

ALBERTA PSYCHOLOGY
DURING A PANDEMIC:



PAA Member Survey

Inaugural Edition

April 2020

Report Author: Kira Brunner

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	8	TELEPSYCHOLOGY
4	BACKGROUND	9	PRACTICE CLARITY
5	PROFESSIONAL IMPACTS	10	COMMUNICATIONS
6	PERSONAL IMPACTS	11	PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT
7	PERCEIVED IMPACTS	12	CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Psychological practice in Alberta has been impacted by the pandemic in a variety of ways. For this initial survey, respondents reported reduced workloads but also increased social commitments. The majority had transitioned to telepsychology with considerable variance in perceived privacy needs, information security, and overall working conditions in these home offices.

Psychologist respondents were personally impacted by the pandemic but perceived those negative impacts to be even greater for those served by respondents. Self-care, psychological health, and overall functioning were all reported as deficient in comparison to pre-pandemic levels at higher rates for their students, patients, and clients than for respondents themselves.

Results indicated that telepsychology did not appear to improve efficacy or connectedness of services provided but that most made do under the circumstances. Interestingly, about two-thirds of respondents reported they would be integrating telepsychology into their practice post-pandemic.

Most respondents felt that they had good access to needed pandemic-specific resources, but some reported the influx of information to be overwhelming. The most accessed resources reported came from PAA and BMS. Advocacy was considered to be most useful but resources shared as infographics, social media, and ENews all had high usage rates.

Very few respondents reached out to PAA directly but those who did found the PAA staff team to be highly responsive and to have provided exceptional services under the circumstances.

Overall, the first four weeks of the pandemic appear to have impacted psychologists and those served in significantly negative ways. Respondents quickly migrated to home offices and telepsychology with some concerns. Targeted resources and PAA staff support was appreciated and rated highly under the circumstances.

BACKGROUND

An online survey sent to members of the Psychologist's Association of Alberta in April 2020 sought to help understand the experience of being a psychologist in Alberta 4 weeks after WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic.

There are currently no known models on how to operate as a psychologist or as a professional association during a pandemic, and this survey aimed to help PAA understand, and respond to, the impacts of this pandemic on psychological practice in Alberta.

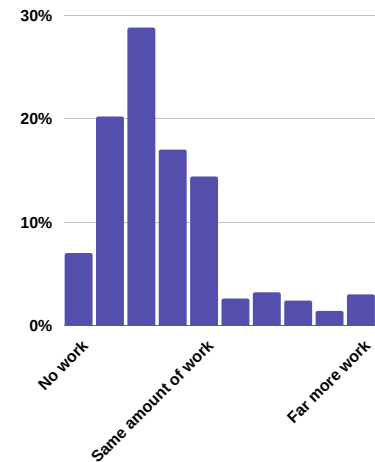
This survey asked about the impact of the pandemic on members professionally, personally, and on those to whom they provide psychological services. It also asked about members' use of telepsychology, their practice clarity, and the effectiveness of PAA's communications and professional support for them.

There are 3 questions in each of 7 areas with an opportunity for member's comments and qualitative feedback at the end of the survey. The response rate varied from 500 to 162 participants.



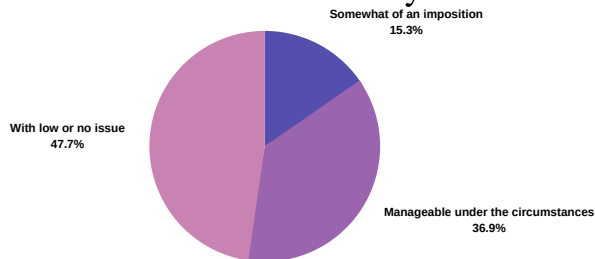
Area 1: Professional Impacts

How has the pandemic impacted your workload as a psychologist?

