

New data shows it's tough to have lung disease

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People with asthma have the lowest overall health literacy according to a first-of-its-kind national health survey conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The survey uses a survey tool developed by Swinburne's Distinguished Professor of Health Sciences Richard Osborne.

Alongside people with [mental health](#) and behaviour problems, those with asthma indicated they struggle more with managing their [health](#) and engaging with healthcare providers than those with other long-term health conditions.

Just 12.3 per cent of those with asthma said they were able to actively manage their own health, and only 5.4 per cent felt understood and supported by healthcare providers.

"This data calls for consideration of how complex different diseases are for people in the community. It seems that while the information needs of people with cancer, diabetes and [heart disease](#) are high, there are larger gaps for people with chronic lung conditions," says Professor Osborne.

"Findings from this survey point out that the average health literacy of people with both [chronic obstructive pulmonary disease](#)/asthma is at the lower end for each of the nine health literacy indicators when compared with the general population. The data points out that for many people they just can't find the information they need."

National health survey

The findings come from the comprehensive [National Health Survey: Health Literacy, 2018](#), which quizzes Australians on their health literacy.

ABS Director of Health, Louise Gates, says that the Health Literacy Survey summarises how Australians find, understand and use health information, and how they interact with doctors and other [healthcare providers](#).

"The survey was developed by a team in Victoria led by Professor Richard Osborne. It is the first time that comprehensive national data in this area has been published anywhere in the world," says Ms Gates.

The survey assesses a broad range of health literacy characteristics and can be used to improve [health services](#), including the understanding of people's experiences when trying to get help from health professionals.

"Overall, 25 per cent of people strongly agreed that they felt socially supported in managing their health. However, people with three or more long-term health conditions were less likely to strongly agree (17 per cent) compared with people who didn't report a long-term health condition (29 per cent)," Ms Gates says.

"In addition, though just over a quarter (26 per cent) of people found it always easy to navigate the healthcare system, this was lower for people who reported very high levels of psychological distress (17 per cent) compared with people who reported low psychological distress levels (31 per cent)."

Professor Osborne says that he is pleased by the strong international interest the [survey](#) has received.

"Once again Australia has set new and higher standards in biomedical and social research that will be followed by other countries. I am proud and honoured to have led this health literacy work that promises to directly impact on the quality of care and health equity in Australia," he says.

More information: More information and the complete results of the survey can be accessed via the Australian Bureau of Statistics:
[www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.n ... es12018?OpenDocument](http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.n...es12018?OpenDocument)

Provided by Swinburne University of Technology

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