Public Attitudes Towards Mental Illness
A Benchmark Study for See Change
What we did and why

What?  
Face-to-Face interviews in the home

Who?  
Nationally representative sample
977 Adults aged 18+

Why?  
Baseline study on attitudes towards mental health problems

Research co-funded by
Low level of personal experience of mental health problems reported

6 in 10 have NO Experience
Significant underreporting among key groups

- 55 – 64’s – 5%
- Farmers – 3%
- Living in Dublin – 5%

Is this due to stigma or reality?
Irish people vastly underestimate mental health problems (vs WHO)

Depression: 8% (1 in 1000)
Anxiety: 20% (1 in 100)
Eating disorder: 19% (1 in 50)
Alcoholism: 21% (1 in 10)
Schizophrenia: 11% (1 in 4)

(5% Nov 2007)

8% 20% 19% 21% 11% 5% 2% 3% 10%
More education and information required to promote greater understanding

- 7 in 10 Irish people strongly agree VIRTUALLY ANYONE can develop a mental health problem.

- Over 1 in 2 think mental health issues VERY COMMON – BUT NOT WELL UNDERSTOOD.

- ONLY 1 in 5 think MAJORITY WILL RECOVER

- 7 in 10 RECOGNISE SYMPTOMS of depression, but less than half recognise symptoms of schizophrenia.
Workplace strategy needed to promote open communication and integration

- 2 in 3 strongly agree those with MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS should have the SAME RIGHTS as others. **BUT:** Only 46% say this in respect of JOB RIGHTS.

- **AND** only 58% say that someone diagnosed with depression will go back to work within a year.

- One in five say they would be VERY COMFORTABLE WORKING WITH SOMEONE with depression.
Stigma felt most keenly in the workplace

Workplaces less tolerant than neighbours for each of the 5 mental health problems

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Eating disorder
- Alcoholism
- Schizophrenia

“I would deliberately conceal my diagnosis from co-workers/classmates”

No 50%
Yes 48%
3 in every 4 strongly agree that mental health SHOULD BE OPENLY DISCUSSED.

1 in 2 agree that they WOULDN’T WANT OTHERS TO KNOW.

1 in 4 agree it would be HARD TO TALK TO SOMEONE with mental health problems.

YET
Those with DIRECT PERSONAL EXPERIENCE are more open.
More community based initiatives needed to support people with mental health problems

61% feel strongly that COMMUNITY IS BEST for recovery

34% strongly believe MENTAL HOSPITALS OUTDATED

Only 18% think SUFFICIENT HELP AVAILABLE
Bringing mental health problems out in the open will help those affected

Family & friends **THOUGHT AS HELPFUL AS** mental health professionals in dealing with mental health

Social workers more helpful than telephone counselling or internet sites
Many harbour reservations about those with mental health problems having children.

Q. Should someone with mental health problems have children?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disorder</th>
<th>% Disagree</th>
<th>% Agree</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eating Disorder</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>59</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anxiety Disorder</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>56</td>
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<td>e.g. panic attacks</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schizophrenia</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
COMMUNICATION

Due to stigma, people HIDE:

- 1 in 3 would hide mental health problems from FRIENDS
- 1 in 10 from FAMILY
- 1 in 3 say their family would hide diagnosis

94% say they would OFFER SUPPORT
Farmers feel stigma

- 57% would NOT WANT OTHERS TO KNOW
- 42% would HIDE DIAGNOSIS from friends
- 45% would NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO TO HELP someone
- 35% would find it HARD TO TALK TO SOMEONE with mental health problems
- 27% would DELAY SEEKING HELP for fear of someone knowing about it
18-24 year old males vulnerable, in need of education

- 53% WOULD NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO TO HELP someone
- 29% would DELAY SEEKING HELP for fear of someone knowing about it
- 9% WOULD NOT SEEK PSYCHOLOGICAL HELP if diagnosed
- 11% say their partner WOULD WANT TO BREAK UP WITH THEM if diagnosed
Personal experience brings more hope, but lingering fears

Those with personal experience more likely to:

- **SEEK HELP** - 94%
- Believe in **RECOVERY** - 63%
- Think that there are **INSUFFICIENT SERVICES** – 70%
- **KNOW WHAT TO DO** - 55%

**BUT**

- 16% would **HIDE DIAGNOSIS** from family
- 5% say family would **NOT OFFER SUPPORT**
- 7% say partner **WOULD BREAK UP WITH THEM** as a result of diagnosis and 19% say they don’t know
Some positive changes since 2007, but many challenges remain

Since the 2007 HSE Study:

- Some progress in **LESSENING STIGMA** (down to 50%)
- **LESS DIFFICULTY TALKING** to someone (down to 25%)
- Higher belief in **EQUAL RIGHTS** (up to 89%)

**BUT**

- Clear evidence of need for **INITIATIVES:**
  - in the **WORKPLACE**
  - among **VULNERABLE GROUPS**, like farmers, 18-24 year old males
- **INFORMATION AND EDUCATION** campaign remains essential
Thank You

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