



UNSW

Centre for Social Research in Health

# Changes in HIV and STI stigma expressed by Australian health care workers

## Results from the Stigma Indicators Monitoring Project

Timothy Broady, Loren Brener, Elena Cama, Carla Treloar - Centre for Social Research in Health, UNSW

**Background:** Stigma is widely recognised as a fundamental cause of health inequity. Expressed stigma towards people living with HIV (PLHIV) and people with STIs (PWSTIs) by health care workers has implications for each step of the care cascade.

**Methods:** Cross-sectional surveys of Australian health care workers were conducted as part of the Stigma Indicators Monitoring Project. Data from 2021-2022 were analysed. Differences over time in participants' self-reported likelihood of expressing stigma and witnessing their colleagues express stigma towards PLHIV and PWSTIs were assessed with logistic regression.



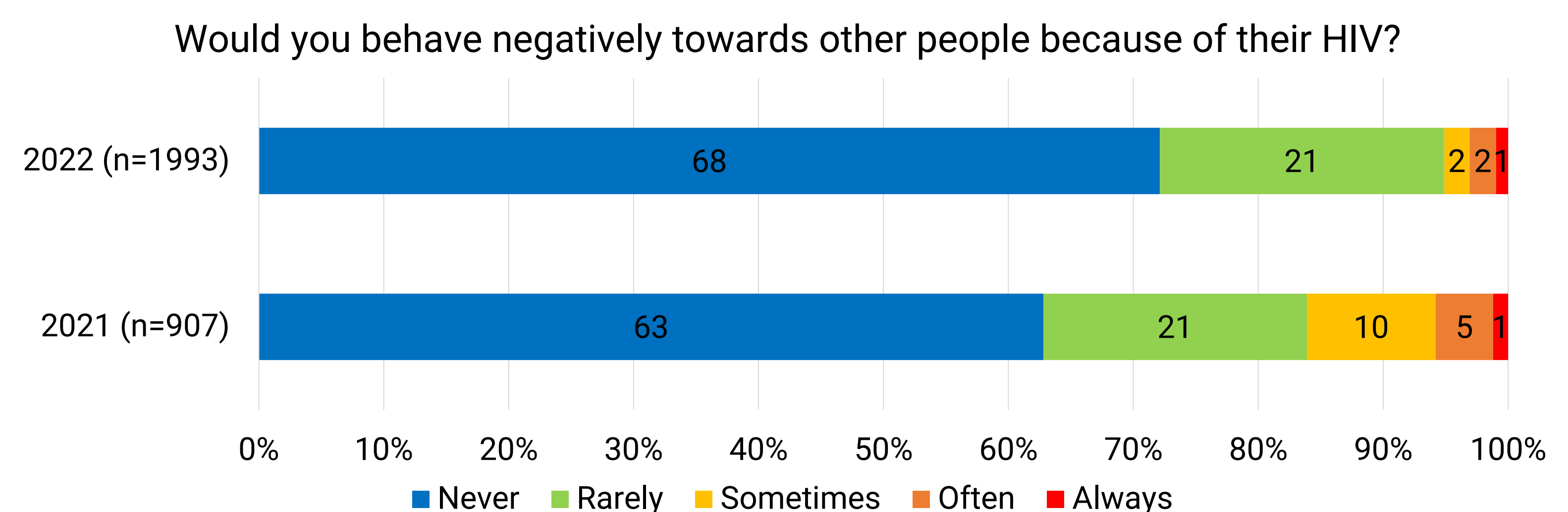
### Results:

Table 1. Participant demographics by year

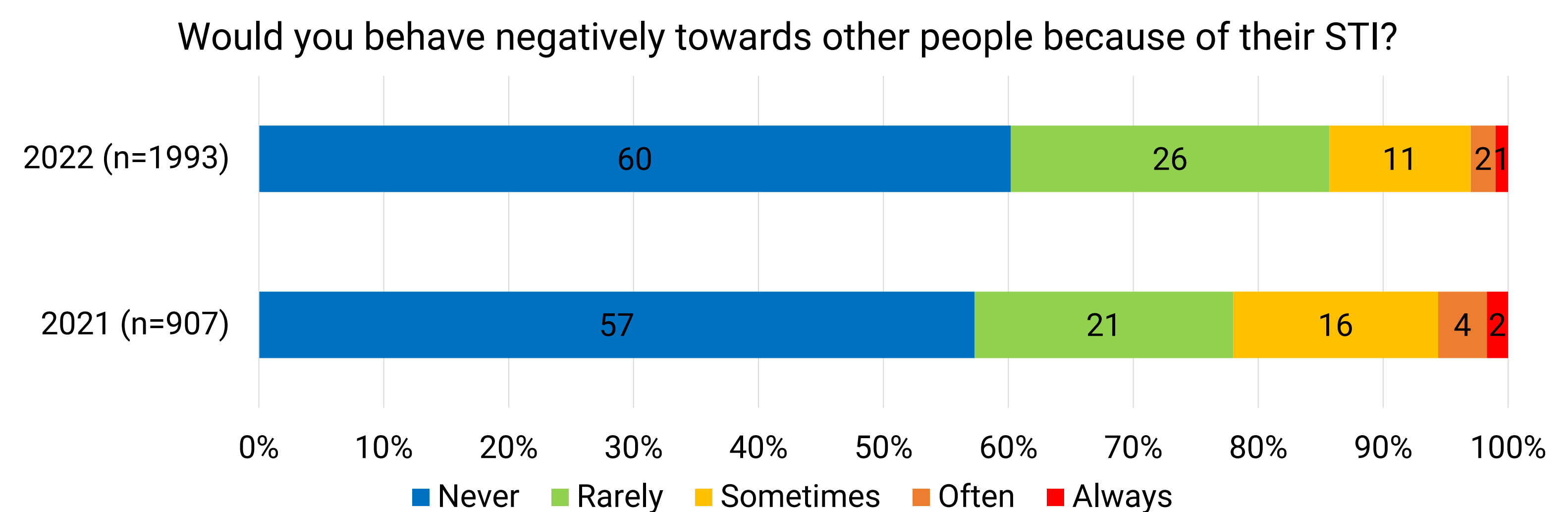
	2021 (n=907)	2022 (n=1,993)
<b>Age (mean)</b>	33.7 years	33.1 years
<b>Gender:</b>		
Male*	22.3%	11.7%
Female*	77.5%	87.6%
Non-binary	0.2%	0.5%
Different identity	-	0.2%
<b>Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander*</b>	4.6%	2.9%
<b>Born overseas</b>	22.0%	19.2%
<b>University education</b>	64.8%	63.4%
<b>Employed full time</b>	53.4%	50.3%
<b>Role:<sup>1</sup></b>		
Nurse*	38.4%	32.2%
Allied health	34.7%	36.3%
Administration*	13.6%	20.4%
Doctor*	5.3%	3.4%
<b>Workplace:<sup>1</sup></b>		
Hospital	42.9%	45.6%
Private practice	19.0%	19.0%
Community health centre*	13.4%	10.1%
<b>More than 5 years' experience</b>	47.4%	45.8%

\* Significant difference between 2021 and 2022 sample  
<sup>1</sup> Response categories were not mutually exclusive. The most common responses are listed.

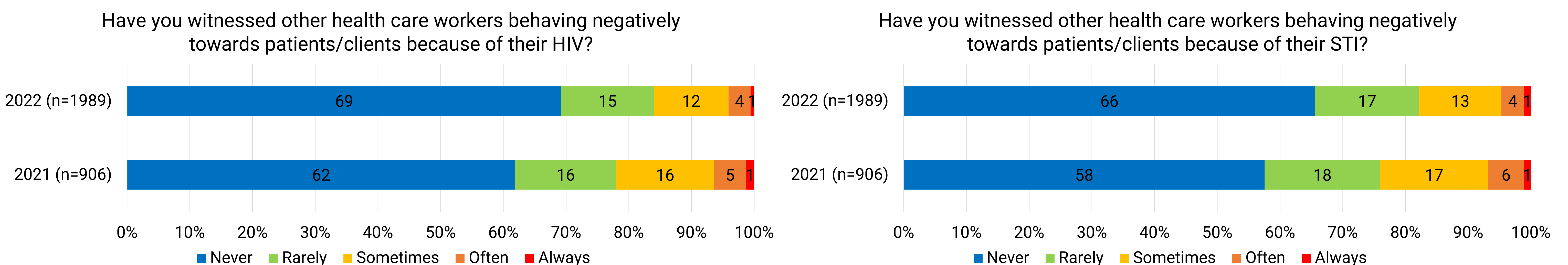
Between 2021-2022, the proportion of health care workers who would never behave negatively towards PLHIV increased (OR=1.25,  $p<.01$ ), while there were decreases in the proportions who would sometimes (OR=.75,  $p=.04$ ) or often (OR=.41,  $p<.001$ ) behave negatively towards PLHIV.



The proportion who would never behave negatively towards PWSTIs remained stable (OR=1.12,  $p=.15$ ). There were decreases in the proportions who would sometimes (OR=.65,  $p<.001$ ) or often (OR=.51,  $p<.01$ ) behave negatively.



Witnessing negative behaviour from colleagues was less common in 2022 than in 2021. The proportion who witnessed any negative behaviour towards PLHIV in the past 12 months decreased from 38% to 31% (OR=.72,  $p<.001$ ) and the proportion who witnessed any negative behaviour towards PWSTIs decreased from 42% to 34% (OR=.71,  $p<.001$ ).



**Conclusion:** Expression of stigma towards PLHIV and PWSTIs decreased among Australian health care workers between 2021 and 2022. Despite these reductions, 32% of health workers would still behave negative towards PLHIV and 40% would behave negatively towards PWSTIs. Approximately one in three health workers witnessed negative behaviour towards PLHIV or PWSTIs within the past year. Ongoing investment in stigma reduction initiatives is necessary across diverse health care settings. Continued monitoring is also necessary to determine the extent of any long-term change, as well as identify areas where stigma and discrimination are most likely to persist.

