



WASHINGTON HEALTH SYSTEM
Center for Mental Health and Wellbeing

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



Americans' Stigma Against Depression May Finally Be Fading: Study

According to HealthDay News, Americans may be dropping some of the stigma they once had toward depression, but attitudes toward other mental health conditions still seem stuck in the past, a new study shows.

The research, based on interviews with U.S. adults conducted over 22 years, found a mixed bag when it came to mental health stigma. In general, the researchers found, Americans' "mental health literacy" seemed to improve over the years: More people understood that depression, alcohol dependence and schizophrenia are medical conditions with biological causes.

Attitudes toward depression showed a particular shift. In recent years, people were less likely to want to avoid someone with depression, versus two decades ago.

The picture was different with alcohol dependence and schizophrenia, however. There was actually an increase in the percentage of people who attributed alcohol dependence to "bad character." Similarly, more Americans harbored the misperception that people with schizophrenia are "dangerous."

The findings regarding depression are encouraging, said Dr. Christine Crawford, associate medical director of the nonprofit National Alliance on Mental Illness.

"If people see that there is less stigma toward depression, maybe even more will be willing to talk about it, and seek help," said Crawford, who was not involved in the study. In contrast, the regression in attitudes toward schizophrenia and alcohol dependence is concerning, Crawford said.

She speculated that media portrayals might help explain the trends. On one hand, recent years have seen celebrities and other public figures talking about their own battles with depression, which can help "normalize" the condition.

**January
2022**



Month

Mental Wellness Month

National Mentoring Month

Week

No Name Calling Week (Jan. 11-21)

Day

Global Family Day (Jan. 1)

National Clean Off Your Desk Day (Jan. 10)

Human Trafficking Awareness Day (Jan. 11)

National Fun At Work Day (Jan. 28)

To learn more visit:

<https://sacwellness.com/mental-health-awareness-calendar/>

On other hand, she said, media portrayals of people with alcohol problems are often less than positive. And the public might perceive their issues as a character flaw, rather than a consequence of untreated alcohol dependence.

Meanwhile, the way the news media cover violence might sway public opinion on people with schizophrenia, Crawford said.

It's common, for example, for coverage of mass shootings to bring up questions about the perpetrator's mental health — and, from some quarters, calls for keeping guns out of the hands of the mentally ill.

"What people don't realize is, it's rare for people with schizophrenia to commit violence," Crawford said. "More often, they're victims of violence."

Lead researcher Bernice Pescosolido made similar points. With depression, she said, the increasingly public conversation has likely made "a huge difference." It's also possible that antidepressant ads have had an impact, said Pescosolido, a professor of sociology at Indiana University Bloomington.

If people are regularly seeing those ads, she noted, that may reinforce the message that depression is a common, treatable medical condition. As for attitudes toward alcohol dependence, there is a disconnect — with more people now acknowledging it as a mental health condition, but also commonly seeing it as a character flaw.

It is puzzling, Pescosolido said. But she also noted that Americans tend to judge addiction, in general, more harshly than other mental health disorders. The findings, published online Dec. 21 in JAMA Network Open, are based on interviews done in 1996, 2006 and 2018. Each wave involved a nationally representative sample of over 1,000 U.S. adults.

"Stigma" was gauged by presenting participants with various vignettes describing a fictitious person with a mental health disorder, then asking them questions about each.

Over the years, the study found, there was an increase in the percentage of people who considered depression, schizophrenia and alcoholism diagnosable psychiatric disorders — distinct from life's "daily troubles."

That's a positive step, according to Pescosolido.

"We don't tell people with diabetes to just 'get themselves together,'" she noted.

In another positive trend, the 2018 respondents were more willing to "work closely" with, or be friends with, a person with depression than earlier respondents were. That openness, however, was not given to people with alcohol dependence or schizophrenia.

In 2018, over 60% of participants considered alcoholism a sign of bad character, while a similar percentage believed people with schizophrenia are dangerous.

Such stigmatization does matter, Pescosolido said: For people living with psychiatric disorders, it can take a toll on their quality of life and be a major obstacle in recovery.

Crawford agreed. "As a society, we need to shift our mindset about how we treat and talk about

**DID YOU
KNOW?**

What is Human Trafficking:

Human trafficking is a type of human rights abuse where people profit from the exploitation of others — mainly through the use of force, fraud or coercion to manipulate victims into engaging in sex acts or labor/services in exchange for something of value. All persons under age 18 who exchange sex for something of value are human-trafficking victims, regardless of whether force, fraud or coercion is involved. Human trafficking is a crime at both the Federal and State levels.

To learn more visit:
https://www.pacourts.us/learn/human-trafficking?gclid=EA1aI0obChMIiqPZu9rA9QIVgs31Ch0IzQNaEAAAYASAAEgKBg_D_BwE



Identifying Human Trafficking

There is no “one-size fits all” way to identify a trafficking victim. Human trafficking victimization is complex and presents in numerous, unique ways. It is unlikely there will be visible indications that a stranger you pass is being trafficked. In order to best help potential victims, it is important to pay attention to the people you know or already interact with in your own family, workplace and community. Understanding the vulnerabilities that can pave the way for victimization and being aware of situations that may raise red flags is key.

Vulnerabilities: Anyone can be trafficked, but it is no coincidence that traffickers recognize and take advantage of people in vulnerable situations.

Persons you know might be vulnerable to trafficking if they:

- Are facing poverty or are having trouble paying for basic needs
- Are in an unstable living situation
- Have a history of domestic violence victimization
- Have a caregiver or family member with a substance use issue
- Are a runaway, foster care system, or juvenile justice involved minor
- Have unstable immigration status
- Are a member of the LGBTQ+ Community
- Have prior criminal convictions, especially for prostitution and related offenses
- Are a survivor of sexual abuse
- Are facing substance use issues
- Have unaddressed mental health needs
- Have a cognitive and/or physical disability that impacts daily functions
- Are isolated from family and friends

To read the full article, please visit: https://www.pacourts.us/learn/human-trafficking?gclid=EA1aIQobChMliqPZu9rA9QIVgs3ICh0IzQNaEAAYASAAEgKBg_D_BwE

Did You Know?

January 28th is National Fun Day At Work:

National Fun at Work Day is a holiday that encourages employees to relax and enjoy themselves. For example, managers and employees play games, do team building activities, enjoy entertainment and show appreciation for each other. The goal of this day is to boost employee engagement and job satisfaction. National Fun at Work Day occurs in the US on January 28. International Fun at Work Day falls on April 1st. We recommend observing both.

To find our list of fun, at work activities visit: <https://teambuilding.com/blog/national-fun-at-work-day>



Thank You

Dear Valued Referral Sources,

We appreciate your ongoing referral. Thank you for your trust and confidence in our services. May your New Year be blessed with Peace, Love and Joy! We look forward to the opportunity to continue working with you and your team.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Campbell, MSW, LSW

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Greene County Crisis Line: 1-800-417-9460

Washington County 24-Hour Crisis Hotline: 1-877-225-3567

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255

Greenbriar Treatment Facility: 1-800-637-4673

STTARS Sexual Assault Hotline (Greene & Washington): 1-888-480-7283