

Addiction & Mental Health (AMH) Stigma in Canada

AMH stigma is common in Canada.



1 in 3

Canadians will have a mental illness during their lifetime.



1 in 3

Canadians have a mental health concern that disrupted their life in the past year.

20%

of Canadians with a mental illness report being affected by negative opinions or unfair treatment.

50%

of Canadians in recovery for substance use report experiencing stigma and discrimination.

Stigma presents itself in many forms.

AMH Stigma

refers to a set of negative attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours towards people experiencing substance use and/or mental health issues.

Stigma is both a cause and effect that creates and reinforces inequitable social and health outcomes.



Stigma takes many forms, including:

- Anger, distrust, or fear
- Avoidance
- Biases
- Discrimination/prejudice
- Embarrassment/shaming
- Exclusion
- Stereotypes

Self stigma



People may believe and internalize stigma about AMH conditions, leading to:

- shame and self-blame
- hopelessness
- increased symptoms

Social stigma



Prejudice toward people with AMH conditions can form societal stigma through negative and discriminatory attitudes and actions.

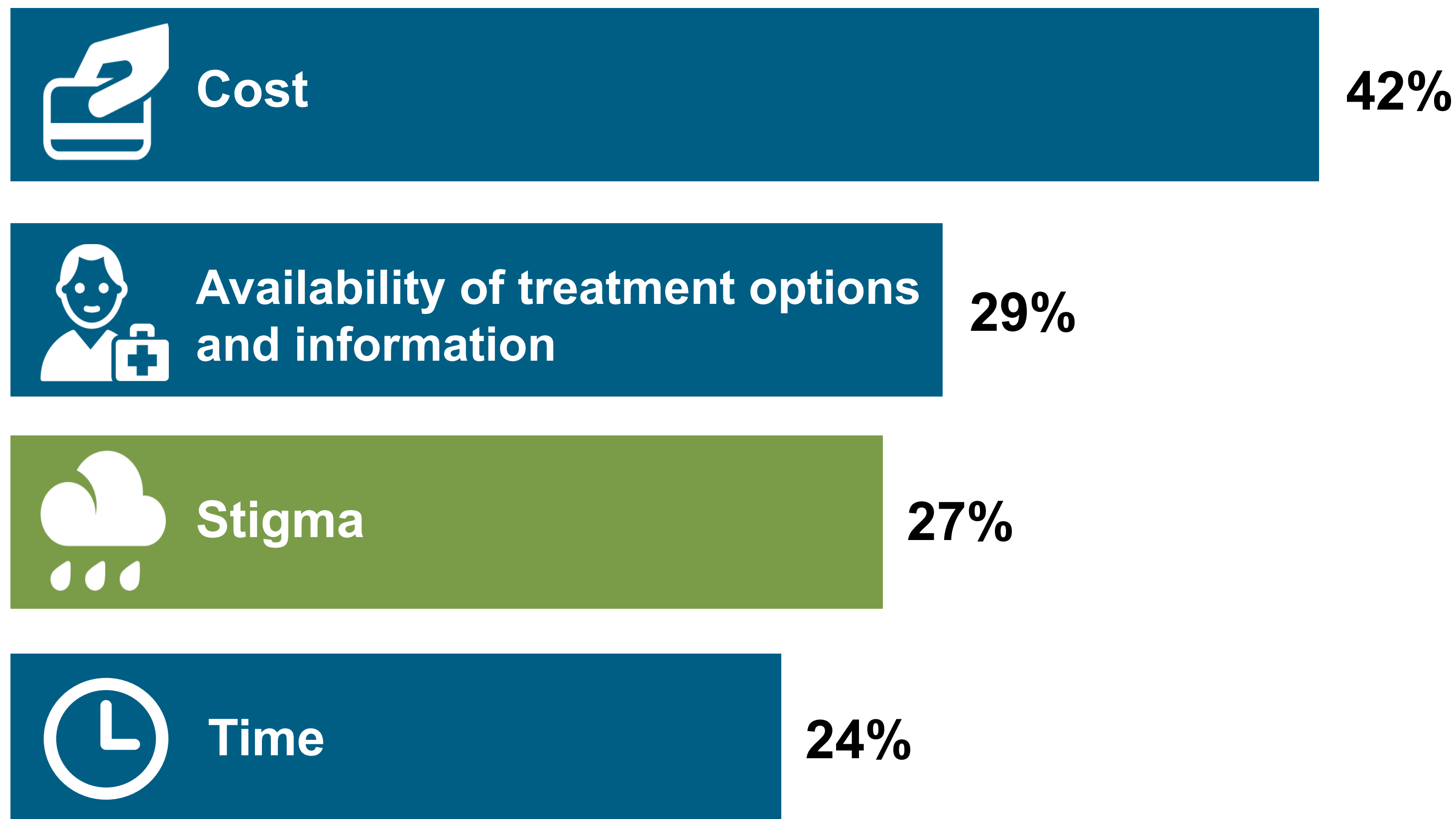
Structural stigma



Stigma can reinforce negative perceptions or limits opportunities for people with AMH concerns through policy, law, and/or exclusive practices.

Stigma prevents people from getting help.

Top reported barriers to receiving AMH care



1 in 4

Canadians report stigma as a barrier in receiving healthcare services/treatment for mental health conditions.

Stigma can impact:

- the desire to seek help.
- AMH symptoms and treatment outcomes.
- patient-provider relationships.

Tips and resources to reduce stigma

Learn about stigma and AMH-related topics.

[MyHealth Alberta](#) provides AHS and Alberta-partnered AMH information.

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) hosts the following resources:

- The [Mental Health and Addiction Index](#) describes various AMH-related topics.
- A free, online [Understanding Stigma course](#) explains stigma as it relates to the AMH field.

Treat everyone with dignity and respect.



No one is defined by their condition.



Support, encouragement, and kindness go a long way.



Recovery looks different to different people.

Choose non-stigmatizing language.

AHS developed an [Our Words Matter](#) infographic.

CAMH offers an [AMH language guideline](#).

The Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction and Community Addictions Peer Support Association coproduced a [language primer resource](#).

The Government of Canada has a [resource](#) on substance use and language.

Other tips:

- **Be self-reflective** of your attitudes and behaviour.
- **Use person first-language** (e.g., person with a mental illness).
- **Use strengths-based language** that supports resiliency and empowerment.
- **Include and advocate for others.**

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