



Australian  
National  
University

# Population mental health research at the Australian National University



**Centre for Mental Health Research  
Research School of Population Health**



# History

- First research centre in social psychiatry and community mental health in Australia

# Vision

- Improve the mental health of the Australian community through collaborative research
- Leadership in excellent, innovative, population-based mental health research that is relevant to policy and practice



# Goals

- Excellence in research; relevance to the mental health sector and the broader population
- Focus on implementation and translation of research into policy and practice
- Building capacity: training future research leaders
- Incorporating lived experience perspectives
- Collaboration with the mental health sector



# CMHR Research themes

- Mental health policy
  - Translational E-mental health
  - Lived experience research
  - Mental health of students
  - Learning and Development
  - *Suicide prevention (stream)*
  - *Rural mental health (stream)*
- Visual Decision  
Analytics Lab

## Stakeholders

- Community – adults, adolescents; multiple settings (online, schools, clinical, rural, etc)
- Consumers
- Carers
- Clinicians
- Policy makers
- Researchers

## Data

Big data analysis  
Cross-sectional surveys  
Longitudinal cohorts  
Clinical trials  
Psychometric  
Qualitative  
Geospatial  
Administrative – linkage  
Economic

## Multidisciplinary approaches

Epidemiological research  
Health systems research  
Intervention research  
Implementation research

# Mental Health Systems and Policy

- Integrated Atlas of Mental Health (15 PHNs in Australia)
- Service Gap Analysis
- Technical Efficiency of Catchment Areas (LGAs-PHNs)
- Development of Decision Support Systems
- Development of relational and composite indicators
- Impact analysis
- Spatial analysis

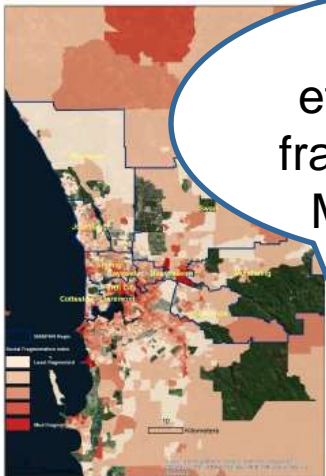


Visual and DEcision Analysis Platform

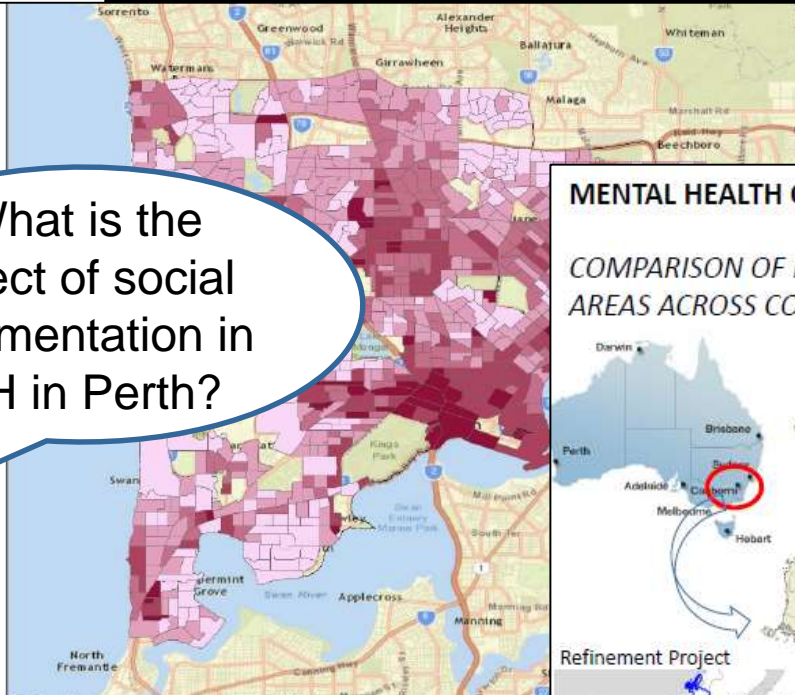
Contact: Dr Nasser Bagheri

# Visual & DEcision Analytics Lab

SF index pattern in NPHN Catchment in WA



What is the effect of social fragmentation in MH in Perth?

