

ALBERTA PSYCHOLOGY  
DURING A PANDEMIC:



# PAA Member Survey

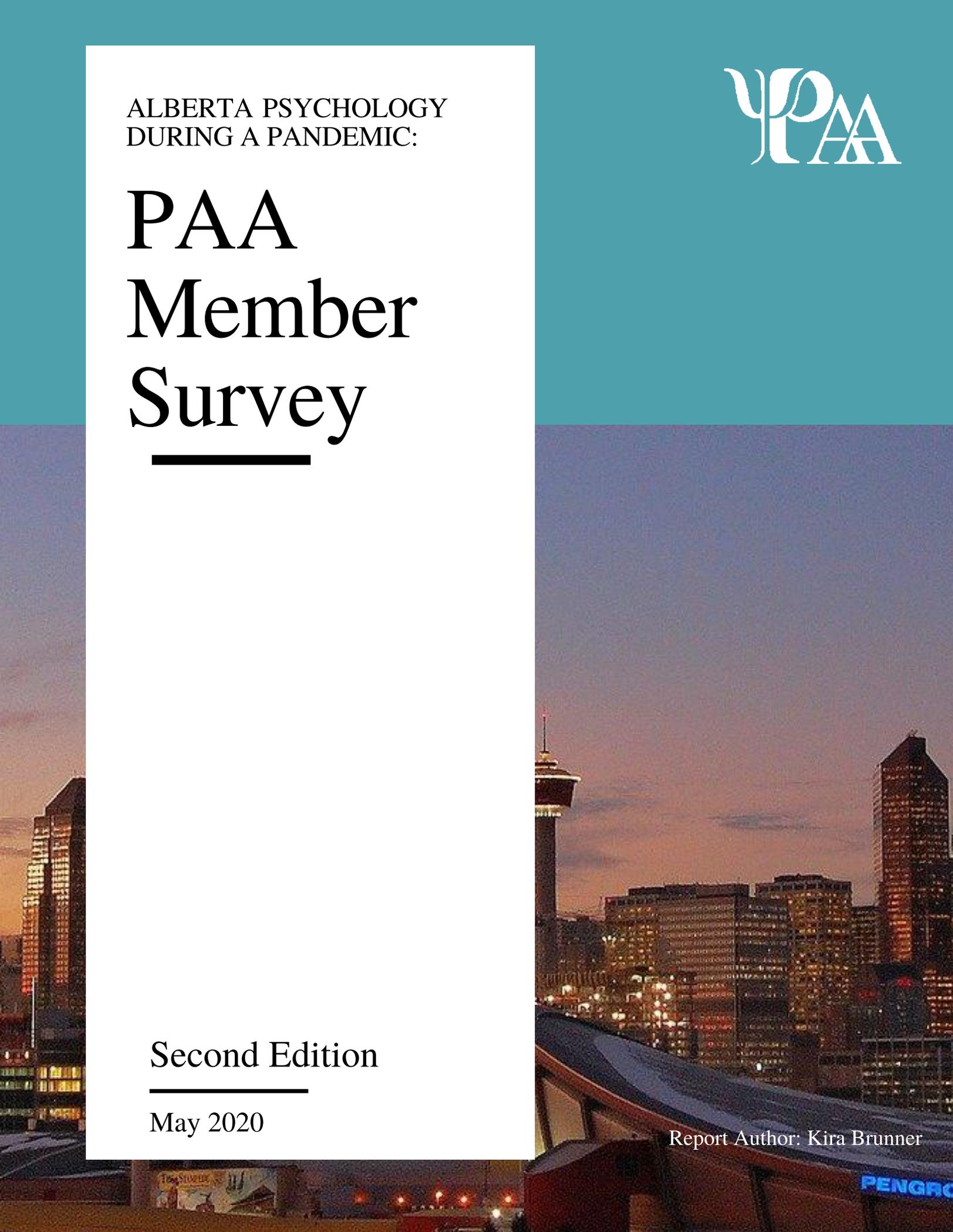
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Second Edition

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May 2020

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Psychological practice in Alberta has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In this second, monthly, member survey since the March 2020 pandemic declaration, we witnessed only small changes.

