

ALBERTA PSYCHOLOGY
DURING A PANDEMIC:

PAA Member Survey

Sixth Edition

October 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

From April to October 2020, PAA members were surveyed on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on psychological practice in Alberta. In this 6th and final survey respondents reported increases in workloads (close to pre-pandemic levels) and social commitments compared to the initial survey. The majority had already transitioned to telepsychology and reported increased confidence in their working conditions and personal privacy. There was also an increase in the number of respondents who are now confident about their ability to sustain their practices for the next year (70%).

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

Results indicated that telepsychology did not appear to improve efficacy or connectedness of services but most respondents considered it a sufficient alternative under the circumstances. There was an increase in perceptions of “connectedness” and “wellness” in using telepsychology and an increase in the intention to continue using telepsychology (79%) post-pandemic.

Respondents felt that they had good access to needed pandemic-specific resources, but some continued to report that the influx of information was overwhelming. The most accessed resources reported came from PAA and BMS. Advocacy continued to be considered important with responses indicating increases in awareness of advocacy efforts. Resources such as infographics, social media, and ENews continued to have high usage rates.

20% of respondents reached out to PAA directly and those who did found the PAA staff team to be highly responsive and to have provided exceptional services under the circumstances. Overall, the first 28 weeks of the pandemic appear to have negatively impacted psychologists and those they served. Respondents quickly migrated to home offices and telepsychology and concerns about that shift in practice appear to have decreased over time. Targeted resources and PAA staff support were appreciated and rated highly during this period.

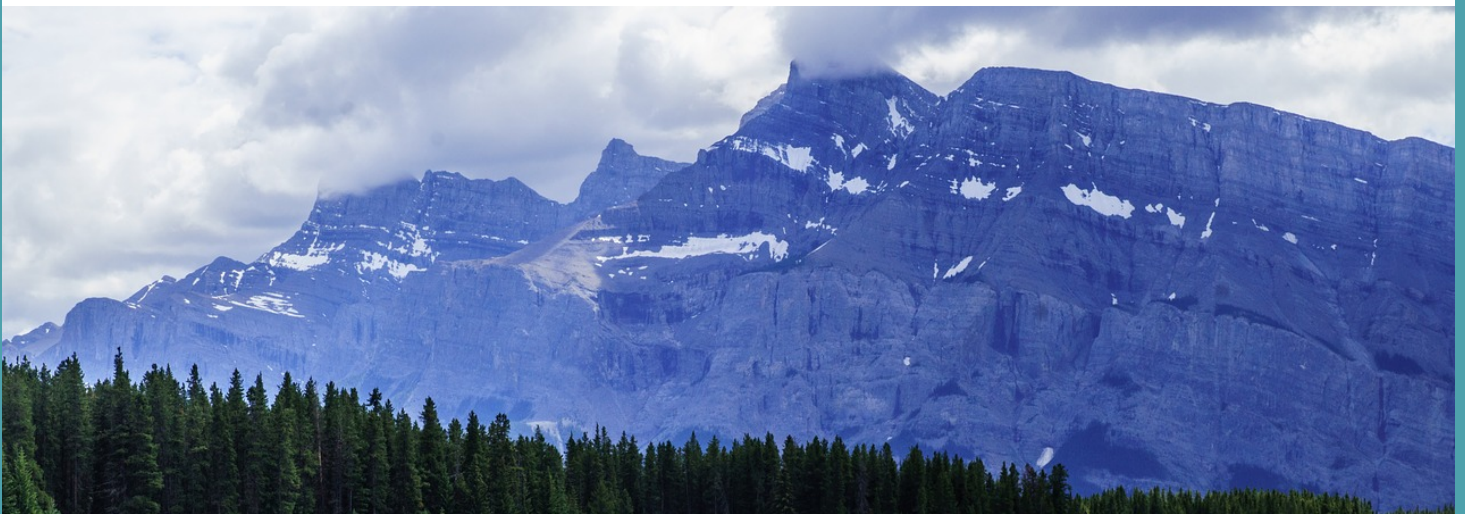
BACKGROUND

An online survey sent to members of the Psychologists' Association of Alberta in October 2020 sought to help understand the experience of being a psychologist in Alberta 28 weeks after WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic. This survey was identical to five previous surveys initiated monthly beginning April 2020.

