

IACP – Press Release - August 2015

More Irish people than ever before are happy to talk about emotional problems, but mental illness is still viewed as the least acceptable form of illness, a new study has found.

The survey, commissioned by the Irish Association of Counselling & Psychotherapy (IACP), found that 85% of those surveyed agreed that it is more acceptable nowadays to talk about emotional problems than it was in the past.

However, less than one in 10 respondents (9%) said that they are comfortable with the idea of being mentally ill. By contrast, 57% of respondents to the same survey said that it was far easier to admit to being physically ill.

The study surveyed over 1,000 Irish adults and was carried out on behalf of the IACP by research company Behaviour & Attitudes.

“These results clearly show that we have come a long way in discussing emotional problems, including depression and stress and this is a hugely positive development,” said IACP spokesman Shane Kelly.

“However, we are concerned that over 90% of people are uncomfortable with the concept of being mentally unwell. It shows that mental illness is still, to an overwhelming extent, stigmatized in the public’s mind,” he added.

Mr Kelly pointed out that one-third of respondents said it made no difference to them whether they were classified as mentally or physically ill.

However, he added that the IACP was concerned about the volume of respondents who had difficulty with the notion of being mentally ill, especially in relation to male respondents.

“The survey shows that 58% of women will talk to a friend about stress or depression, but only 39% of male respondents will speak to someone close to them about these mental problems,” Mr Kelly said.

The IACP said that an ongoing dialogue could help to offset the perceived stigma around mental health illness. It advised that people who found it difficult to talk to a friend should consider speaking to a doctor or an IACP accredited counsellor / psychotherapist.

For a list of fully accredited counsellors and psychotherapists, log onto www.iacp.ie