

St Patrick's Mental Health Services



Annual Stigma and Attitudes to Mental Health Survey: Five-year (2018 -2022) comparative review

Methodology

The *Annual Attitudes to Mental Health and Stigma Survey* is a bespoke online survey conducted to explore the public's awareness of, and attitudes towards, mental health in Ireland.

Each year, the questionnaire is designed based on previously used iterations of the survey to allow for year-on-year comparisons. From 2020 onwards, additional questions related to the mental health impact of COVID-19 were added.

A nationally representative sample of over 500 adults aged 18+ is surveyed each year, with quotas set on gender, age, region and social class. Over the past five years, 3,444 members of the public have been surveyed, and the average margin of error was 3.9%. Only changes greater than 3.9% can be read to indicate change.

Fieldwork for the annual survey takes place between May – July for a roughly one-week period.

Comparative review 2018 - 2022

Stigma and mental health awareness

Have any of the following ever disclosed to you that they have, or had, a mental health difficulty?

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Friend	N/A	40%	47%	47%	48%
Immediate family	N/A	33%	37%	44%	39%
Colleague	N/A	14%	20%	22%	26%
Partner	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	24%
Extended family	N/A	10%	13%	16%	19%
Other	N/A	5%	5%	5%	4%
Don't know	N/A	2%	2%	1%	4%
None of above	N/A	24%	33%	24%	23%

For each of the following statements, please indicate the extent to which you disagree or agree

Respondents could answer 'strongly agree', 'slightly agree', 'slightly disagree', 'strongly disagree' – this table outlines the combined % who answered either 'strongly agree' or 'slightly agree'

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
I would be comfortable living next door to someone who has bipolar disorder	71%	72%	74%	74%	73%
I would marry someone who was previously admitted to hospital with depression	69%	62%	70%	69%	65%
I would not trust someone who experienced postnatal depression to babysit my child	37%	28%	28%	23%	23%
I think someone who experiences panic attacks could work as head of a large company	59%	55%	60%	67%	66%
If I was worried that my spouse/partner was experiencing a mental health issue, I would raise it with them	88%	91%	91%	94%	92%
I would be okay explaining to my boss that I needed time off work due to a mental health difficulty	61%	61%	64%	61%	56%
Irish people would willingly accept someone with a mental health difficulty as a close friend	67%	62%	72%	68%	71%
Irish people would treat someone with a mental health difficulty the same as anyone else	57%	51%	55%	51%	43%
Being treated for a mental health difficulty is still seen by Irish society as a sign of personal failure	61%	63%	63%	66%	69%
Anyone can experience mental health difficulties	93%	93%	96%	96%	95%
I am afraid of experiencing mental health issues myself in the future	57%	56%	61%	62%	59%
Irish people would willingly accept someone recovering from an alcohol/substance abuse problem as a close friend	70%	63%	69%	67%	72%
I think mental health is not talked about enough in the media	N/A	N/A	72%	69%	66%
I would consider it a sign of weakness if I sought help for a mental health difficulty	N/A	20%	21%	21%	22%
I would consider it a sign of weakness if a friend/colleague/family member sought help for a mental health difficulty	N/A	11%	8%	7%	6%
I believe there is a worrying amount of anxiety in society	N/A	77%	83%	87%	91%

I am more comfortable talking openly about my mental health now than I was before the pandemic	N/A	N/A	N/A	56%	60%
I believe Irish society is more open to talking about mental health issues since the onset of the pandemic	N/A	N/A	N/A	72%	80%
Irish people would willingly accept someone who received inpatient treatment at a mental health hospital as a close friend	60%	57%	61%	60%	53%
Irish society tends to view people who have spent time as an inpatient in a mental health service somewhat differently	70%	74%	73%	78%	76%
People who use mental health services often fully recover and live normal lives	69%	76%	67%	70%	66%
Irish people would willingly accept someone who has received outpatient treatment at a mental health services as a close friend	67%	65%	70%	68%	63%

Children's mental health

Do you worry about your children's mental health?

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Yes	N/A	57%	67%	75%	71%

Have you ever sought mental health services for your child/children?

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Yes	N/A	17%	16%	23%	24%

Was your child diagnosed with a mental health difficulty?

Based on those who answered yes to the question above

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Yes	N/A	48%	37%	57%	51%

Do you see an association between social media and mental health difficulties in children?

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Yes	N/A	76%	74%	77%	69%

Are you concerned about any long-term impact of the pandemic on your child's mental health?

	2020	2021	2022

Yes	N/A	62%	62%
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Services and treatment

Have you ever been treated for a mental health difficulty?

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Yes	26%	25%	35%	41%	39%

% of respondents who would tell no-one if...

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Your son or daughter was being treated for depression	18%	18%	8%	10%	13%
You were on antidepressants	20%	19%	11%	12%	11%
You were experiencing suicidal thoughts	28%	28%	19%	21%	23%
You had previously been an inpatient for a mental health difficulty	27%	29%	17%	17%	18%
You felt that you had an issue with alcohol, drugs, prescription medicines	26%	21%	13%	17%	17%
You were experiencing a mental health difficulty	N/A	17%	8%	11%	11%

COVID-19

Did the pandemic lead to concerns about your own mental health or the mental health of a family member?