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

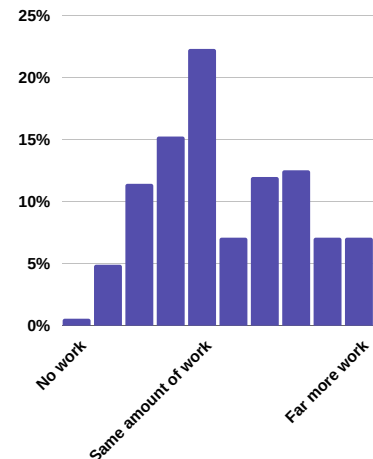
Each survey asked about the impact of the pandemic on members professionally, personally, and about their perception of impacts on those to whom they provide psychological services. It also asked about members' use of telepsychology, their practice clarity, and the effectiveness of PAA's communications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

Surveys had 3-4 questions in each of 7 areas with opportunities for member's comments and qualitative feedback. The response rate in this survey varied from 191 to 31 participants.



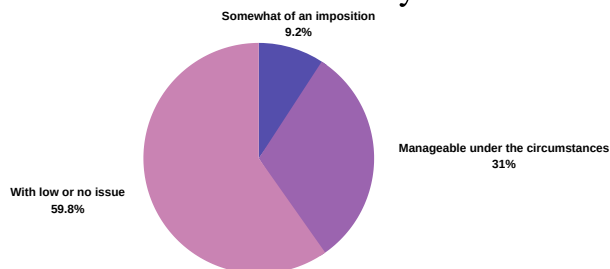
Area 1: Professional Impacts

How has the pandemic impacted your workload as a psychologist?

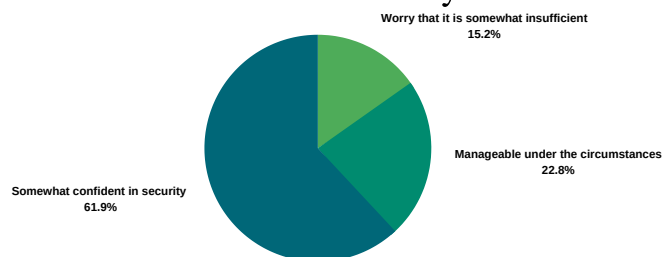


Of the 50.54% of respondents that are currently in a home office, how easy has it been to address:

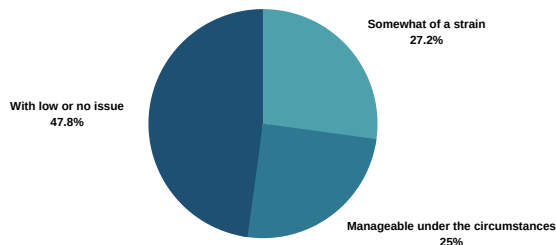
Personal Privacy:



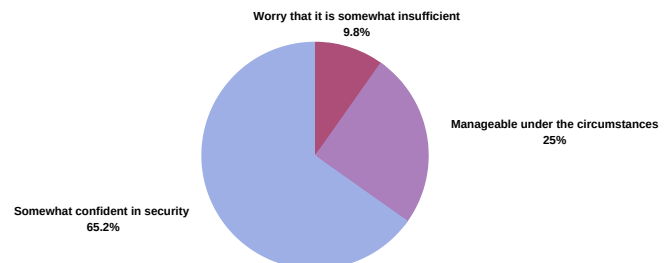
Client Privacy:



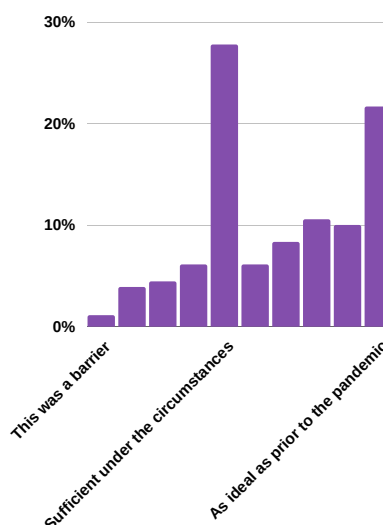
Current Working Conditions:



Security of Information:



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

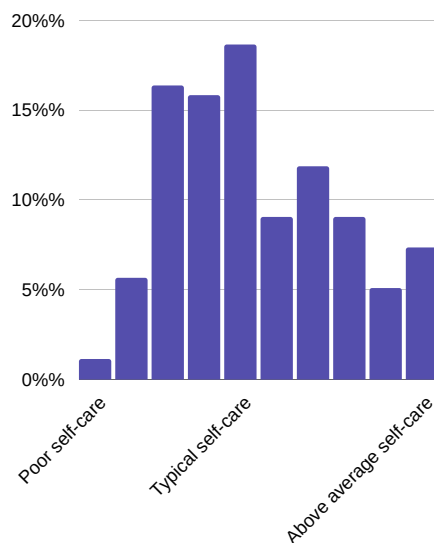


Values are not significantly changed from April, though workload and confidence in working conditions have continued to increase.

