

13 October 2004

## NEW RESEARCH INTO ATTITUDES AROUND MENTAL HEALTH

Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria (MI Fellowship) is launching the biggest communication campaign of its 25-year history. The '**Five In Five**' campaign – a 30-second animated commercial voiced by **Eric Bana** – premieres nationally October 17.

More than just another commercial, this is based on some of the most detailed research ever conducted into Australians' attitudes to mental illness. Focus groups were held with people with mental illness, their friends and families, mental health professionals and the general public. A Newspoll survey then questioned a representative sample of 300+ adults about their attitudes towards mental illness. **Some key findings are attached.**

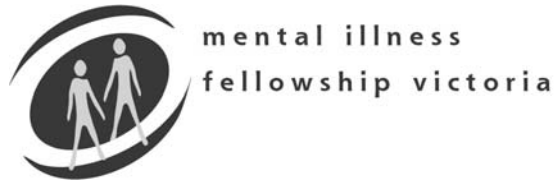
The Five In Five campaign is supported by a tactic of US Presidential hopeful **Howard Dean** and film maker **Michael Moore**: the **Meet Up**. As part of **MI Meet Ups**, MI Fellowship members will screen the commercial in their workplaces, community groups and homes. The aim is to increase create awareness of the commercial and the issues it raises in unexpected places. Already law firms and chemical factories have signed on to Meet Up.

MI Fellowship Victoria runs 35 programs across the state including rehabilitation, education, respite and vocational programs. Its annual budget is \$7 million and is Victoria's largest membership-based mental health organisation with 170 staff, over 500 volunteers, 1500-plus members and over 40,000 supporters.

Public can contact MI Fellowship anywhere in Australia on 1800 985 944 or visit [www.mifellowship.org](http://www.mifellowship.org).

Media contact: Brett de Hoedt: 03 9510 0848 / 0414 713 802.

# Mental Illness Fellowship Benchmark Tracking Study Key Findings



Conducted by Newspoll Market Research:

- 300 respondents in Victoria aged 18+
- Conducted by telephone over the period 10<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> September 2004

## **Awareness of the term “mental illness.”**

Unaided awareness of the term “mental illness” in Victoria is 98.3%

## **Specific illness awareness**

Of the people who had heard of the term mental illness, schizophrenia has the highest awareness (54%), followed by depression (46.1%), then bi-polar / manic depression (26.9%).

## **Gender, professional and education variations:**

Of these three illnesses, females had a higher awareness than males.

59.2% of females were aware of schizophrenia vs 48.5% of males.

White-collar workers had a higher awareness of schizophrenia (62.1%) than blue (45.1%)

People who completed a higher level of schooling (yr 11 or 12) (60.6%) vs people who had completed year 10 or below (43.7%).

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## **Estimating the prevalence of people who will experience a mental illness:**

86.6% did not know that one in five Australians will be directly affected by mental illness.

13.4% of respondents stated that they thought 20% of people will personally suffer from a mental illness at sometime in their life.

## **Variation on above based on profession**

20.8% of white-collar workers vs 5.3% of blue-collar workers stated that they thought 20% of people will personally suffer from a mental illness at sometime in their life.

22.9% of people stated that they didn't know. (30.1% for blue-collar vs 16.1% for white-collar).

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## **Understandings of the cause of mental illness:**

Only 50.3% of respondents agreed strongly with the statement “*mental illness involves a chemical imbalance in the brain*”.

## **Variation on above based on gender**

63.7% of females vs 36.2% of males agreed strongly with the statement.

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## **Potential of people with a mental illness**

71.6% of respondents agreed strongly with the statement that “*people, when treated, can lead normal and active lives*”.

Yet only 21.3% of people agreed strongly with the statement that they “*would be happy for a child they care about to be minded by a friend who has been treated for a mental illness*”.

**Variations on above based on gender**

Again, 75.5% of females agreed strongly with the statement that *“people, when treated, can lead normal and active lives”* vs 67.6% of males.

**Variations based on profession**

Similarly 75.2% of white-collar workers agreed strongly with the statement vs 67.8% of blue-collar workers.

**Variation based on experience of mental illness.**

82.1% of people who either have or know someone close to them who is affected by mental illness agreed strongly with the statement vs 64.5% of people who weren't.

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**Helping people with mental illness**

Only 57.7% of respondents agreed strongly with the statement that *“people can play an active part in helping people with a mental illness”*.

**Variations based on age**

73.3% of 18-24 year olds agreed strongly with this statement  
49.4% of people 50+.

**Variations based on experience with mental illness**

67.9% of people who are personally affected by mental illness agreed strongly with the statement vs 50% of people who weren't personally affected.

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**Workplace Issues****Based on gender:**

72.8% of females agreed strongly with the statement that they *“would be happy working with someone who had been treated for a mental illness”*

56% of males strongly agreed with the statement.

**Variations on above based on profession**

67% of blue-collar workers agreed strongly with this statement  
62.4% of white-collar workers agreed strongly with this statement.

**Variations of above based on experience of mental illness**

70% of people who are personally affected by mental illness agreed strongly with the statement

61.6% of people who weren't personally affected.

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**Childcare**

Only 21.3% of people agreed strongly with the statement that they *“would be happy for a child they care about to be minded by a friend who has been treated for a mental illness”*.

**Variations based on gender**

27.5% of females agreed strongly with this statement vs 14.8% of males.

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