In 2012, See Change, the national mental health stigma reduction partnership, commissioned Millward Brown Lansdowne to conduct a nationally representative survey of Irish attitudes towards mental health problems to build on baseline research conducted for the campaign in 2010. The survey was conducted over May and June in 2012 with a sample size of 1,038 people and was co-funded by the National Office for Suicide Prevention and the National Disability Authority.
Two years on from See Change’s 2010 baseline research into Irish attitudes towards mental health problems, this study paints a somewhat altered picture and highlights the impact of financial hardship on attitudes to mental health problems.

**Main findings: Attitudes in 2012 vs. 2010**

1. An increased number of Irish people claim to have some experience of a mental health problem, either themselves or through others.
2. There is increased awareness and understanding of mental health, mental health problems, stigma and support services.
3. There has been some improvement of attitudes around the outcomes for recovery from a mental health problem, although attitudes to people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia still lag behind.
4. There has been some softening of attitudes towards the integration of people with mental health problems, although attitudes to people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia still lag behind.
5. There is increased willingness to seek professional help for a mental health problem.
6. There is greater reluctance to be open and disclose information about a mental health problem in personal and professional relationships.
7. There is a more negative perception of peers’ reactions to a person’s mental health disclosure.
Increased numbers claim to have some experience a mental health problem:

In 2012, See Change’s attitudes survey has found that since 2010, there is an increased number of Irish people claiming to have some experience a mental health problem, either themselves or through others. More than 55% of those surveyed now claim to have some experience of a mental health problem either themselves or through others. This is increased from the 39% who claimed experience in 2010.

15% of those surveyed identified that they had direct personal experience with a mental health problem, up from 7% in 2010.

77% of those who describe their own financial situations to be under severe strain claim experience of a mental health problem either personal or through others.

61% of those who describe their own financial situations as worse off than two years ago claim experience of a mental health problem either personal or through others.

This is important given that 58% of those surveyed now claim to be financially worse off than 2 years ago.

See Change’s stigma-reduction activities will now focus on those under financial strain as a new target group to engage.
In 2012, See Change’s survey has found that there is increased awareness and understanding of mental health, mental health problems, stigma and support services compared to the campaign’s 2010 baseline research.

At 91%, there is a continued strong belief among the public that mental health problems can affect anyone since 2010.

There are increased levels of recognition that people with mental health problems experience high levels of prejudice and discrimination, up from 73% in 2010 to 77% in 2012.

Respondents identified a wider range of support services as helpful with GP, counsellor, therapist, social worker, online and telephone services as well as alternative therapies rated increasing more helpful.

There is a growing recognition of the factors that can positively and negatively impact on mental health. Having friend and family support as well as financial security were rated as most crucial and increased in importance since last surveyed in 2010.

68% of people claim that personal financial worry makes them more accepting of people with mental health problems.
See Change's attitudes survey highlights that since 2010, there has been some improvement of attitudes around the outcomes for recovery from a mental health problem although attitudes towards people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia still lag behind.

At 56%, there is a sustained belief that the majority of people who experience mental health problems will recover, continued from 2010's baseline survey.

There is an increase in the perception that someone with a diagnosis of schizophrenia will go on to lead a normal life, up from 47% in 2010 to 59%, compared to a sustained 70% who believe the same for someone with depression.

There is an increased although still minority perception that someone with diagnosis of schizophrenia will go back to work within a year, up from 29% in 2010 to 40% in 2012. In comparison, 63% believe the same for someone with depression.

There is an increased although still minority perception that someone with diagnosis of schizophrenia will develop close relationships in the future, up from 25% in 2010 to 38% in 2012. In comparison, 51% believe the same for someone with depression.
See Change's attitudes survey highlights that since 2010, there has been some softening of attitudes towards the integration of people with mental health problems although attitudes towards people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia still lag behind.

There is an increased belief that people with mental health problems have same right to a job as others, up from 72% in 2010 to 79% in 2012.

While an average of 3 in 4 people would be comfortable living beside or working with someone with experience of depression, anxiety or an eating disorder, only 43% stated the same for someone with a diagnosis of schizophrenia.

There is increased support for someone with a mental health problem to have children, up from an 56% in 2010 to 64% in 2012. In comparison, only 33% support people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia to have children.

There is an increased belief that someone with a mental health problem would do something harmful or violent to themselves, up from 42% to 52% for someone with a diagnosis of schizophrenia and also up from 30% to 42% for someone with depression.

