Stigma Snapshot: Hepatitis C 2025

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Stigma Snapshot

Hepatitis C 2025

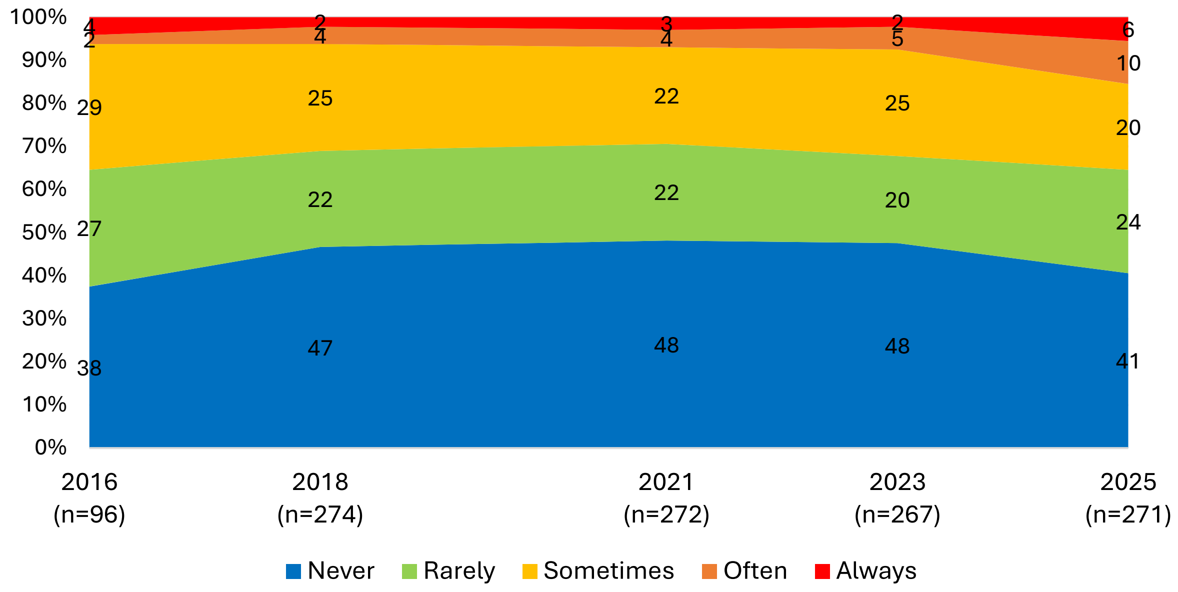
Stigma has a major impact on health outcomes for people living with blood borne viruses (BBVs) and sexually transmissible infections (STIs). The Australian Government Department of Health strategies for BBVs and STIs explicitly aim to “eliminate the negative impact of stigma, discrimination, and legal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

In 2025, a survey of people who inject drugs was conducted to investigate their experiences of stigma. Participants who had ever been diagnosed with hepatitis C were asked about their experiences of stigma in relation to their hepatitis C. This followed on from previous surveys of people who inject drugs and had been diagnosed with hepatitis C, which have been conducted periodically since 2016.

282 people completed the 2025 survey

59% male – 71% heterosexual – 34% Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
48% completed high school – 34% had received HCV treatment before 2016
42% had received HCV treatment since 2016

