

NSW Mental Health service users have high rates of emergency surgery



Many mental health service users have chronic conditions that require surgery. If people face barriers to planned surgery, they may need emergency surgery, which often has worse outcomes.

We studied 1.2 million surgical procedures in NSW public and private hospitals.*

Compared to **other NSW residents**, **mental health service users** had



32% of surgery occurred as emergency procedures in **mental health service users**



compared to only **13%** in **other NSW residents**

Mental health service users had high rates of some **emergency** procedures for life threatening conditions ...

- ↑ **4.7 x** Coronary artery grafts
- ↑ **2.4 x** Emergency hernia repair

... but low rates of **planned** procedures for some chronic and disabling conditions ...

- ↓ **0.9 x** Cataract replacement
- ↓ **0.8 x** Knee replacement



High rates of emergency surgery suggest that mental health service users' greater need for surgery is not being met.

Work is needed to understand barriers, such as low rates of private health insurance or reduced rates of referral

Mental Health Living Longer (MHLL) aims to use data to improve the physical health of people who use NSW mental health services.

NSW Ministry of Health

* Sara G, Hamer J, Gould P, et al. Greater need but reduced access: a population study of planned and elective surgery rates in adult mental health service users. *Epidemiology and Psychiatric Sciences*. 2024;33:e12.

To read the full study [click here](#)