



UNSW
Centre for
Social Research
in Health

Stigma Indicators Monitoring Project

General public

Stigma has a major impact on health outcomes for population groups affected by blood borne viruses (BBVs) and sexually transmissible infections (STIs). Each of Australia’s national strategies addressing BBVs and STIs has a clear goal to eliminate the negative impact of stigma and discrimination on people’s health.

In 2020, an indicator measuring expressed stigma was included in an online survey of the Australian general public. Participants were asked if they would behave negatively towards other people because of certain behaviours, identities, or infections. The indicator had previously been included in the 2017-18 Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (AuSSA) – a representative sample of the Australian adult population. Due to different recruitment approaches, the demographic profile of participants was different between these two surveys.

2,010 people
completed the survey

59%
female

43
years old
average age

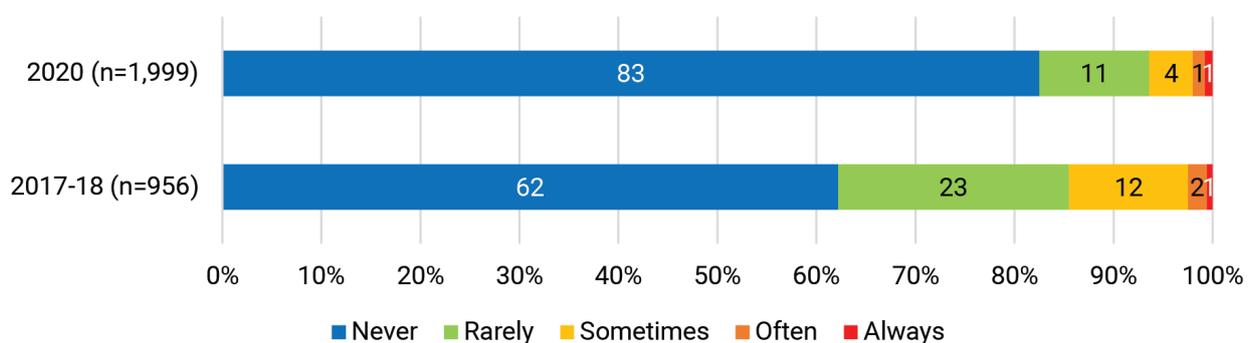
3%
Aboriginal and
Torres Strait
Islander

20%
born overseas

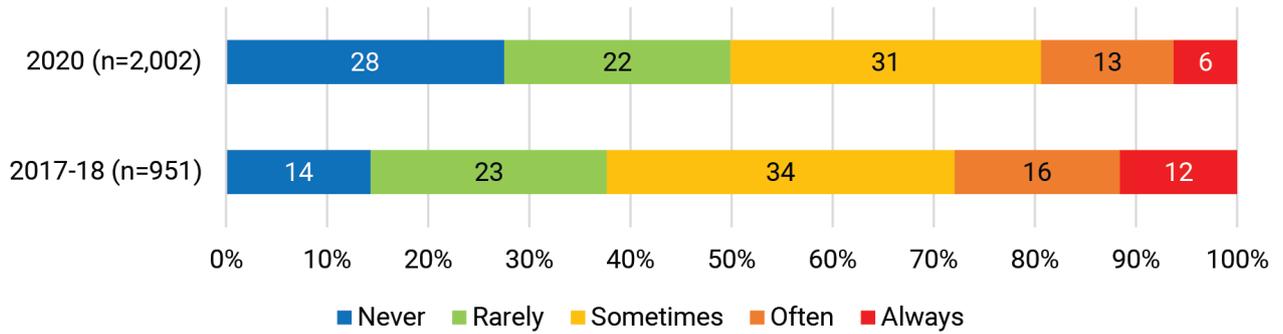
52%
completed
university

Across each of the listed infections, behaviours, or identities, participants in 2020 were less likely to report that they would behave negatively towards other people than participants in 2017-18. In 2020, less than half of participants indicated that they would ever behave negatively towards other people because of their sexual orientation, HIV, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, sex work, or STI statuses. In contrast, 72% of participants indicated that they would ever behave negatively towards other people because of their injecting drug use, including nearly 1 in 5 (19%) who would ‘often’ or ‘always’ do so.

