



Mental health problems generally have many causes and occur as the result of interlinking causes, either generic or football specific.

### Generic causes

It's likely that a combination of causes (instead of one single cause) leads to mental health problems, especially a mixture of biological, psychological and environmental causes. People who have a family history of mental health problems are more likely to develop one.

There are many causes that put pressure on people's mental health, such as severe psychological childhood trauma, living in poverty or social isolation, or life events such as the loss of a parent or a child.

In addition overall personality and temperament as well as resilience and coping style can also trigger the development of mental health problems.

### Professional football causes

#### Severe injuries

Current professional footballers who suffer three or more severe injuries during their career are two to four times more likely to report mental health problems. Severe injuries are also correlated to post-career mental health problems among retired players.

#### Relationship with coaches and teammates

Professional footballers experiencing a deteriorated/ bad relationship with coaches or teammates are more likely to report mental health problems.

#### Career dissatisfaction

Professional footballers unsatisfied about their career are more likely to report mental health problems.

#### Employment and working hours

Retired professional footballers who are unemployed are more likely to report mental health problems.

#### Post-career physical complaints

Retired professional footballers suffering from physical pain (especially knee and ankle) are more likely to report mental health problems.

FIFPro supports the health and safety of players, both during and after their career



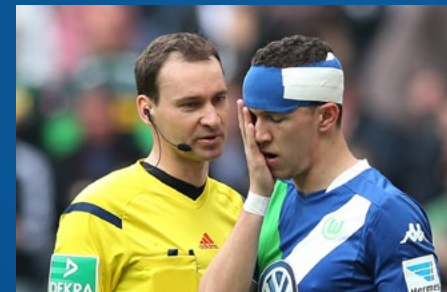
Musculoskeletal injuries



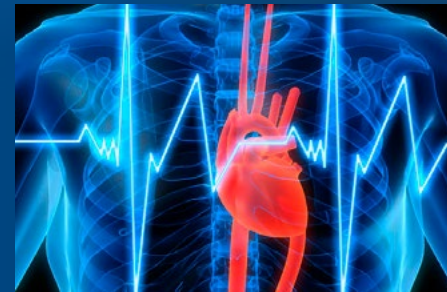
Osteoarthritis



Mental health



Concussions



Sudden cardiac arrest

**FIFPro**  
World Players' Union

# Mental health in professional football

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# Mental health problems

Mental health problems describe a mental and emotional state that affects a person's thinking, feeling, behaviour or mood. They cover a broad range of disorders such as feelings of distress, anxiety, depression, sleep problems or substance abuse.

Someone has mental health problems when these unpleasant or abnormal feelings and/or unadjusted or abnormal behavior lead to a limitation in functioning either in daily life, work or sports.

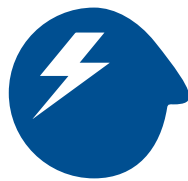
In many cases, mental health problems are comorbid, meaning that two or more mental health problems occur in the same person at the same time or one after another.

Mental health problems are common: they affect about one in four people. Among professional athletes, the rate is even higher.



## Anxiety

- Feeling of fear, excessive worry and/or irritability
- Being easily fatigued
- Loss of self-confidence



## Distress

- Feeling worried and tense, with a lack of interest and energy for daily life activities



