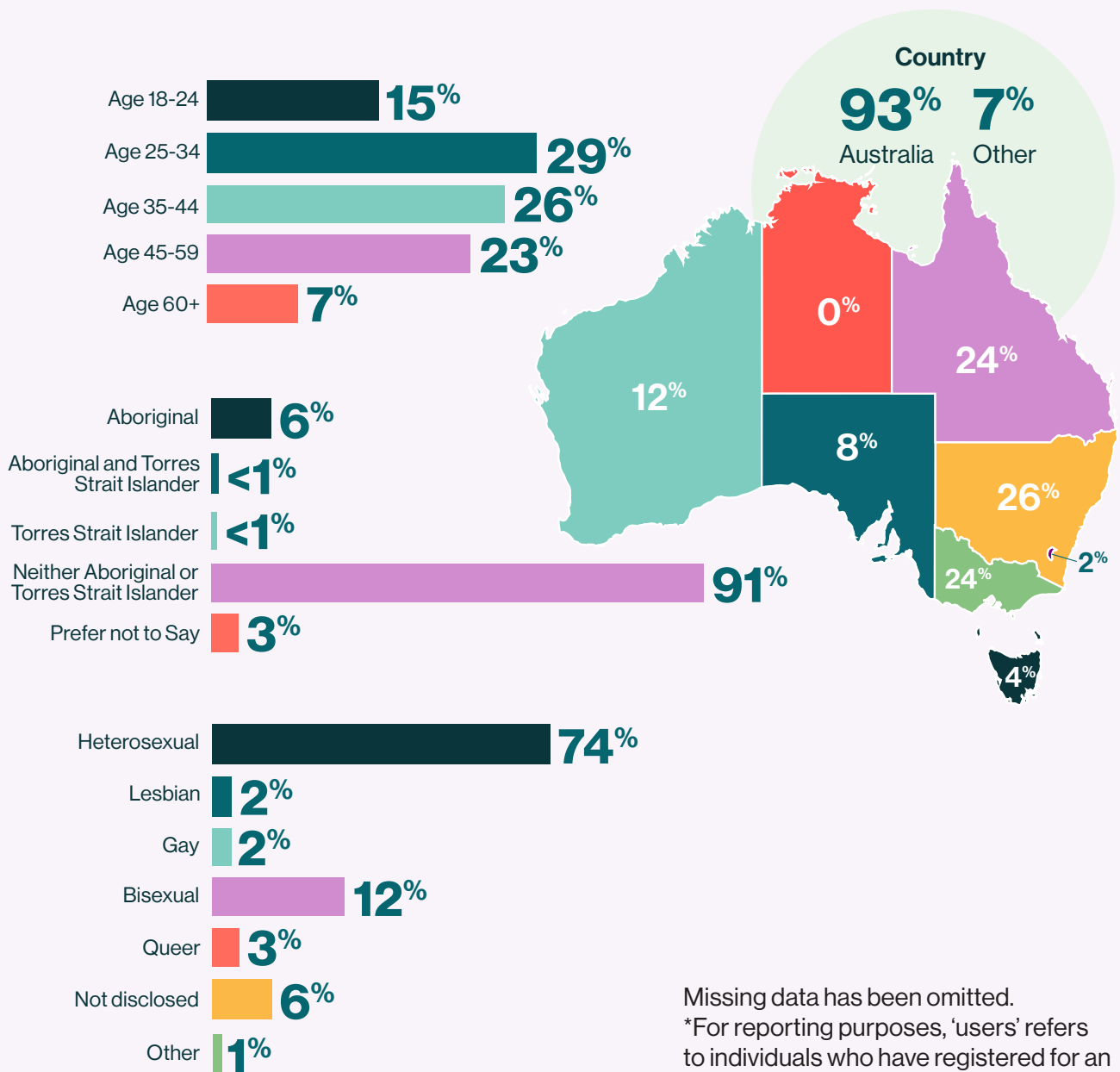
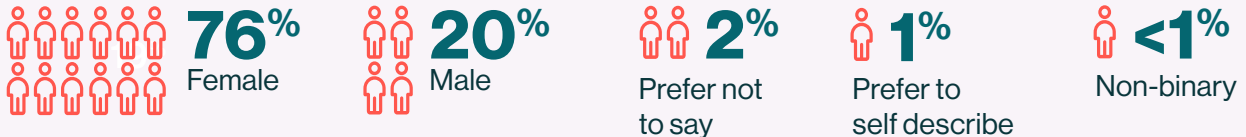
22 postgraduate students joined MHO through counselling and psychology placements  **8%**  increase from 2023

Although Panic Stop! made up only 8% of total program registrations in 2024, it experienced the highest program growth in user registrations, increasing by an impressive  **65%** from **171** registrations in 2023 to **485** in 2024.

Who's Using Mental Health Online?

Mental Health Online (MHO) is available to anyone in Australia, aged 18 and over.

Demographics - Users*



Missing data has been omitted.
*For reporting purposes, 'users' refers to individuals who have registered for an account on the MHO website.

Who's Using Mental Health Online?