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

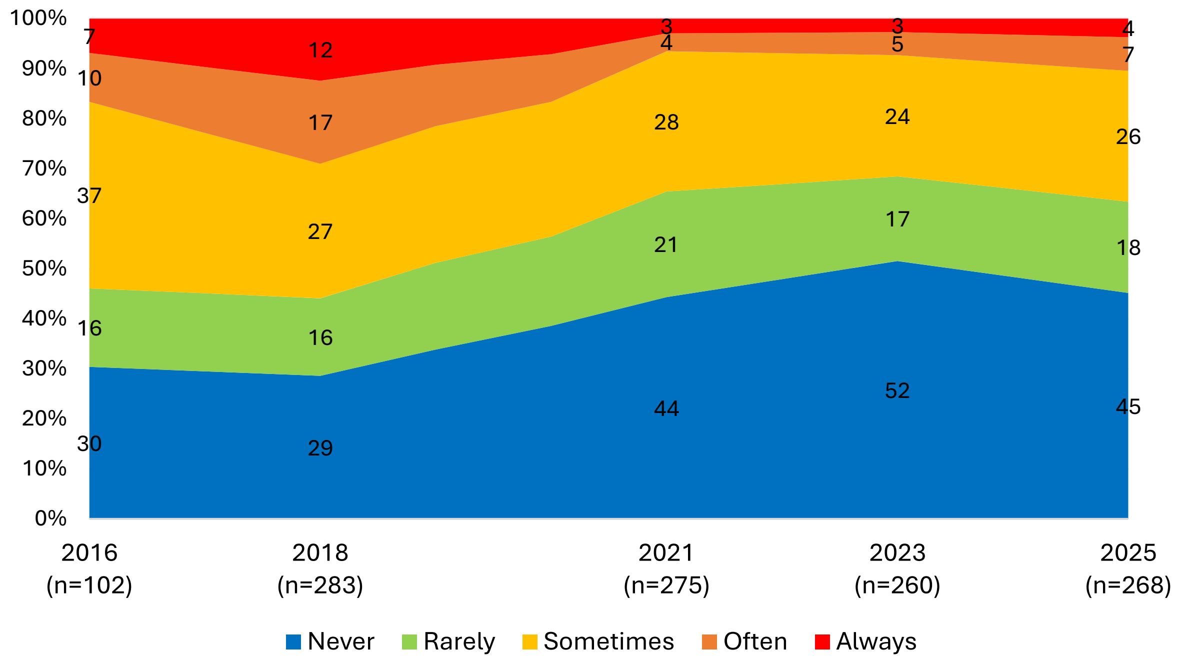


Note: This graph excludes 12 participants who responded ‘N/A’ in 2016.
‘N/A’ was not provided as a response option after 2016.

In 2025, more than half of participants (59%) reported experiencing stigma within the last 12 months in relation to their hepatitis C, including 16% reporting that they ‘often’ or ‘always’ experienced stigma. The proportion who reported ‘often’ experiencing stigma in relation to their hepatitis C was consistently between 4-5% before increasing to 10% in 2025. No other significant changes were evident over time.

In 2025, 55% of participants reported being treated negatively by health workers in the past 12 months, including 11% who indicated that this ‘often’ or ‘always’ occurred. Negative treatment by health workers has been reported less frequently between 2021-2025 than in 2016-2018, however, these trends were not statistically significant.

Health workers treated me negatively or differently to other people



Note: This graph excludes 8 participants who responded ‘N/A’ in 2016.
‘N/A’ was not provided as a response option after 2016.

Stigma and discrimination continue to be commonly experienced by people living with hepatitis C, with no meaningful change in participants' reports of any past-year experiences of stigma since 2016. Within health care settings, the proportion of participants reporting any negative treatment was lower in recent years, compared with earlier rounds of data collection, however, these changes over time were not statistically significant. It should also be noted that data were collected from repeated cross-sectional surveys, so any differences over time should be interpreted with caution. Regardless of any incremental trends, the finding that more than half of participants reported negative treatment by health workers within the last 12 months highlights the persistent need to address stigma within health care settings. Significant ongoing progress is therefore needed to eliminate the barrier that stigma creates for people living with hepatitis C to accessing the quality of health care they need.

Wide-ranging initiatives are required to address stigma towards people living with hepatitis C within health care systems and throughout society more broadly. The Stigma Indicators Monitoring Project will continue to monitor experiences of stigma and discrimination reported by people living with hepatitis C, as well as negative behaviour expressed by health care professionals and the general public.

If the results presented here have upset you in any way, we encourage you to seek mental health support from Lifeline (13 11 44) or peer support from AIVL (1 800 692 485).

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We would like to acknowledge the invaluable support of the Australian Injecting & Illicit Drug Users League (AIVL) and their member organisations in assisting with recruiting survey participants.

We would also like to thank everyone who completed the survey.

For more information on this project, please see the project website.

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