



Mental Health
Commission
of Canada

Commission de
la santé mentale
du Canada

Stigma Cultures in Health Care Scale (SCHCS)

Introduction

The **Stigma Cultures in Health Care Scale** (SCHCS)¹ was developed as part of a [larger project](#) the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) initiated in 2019.

This scale was designed to capture stigma cultures in **any health-care setting** (including family doctors' offices, outpatient clinics, emergency departments, and hospitals) where people with a mental health and/or substance use (MHSU) concern may seek care. It is a 23-item unidimensional scale.

Development of the scale

The SCHCS was designed to capture stigma experiences specifically from the perspective of service users. Scale development and testing followed best practice guidelines, including participation of people with lived and living experience of mental health and substance use disorders and family members (PWLLE) in the development process. More information about the development and testing of the SCHCS can be found [here](#).

Using the scale

To complete the scale, participants are asked the extent to which they agree or disagree with each of the 23 items using a four-point scale: strongly agree (1), agree (2), disagree (3), or strongly disagree (4). 'Not applicable' and 'don't know' response options are also provided.

Item scores range from one to four, with higher scores indicating higher levels of structural stigma (no items are reverse-coded). The total score of all items will range from 23-92. Mean average scores can also be used to compute a total scale score. When calculating mean or total scores, 'not applicable' and 'don't know' responses should be excluded.

The scale also may be transformed into count variables indicating the frequency with which respondents reported having experienced structural stigma. To do this, disagree and strongly disagree responses (i.e., responses indicating the presence of stigma) would be recoded as 'yes' to indicate a stigmatizing experience.

For more information, or for inquiries regarding possible scale adaptations, please contact the MHCC at mhccinfo@mentalhealthcommission.ca.

1 Stuart, H., Knaak, S. Measuring aspects of stigma cultures in healthcare settings. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology* (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00127-024-02780-5>

The Stigma Cultures in Health Care Scale (SCHCS)

The survey preamble may be modified to instruct respondents to reflect on their care experiences as they relate to the specific interests of a particular study or quality improvement initiative (e.g., ‘most recent care experience’, ‘overall care experience in this setting over the last month’, etc.).

This survey asks for your opinions on a series of statements about your care experience. Please answer according to your own beliefs, feelings, and experiences.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable	Prefer not to answer
1. I was taken seriously.						
2. My needs were met.						
3. I was paid attention to.						
4. I had choice.						
5. I felt supported.						
6. Instructions were clear.						
7. My concerns were met.						
8. I had the final say in care decisions.						
9. Treatment times were convenient.						
10. I felt welcomed.						

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable	Prefer not to answer
11. I was encouraged to ask questions.						
12. I didn't feel rushed.						
13. My emotional needs were met.						
14. My mental health needs were met.						
15. Treatment options were clearly explained to me.						
16. I was treated fairly.						
17. It was not difficult to get an appointment.						
18. My physical health needs were met.						
19. I was told about my treatment.						
20. I was not made to feel my health condition was my fault.						
21. I was allowed to bring someone with me for support.						
22. I was treated with respect.						
23. My rights were explained to me.						



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Financial contribution from

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mhccinfo@mentalhealthcommission.ca
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