

Stigma Snapshot

People living with hepatitis C 2021

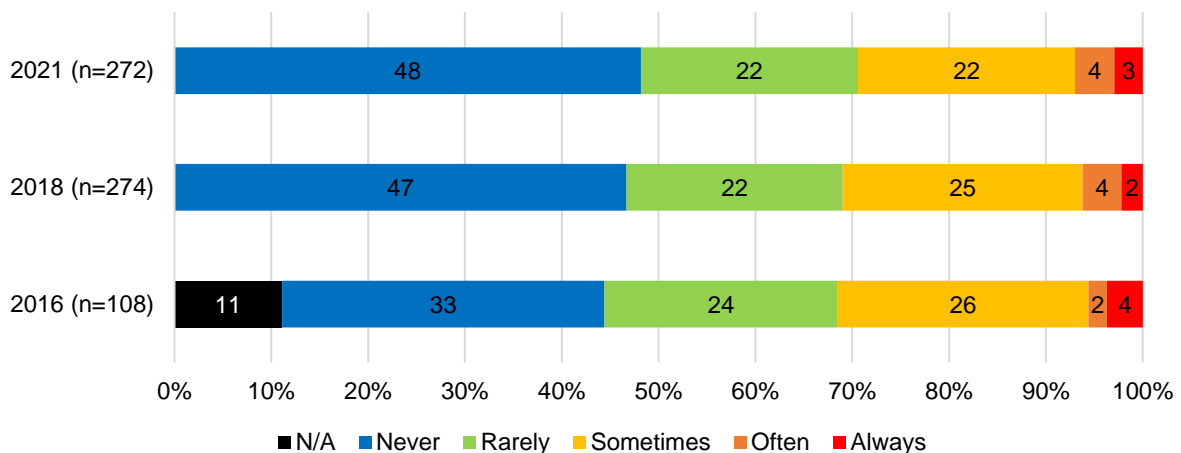
Stigma has a major impact on health outcomes for people living with blood borne viruses (BBVs) and sexually transmissible infections (STIs). The Australian Government Department of Health strategies for BBVs and STIs explicitly aim to “eliminate the negative impact of stigma, discrimination, and legal and human rights issues on people’s health”.

In 2021, a survey of people who inject drugs was conducted to investigate their experiences of stigma. Participants who had ever been diagnosed with hepatitis C were asked about their experiences of stigma in relation to their hepatitis C. This followed on from previous surveys of people who inject drugs and had been diagnosed with hepatitis C, conducted since 2016.

280 people completed the 2021 survey

60% male – 70% heterosexual – 22% Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
46% completed high school – 23% had received HCV treatment before 2016
51% had received HCV treatment since 2016

In the last 12 months, have you experienced any stigma or discrimination in relation to your hepatitis C?

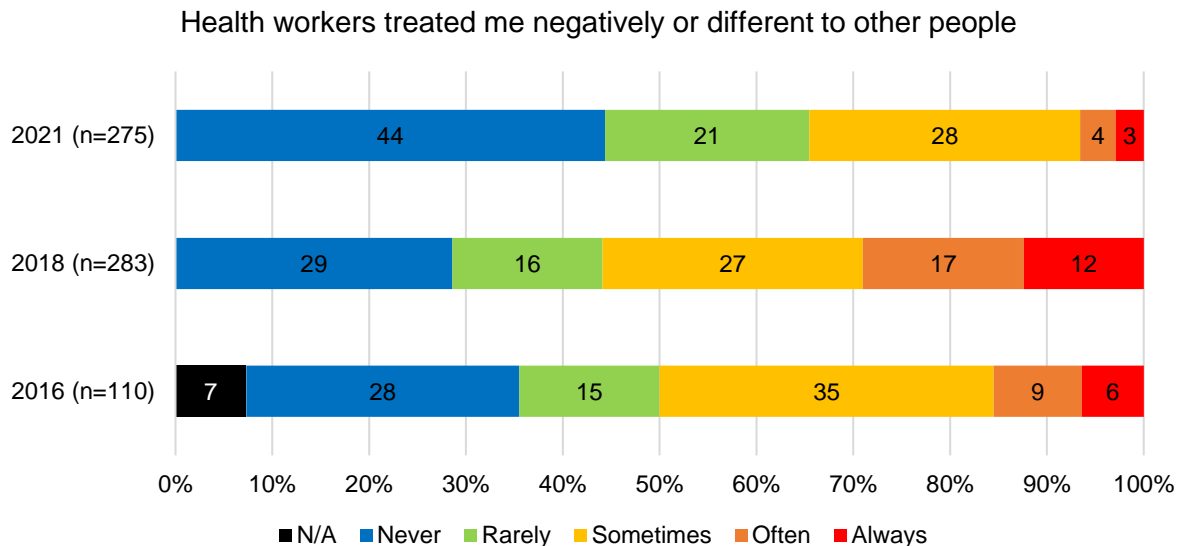


Note: N/A was not provided as a response option after 2016.

In 2021, more than half of participants (52%) reported experiencing stigma within the last 12 months in relation to their hepatitis C, including 7% reporting that they ‘often’ or ‘always’ experienced stigma. These proportions were not significantly different to those reported in 2018.



In 2021, 56% of participants reported any negative treatment by health workers, including 7% who indicated that this was 'often' or 'always' the case. This was a smaller proportion than in 2018, when 71% of participants reported negative treatment from health workers.



Note: N/A was not provided as a response option after 2016.

Stigma and discrimination continue to be commonly experienced by people living with hepatitis C, with no discernible change in reports of stigma over the past five years. Within health care settings, over half of participants reported being treated negatively within the past 12 months. While this negative treatment was reported less frequently in 2021 than in 2018, significant progress is still needed to eliminate the barrier that stigma creates for people living with hepatitis C to accessing the quality of health care they need.

Wide-ranging intervention initiatives are required to address stigma towards people living with hepatitis C within health care systems and throughout society more broadly. The Stigma Indicators Monitoring Project will continue to monitor experiences of stigma and discrimination reported by people living with hepatitis C, as well as negative behaviour expressed by health care professionals and the general public.

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 acknowledge the invaluable support of the Australian Injecting & Illicit Drug Users League (AIVL) and their member organisations in assisting with recruiting survey participants. We would also like to thank everyone who completed the survey.

For more information on this project, please see http://bit.ly/stigma_indicators

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