



Barrier Breakers Inc

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Barrier Breakers Fact Sheet.

Mental Health and Crime

- The majority of people with a mental illness, including those with severe mental illness, do not commit crimes; although in Australia, people with a mental illness are over-represented in the criminal justice system.
- There is a much higher incidence of mental illness among Australia's prison population than in the general population. In NSW, 74% of prison inmates had a mental disorder at some time in the past year, compared to 18% of the Australian adult population.
- Research shows that people with severe mental illness are more than 11 times more likely to be victims of a violent crime than the general population.
- In the USA, studies have shown that people with severe mental illness have a 6 to 23 times greater prevalence than the general population of being the victims of certain types of violent crime (rape/sexual assault, robbery and assault).
- An Australian study showed that patients with schizophrenia were more likely to experience a higher level of victimisation compared to the general community. Further the research found a major predictor of victimisation related to people not being engaged in meaningful activities.
- A similar study in the USA concluded that people with schizophrenia living in the community were at least 14 times more likely to be victims of violent crimes that be arrested for committing a violent crime.
- Victimisation is common among people with mental illness. People with severe mental illness are a high-risk group because issues such as disorganised thought processes, poor problem solving and impaired reality perception compromise a person's ability to perceive and protect themselves against harmful risks.
- Victimisation of people with a mental illness can exacerbate pre-existing conditions and result in a substantially diminished quality of life.
- Although classifying 'victimisation' is complex and differs across studies and research methodology, it is apparent that vulnerable people with schizophrenia are most likely to be victimised in the community; often exacerbated by other issues, such as substance abuse and homelessness.

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