

### Current Health Event

#### Mental health-related stigma

Misunderstanding and stigma around mental health are widespread. Many people with mental disorders around the globe face stigma and discrimination, which negatively affect their mental health outcomes as well as lead to abuse, social isolation, and rejection. By being victimized for their illness, persons with mental disorders become target of discrimination such as in access to education, employment, and housing, among others.

#### Editorial note:

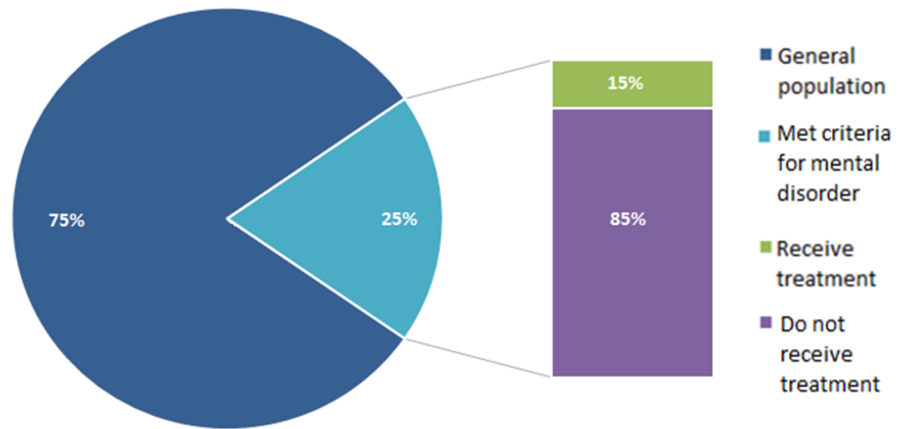
Mental disorders account for 14% of the global burden of disease and currently around 450 million persons globally are affected by mental disorders, placing them among the leading cause of disability worldwide. Moreover, mental and substance use disorders are accountable for around 23% of all years lost because of disability. Despite their enormous impact on persons, their families, and the society at large, and although they can be managed effectively (with medication and/or psychosocial interventions), only few people receive treatment. The treatment gap can reach 85% in low- to middle-income countries.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines stigma as “a mark of shame, disgrace or disapproval which results in an individual being shunned or rejected by others.” Myths, misconceptions, and negative stereotypes around mental health in the general community are the major causes of stigma associated with mental illness.

In Lebanon, according to the latest prevalence study (Karam et al., 2008), around one in four of the population are affected by mental disorders at some point in their lives (Figure 1). Only a minority of persons with any mental disorder ever receive treatment, with substantial delays ranging between 6 and 28 years before seeking care.

With the aim of responding to gap in data on mental disorders, the National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) at the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) with WHO developed and piloted a National Mental Health Registry— for psychiatrists. The registry aims at identifying trends in mental

Figure 1: Mental disorders and treatment gap in Lebanon (Karam et al., 2008)



disorders and treatments as well as help-seeking behaviour, in both public and private sectors for patients that the psychiatrist is seeing for the first time.

Although not nationally representative (sample of 779 patients), data from the registry shows that around 15% of patients waited more than 10 years before seeking help. The 10-year delay in seeking treatment falls in the range reported by Karam et al. (2008). In addition, there is a high percentage of patients seeking care outside the governorates of their residency (around 40% of patients seek services in Mount Lebanon and Beirut while they reside outside these governorates). One assumption behind this is the fear of stigma.

Through the [National Mental Health Strategy for Lebanon \(2015-2020\)](#), the NMHP, WHO, and partners have been joining hands to reform the mental health system in the country, increase access and utilization of quality and evidence-based treatments, and desensitize mental health in the country.

In line with this strategy, the NMHP, WHO, and partners conduct yearly awareness campaigns to promote mental health and increase knowledge amongst the general population. The 2018 National Mental Health Awareness Campaign was launched on 14 Sept. (until 10 Oct) in a public event where persons with lived experiences in mental health provided testimonies about their journey. Under the slogan “Time to talk mental health” (صار وقت نحكي صحة نفسية) the campaign emphasizes stigma and lack of knowledge as main barrier to seeking care.

#### WHO response:

[The WHO Mental Health Action Plan \(2013-2020\)](#) is a comprehensive and multisectoral approach to guide countries in promoting mental well-being and preventing mental disorders. It has 4 main objectives:

- Effective leadership and governance for mental health;
- Provision of comprehensive, integrated mental health and social care services in community-based setting;
- Implementation of strategies for promotion and prevention; and
- Strengthened information systems, evidence and research.

#### Notifiable Diseases in Lebanon [cumulative n° of cases among all Residents (among Syrians)] as of 29 September 2018

Disease	2017	2018	Aug 18	Sept 18
<b>Vaccine Preventable Diseases</b>				
Polio	0	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
AFP	77	74 (29)	6 (3)	4 (2)
Measles	126	875 (163)	35 (3)	13 (2)
Mumps	235	91 (34)	3 (2)	2 (0)
Pertussis	92	52 (25)	3 (0)	3 (0)
Rabies	1	3 (1)	1 (0)	1 (0)
Rubella	10	7 (1)	0 (0)	1 (0)
Tetanus	0	1 (0)	1 (0)	0 (0)
Viral Hep. B	321	203 (25)	27 (4)	21 (5)
<b>Water/Food Borne Diseases</b>				
Brucellosis	460	197 (24)	27 (6)	9 (0)
Cholera	0	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Hydatid cyst	18	3 (1)	0 (0)	1 (0)
Typhoid fever	656	206 (4)	22 (1)	16 (0)
Viral Hep. A	776	690 (125)	93 (14)	70 (4)
<b>Other Diseases</b>				
Leishmaniasis	140	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Meningitis	366	337 (63)	45 (3)	23 (3)
Viral Hep. C	130	76 (6)	6 (0)	0 (1)