A few trends may be emerging in this second study. Use of, and confidence in, telepsychology may be increasing as is the use of the PAA public education resource (infographics, social media, and ENews). A growing number of respondents have reached out to PAA directly. They continue to find the PAA staff team to be highly responsive and to have provided exceptional services under the circumstances. Members are encouraged to connect with us to share their questions and concerns.

Member respondents continue to report higher than expected workloads and social commitments and that the majority are working from home offices. There continues to be considerable variance in perceived privacy needs, information security, and overall working conditions in these home offices with members responses indicating that telepsychology did not appear to improve efficacy or connectedness. Also consistent is the negative impacts on self-care, psychological health, and overall functioning of members personally, with even greater perceived negative impacts for those served (students, patients, and clients).

Respondents continued to indicate both good access to needed pandemic-specific resources and that the influx of information was overwhelming. Advocacy continued to be perceived as most useful.

55% of respondents indicated that it is financially feasible to continue with current conditions for only another 0-6 months, a trend in which we hope to see improvement.

Overall, the second month/ first eight 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 were appreciated and rated highly under the circumstances.

# BACKGROUND

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An online survey sent to members of the Psychologists' Association of Alberta May 2020 which sought to help understand the experience of being a psychologist in Alberta 8 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 these monthly survey are aimed at helping PAA understand, and respond to, the impacts of this pandemic on psychological practice in Alberta.

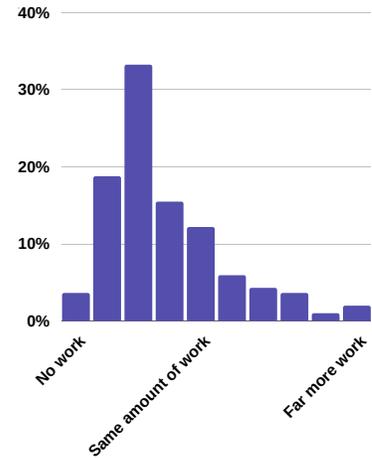
This survey asked about the impact of the pandemic on members professionally, personally, and on those to whom they provide psychological services. It also asked about members' use of telepsychology, their practice clarity, and the effectiveness of PAA's communications and professional support for them.

There are 3-4 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 323 to 107 participants (12%-4% of membership, respectively).



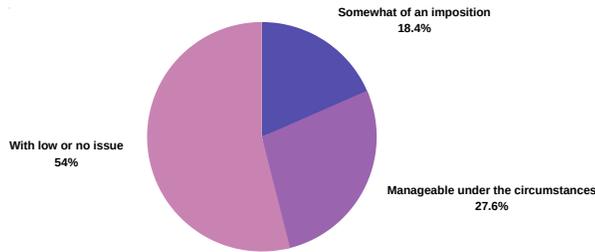
# Area 1: Professional Impacts

How has the pandemic impacted your workload as a psychologist?

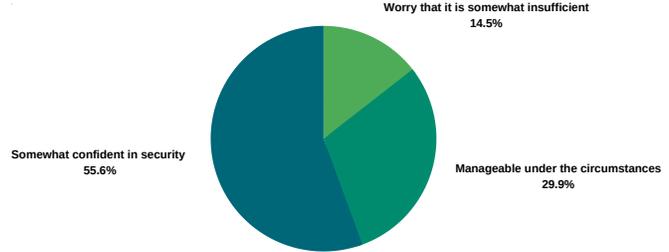


Of the 73.03% of respondents that transitioned to a home office, how easy has it been to address:

