

Seven-Year Campaign Study

County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, Behavioral Health Services
Suicide Prevention and Stigma Reduction Media Campaign

JULY 2019

Introduction

In 2010, the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, Behavioral Health Services contracted with Civilian, a San Diego based full-service marketing communications agency, to develop and implement a media campaign to increase public awareness and understanding of mental illness and suicide prevention. The *It's Up to Us* campaign aims to increase awareness of symptoms of mental illness and warning signs for suicide, promote help-seeking, increase conversations about these topics, and promote social inclusion and acceptance of community members experiencing mental health challenges. To measure the public's awareness and understanding, monitor

progress, and gauge the effectiveness of the *It's Up to Us* campaign over time, Civilian commissioned Strata Research (Strata), an independent market research firm, to conduct a Random Digit Dialing (RDD) telephone survey among San Diego County residents prior to the campaign launch. Follow-up studies were conducted in this manner at 6 months, 18 months, and 39 months. For a 6-year follow-up study Strata changed to a web-based survey, and for the most recent study, the 7-year follow-up, Strata conducted a web-based survey of 611 San Diego County residents.

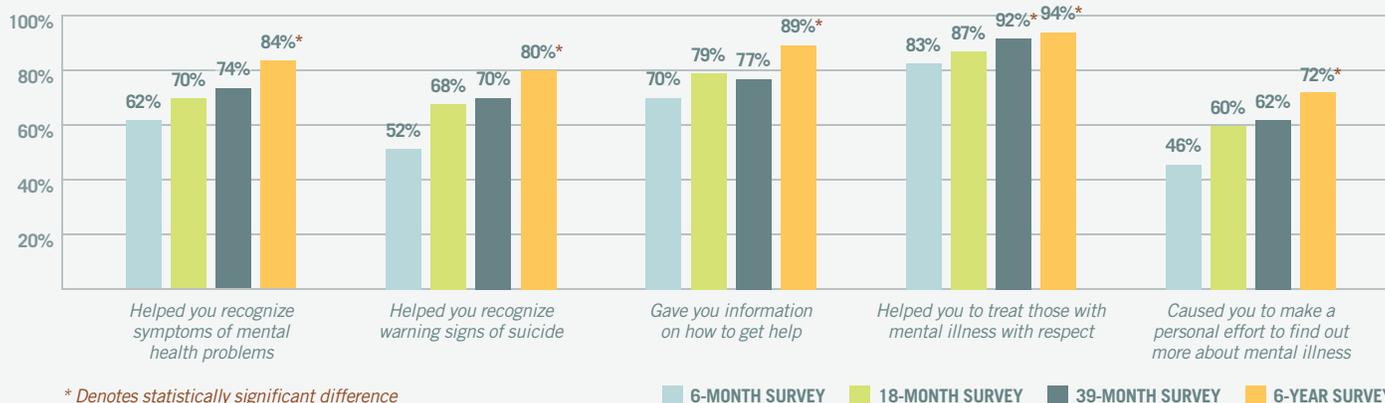
Campaign Awareness

As of December 2018, seven years after the launch of the *It's Up to Us* campaign, **71% of San Diego County residents were aware of at least one message or ad pertaining to the campaign.** The majority of respondents recalled the message or ad from TV (74%), followed by radio (27%), and social media (23%).

Campaign Impact over Time

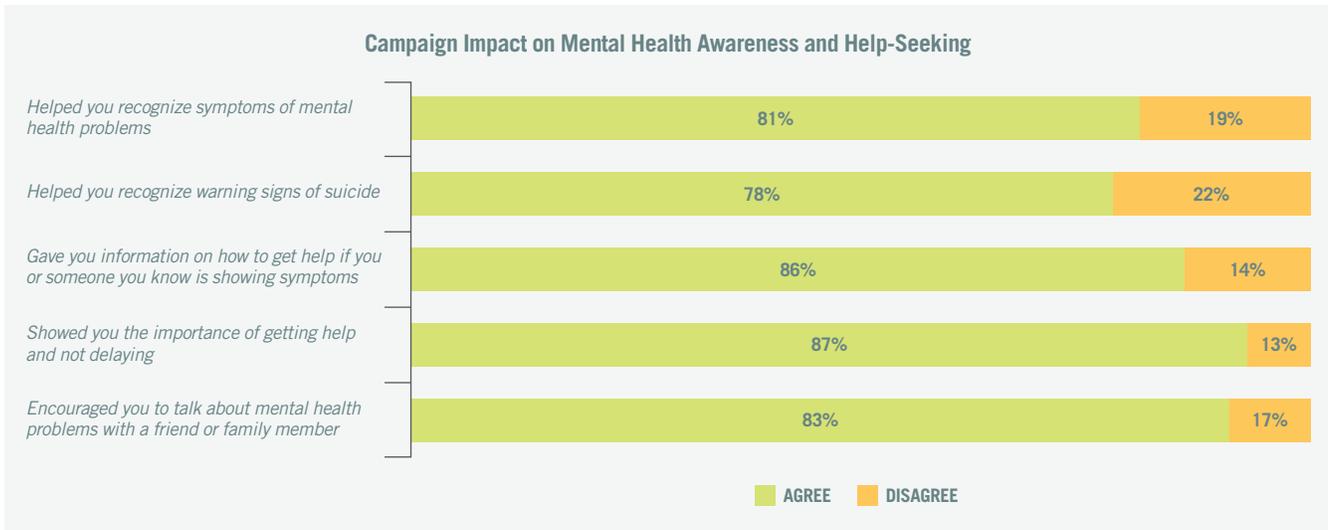
Since the launch of the campaign, San Diego County residents continue to increase their likelihood of treating those who have a mental illness with respect, recognize warning signs for suicide, and make a personal effort to learn more about mental illness. San Diego residents also agree that the campaign messages gave them information on where to get help.