Mental health support for adults at every stage of life

While the 25–34 age group remained our largest user segment in 2024, accounting for 29% of total users, we also saw a marked rise in registrations from older Australians.

The proportion of users aged 45–59 grew from 13% in 2023 to 23% in 2024, and registrations from those aged 60 and over more than doubled from 3% to 7%. This growth suggests that MHO is increasingly resonating with older adults, reflecting a positive shift in engagement within this demographic.

Filling critical service gaps

Among reported data, Tasmania has the highest rate of users per capita, with 20 users per 100,000 residents, followed by the Australian Capital Territory (13.7) and Queensland (13.5). This could suggest that MHO may be filling critical service gaps in regions with limited access to in-person mental health services, particularly in more rural or regional areas like Tasmania.

* Population figures are based on ABS estimates as of June 2024.

** When interpreting user distribution across regions, it is important to note that 56% of Mental Health Online users (4,548 users) did not disclose their location, which significantly impacts overall analysis.



Delivering quality care

In March 2024, Mental Health Online (MHO) achieved full accreditation under the National Safety and Quality Digital Mental Health Standards (NSQDMH), placing us among a select group of accredited digital mental health services in Australia.

Our 2024 performance against safety and quality benchmarks:

Partnering with consumers

- Feedback resolved: $\geq 80\%$ benchmark met.
- Complaints: $\geq 80\%$ benchmark met*.
- Client collaboration in care decisions: $\geq 80\%$ benchmark met.
- Consideration of individual priorities and needs: $\geq 80\%$ benchmark met.

Program effectiveness

- Modules easy to understand: $\geq 80\%$ benchmark met.
- Positive mental health changes: $\geq 80\%$ benchmark met.

Compliance

- Risks responded to within 1 business day: 100%.
- Health Records Policy compliance: $\geq 80\%$ benchmark *not* met, reflecting complex auditing metrics and prompting revision of processes for the subsequent audit.

Therapist placement experience

- Adequacy of supervision: $\geq 80\%$ benchmark met.
- Recommendation of MHO placement to peers: $\geq 80\%$ benchmark *not* met resulting from $n=1$ response.

Additional safety & quality achievements

- Underwent and passed extensive security testing and privacy impact assessments following the 2023 website relaunch, including penetration testing and internal IT reviews.

* Zero complaints received.



Performance

In 2024, Mental Health Online (MHO) continued to meet key performance indicators set by the Department of Health:

- 1** Create and deliver evidence-based online mental health content aligned to improving mental health outcomes.
- 2** Deliver free online mental health assessment and referral information.
- 3** Deliver free immediate access to evidence-based and expert reviewed treatment programs for high prevalence mental health disorders.
- 4** Deliver free to healthcare professionals and mental health service delivery organisations progressive, accessible, and best practice assessment and treatment resources for adaptation and use within their existing models of service/care.
- 5** Deliver free healthcare practitioner portal access to evidence-based treatment programs enabling them to integrate e-mental health into their professional practice.
- 6** Deliver free online therapy training programs for post-graduate students and their supervisors.
- 7** Promote service delivery growth through community engagement and social marketing.
- 8** Increase brand awareness and brand strength.

Research

Driving the future of digital mental health innovation, research has always been central to Mental Health Online (MHO), ensuring our interventions are safe, effective, and evidence based.

2024 Research highlights

- Therapist Assist users continue to report significant, large improvements in psychological distress after completing their program, with the majority reporting moving to a lower severity range.
- Progressed the ACTION trial, refining insights into behavioural activation for depression.
- Advanced international collaborations through the Australia-Germany Joint Research Cooperation Scheme, strengthening global digital mental health research.
- Hosted student-led research projects on Ecological Momentary Assessment (EMA) and Therapist Assist evaluation, fostering the next generation of researchers.
- Our work on mindfulness skills in virtual reality was featured in a publication in *Journal of Medical Internet Research*.

Projects

Consumer Advisory Group

Consumer voices play a vital role in shaping the evolution of MHO. In 2024, we were proud to hold the inaugural meeting of our Consumer Advisory Group, bringing together consumers and carers to help guide the future of our programs. These conversations have already highlighted valuable insights that will ensure our programs remain relevant, engaging, and responsive to the needs of the Australian community. We look forward to deepening this collaboration as the group continues to grow. We express our gratitude to members Juanita Koeijers, Dean Kiley, Karuna Santosa, Kellie Gilbert, Sapphire, Zoe Partington, and 3 anonymous members.

Expanding our program suite

We are currently developing a new evidence-based program for bipolar disorder to expand our suite of offerings. Informed by findings from our randomised controlled trial, this program will provide psychoeducation and practical tools to support people living with bipolar disorder to manage their symptoms and enhance their wellbeing. Developed with input from clinical experts and people with lived experience, the program is set to launch in 2025.

Governance

MHO governance framework continues to evolve, aligning with best practices in digital health to ensure transparency, accountability, and consumer safety. As we continue into 2025, our focus remains on strengthening governance, enhancing data security, and documenting quality assurance processes, ensuring long-term service excellence.



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