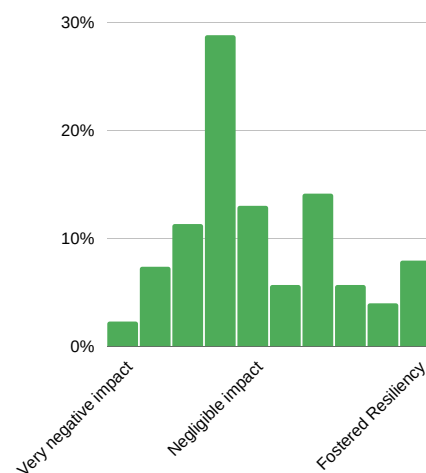
Area 2: Personal Impacts

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

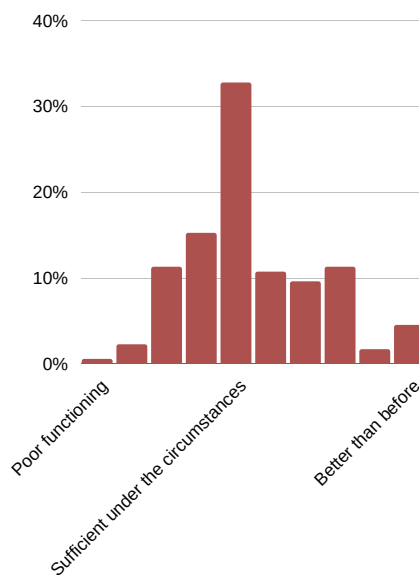
Self-care:



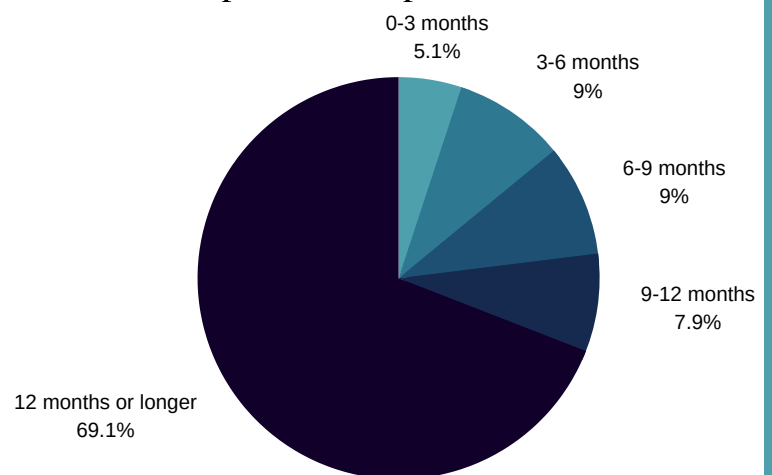
Psychological health:



Functioning (employment, relationships):

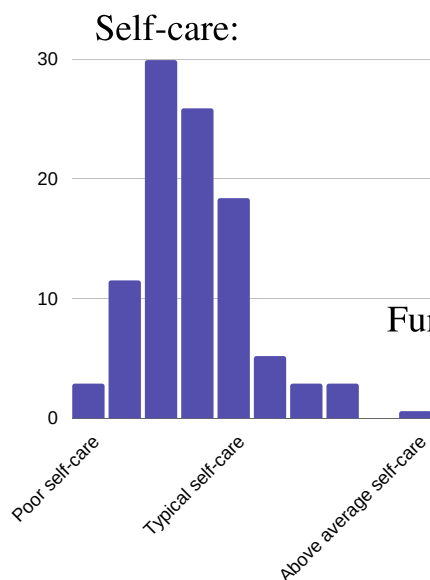


How long can you sustain business practices to provide adequate client care given the current financial impacts of the pandemic?

