

Study finds Adelaide's depression hot spots

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Poorer, disconnected suburbs are more likely to have depression 'hot spots', according to a new study focused on Adelaide from The Australian National University (ANU).

Dr. Nasser Bagheri, a Senior Research Fellow from ANU College of Health and Medicine, found links between depression and highly fragmented neighbourhoods in Adelaide.

The wealthy seaside suburbs of west Adelaide were more connected and had lower levels of depression. In contrast, the city's south and [inner city](#) was more disconnected and had higher rates of depression.

Dr. Bagheri says the results are explained by [social fragmentation](#), which is defined by a lack of opportunity and inclusion.

Social [fragmentation](#) is based on 12 variables from Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), including how long people have lived in the area, the percentage of renters, single-person households, recent immigrants, unmarried and non-family households.

"We found significant clusters of both [hot spots](#) and cold spots of social fragmentation and depression," said Dr. Nasser Bagheri.

"Individuals treated for depression are more likely to live in neighbourhoods with low socio-economic status and higher social fragmentation.

"The cold spots were the opposite. They had higher socio-[economic status](#), lower rates of depression and less social fragmentation.

"We found these cold spot areas are more connected and they have better mental health."

The cold spot suburbs that were doing well had more school age children living in the area, voluntary workers, home owners and long-term residents.

"What's working in the cold areas is they are mostly home owners, they have established families and people live longer in those areas. People are more invested in these areas," said Dr. Bagheri.

"Home owners are more likely to have an attachment to the [neighbourhood](#) compared to someone who rents short term."

Researchers suggest that enhancing connectivity in poorer neighbourhoods could help with lowering depression rates.

"We expected areas that are highly socially fragmented would have high rates of [depression](#)," said Dr. Bagheri.

"Finding where these hot spots are helps us target prevention activities across communities and work toward more connected neighbourhoods."

The study is published in *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*.

More information: Nasser Bagheri et al. Development of the Australian neighborhood social fragmentation index and its association with spatial variation in depression across communities, *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology* (2019). [DOI: 10.1007/s00127-019-01712-y](https://doi.org/10.1007/s00127-019-01712-y)

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