

Describing & analysing data

In some assignments you will need to use data as evidence. You will provide a table or graph showing the data, and then you will describe and analyse the most important details for the reader.

The following examples describe and analyse data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) website (given below), which shows psychological distress during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Example 1

Writing a **general statement** that describes the overall population. Then explaining its significance.

Action	Example	Explanation
Describe the data	The 2020-2021 study on Australians' mental health and wellbeing found that 15 per cent of the overall population had experienced higher than normal levels of psychological distress during the Covid pandemic , as shown in Figure 1 (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2022).	The specific dates for the study can be linked to real world events. Note Australia as the data source. Write per cent like this! Paraphrase this information in your own words, from 'high' and 'very high' to higher than normal Cite the figure and its source.
Analyse the data	This percentage is not surprising given that the pandemic led to lockdowns, job losses, and feelings of fear and uncertainty about the health and wellbeing of individuals, their friends and their families (Evans et al., 2020).	Give your assessment of the situation. Explain in more detail. Show that your evidence comes from a reliable source.

Include the data as a figure, table or graph. Note the source also, following **Fedcite** instructions.

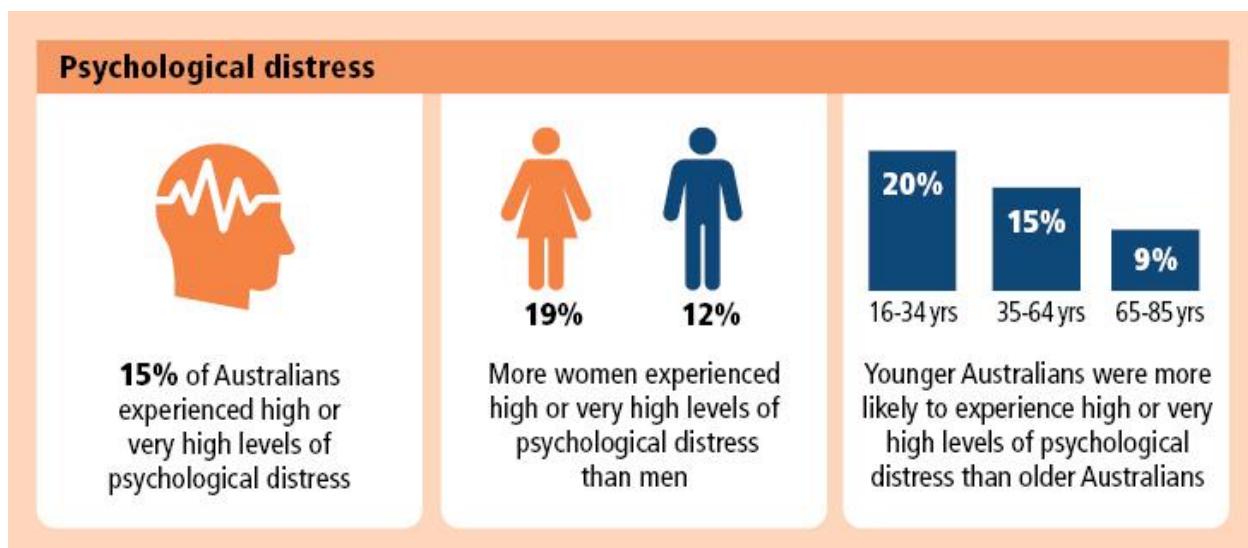


Figure1: Psychological distress. From Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] First insights from the national study on mental health and wellbeing, 2022, <https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/first-insights-national-study-mental-health-and-wellbeing-2020-21>.



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Example 2

Describing and analysing the link between gender and psychological distress.

Here are **three ways** to compare data.

Action	Example	Explanation
Describe the data 1. 2. 3.	<p>Figure 1 also shows that more women than men experienced higher levels of psychological distress (ABS, 2022) during the Covid pandemic (19% and 12% respectively).</p> <p>Figure 1 (ABS, 2022) also shows that 19 per cent of women experienced higher or higher levels of psychological distress compared with 12 per cent of men.</p> <p>When comparing the link between gender and psychological distress, the data (Fig. 1) shows that women were more likely than men to experience these higher levels of psychological distress (19% and 12% respectively).</p>	<p>Use comparing words such as 'more X than Y'.</p> <p>Use the past tense for study findings.</p> <p>Put percentages in brackets in the same order you wrote gender types and add 'respectively'.</p> <p>Write about data as visual information, using words like 'shows', 'indicates', and 'illustrates'.</p> <p>Start by introducing the topic.</p>
Analyse the data	<p>There are several connected factors that can explain this difference. A study in North America (Zheng et al., 2021) found that women, including those on low incomes were at a higher risk of experiencing psychological distress, in part due to stresses caused by the pandemic including job loss and economic instability. In addition, a U.K study (Xue & McMunn, 2021) found that women were more likely to withdraw from work in order to stay home to do unpaid care during lockdowns, and long hours of housework and looking after children added to their psychological burden. These factors are likely to have had an impact on Australian women as well.</p>	<p>Make a general statement.</p> <p>Introduce one study that explains the data in general.</p> <p>Use another study to give more detail about these factors.</p> <p>'In addition' signals this.</p> <p>Suggest that these findings are likely to be similar in Australia. Use tentative language because you cannot prove it 100%.</p>



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Example 3

Examining the link between age and psychological distress.

Action	Example	Explanation
Describe the data	<p>With regard to the link between age and psychological distress during the pandemic (see Fig. 1), there is a 5 per cent incremental decrease between each of the three age groups of 16-34 (20%), 34-64 (15%) and 65-85 (9%). This means that the highest concentrations of psychological distress are in the youngest age group.</p>	<p>Start by introducing the topic. Describe the graph, and then correlate the result. (This is a negative correlation – high distress correlates with younger ages; another correlation is found between less sleep and more psychological distress).</p>
Analyse the data	<p>In the age category 16-34, adolescents in their final years of secondary school are included together with adults, making it likely that different factors will cause their psychological distress. For example, an Australian survey of <u>12 to 18-year-olds</u> found an association between lack of exercise, poor sleep, social isolation, and health anxiety with psychological distress (Li et al., 2021). While no study appears to have focused on the 25-36 age category, financial stressors related to job loss and hefty house mortgages, as well as the pressure of managing young families in a time of uncertainty have been found to play a role among adults in general (Evans et al., 2020; Zheng et al., 2021).</p>	<p>Identify a problem in the age range. Explain what the problem is.</p> <p>Give an example from a study.</p> <p>Contrast these results with two studies that show the stresses that the older people in this ABS age category faced.</p>

References

Evans, S., Mikocka-Walus, A., Klas, A., Olive, L., Sciberras, E., Krantz, G., & Westrupp, E.M. (2020). From “It has stopped our lives” to “Spending more time together has strengthened bonds”: The varied experiences of Australian families during COVID-19. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 588667. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2020.588667.

Li, S.H., Beames, J.R., Newby, J.M., Maston, K., Christensen, H., & Werner-Seidler, A. (2021). The impact of COVID-19 on the lives and mental health of Australian adolescents. *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00787-021-01790-x>.

Xue, B., & McMunn, A. (2021). Gender differences in unpaid care work and psychological distress in the UK Covid-19 lockdown. *PLoS ONE*, 16(3): e0247959. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0247959>.

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