

Survey finds people more willing to disclose experience of mental health problems

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(Medical Xpress)—A new survey has found that people are more willing to disclose their experience of having a mental health problem and receiving treatment.

The findings of the survey, which was led by Orygen Youth Health Research Centre, in collaboration with the University of Melbourne, also indicated improved knowledge and beliefs about mental health problems within the community due, in part, to educational campaigns about mental health.

Lead researcher Dr Nicola Reavley from the Melbourne School of Population and Global Health said this increase in willingness to disclose

is most likely due to changing attitudes towards and greater awareness of mental health problems, rather than more people having mental health problems or more people having treatment.

"We conducted a national survey of mental health literacy, that is, what people know and believe about mental health problems like depression and schizophrenia. We compared these results with previous surveys carried out since 1995," Dr Reavley said.

"The results of the study revealed that the numbers of those disclosing experiences of depression and early schizophrenia, and of having received professional help for depression, have increased since 1995."

"We know that people are better at recognising the symptoms of depression than they used to be. It is also possible that there is less stigma around disclosure, although we still have a lot of work to do in that area," Dr Reavley said.

In 1995, 45 per cent of people said they knew someone like the person given in the case description, while in 2011, 71 per cent of people said this.

The study also showed that between survey periods 2003, 2004 and 2011, females were more likely than males to disclose experiencing depression, while those born overseas were more likely than those born in Australia to disclose experiencing [depression](#) with suicidal thoughts.

Researchers say these findings can contribute to the design of public education and anti-stigma interventions. Such policies could facilitate early treatment-seeking by improving recognition of mental disorder signs and symptoms, knowledge of appropriate treatments and minimise the impact of stigma as a barrier to seeking professional help.

"This new information helps us to understand how things can change in the population and the impact of campaigns to reduce the stigma of [mental health](#) problems," Dr Reavley said.

Provided by University of Melbourne

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