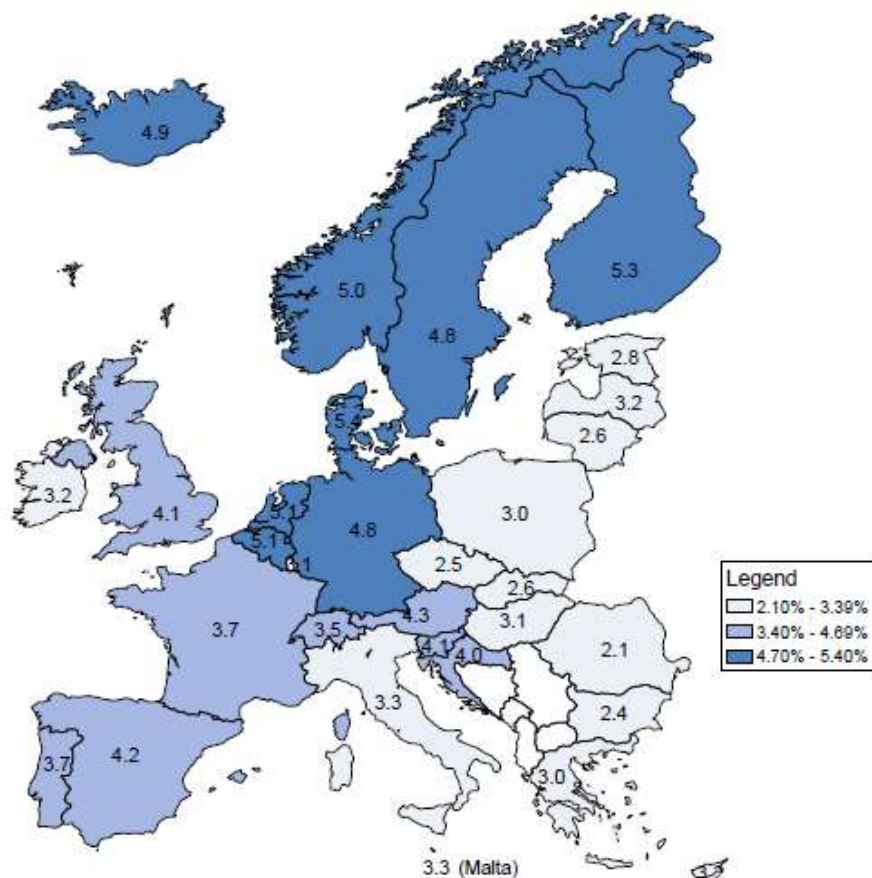




## Factsheet on Promoting Mental Health

Mental health is critical to individual wellbeing, as well as social and economic participation. Yet more than one in six people across EU countries had a mental health problem in 2016, equivalent to about 84 million people. In 2015, mental ill-health cost EU economies over EUR 600 billion, EUR 240 billion of which was due to lost productivity.

### 1 The total costs of mental health account for more than 4% of GDP across EU countries, or over EUR 600 billion



The total costs of mental ill-health are estimated at more than 4% of GDP – or over EUR 600 billion – across the 28 EU countries. These costs include:

- 190 billion EUR (1.3% of GDP) on direct health care spending;
- 170 billion EUR (1.2% of GDP) on social security programmes including sick leave benefits, disability benefits and unemployment insurance benefits; and
- 240 billion EUR (1.6% of GDP) on indirect costs due to lower employment and productivity at work.

The direct and indirect costs of mental health problems vary from a low of 2% to 2.5% of GDP, to a high of 5% or more in other EU countries. Some of these cross-country differences may be due to under-diagnosis and under-treatment of people with mental health problems in some countries.

Source: OECD estimates.