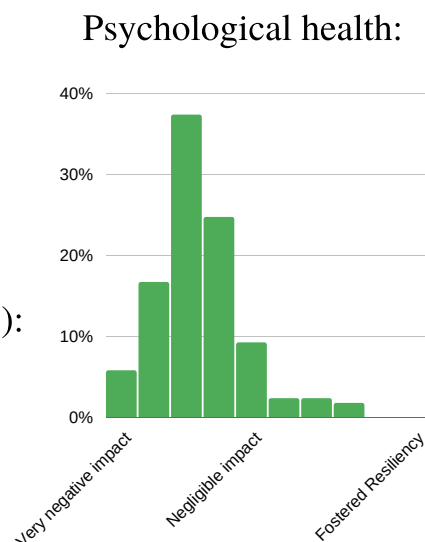
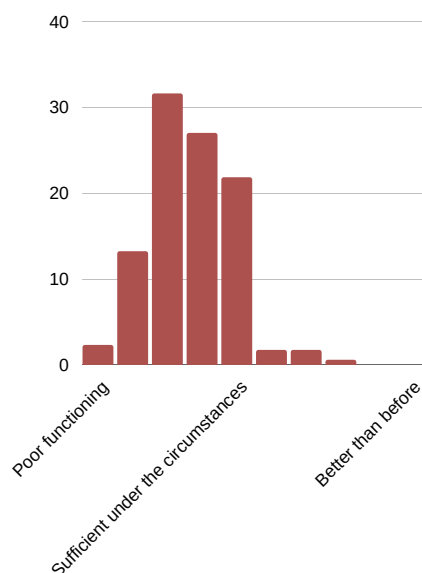


Area 3: Perceived Impacts

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



Functioning (employment, relationships):

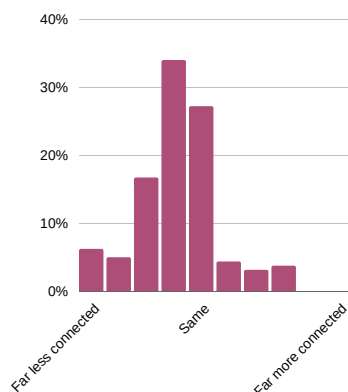


Changes in impacts remain non-significant within both psychologists and those they serve.

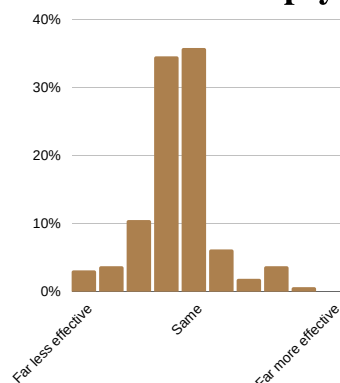
Sustaining business practices for over 12 months now sits at 69.1%, up 38.8% from May.

Area 4: Telepsychology

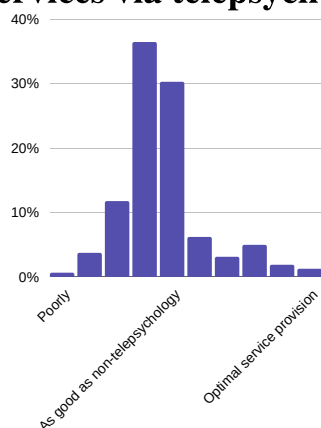
How connected did you feel to clients/students/other service recipients during telepsychology compared to non telepsychology offerings?



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

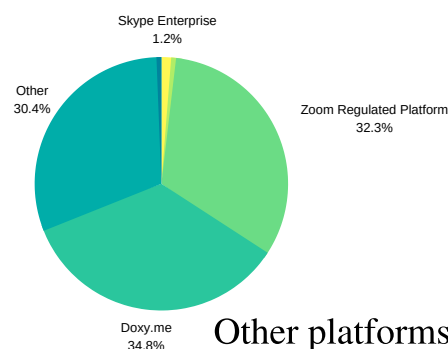


How well do you feel that you were able to provide services via telepsychology?



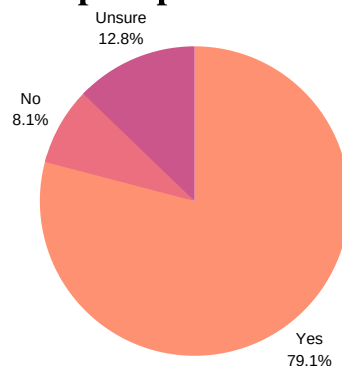
94.22% of respondents are now using telepsychology services, up 2.02% from survey one. All values remain statistically stagnant.