	2020	2021	2022
Yes	45%	58%	58%

Did you or a family member ever experience mental health difficulties prior to the pandemic?

	2020	2021	2022
Yes	73%	74%	57%

Did you or a family member seek mental health treatment or support during the COVID-19 pandemic?

	2020	2021	2022
Yes	18%	43%	50%

Did you introduce new ways to manage your mental health during the pandemic?

	2020	2021	2022
Yes	N/A	51%	45%

Societal concerns

Regarding societal challenges, which, if any, of the following are you most concerned about over the coming 12 months?

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Economic factors	N/A	N/A	75%	69%	92%
Impact of Russian invasion	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	65%
Mental health	N/A	N/A	65%	53%	64%
Housing	N/A	N/A	N/A	34%	63%
Climate change	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	61%
Coronavirus risk	N/A	N/A	76%	55%	60%
Other health risks	N/A	N/A	39%	30%	56%
Adjusting to society's re-opening post-pandemic	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	50%
Education shortfalls	N/A	N/A	N/A	22%	45%
None of these	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1%

2022 Annual Attitudes to Mental Health and Stigma Survey findings

Methodology of 2022 Annual Attitudes to Mental Health and Stigma Survey

A bespoke online survey was conducted to explore public awareness of, and attitudes towards mental health in Ireland. The questionnaire was based on previous iterations of the survey, with 2022 changes made in collaboration with St Patrick's Mental Health Services. A nationally representative sample of 802 adults aged 18+ was achieved using a combination of quotas (gender, age, region, social class) and weighting. Fieldwork took place 24 June to 5 July, 2022.

Findings

Stigma and mental health awareness

- 48% of people have had a friend disclose a mental health difficulty to them; 39% an immediate family member; 26% a colleague; 24% a partner; and 19% an extended family member
- 73% would be comfortable living next door to someone who has bipolar disorder
- 65% would marry someone who was previously hospitalised with depression
- 64% would trust someone who had previously experienced postnatal depression to look after their child
- 66% believe someone who experiences panic attacks could be head of a company
- 56% would be okay explaining to their boss if they needed time off due to a mental health difficulty

- 71% believe Irish people would accept someone with a mental health difficulty as a close friend
- 43% believe that Irish people would treat someone with a mental health difficulty the same as anyone else
- 69% believe being treated for a mental health difficulty is still seen as a sign of personal failure by Irish society
- 95% think that anyone can experience mental health difficulties
- 59% are afraid of experiencing mental health difficulties themselves in the future
- 72% believe Irish people would willingly accept someone recovering from a substance abuse problem as a close friend
- 66% don't believe mental health is talked about enough in the media
- 22% would consider it a sign of weakness if they sought help for a mental health difficulty
- 6% would consider it a sign of weakness if a friend sought help for a mental health difficulty
- 91% believe there is a worrying prevalence of anxiety in Irish society
- 60% are more comfortable talking openly about their mental health now than they were before the pandemic
- 80% believe Irish society is more open to talking about mental health issues since the onset of the pandemic
- 53% believe Irish people would accept someone who received inpatient treatment for a mental health difficulty as a close friend
- 76% believe that Irish society tends to view people who have spent time as an inpatient in a mental health service somewhat differently
- 66% believe that people who use mental health services often recover and live normal lives
- 63% believe that Irish people would willingly accept someone who has received an outpatient treatment at a mental health facility.

Children's mental health

- 71% of parents to under-18s worry about their children's mental health
- 24% of parents to under-18s have sought mental health services for their child
- Of these, 51% of children were diagnosed with a mental health difficulty
- 69% of parents see an association between social media and mental health difficulties in children
- 62% are concerned about the long-term impact of the pandemic on their child's mental health.

Services and treatment

- 39% have been treated for a mental health difficulty
- 13% would tell no-one if their child was being treated for depression
- 11% would tell no-one if they were on anti-depressants
- 23% would tell no-one if they were experiencing suicidal thoughts

- 18% would tell no-one if they had previously been an inpatient for a mental health difficulty
- 17% would tell no-one if they felt they had an issue with alcohol, drugs or prescription medicine.
- 11% would tell no-one if they were experiencing a mental health difficulty.

COVID-19

- 33% said COVID-19 led to concerns about their own mental health
- 25% said COVID-19 led to concerns about a family member's mental health
- 43% of people did not experience mental health difficulties prior to the pandemic
- 50% sought mental health treatment or support during the pandemic
- 45% introduced new ways to manage their mental health during the pandemic
- 54% said the pandemic presented an opportunity to reflect on values and priorities
- 51% said the pandemic presented an opportunity for changes in the workplace
- 23% said the pandemic presented an opportunity for reduced mental health stigma
- 52% said the lifting of restrictions positively impacted their mental health.

Societal concerns

Regarding societal challenges, which, if any, of the following are you most concerned about over the coming 12 months? *Respondents ranked in order of most concerned*

- 92% are concerned about economic factors over the coming 12 months
- 65% are concerned about the impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine
- 64% are concerned about mental health
- 63% are concerned about housing
- 61% are concerned about climate change
- 60% are concerned about coronavirus.