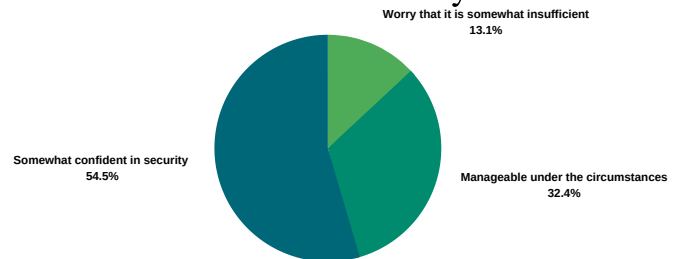


Of the 72.4% of respondents that transitioned to a home office, how easy has it been to address:

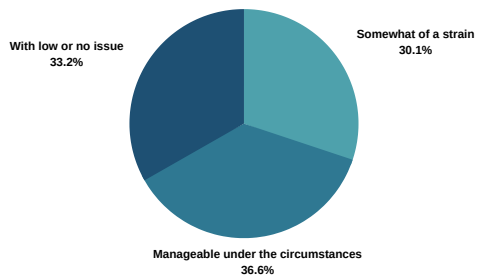
Personal Privacy:



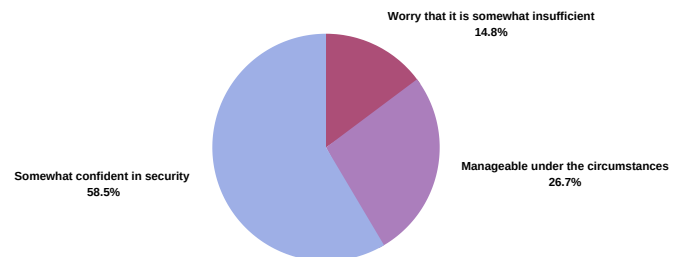
Client Privacy:



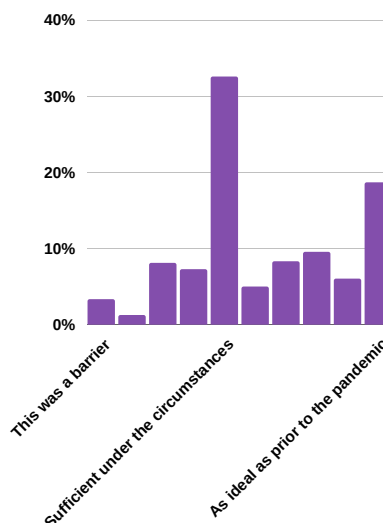
Current Working Conditions:



Security of Information:



Have you felt you had sufficient access to the professional resources that you required (files, testing materials, books, etc.)?

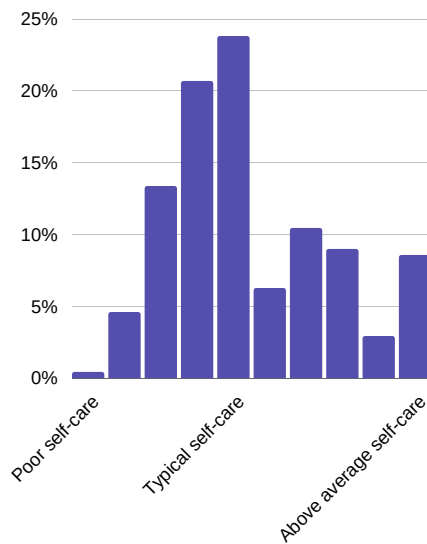


"Well done team! I am very thankful for the continued resources you have been emailing."

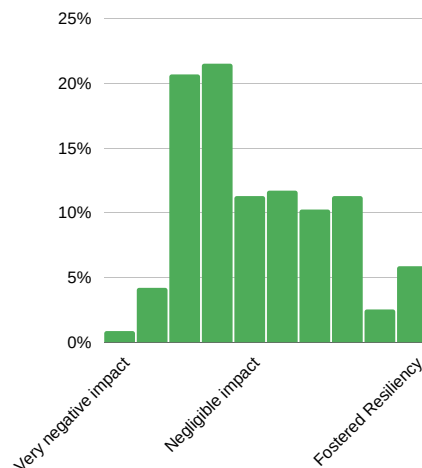
Area 2: Personal Impacts

In considering yourself as a person, and your family, how do you perceive this pandemic to have impacted your:

Self-care:

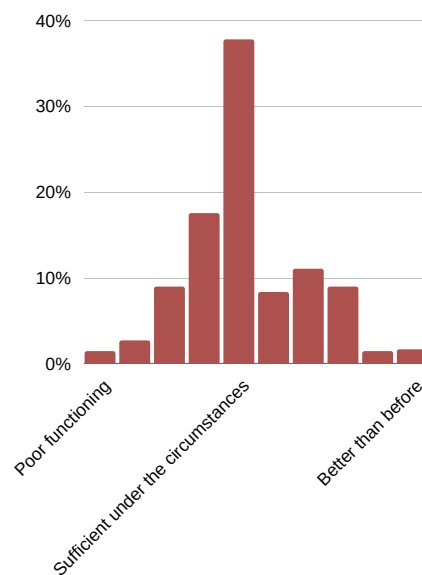


Psychological health:



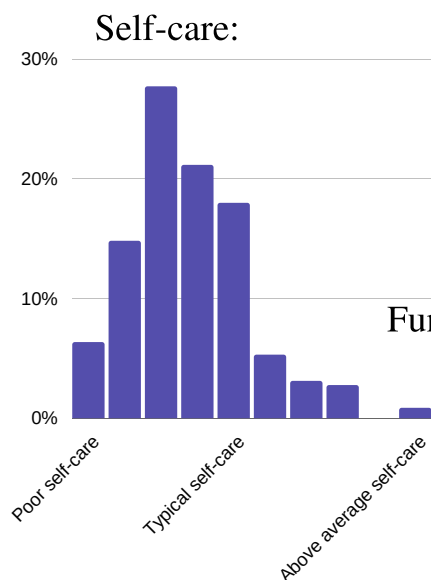
"A big barrier for myself is that I have dependents (children) that I need to care for. As a single parent with no family within range to assist with care, I am limited in my capacity to work... there are many variables at play for so many psychologists."

Functioning (employment, relationships):

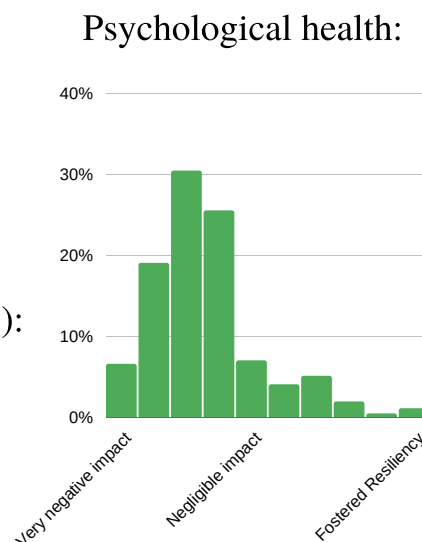
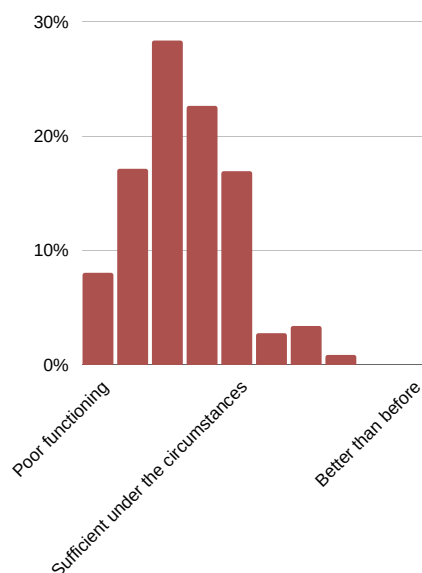


Area 3: Perceived Impacts

In considering those you serve (clients, students, research participants, etc.), how do you perceive this pandemic to have impacted their:



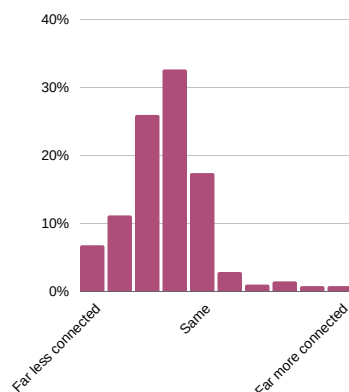
Functioning (employment, relationships):



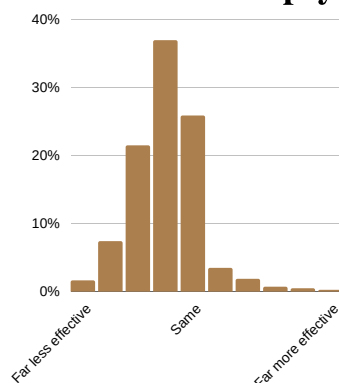
Participants generally rated those they serve as more impacted and with poorer experiences with self-care, functioning, and psychological health as compared to respondents themselves.

Area 4: Telepsychology

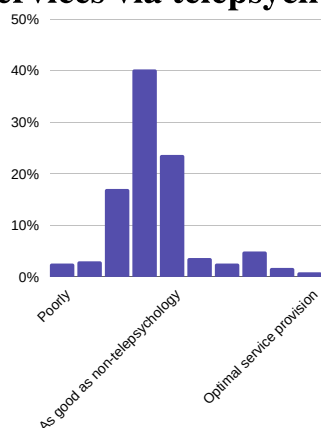
How connected did you feel to clients/students/other service recipients during telepsychology compared to non telepsychology offerings?



How effective did you perceive your telepsychology services to be in relation to previous similar non-telepsychology services?

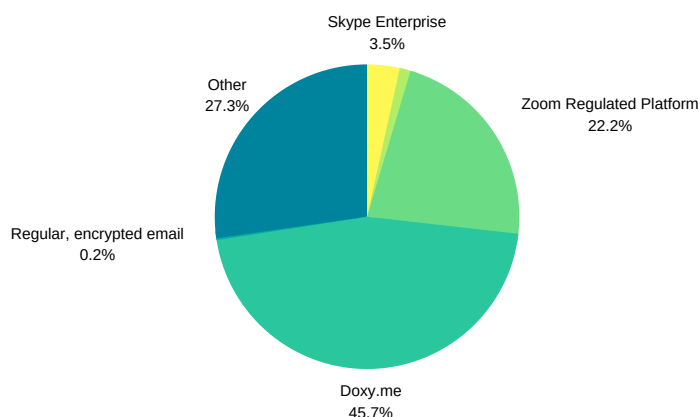


How well do you feel that you were able to provide services via telepsychology?

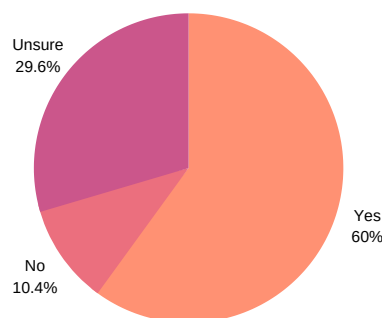


92.2% of respondents migrated to (or were already using) telepsychology services, including by telephone, video, or other online platforms.

Which platform do you use?



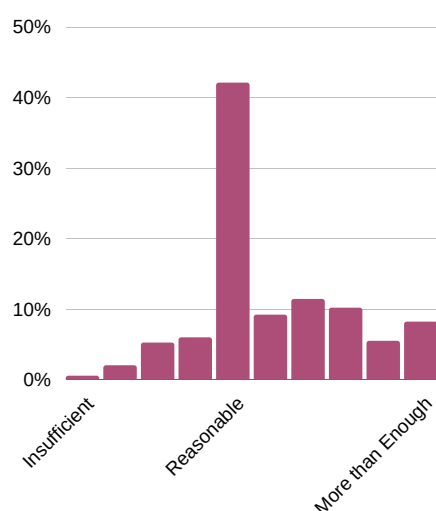
Are you likely to integrate some (or all) telepsychology into your practice post-pandemic?