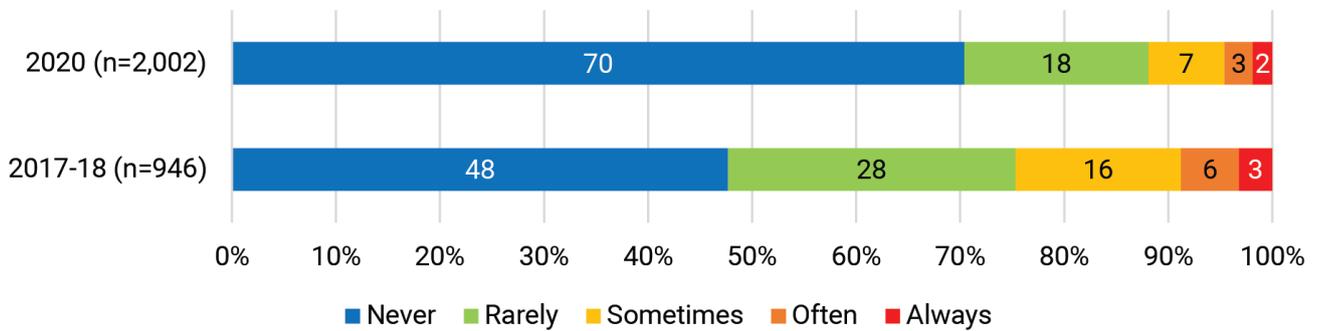
Would you behave negatively towards other people because of their sexual orientation?



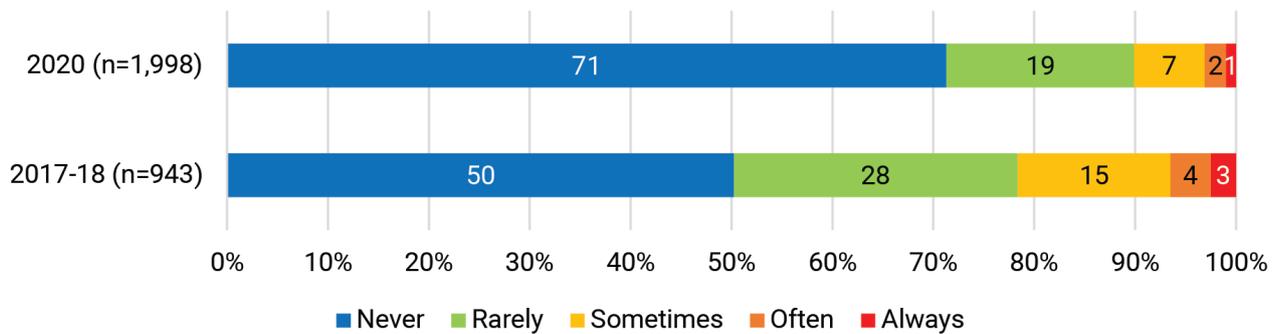
Would you behave negatively towards other people because of their injecting drug use?



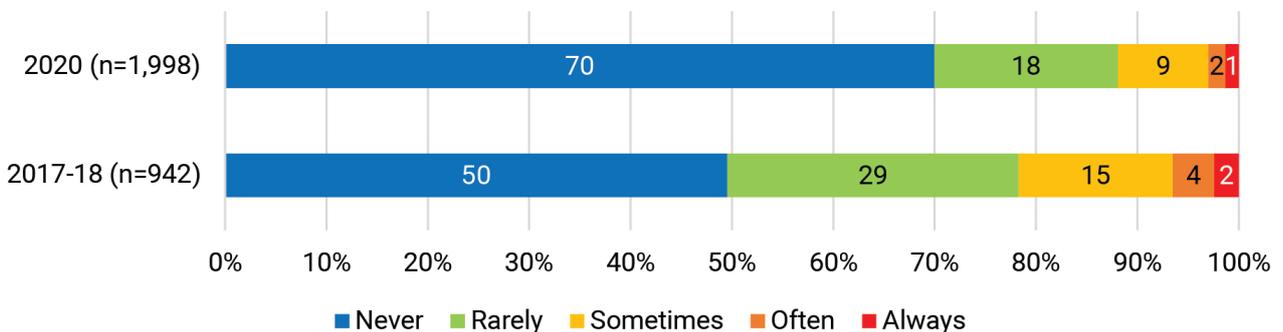
Would you behave negatively towards other people because of their HIV?



