

## **FINDINGS FROM THE AUSTRALIAN ABORTION STIGMA SURVEY**

### **Authors:**

Vallury K<sup>1</sup>, Ward P<sup>1</sup>, Miller, E<sup>1</sup> & Baird B<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> College of Medicine and Public Health, Flinders University

<sup>2</sup> College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, Flinders University

### **Background:**

Abortion is one of the most common and safest gynecological procedures, yet is arguably the most stigmatised. Abortion stigma, although greatly under-researched, has demonstrated links to social inequities, reduced abortion provision, accessibility and poor health outcomes. To date, however, there are no significant published studies on abortion stigma in Australia.

### **Methods:**

A 63-item survey tool was developed and tested alongside a global expert panel. The final tool, The Australian Abortion Stigma Survey, explores demographics and pregnancy experiences, abortion knowledge, attitudes and perceived stigma. Participants were recruited to complete the survey online via Facebook, data analysed using logistic regression in IBM SPSS Statistics 27.

### **Results:**

The survey went viral on social media, resulting in 70,051 responses. Participants represented a broad spectrum of the Australian population, aged 16 and over. Multivariate modelling found that pro-choice and anti-choice attitudes were the strongest predictors of perceived abortion stigma, with those supportive of legal abortion more likely to perceive greater social consequences associated with abortion, and people opposed to legal abortion twice as likely to perceive high community-level stigma. Young age and rural residence were also found to be strong predictors of perceived stigma, while pregnancy and abortion experiences weren't found to have a significant impact.

### **Conclusion:**

The first study of its kind in Australia and likely largest in the world, the findings of the Australian Abortion Stigma Survey provide insight into groups at highest risk of perceived abortion stigma, and how perceived stigma interacts with abortion attitudes, demographic factors and knowledge. It is hoped the findings will be used to inform how we address abortion stigma and future work to document the impacts of stigma locally, with implications for sexual and reproductive health outcomes, rights and equity.

**Disclosure Of Interest:** None