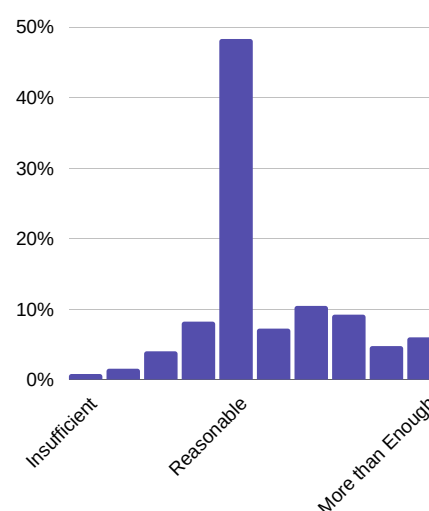
Area 5: Practice Clarity

86.6% of respondents accessed the PAA's online COVID-19 resource page. They found that:

There were sufficient resources to answer my questions about practice.

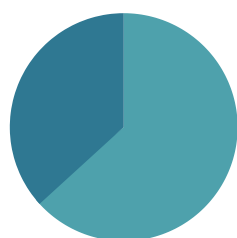


There were useful resources for my clients/ students/ public.



63.23% of respondents accessed the BMS CPA/ CPAP Liability Insurance Policy's COVID-19 communications,

Did not access resources from BMS
36.8%



Accessed resources from BMS
63.2%

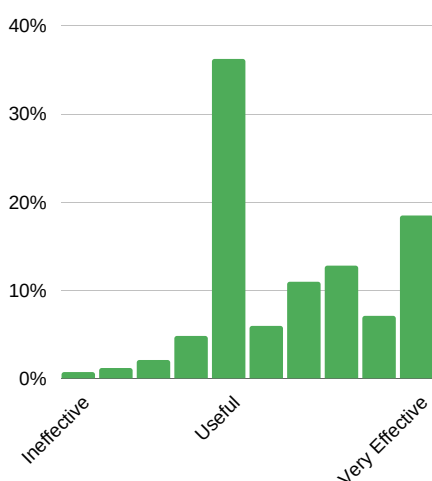
while 34.84% were able to secure more useful resources elsewhere.

Some found resources from their individual agencies, AHS updates, Psychology Today, the APA, the CPA, CAP, and Anxiety Canada. Many respondents were pleased with the amount of resources provided, and others found the amount of information coming from both PAA and CAP to be overwhelming.

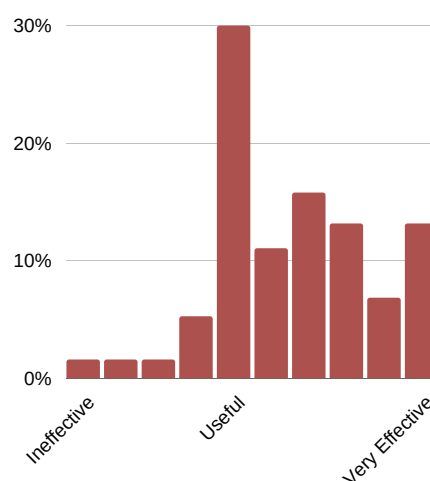
Area 6: Communications

Respondents were asked whether they accessed various forms of resources, and how effective they found them to be. Regarding advocacy, members were asked for awareness rate and how necessary they found them to be.