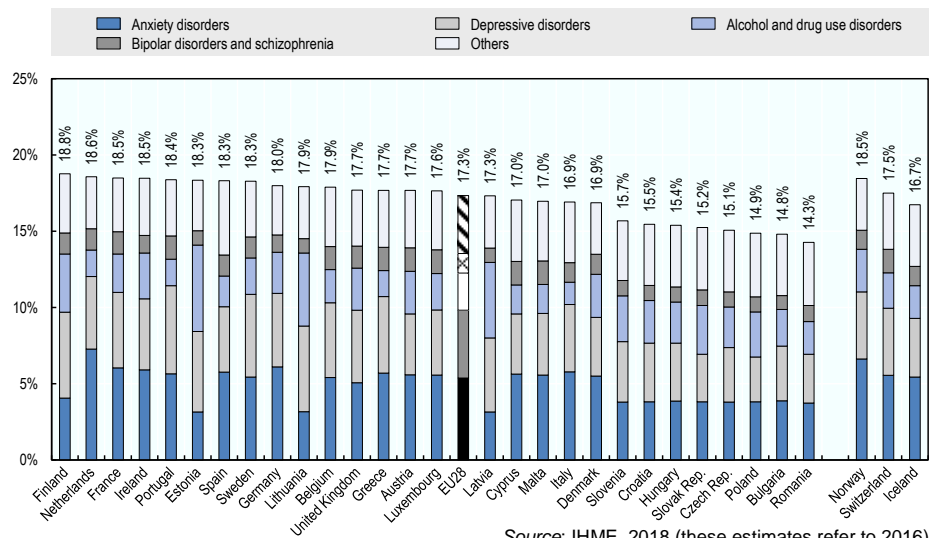


[Health at a Glance: Europe 2018](#) presents comparative analyses of the health status of EU citizens and countries. It contains a thematic chapter on the need for concerted efforts to promote better mental health. This factsheet draws four key findings from that chapter. For questions about this chapter, contact [Emily.Hewlett@oecd.org](mailto:Emily.Hewlett@oecd.org).

## 2 More than one in six people in EU countries have a mental health problem in any given year – nearly 84 million people

More than one in six people across EU countries (17.3%) had a mental health problem in 2016 – nearly 84 million people (according to IHME estimates).

The most common mental disorders across EU countries are anxiety disorders affecting an estimated 25 million people (5.4% of the population), followed by depressive disorders (21 million people, 4.5%), and drug and alcohol disorders (11 million people, 2.4%).



Source: IHME, 2018 (these estimates refer to 2016).

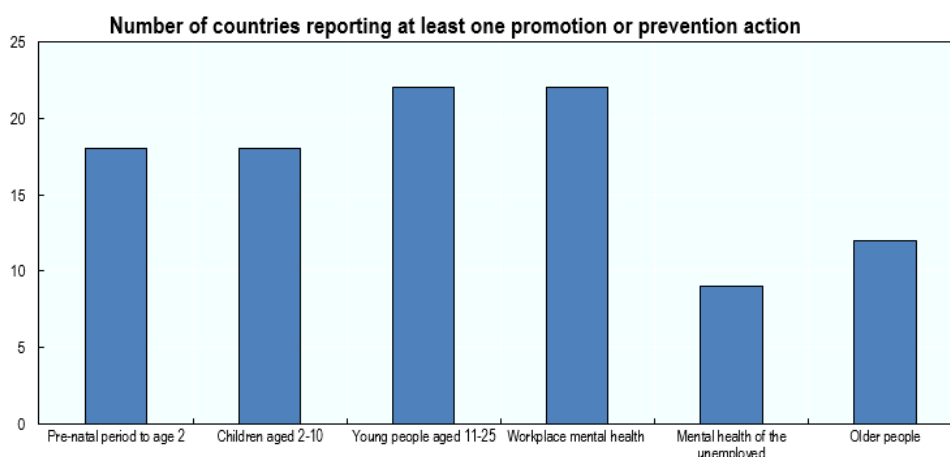
## 3 People reporting chronic depression are much less likely to be in work in all EU countries

People reporting chronic depression have much lower employment rates than the rest of the population in all countries. Only about half of the population aged 25-64 reporting chronic depression are in employment across EU countries, compared with over three-quarter among those who do not report chronic depression.

When at work, people with mental health problems do not always function to their full capacity, are more likely to be absent from work, and are often less productive. Studies have estimated that workers experiencing mental ill-health are about 6% less productive than their colleagues.

## 4 Fewer mental health promotion programmes target the unemployed and older people than other population groups

The heavy individual, economic and social burdens of mental illness are not inevitable. Many European countries have policies and programmes to address mental illness at different ages. More than 100 prevention and promotion actions across the 28 EU countries and 3 EFTA countries target different population groups. However, the distribution of these actions is uneven throughout the life course.



Fewer countries have programmes targeting the mental health of unemployed people and older people. Just as mental ill-health reduces the likelihood of being in employment, unemployment increases the risk of having poor mental health. Programmes that foster good mental health – reducing loneliness, encouraging social participation, building support structures – should be greater priorities for countries.

Source: McDaid, Hewlett and Park (2017); EU Compass for Action on Mental Health and Wellbeing (2017); WHO (2018); EU Compass for Action on Mental Health and Wellbeing (2018).