



UNSW

Centre for
Social Research
in Health

Stigma Indicators Monitoring Project

Health care workers

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 2021, a stigma indicator was included in an online survey of Australian health care workers, recruited via a paid research panel. 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 an online survey of Australian health care workers in 2018, recruited via social media. Due to different recruitment approaches, the demographic profile of participants was different between these two surveys.

Across each of the listed infections, behaviours, or identities, participants in 2021 were more likely to report that they would behave negatively towards other people than participants in 2018. In 2021, approximately 1 in 4 participants (23%) indicated that they would ever behave negatively towards other people because of their sexual orientation, and 1 in 3 would behave negatively towards other people because of their HIV (37%), hepatitis B (34%), or hepatitis C (36%). Just under 1 in 2 participants would behave negatively towards other people because of their sex work (46%) or STI (43%). In contrast, more than 2 out of 3 participants (69%) indicated that they would ever behave negatively towards other people because of their injecting drug use, including nearly 1 in 5 (18%) who would 'often' or 'always' do so.

907 people
completed the survey

78%
female

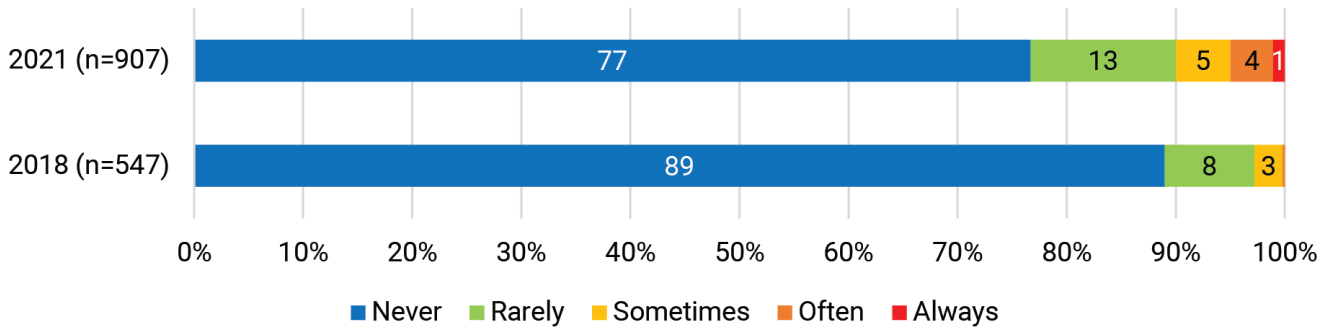
34
years old
average age

5%
Aboriginal and
Torres Straight
Islander

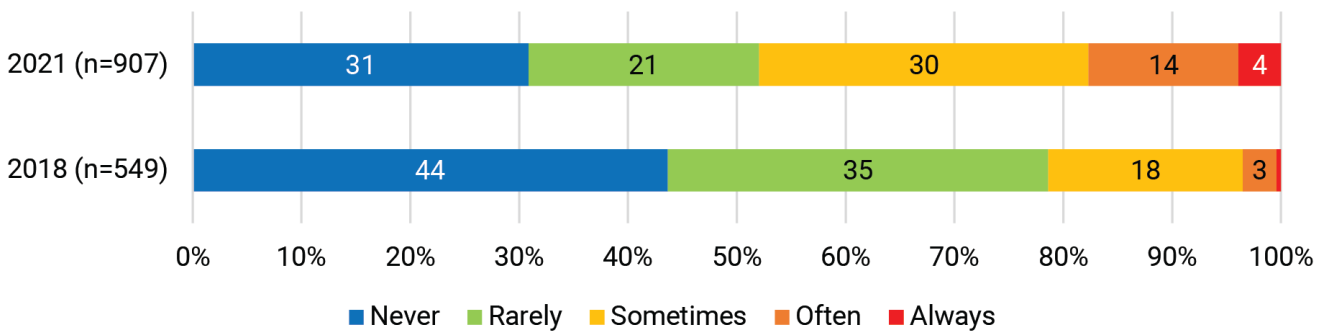
22%
born overseas

27%
more than 10
years' experience

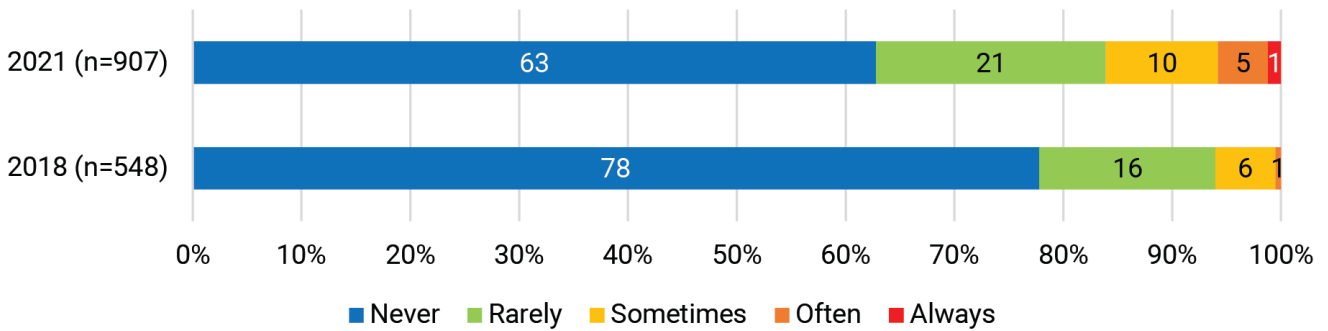
Would you behave negatively towards other people because of their sexual orientation?



