# Make It OK
IMPACT Survey Results
November 2022

Overview

Make It OK is a community initiative that aims to **reduce the stigma of mental illness** through community engagement, education, online resources, and media campaigns. Developed by HealthPartners and the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), the program targets specific communities in Minnesota and Western Wisconsin.
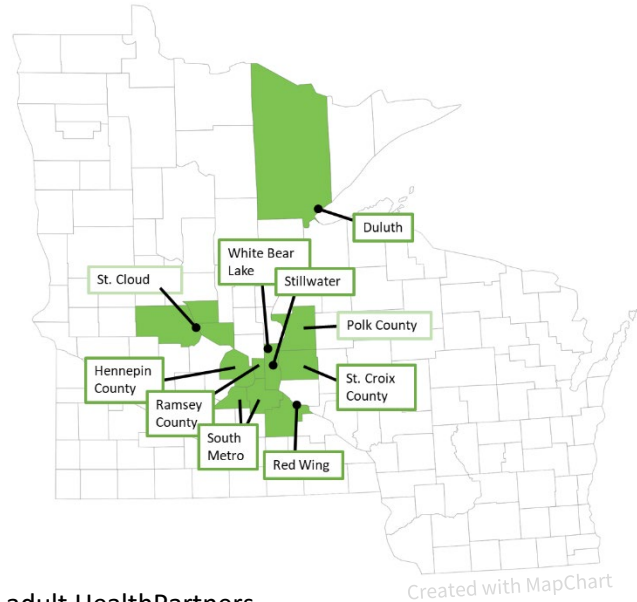
To support initiative strategy, we partnered with the HealthPartners Institute Center for Evaluation and Survey Research. We designed the IMPACT survey to understand **what people think and do about mental health and stigma**. We sent the 2021 IMPACT survey to adult HealthPartners members living in these specific communities. We offered the survey online, on paper, and over the phone. We also administered this survey in 2017 and 2019; this report has some information about change in responses over time for communities we have surveyed before.

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Key Takeaways

Over half (57%) of survey respondents agree that there is mental illness stigma in their communities. While this number has decreased since 2019, there is still work to be done.

When asked how comfortable people are talking with someone about that person's mental illness, most 2021 respondents (65%) say they are somewhat or very comfortable. Comfort level has decreased since 2019.

Most respondents (75%+) are willing to take action against mental illness stigma, and many have already taken action.

Who Responded

In 2021, nearly two thousand (n=1,942) people responded to the survey, for a 31.2% response rate. Respondents were more likely to be white (with other most frequently reported racial/ethnic identities being Asian (3%), Black/African American (3%), and Hispanic/Latino (2%)), female, over age 55, and to have Medicare than non-respondents.

84% white, non-Hispanic	57% female	67% income of $50,000+	60% college degree+	57% commercial insurance	59% have friend/family with mental illness

Stigmatizing beliefs
In 2021, over half **(57%)** agree that **there are negative impressions, stereotypes, or stigma about mental illness** in their community. This is a significant decrease from 63% reported in the 2019 survey, suggesting progress.

The survey listed a series of statements or beliefs about mental illness and asked people how much they agreed or disagreed with each statement. The goal is to have 0% agreement, or no one agreeing with a stigmatizing belief. Higher agreement suggests program opportunities to address existing stigma.
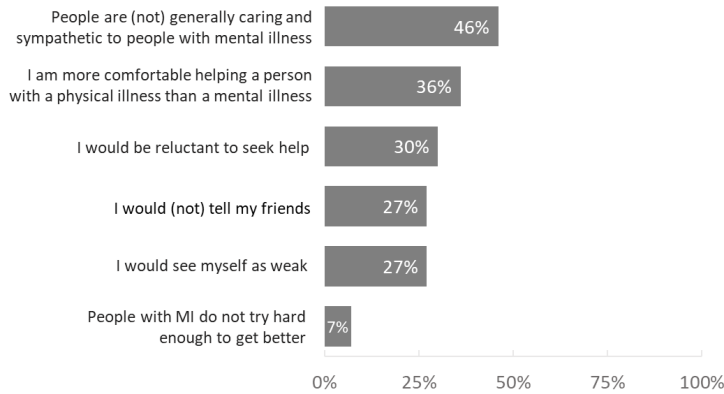

Statement	%
People are (not) generally caring and sympathetic to people with mental illness	46%
I am more comfortable helping a person with a physical illness than a mental illness	36%
I would be reluctant to seek help	30%
I would (not) tell my friends	27%
I would see myself as weak	27%
People with MI do not try hard enough to get better	7%

Figure 1. Almost half of respondents believe that people are not caring or sympathetic to people with mental illness.