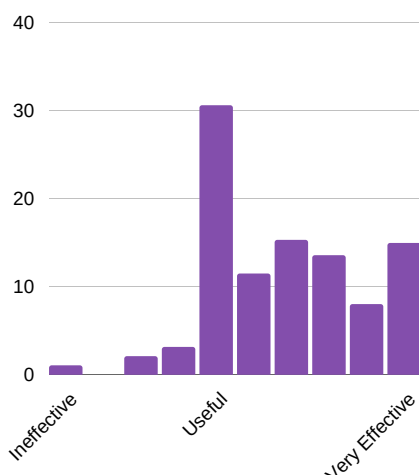
1. Regular ENews:
94.61% Accessibility Rate



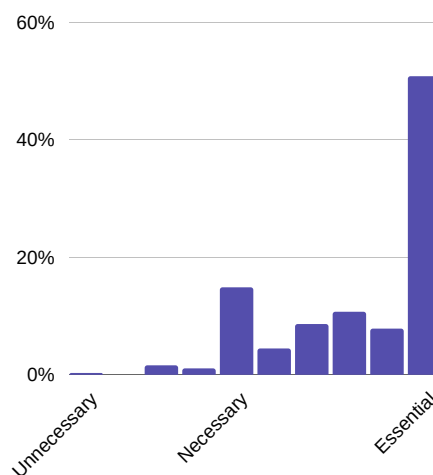
2. Social Media:
41.04% Accessibility Rate



3. Infographics, posters, and videos:
62.20% Accessibility Rate



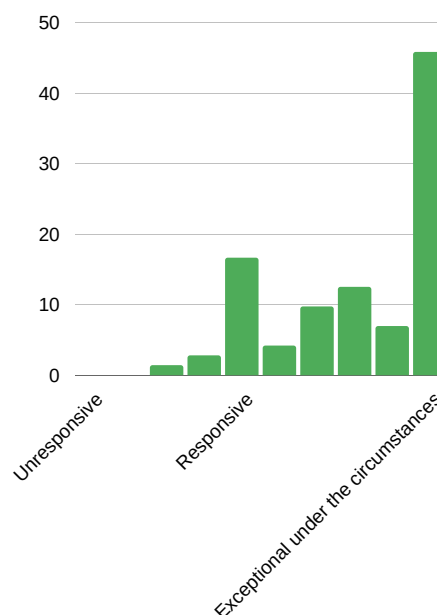
4. Advocacy Awareness:
83.15% Awareness Rate



Area 7: Professional Support

15.65% of respondents reached out to PAA directly, via phone or email, to access staff support services.

They found the PAA staff team to be:



Some thoughts from our members:

I think that CAP and PAA need to work more closely together to advise us on policies and procedures moving forward.

I feel negatively impacted AND feel like a sense of resilience has been fostered.

Thank you for representing our profession and providing us with support and information.

I believe that the decrease in connection [with my clients] may be as much due to my own state of anxiety as it is due to the platform change.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Associations benefit members by being a source of learning, connection, and support. These needs are highlighted during times of crisis such as this pandemic. This initial survey was an informative glimpse into the experiences and needs of psychologists in relation to this pandemic.

Recommendations

Advocacy

Members value the role of advocacy and being members of an association creates a collective that can both represent the voices of members and those we serve but can also tap into the wealth of experience and expertise of members to inform advocacy that matters.

Connection

This pandemic has negatively impacted members. Given the benefits of associating with a group with similar experiences, it is key for members to be able to share experiences, connect, and be validated that there are common experiences – and that no one psychologist is in this alone. There is power in association membership and the associated sense of belonging.

Member Support

In a crisis, the association has a role in supporting members as they retool their professional practices to thrive. This means information, resources, and support to adjust to new practices. Key is providing reliable, relevant, and accessible information, training, and services. Highlighted in this were tools to optimize telepsychology practices and guidelines for return to in-person practices during a pandemic. Members are best served in this regard by a wide range of communication tools (including website, email, social media, infographics, online meetings, webinars).

Professionalism

Psychologists are respected and essential health professionals. They deserve, and appreciate, a professional association that is highly responsive and member-service oriented.

Research

Not enough is known about telepsychology in Alberta. Members benefit from evidence-based practices and outcome informed telepsychology service information. Even in non-pandemic times, telepsychology will continue to allow psychologists to serve those who might otherwise have limited access. And our profession is well placed to lead in this regard.