



Stigma Indicators Monitoring Project

Sex workers

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

In 2020, an indicator measuring experienced stigma was included in an online survey of sex workers in Australia.

647 people completed the survey

89% female

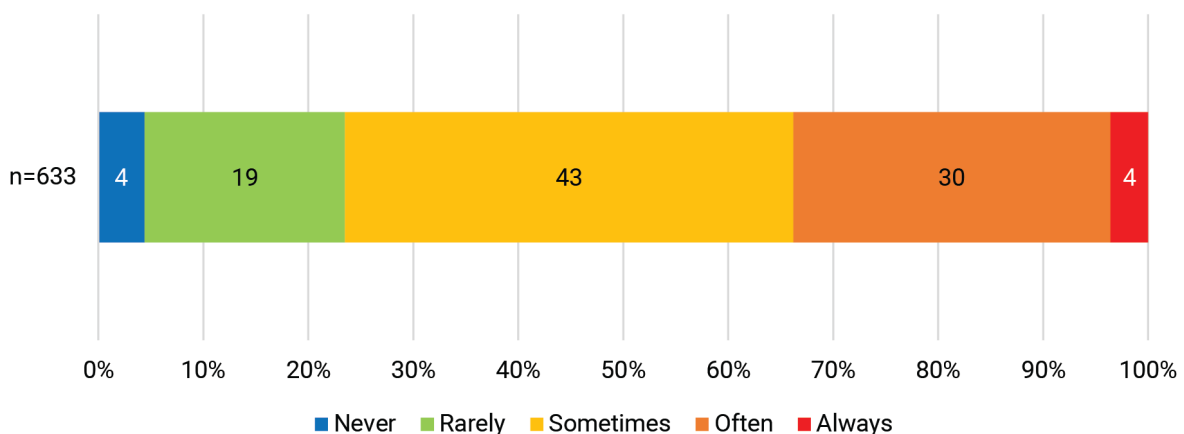
80% aged 35 years or younger

59% heterosexual

21% university educated

21% more than 5 years' experience in Australian sex industry

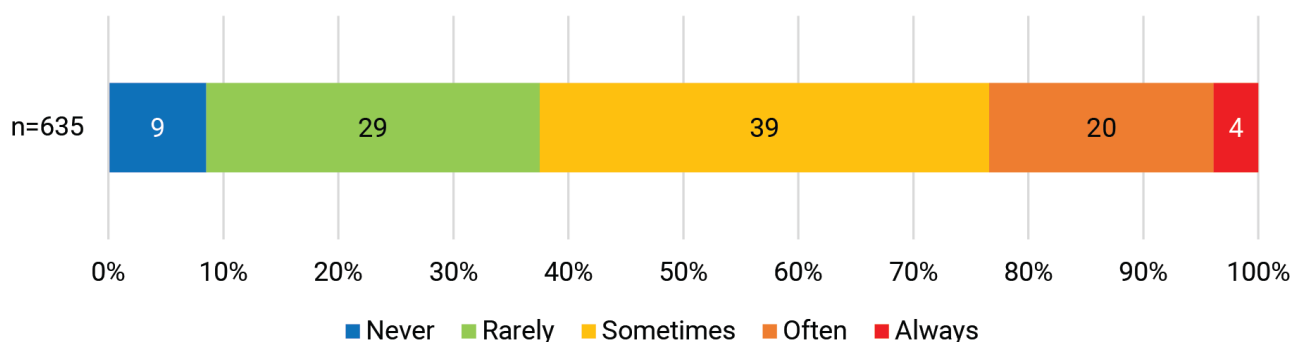
In the last 12 months, have you experienced any stigma or discrimination in relation to your sex work?



In 2020, 96% of participants reported experiencing any stigma or discrimination related to their sex work within the last 12 months, including 34% who indicated that this ‘often’ or ‘always’ occurred.

Similarly, 91% of participants reported any negative treatment by health workers, including 24% who indicated this 'often' or 'always' happened.

Health workers treated me negatively or differently to other people



Reported experiences of stigma and discrimination were very common among Australian-based sex workers in 2020. This project will continue to monitor sex workers' experiences, though wide-reaching interventions will be required if stigma and discrimination are to be significantly reduced within health care settings and the community more generally.

If the results presented here have upset you in any way, we encourage you to seek support from Lifeline (13 11 44) or your state or territory sex worker organisation.

This project was supported by a grant from the Australian Government Department of Health.

We would like to acknowledge the invaluable support of Scarlet Alliance and thank everyone who completed the survey.

For more information on this project, please see: bit.ly/stigma-indicators