



Consumers speak out about the recovery orientation of the mental health system in Washington State

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INTRODUCTION

In 2006, WIMHRT conducted a phone survey of 668 randomly selected adult mental health consumers across Washington State. This survey was part of an ongoing assessment of the State's efforts to transform mental health services into a more recovery-oriented system, in accordance with the aims of the Mental Health Transformation State Incentive Grant.

Respondents were asked about:

- 1) Their perceptions of how recovery-oriented their mental health services were; and
- 2) Their experiences with stigma based on their mental illness

FINDINGS

(See the graphs on the following page)

Consumers reported the greatest unmet needs in the areas of:

- **Perceived independence.** Less than half of the respondents agreed that mental health services helped them get basic resources such as employment, housing, and education.
- **Stigma and discrimination.** Half of respondents (51%) feel stigmatized due to their mental illness. Stigma does not discriminate; it was reported by people of all ethnicities and genders.
- **Validation.** 2 out of 5 consumers feel invalidated (e.g., not understood and ignored) by staff.
- **Supports such as information and education.** Almost 25% of consumers say they rarely or never receive educational support or guidance during services.

Consumers reported the greatest satisfaction in the areas of:

- **Staff and treatment.** 86% of consumers say they were usually (often to always) satisfied with their mental health treatment and staff.
- **Encouragement.** 4 out of 5 consumers report that they receive encouragement from their service providers.
- **Access to services.** 70% of consumers report having satisfactory access to the services they need.

In addition, there were some significant differences among particular groups of consumers.

- Females report feeling **less supported** and **less encouraged** by their mental health services than males do.
- Consumers receiving services from non-mental health DSHS service providers feel **more invalidated** and **less independent** than those consumers receiving services from mental health providers.
- Respondents from ethnic minority groups feel **more invalidated** by the mental health service system than non-minorities.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The researchers recommend that the following actions be taken to address the unmet needs identified by this survey:

- Increase public awareness and change public perceptions about mental health (reduce stigma);
- Increase the amount of resources and training devoted to the provision of gender-appropriate and culturally competent mental health services;
- Implement workshops on positive self-enhancement on overcoming discrimination;
- Increase the amount/availability of educational, employment, and housing programs to consumers;
- Evaluate the relationship between stigma and unemployment, unsecured housing, and use of public assistance.

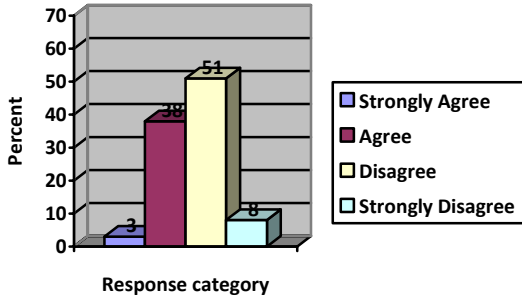
For the full report go to www.wimirt.washington.edu.

Demographics	
Average age in years	44.4
% of females	65
% of ethnic minorities	18
% currently employed	16

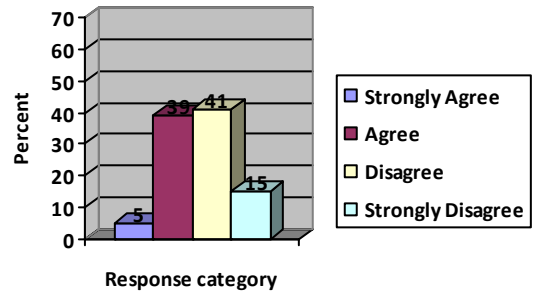
RESPONSE PERCENTAGES BY SCALE

(N = 668)

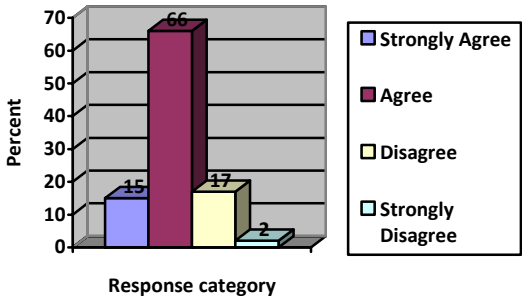
Invalidation



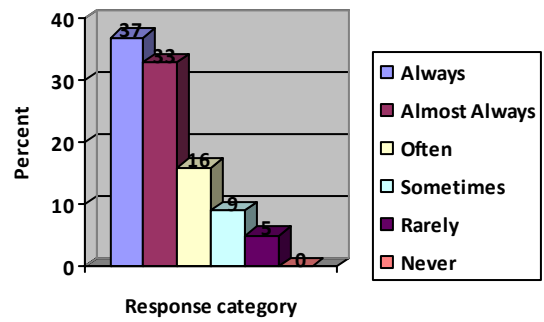
Perceived Independence



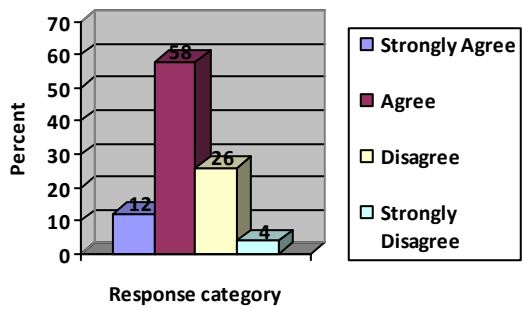
Encouragement



Staff & Treatment Satisfaction



Access to Services



Support