Which platform do you use?



Other platforms included GoogleMeet, Jane.app, telephone calls, OWL, and FaceTime.

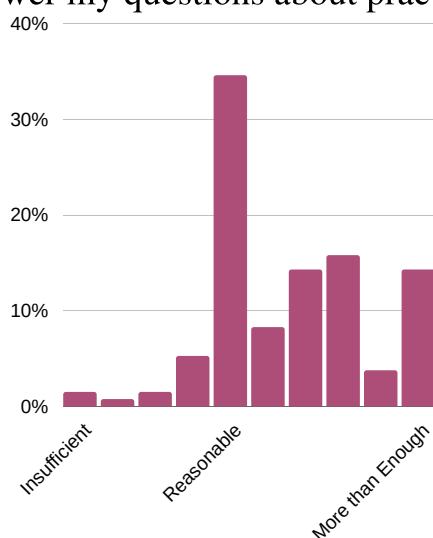
Are you likely to integrate some (or all) telepsychology into your practice post-pandemic?



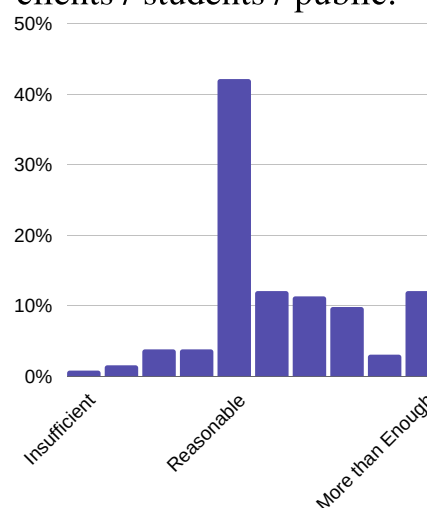
Area 5: Practice Clarity

78.36% of respondents accessed the PAA's online COVID-19 resource page. They found that:

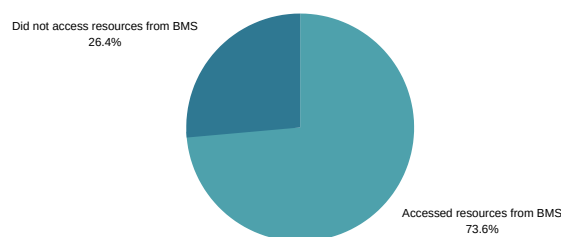
There were sufficient resources to answer my questions about practice.



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



54.71% of respondents accessed the BMS CPA / CPAP Liability Insurance Policy's COVID-19 communications.



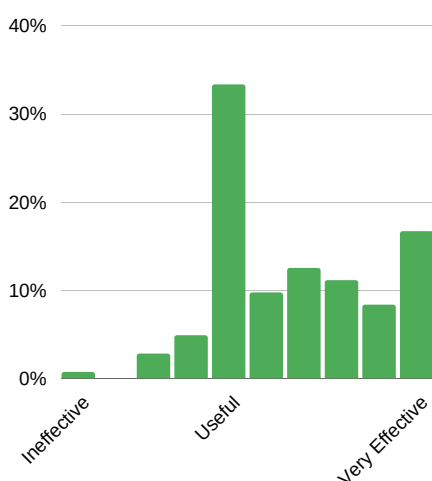
48.39% were able to secure more useful resources elsewhere, from sources including the APA, AHS, BCPA, and CAP.

Telepsychology remains raised from inaugural levels - 79.1% plan to implement telepsychology to some extent post-pandemic, up 12.3% from April. Respondents vary in resource preferences, though many find PAA's website and resource lists appropriate or above expectation.

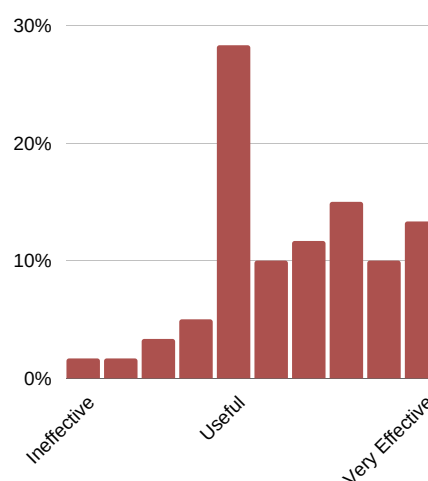
Area 6: Communications

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.

