



## The employment of people with mental illness

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### Abstract

People with a mental illness are among the most socially and economically marginalised members of the community. They experience high levels of unemployment and non-participation in the labour force. Unemployment has a number of negative effects including the loss of purpose, structure, roles and status and a sense of identity which employment brings. Employment enables social inclusion in the wider community and is an important way that people with a mental illness can meaningfully participate in the wider community. Australia has a mental health strategy, which guides the ongoing reform of mental health services. However, specific strategies to address the social and economic marginalisation of people with a mental illness have not been addressed. A recovery-oriented approach is recommended, which integrates the key sectors involved. To date there has been little inter-sectoral collaboration between the various sectors such as mental health services, housing, and vocational services. People require more role-specific assistance to enable them to participate in socially valued roles implicit with citizenship. There is a need to formulate improved pathways to assistance and more evidence-based forms of assistance to re-establish career pathways. This report aims to: 1) collect relevant overseas and Australian evidence about the employment of people with mental illness; 2) identify the potential benefits of employment; 3) describe patterns of labour force participation in Australia among people with mental illness; 4) identify how mental illness can cause barriers to employment; 5) outline the type of employment restrictions reported by people with mental illness; 6) identify the evidence-based ingredients of employment assistance; 7) identify relevant policy implications; and 8) suggest strategies to improve employment outcomes and career prospects for people with mental illness.

### Keywords

*mental illness, work, policy development, vocational interventions, supported employment, evidence-based components*

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