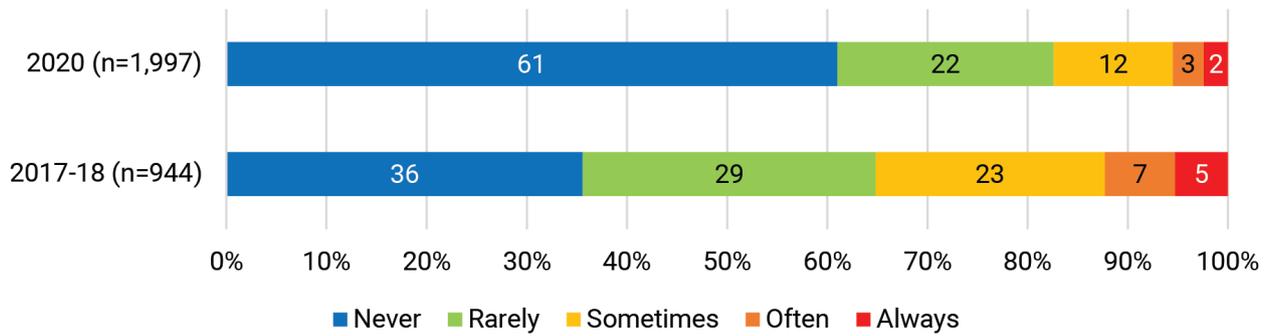
Would you behave negatively towards other people because of their hepatitis B?



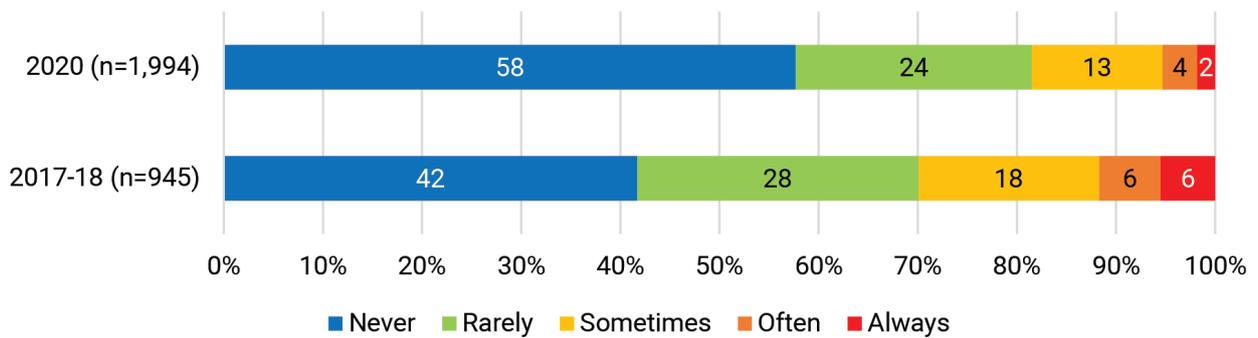
Would you behave negatively towards other people because of their hepatitis C?



Would you behave negatively towards other people because of their sex work?



Would you behave negatively towards other people because of their STI?



In 2020, participants were less likely to report negative behaviour towards other people than those in 2017-18, however, these differences should be interpreted cautiously due to the different recruitment methods and participant profiles between surveys. Findings also indicate that stigma and negative behaviour towards population groups affected by BBVs and STIs continue to exist among the Australian public. Wide-ranging approaches to reducing stigma are needed to reduce the negative attitudes held by sizeable proportions of the Australian public. Ongoing monitoring of expressed stigma is also vital in tracking progress towards eliminating the negative effects of stigma on people’s health.

If the results presented here have upset you in any way, we encourage you to seek support from Lifeline (13 11 44).

This project was supported by a grant from the Australian Government Department of Health.

We would like to thank everyone who completed the survey.

For more information on this project, please see: bit.ly/stigma-indicators