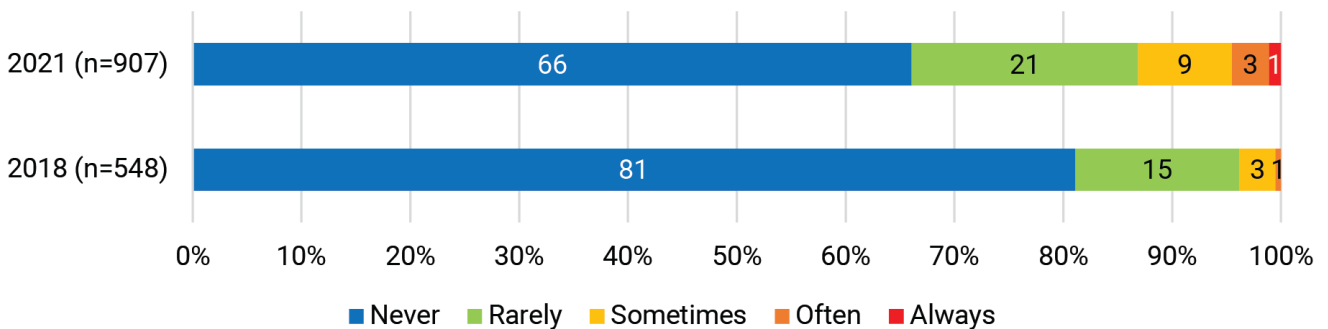
Would you behave negatively towards other people because of their injecting drug use?



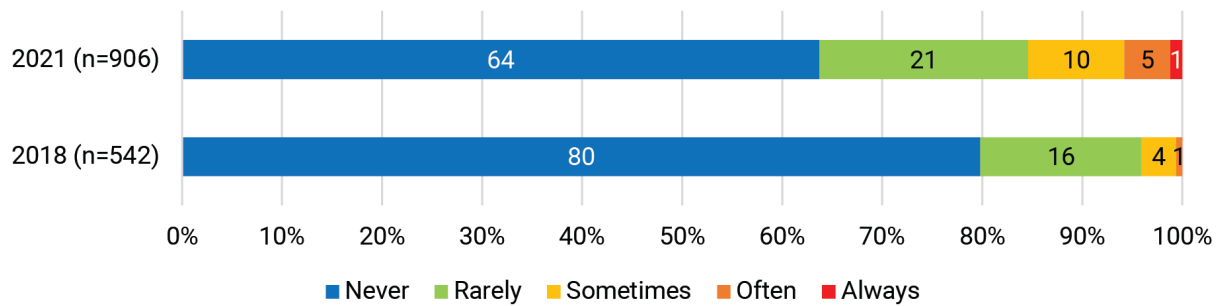
Would you behave negatively towards other people because of their HIV?



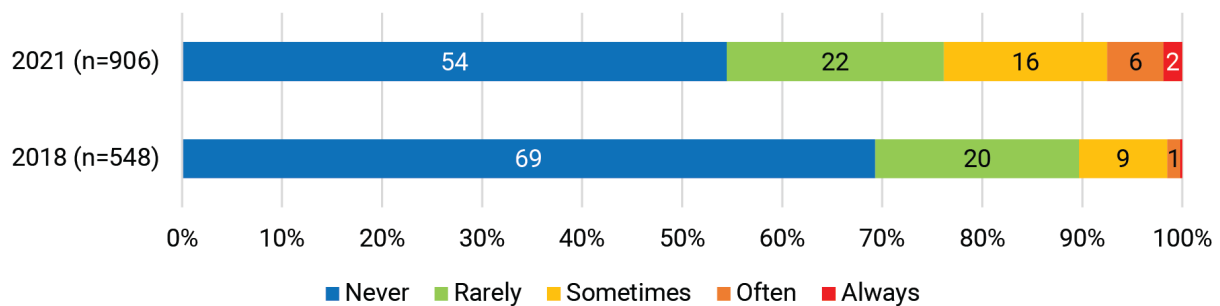
Would you behave negatively towards other people because of their hepatitis B?



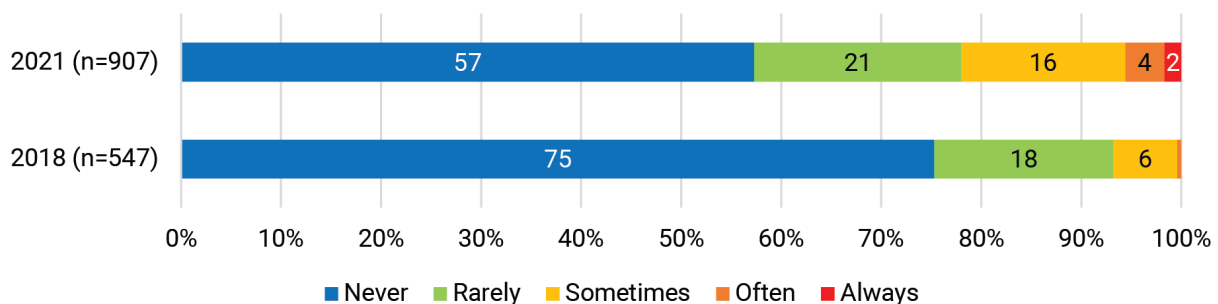
Would you behave negatively towards other people because of their hepatitis C?



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



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



In 2021, participants were more likely to report negative behaviour towards other people than those in 2018, 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 in the Australian health care system. Wide-ranging approaches to reducing stigma are needed to reduce the negative attitudes held by sizeable proportions of Australian health care workers. 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