



Make a mental note

Raise awareness
of mental
health-related
stigma in the
workplace

What is mental health-related stigma and how does it affect workers?

Factsheet for managers and supervisors

Mental health-related stigma consists of the negative stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination towards people experiencing mental health issues.

Stigma can be described as a mark of shame or disapproval that changes the way other people view and treat the individual and can lead to them being considered inferior, incapable of work or maintaining relationships, and denied access to essential services and employment.

In the workplace, a worker may experience stigma when completing routine tasks, attending formal

meetings and networking events, and in countless other interactions with colleagues, managers and supervisors, customers or clients, and with the general public. People with a diagnosed mental health condition such as anxiety and depression have reported that experiencing mental health-related stigma and discrimination sometimes makes them feel worse than the effects of their illness.

Types of stigma

Public stigma

A person's stigmatising thoughts, feelings and behaviours about/towards people with experiences of mental health issues.

Self-stigma

Stigmatising views that individuals hold about themselves. This may result from internalising the negative stereotypes and attitudes held by others.

Structural stigma

Organisational policies and practices that enable unfair treatment of workers with experiences of mental health issues.

Stigma and discrimination statistics

- **More than two in five Australians said they had experienced a diagnosed mental illness** at some point in their life, and one in five said they had experienced a diagnosed mental illness that lasted 12 months or longer. (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022)¹
- Our Turn to Speak – a survey of people with complex mental health needs – reported that **78% of participants experienced some level of mental health-related stigma or discrimination** in relation to employment in the 12-month period preceding the survey, with over 50% reporting frequent or very frequent experiences in this area. (Groot et al., 2020)
- **Nearly 80% of people indicated they had experienced unfair treatment** by employers, supervisors or managers in relation to their complex mental health issue. (Groot et al., 2020)

Impacts of stigma

- Not disclosing mental health issues or asking for supports to help them flourish in the workplace
- Discouraging reporting and help-seeking
- Making recovery and return to work harder
- Bullying and discrimination
- Absenteeism, decreased productivity, social withdrawal
- Poor self-worth and lack of confidence in own ability.

¹ For the full list of references used in this fact sheet, see the accompanying resource ['What is mental health-related stigma and how does it affect workers?'](#)

