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Personality disorders in the community: a report from the Australian National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing

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**Abstract**

*Background*: The first set of aims of the present study was to determine the prevalence of personality disorders (PDs) in a nation, and gender differences in the types and numbers of PDs endorsed. The second set of aims was to establish the relationship of PD to other, non-PD disorders, physical conditions, and disability. *Method*: Data were obtained from the Australian National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing, conducted between May and August 1997. A stratified random sample of households was generated, from which all those aged 18 or over were considered potential interviewees. There were 10,641 respondents to the survey, and this represented a response rate of 78%. Each interviewee was asked 59 questions indexing specific ICD-10 PD criteria. *Results*: Of the total survey sample, 704 persons had at least one PD. Using weighted replicate weights, it was estimated that approximately 6.5% of the adult population of Australia have one or more PDs (lifetime prevalence). Persons with PD were more likely to be younger, male, and not married, and to have an anxiety disorder, an affective disorder, a substance use disorder, or a physical condition. They were also more likely to have greater disability than those without PD. *Conclusion*: The study is the first nation-wide survey of mental disorders conducted within Australia. It provides an estimate of the prevalence of the various types of PD. The survey has considerable limitations, however, and these are discussed.

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