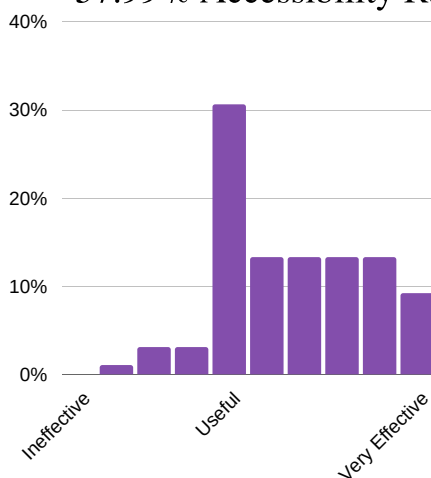
1. Regular ENews:
85.21% Accessibility Rate



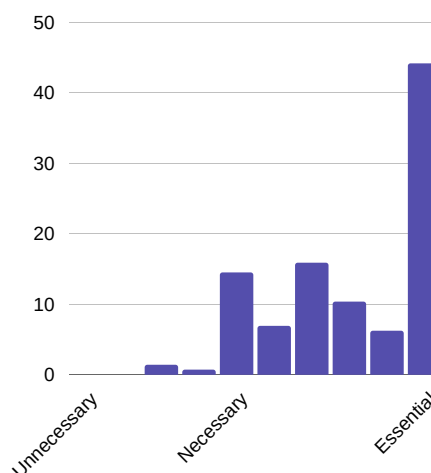
2. Social Media:
35.50% Accessibility Rate



3. Infographics, posters, and videos:
57.99% Accessibility Rate



4. Advocacy:
85.80% Awareness Rate

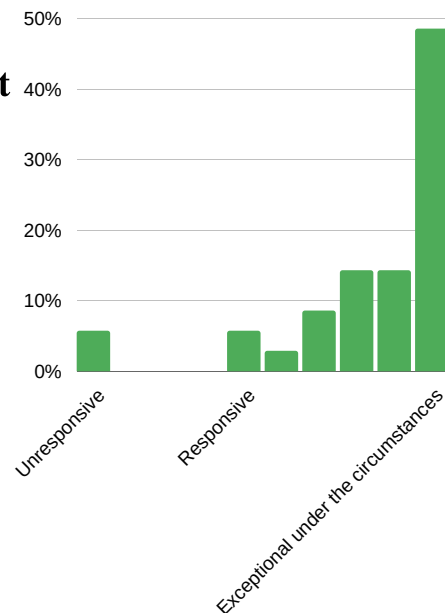


Area 7: Professional Support

20.71% of respondents reached out to PAA directly, via phone or email, to access staff support services, almost doubled from survey one.

They found the PAA staff team to be:

We at PAA encourage our members to reach out, via email or phone, if they have questions or concerns. We are unfortunately not able to address these if they are sent in via the qualitative section of the pandemic survey.



Some thoughts from our members:

A positive outcome of the pandemic is adopting increased flexibility and learning in an even greater way to adapt to complicated circumstances.

At first my self care and job functioning went down within the first 3 months of the pandemic. Now my health and practice are way better and I'm finding more clients sharing similar stories about having shifted their priorities.

I decided to continue providing telepsychology services to my clients because they are happy with the option; the standard of service is equal to face to face; and the proven results of my services are also equal to face to face delivery.

I particularly enjoyed the CAP/PAA town hall & would appreciate more of this collaboration in the future (even if non pandemic related).

A note on statistical testing: to determine significance of results, a two-tailed t-test for paired means was performed, compared to the inaugural edition, with $p < 0.05$.

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 sixth and final survey is an informative glimpse into the experiences and needs of psychologists over the first 7 months of the COVID-19 pandemic. Over that time period, clear trends began to emerge suggesting increasing workloads, growing confidence in work conditions and telepsychology, ability to sustain business/practice, good access of resources, growing awareness of advocacy work, appreciation of association direct support, and the likelihood of post-pandemic telepsychology use.

Recommendations

Advocacy:

Continue active advocacy efforts. 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:

Facilitate member networking and connectivity. 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:

Continue to develop, and prioritize, member supports. 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 was 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). Psychologists are respected and essential health professionals. They deserve, and appreciate, a professional association that is highly responsive and member-service oriented.

Research:

Continue this research and employ knowledge transfer with the results. 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 professional is well placed to lead in this regard.