In past surveys, directional improvements in reducing stigmatized beliefs were observed between 2017 and 2019. In 2021, comfort helping, telling friends, and trying hard to get better improved, with stigma levels significantly lower than in 2019.

As represented by this quote from a surveyed individual, some people suggested that COVID may have led to more awareness about mental illnesses as people struggled to cope with the pandemic. Females were more likely to report that the pandemic increased awareness than males. In addition, data from the 2019 survey showed some important differences in response by race and ethnicity, with people of color indicating that they would be more reluctant to seek help for their own mental health. Recognizing differences like these can help guide expanded partnerships and outreach to ensure equitable access to information about stigma and mental illnesses as well as community and care resources for our entire community.

"I think [COVID] has [made] more people sympathetic and accepting of illness like depression and anxiety which may have been triggered or worsened due to the pandemic."

Comfort talking about a mental illness
We asked people how comfortable they were talking with someone about that person's mental illness. Between 2019 and 2021, there was a **6-percentage point decline** in the number of people who said they were somewhat or very comfortable indicating that **comfort talking about mental illness decreased** in recent years.
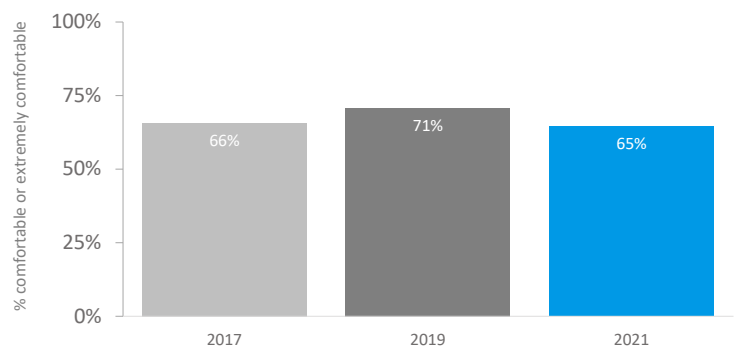

Year	% comfortable or extremely comfortable
2017	66%
2019	71%
2021	65%

Survey respondents in 2021 noted that mental health was more likely to be discussed publicly, including in media coverage and on social media. Some respondents attributed this increase in media coverage to COVID, suggesting that the increased media attention increased their own awareness about mental health.

Taking action

We gave people a list of anti-stigma actions individuals can take and asked whether they have done or would consider doing any of them. Almost 75% have done or would consider doing each of the following actions, with learning about mental health being the most commonly endorsed item:
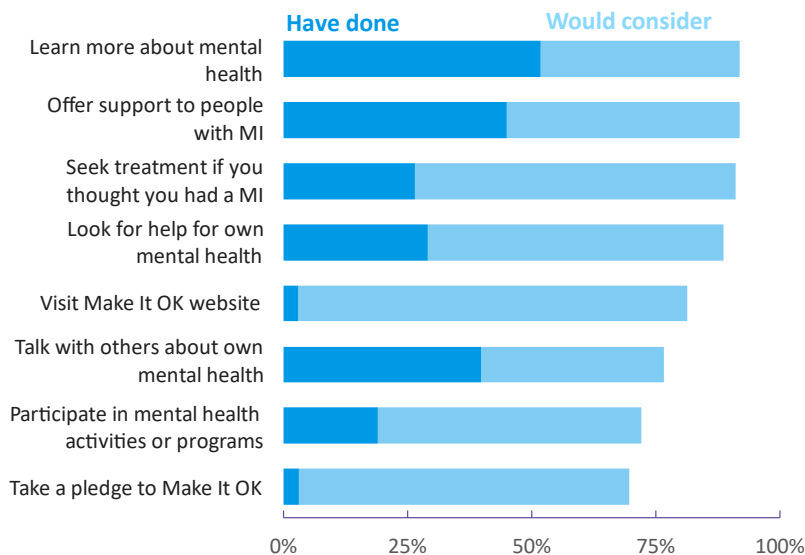
What's Next?

The survey results point to a few key next steps for the Make It OK initiative:

Recognize success in the measures that have improved while also pushing for improvement in the measures that haven't been changing, both overall and among specific communities.

Dive deeper into the data to understand how different groups are affected by stigmatizing beliefs. Use these findings to tailor messages and resources for these people whom the program isn't effectively reaching.

Continue seeking input from the community about stigma and mental health through the IMPACT survey to identify opportunities and evaluate progress over time.

"Make it OK is committed to evaluating its progress over time and sharing its findings. The HealthPartners Institute designed the IMPACT survey to systematically measure attitudes and perceptions of mental health and illnesses over time. This enables data-driven decision making as we learn what opportunities exist to continue to reduce the stigma of mental illness and improve community health."

--Jeanette Ziegenfuss, PhD, Director of the HealthPartners Institute Center for Evaluation and Survey Research