



FACTUM

The Inconvenient Truth: Being Around People with Schizophrenia Makes Many Feel *Uncomfortable*

Majorities Wouldn't Date (61%) or Know How to Act Around Someone with Schizophrenia (55%)

Toronto, Ontario, October 7, 2019 — A new Ipsos poll conducted on behalf of Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Services reveals that schizophrenia is not well understood by many Ontarians. Just three in five (59%) say they are at least *somewhat familiar* with schizophrenia, a figure which tracks well below what is reported for other mental illnesses, including: depression (89%), post-traumatic stress (71%), bi-polar (67%), and obsessive-compulsive disorders (73%).

This lack of familiarity may contribute to the discomfort many Ontarians profess they would feel if they spent time around people with schizophrenia. Close to half (48%) admit outright that being around people with schizophrenia would make them *uncomfortable* while as many as thirteen percent (13%) are not sure how they would feel about it. To put it into perspective, a majority say they would be *comfortable* being around people who suffer from: depression (79%), post-traumatic stress (68%) bi-polar (59%), and obsessive-compulsive disorders (70%). And yet just four in ten (39%) feel this way about schizophrenia.

For many Ontarians, there are stigmas associated with the disorder. For starters, a clear majority say they wouldn't date (61%) or know how to act around someone with schizophrenia (55%). One in three (34%) admit they wouldn't be willing to hire anyone with schizophrenia and an even greater proportion (38%) wouldn't be willing to rent an apartment or room to someone with the disorder. Moreover, a full one in ten (10%) *agree* with the idea that people with schizophrenia should be kept away from society, completely.

Clearly many aren't familiar or comfortable with schizophrenia. But a sizeable proportion don't really understand it, either. The extent to which many Ontarians fall short in their understanding of the disorder are exemplified by the following data points:

- A majority (57%) think most people with schizophrenia have multiple personalities (24%) or admit they are not sure if this is (or isn't) a condition associated with the disorder (33%). Fewer than half (43%) correctly indicate that it is not a condition associated with schizophrenia;
- One in six (16%) reject the notion that most people with schizophrenia are capable of attending school or holding down a job;
- As many as one in ten think most people with schizophrenia are violent (10%), commit serious crimes (8%), come from lower income households (9%), and can't be treated (8%).



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When asked how the courts should deal with situations in which someone with schizophrenia was accused of a crime and found to be Not Criminally Responsible a plurality think they should be sent to a hospital (44%) or a residential care / group home (41%). Just over one in ten feel they should be left in the care of a family member (11%) or sent to prison / jail (12%). At thirteen percent (13%), a considerable proportion aren't sure what should be done, in such situations.

Misperceptions About Schizophrenia *Decrease with Age*

Across the board, misperceptions as they relate to schizophrenia are more prevalent among younger Canadians. Indeed, a statistically higher proportion of adults under the age of 35 believe that most people with schizophrenia are unable to attend school or maintain employment (26% vs. 12% 35+), come from lower income households (18% vs. 6%), and can't be treated (15% vs. 5%). Conversely, Ontarians over the age of 55 are less likely to think that most people with schizophrenia come from low-income households (3% vs. 13% under 55), are violent (4% vs. 14%), have multiple personalities (15% vs. 29%), difficulty attending school / holding down a job (8% vs. 20%), and commit serious crimes (5% vs. 10%). This group is also less likely to view hospitals as the appropriate treatment setting for individuals with schizophrenia who have been accused of committing a crime but are found by the courts to be Not Criminally Responsible (36% vs. 49% under 55).

Men are more likely than women to *agree* with the idea that people with schizophrenia should be kept away from society (13% vs. 8% of women), perceive most who suffer from the disorder as coming from low-income households (12% vs. 7%) and incapable of attending school or maintaining steady employment (20% vs. 12%). Men are also less likely to *agree* that they would know how to act around someone with schizophrenia (41% vs. 49% of women) but are more likely to think that a group home is the optimal treatment setting for individuals with schizophrenia who have been accused of committing a crime but are found by the courts to be Not Criminally Responsible (46% vs. 37% of women).



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About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between August 13th and 14th, 2019, on behalf of Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Services. For this survey, a sample of 800 Ontarians were interviewed. Weighting was then employed to balance demographics to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the Ontario population according to Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll is accurate to within ± 4.0 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all Ontarians been polled. The credibility interval will be wider among subsets of the population. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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