There is an increased belief that someone with a mental health problem would do something harmful or violent to others, up from 16% in 2010 to 23% in 2012 for someone with depression and sustained at 31% for some with a diagnosis of schizophrenia.
See Change’s attitudes survey highlights that since 2010, there is increased willingness to seek professional help for a mental health problem.

In the period since the 2010 baseline survey, the percentage of people willing to seek professional help for a mental health problem has risen from 88% in 2010 to 91% in 2012.

At 99%, those experiencing severe financial strain emerged as the most willing group to seek professional help for a mental health problem. (N=97)
See Change’s attitudes survey highlights that since 2010, there is greater reluctance to be open and disclose information about a mental health problem in personal and professional relationships.

An increased number would not want others to know about their mental health problem, up from 50% in 2010 to 56% in 2012.

28% would delay seeking treatment for fear of someone else knowing about their mental health problem, up from 18% in 2010.

41% would hide a mental health from friends, up from 32% in 2010.

24% would conceal a mental health problem from family, up from 13% in 2010.
See Change’s attitudes survey highlights that since 2010, there is a more negative perception of peers’ reactions to a person’s mental health disclosure.

There is an increased belief that family would want to conceal a diagnosis from others, up from 32% in 2010 to 42% in 2012.

20% believe that friends would distance themselves in reaction to a mental health problem. This figure is increased from 10% in 2010.

There is an increased belief that a partner would end a relationship as reaction to diagnosis with mental health problem, up from 5% in 2010 to 15% in 2012.

57% believe that being open about a mental health problem at work would have a negative impact on job and career prospects, up from 48% in 2010.

47% believe that being open about a mental health problem at work would have a negative effect on a person’s relationship with colleagues, up from 36% in 2010.
Openness

72% would not want others to know about their mental health problem.

56% would hide a mental health problem from friends, up from 39% in 2010.

35% would delay seeking treatment for fear of letting others know about my mental health problem.

29% would conceal a mental health problem from family.

Perceived support

50% being open about a mental health problem at work would have a negative effect on relationships with colleagues.

Supporting others

44% would not know what to do if someone close to them was experiencing a mental health problem.

32% would find it hard to talk to someone with a mental health problem.
Farmers (n=98)

Experience with a mental health problem

15% of farmers now claim experience with mental health problems, up from 3% in 2010. This represents the biggest increase in direct personal experience of any group.

Openness

72% would not want others to know about their mental health problem.

33% would delay seeking treatment for fear of letting others know about a mental health problem.

39% would hide a mental health problem from friends.

Perceived support

22% believe that a partner would end relationship as a reaction to a diagnosis with mental health problem.

29% believe that friends would distance themselves as a reaction to a mental health problem.
There is an increased belief that people with mental health problems have the same right to a job as others, up from 72% in 2010 to 79%.

While an average of 3 in 4 people would be comfortable working with someone with experience of depression, anxiety, or an eating disorder, only 43% of people would be comfortable working with someone with a diagnosis of schizophrenia.

There is an increased although still minority perception that someone with a diagnosis of schizophrenia will go back to work within a year, up from 29% in 2010 to 40% in 2012. In comparison, 63% believe the same for someone with depression.

57% believe that being open about a mental health problem at work would have a negative impact on job and career prospects, up from 48% in 2010.

47% believe that being open about a mental health problem at work would have a negative effect on a person’s relationship with colleagues, up from 36% in 2010.
**People under financial strain**

(n=346)

**Experience with a mental health problem**

77% of those who describe their own financial situations to be under severe strain claim experience with a mental health problem.

61% of those who describe their own financial situations as worse off than 2 years ago claim experience with a mental health problem.

This is important given that 58% of those surveyed now claim to be financially worse off than 2 years ago.

**Seeking help**

99% of those who describe their own financial situations to be under severe strain claim intent to seek professional help for a mental health problem. (n=97)

**Integration**

85% agree that people with mental health problems have same right to a job as others.
Openness

72% would not want others to know about their mental health problem.

36% would delay seeking treatment for fear of letting others know about a mental health problem.

32% would conceal a mental health problem from family.

Perceived support

34% believe that partner would end relationship as reaction to diagnosis with mental health problem.

32% believe that friends would distance themselves as a reaction to a mental health problem

Supporting others

33% would panic in relation to a friend’s or relative’s mental health disclosure.

40% would find it hard to talk to someone with a mental health problem.