



Stigma Indicators Monitoring Project

Health workers

Stigma has a major impact on health outcomes for people living with blood borne viruses and sexually transmissible infections. Australia has five national strategies addressing HIV, viral hepatitis, and sexually transmissible infections, each with a clear goal to eliminate the negative impact of stigma and discrimination on people's health.

In 2018, a stigma indicator was included in an online survey of health workers. Participants were asked if they would behave negatively towards other people because of certain attributes. They were also asked if they had witnessed any other health workers behaving negatively towards others within the past 12 months because of those same attributes.

551 health workers completed the survey

94% female

82% straight/heterosexual

84% born in Australia or NZ

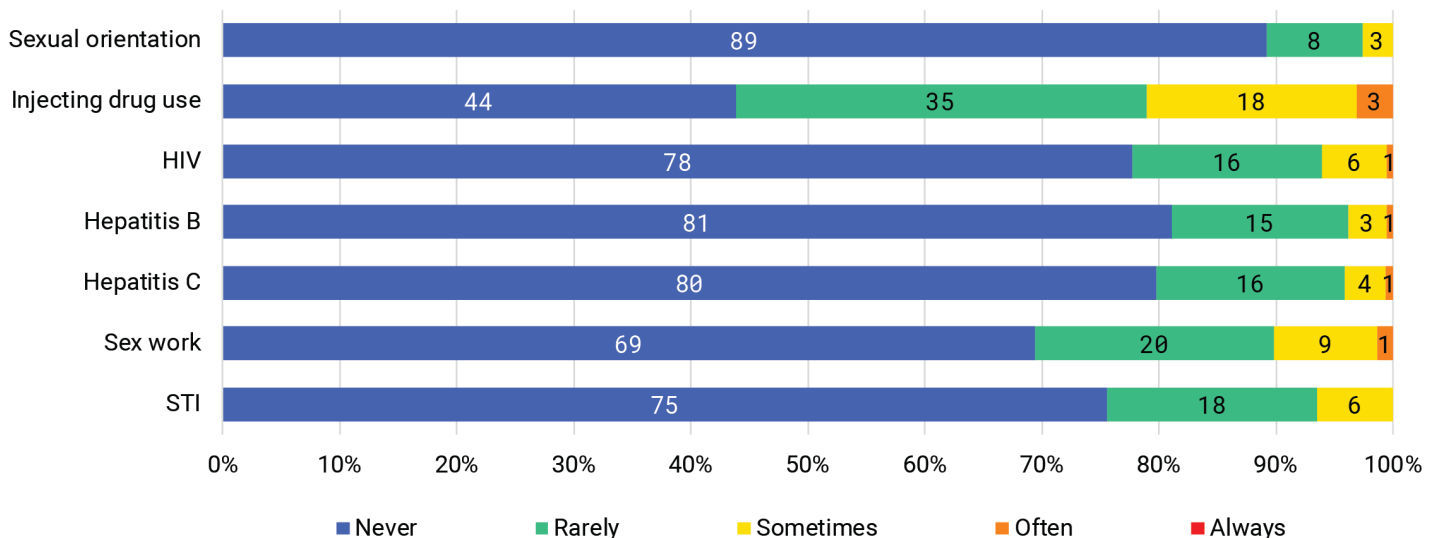
54% employed full-time

59% in nursing roles

17% in allied health

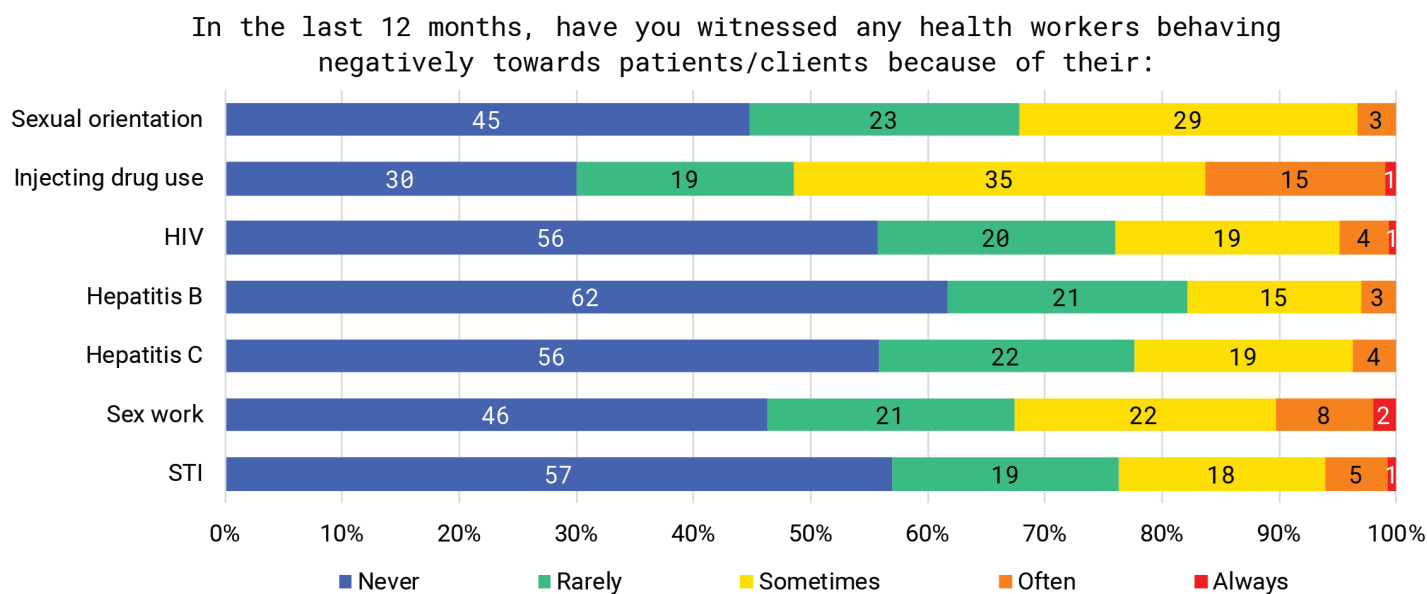
52% 10+ years' experience

Would you behave negatively towards other people because of their:



Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

In 2018, health workers were most likely to report that they would behave negatively towards people who inject drugs (56%) and least likely to report that they would behave negatively towards others because of their sexual orientation (11%). Between 19%–31% indicated that they would behave negatively towards people living with HIV, hepatitis B or C, STIs, or sex workers.



Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Health workers were more likely to report witnessing other health workers behaving negatively towards each group than they were to indicate that they themselves would behave negatively. Negative behaviour was most commonly witnessed towards people who inject drugs (70%). The largest discrepancy related to sexual orientation – 11% indicated that they would behave negatively towards other people because of their sexual orientation, but 55% reported witnessing negative behaviour from other health workers.

People living with blood borne viruses and sexually transmissible infections, people who inject drugs, and sex workers all continue to experience stigma and discrimination in some health care settings. Being able to quantify the expressed stigma towards these groups by health care workers is an important first step towards introducing evidence-based strategies to eliminate its negative effects.

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



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