Results of Campaign over Time (among those aware of campaign)



Campaign Awareness Promotes Help-Seeking

San Diegans who were aware of the *It's Up to Us* campaign agreed that the messages provided information on how to get help if they or someone they know is showing symptoms of mental illness or warning signs of suicide, showed the importance of getting help and not delaying, and encouraged talking about mental health problems with a friend or family member.

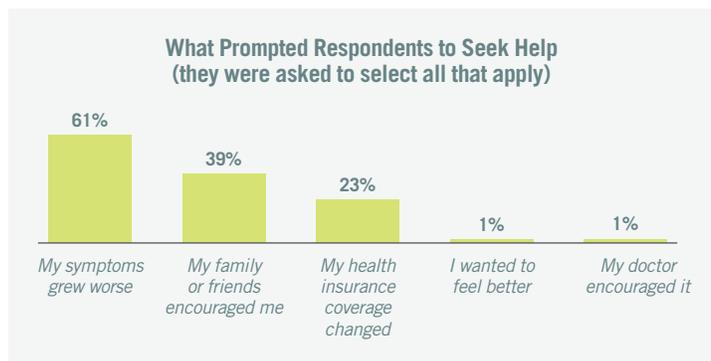
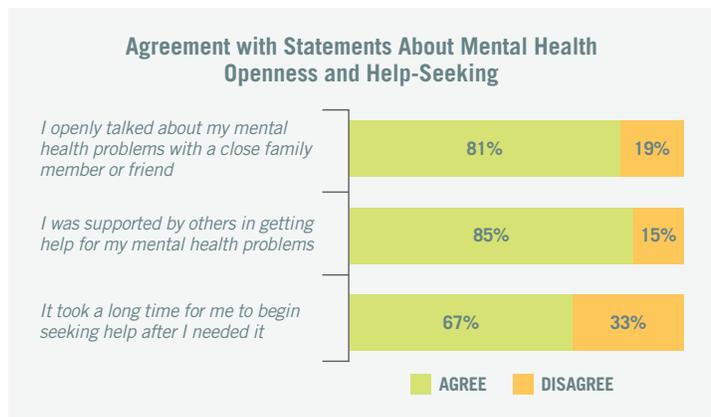


Experience with Mental Illness and Help-Seeking

Among those surveyed, 38% reported they had received or were currently receiving treatment for mental health problems. The majority agreed they talked openly about their problems with a close family member or friend (81%) and were supported by others in getting help (85%). However, nearly two-thirds (67%) indicated that it took them a long time to begin seeking help. The top three reasons for not seeking help sooner were:

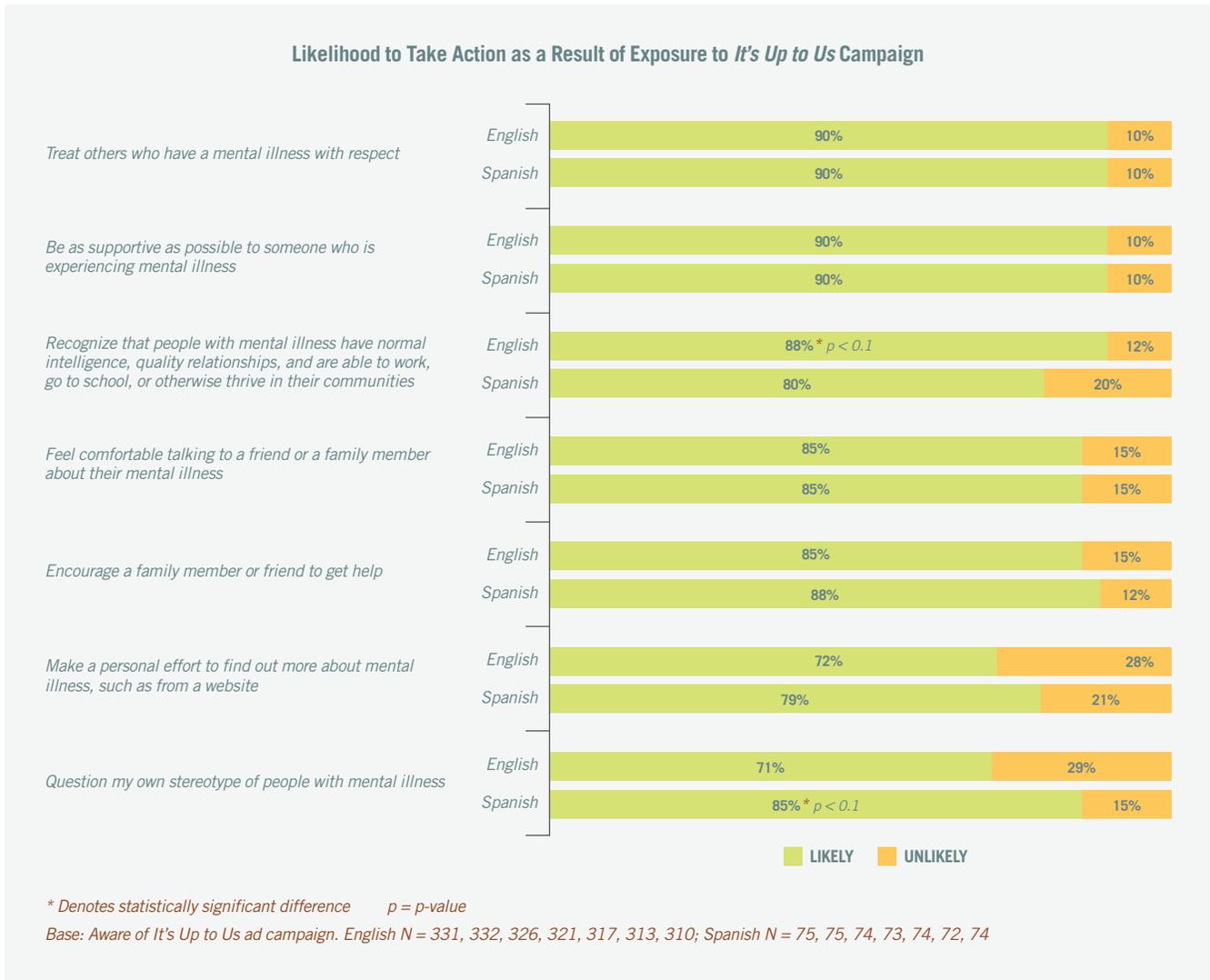
- I wanted to solve it on my own (34%).
- I was concerned about what others would think of me if they knew (33%).
- I didn't know where or who I should seek help from (31%).

More than one-half of respondents (61%) who sought treatment did so because of worsening symptoms or because they were encouraged by family and friends (39%).



Campaign Impact

Survey participants who recalled any *It's Up to Us* campaign ads rated the campaign as having a positive impact on them, including promoting respect, support, and acceptance of people experiencing mental health challenges. In the figure below, "English" refers to respondents who took the survey in the English language, and saw or heard ads in English. "Spanish" refers to respondents who took the survey in Spanish, and saw or heard ads in Spanish.



Campaign Impact on Social Inclusion and Mental Health Knowledge

To compare knowledge and attitudes about mental illness, four scales were developed by combining and averaging individual survey items within each of four domains.

- MENTAL HEALTH LITERACY**
 Measures beliefs about mental illness and treatment including that mental health issues are common and recovery is possible.
- MENTAL HEALTH OPENNESS**
 Measures openness to discussing mental health problems.
- MENTAL HEALTH KNOWLEDGE AND ACCESS**
 Measures knowledge of recognizing problems and warning signs for suicide, and where to get help for mental health problems in community.
- LACK OF SOCIAL DISTANCING**
 Measures the willingness of community members to be professionally and socially connected to people experiencing a mental illness.

Community members that were aware of the *It's Up to Us* campaign scored significantly higher on the Mental Health Knowledge and Access scale indicating that a majority of San Diegans are able to recognize mental health problems and know where to seek help.

The 7-year study showed a significant decrease in the Mental Health Openness scale compared with previous years. This change was seen across all sub-populations of respondents, suggesting a universal shift may be occurring toward keeping mental health problems a secret (for example, political and/or social trends influencing sentiment among San Diego County residents).