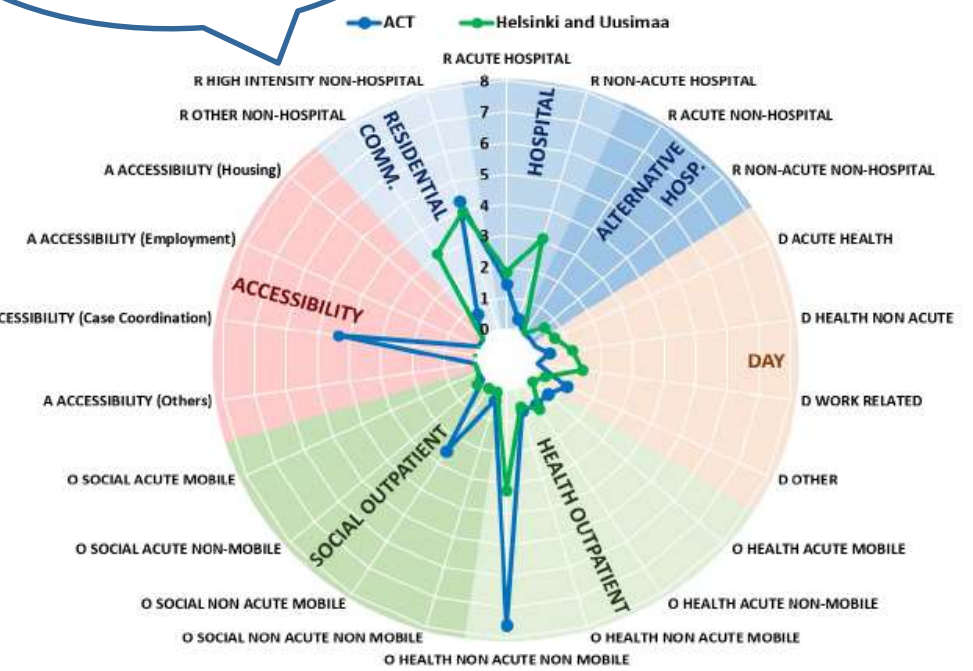


MENTAL HEALTH CARE COMPARISON OF LOCAL AREAS ACROSS COUNTRIES



How can we improve care integration in Canberra?

... for adults > 17 years with lived experience of ... between Canberra and Helsinki and Uusimaa.



New visual tools to help policy makers and planners to grasp complex questions and guide resource allocation and planning



# Translational e-mental health

- Identifying how people in the community engage with digital mental health programs
- Optimising connections between traditional clinical services and internet services
- Two major new NHMRC-funded projects:
  - EU partnership examining clinical referrals to e-health
  - Testing interventions to increase uptake





# Assessment of mental health

- Development of better screening tools for self assessment of mental health
- DQ5: a more accurate distress measure than K10
- New brief scales to accurately assess suicidality, anxiety disorders, psychosis, ADHD, PTSD in the community

# Mental health of students



- Sources of Strength evaluation
  - Social connectedness approach that utilises peer-leaders to promote adult-youth connections and positive coping
  - 16 ACT and NSW high-schools participating in an RCT
  - Assessing effects on help-seeking behaviour, adult-youth connections, social support, positive coping and suicide.



# Mental health of students

- Silence is Deadly: evaluation in collaboration with Menslink
  - Targeted to young men and utilises traditional male role models to promote help-seeking.
  - 8 ACT schools (Year 11 and 12) participating in an RCT
  - Assessing effects on help-seeking attitudes, intentions and behaviour

# Mental health of students



The Uni Virtual Clinic (UVC): A comprehensive online mental health service to prevent and treat mental health problems and related issues in university students

- Anonymous, tailored, and free to the end-user, incorporating evidence-based treatments/information, and developed using co-design methods.
- Information about help-seeking, mental health problems, and other key student-related issues, screening, and self-help tools
- Pilot trial: Developed for the ANU and is currently being trialled with ANU students ( $N = 200$ )
- Potential for UVC dissemination across Australian universities is strong

# Mental health of students





# Lived experience research

- ACACIA: The ACT Consumer and Carer Mental Health Research Unit
  - Research priority-setting from consumer and carer perspectives
  - Active involvement in research processes through Advisory Group, internship and consultation
  - Projects include trial of a peer worker in ACT-Wide Mental Health Services, and evaluation of ACT Partners in Recovery



# Lived experience research

- Finding the Path: study investigating care access and navigation for serious mental illness
  - Access to general practice
  - Care received in general practice
  - Care planning experiences

# Suicide prevention



- New tools to assess suicide risk/recovery
- Testing theoretical models of suicide
- LifeSpan: evaluating systems-based approach to suicide prevention
- School-based suicide prevention projects (above)
- Barriers to help seeking for suicide, including stigma, mental health literacy, self-reliance



# Rural mental health



- Sustainable Farms
  - Collaboration between Fenner School of Environment, CMHR and Business/Economics (2017-2027)
  - Examine links between sustainable farming practices on ecological, mental health and financial outcomes
  - Philanthropic funding (including Ian Potter Foundation, Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation)
- Mental health services in rural areas
  - Geospatial mapping, atlas of health services, e-health

# Learning and Development



- Career Expert PhD Pathway
  - A new pathway for structured support for experienced professionals and public officers to convert workplace expertise into tertiary qualifications
  - Mutually beneficial to academia and organisations
- Seminar Series
  - Presented in partnership with the Australian Health and Hospital Association, national and international speaker series
- Masters-level course: population mental health
- PhD, Masters, Honours student supervision



# Key collaborations (1)

- **Mental health sector**
  - NATIONAL: Capital PHN, ACT Health, Department of Health, beyondblue, headspace, emerging ACT Office for Mental Health, WA Primary Health Alliance, Menslink, Mental Health Community Coalition, ACT Mental Health Consumer Network, Carers ACT
  - INTERNATIONAL: Departments of Health in Spain (Catalonia, Basque Country), Denmark, Italy (Friule-Veneto)
- **Professional organisations**
  - Mental Health Australia, Society for Mental Health Research, Suicide Prevention Australia, Australian Psychological Society



# Key collaborations (2)

- Research networks
  - **AUSTRALIA:** Black Dog Institute (UNSW), National Drug & Alcohol Research Centre (UNSW), Menzies Centre for Health Policy (University of Sydney), University of Queensland, University of Melbourne
  - **US:** Harvard Medical School, University of Rochester, Johns Hopkins University
  - **CANADA:** Toronto University
  - **EUROPE:** London School of Economics, University College of London, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (ImpleMentAll), INSERM (Paris, France), PECUNIA Consortium Europe



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