## Sleep disturbance

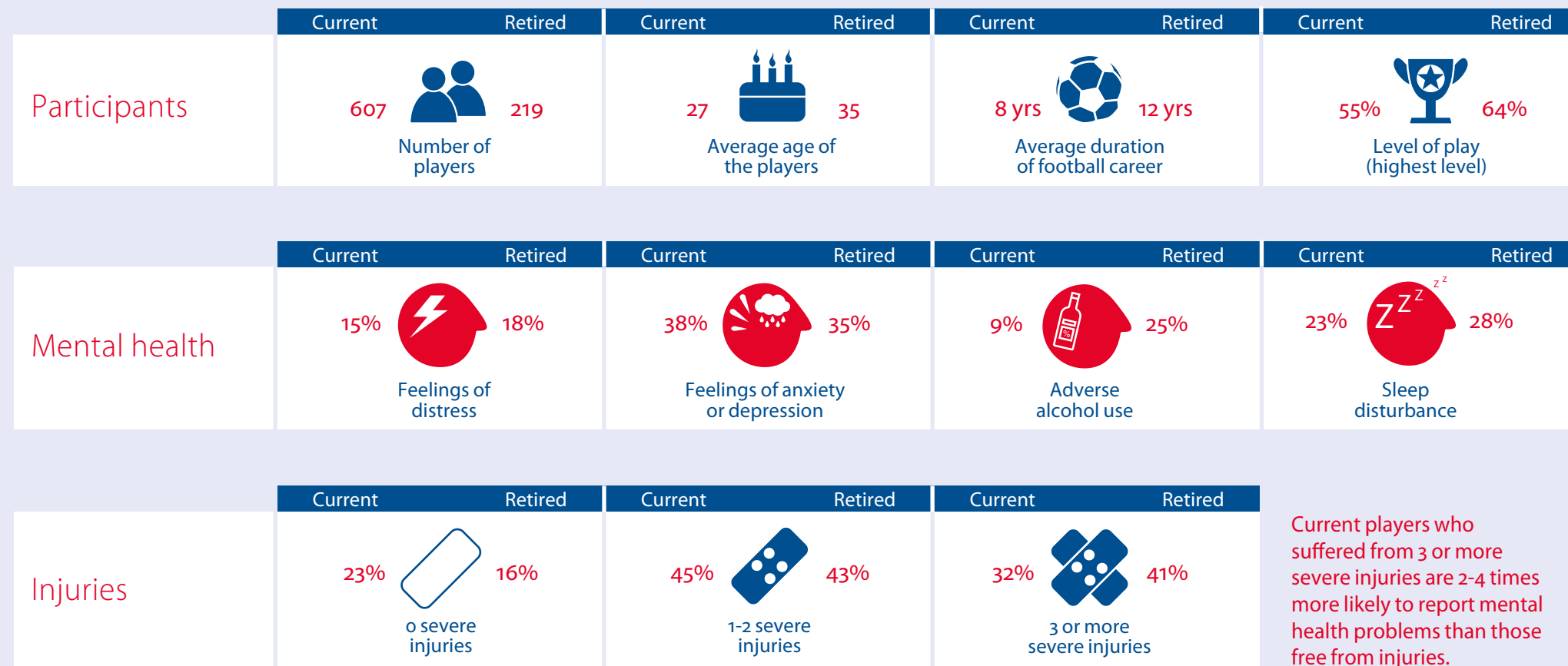
- Having difficulties falling asleep or waking up frequently during the night
- Feeling unrested and still tired after a night
- Feeling irritable or sleepy during the day



## Depression

- Feeling under strain, unhappy and depressed
- Having problems concentrating, to enjoying day-to-day activities, making decisions and overcoming difficulties
- Loss of interest and/or pleasure

# FIFPro study About mental health problems in professional football



Within a football team of 25 players, it can be expected that at least 3 players will report mental health problems over one season.

Current players who suffered from 3 or more severe injuries are 2-4 times more likely to report mental health problems than those free from injuries.



## Chris Jackson

Chris Jackson is a former midfielder who made 72 appearances for the national team of New Zealand. He played more than 500 matches as a professional football player in Australia, New Zealand and Singapore. Chris publicly spoke about his mental health problems in exclusive interviews with FIFPro.

*"I had and still have a lot of anxiety regarding performance. The pressure bottled up for years particularly when I captained different teams and had to be the face of the team when going through tough times."*

*"The effect on my professional life was that I played with fear and negativity. I was just trying to get through each game until the end of each season brought relief."*

*"In everyday life, my illness made me quite withdrawn from a large part of society."*

*"I didn't tackle the problem at all, because I never admitted to myself I had a problem, just that I needed to keep everything I was feeling inside and not let it out."*

*"I am so happy to see that, based on FIFPro's work, the latest Collective Bargaining Agreement for the national team of New Zealand includes mental health help for the players and also player counselling opportunities for those who should need and want it."*