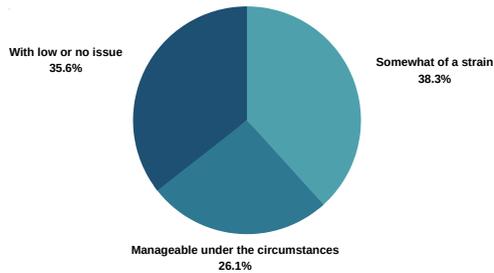
## Personal Privacy:



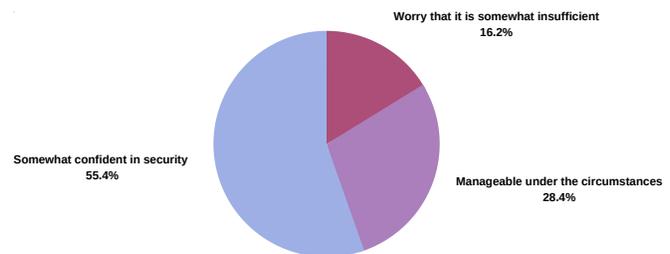
## Client Privacy:



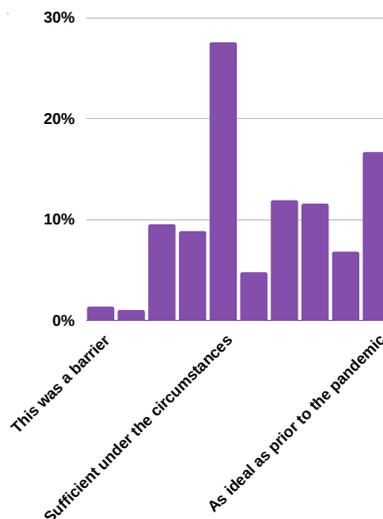
## Current Working Conditions:



## Security of Information:



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

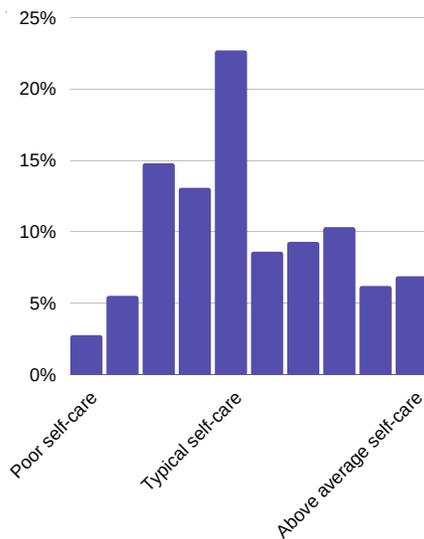


Respondents' overall confidence in home office work has increased, though the burden of pandemic work has begun to compound.

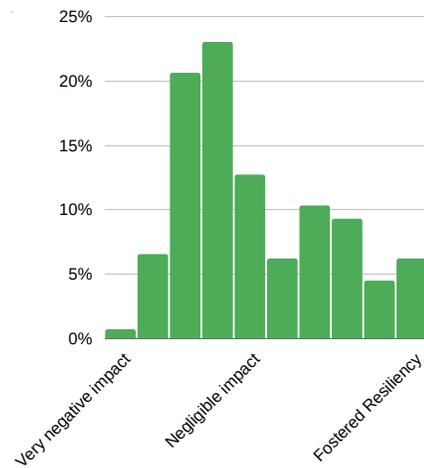
# Area 2: Personal Impacts

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

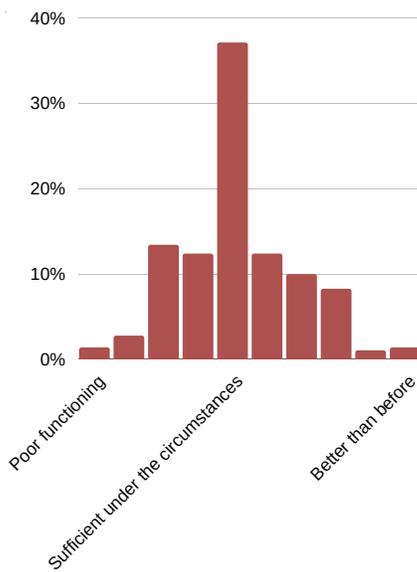
Self-care:



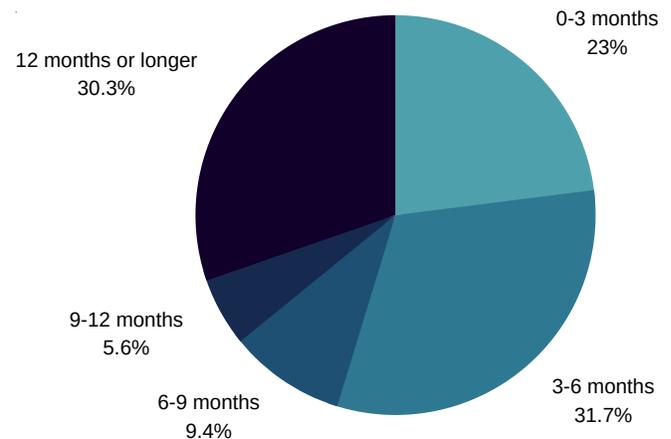
Psychological health:



Functioning (employment, relationships):

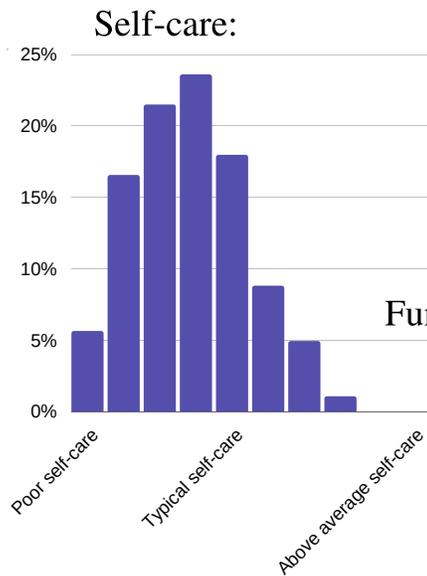


How long can you sustain business practices to provide adequate client care given the current financial impacts of the pandemic?

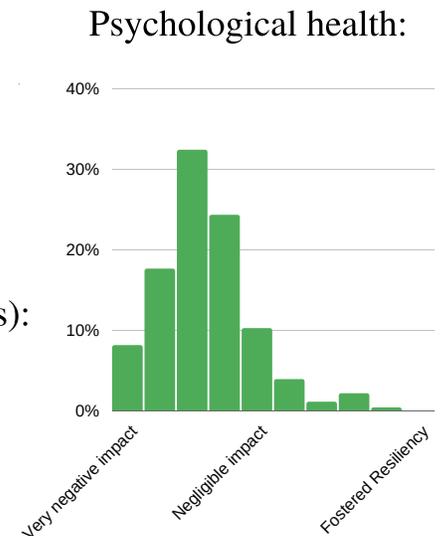
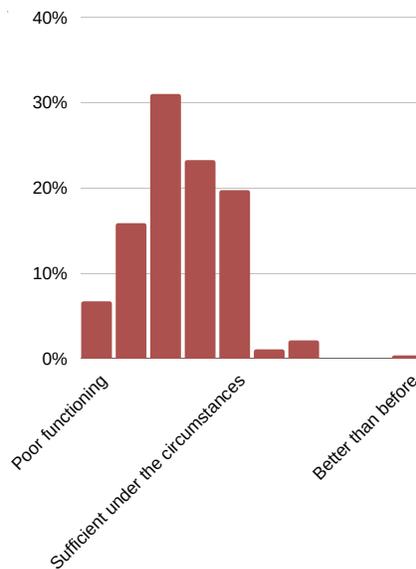


# Area 3: Perceived Impacts

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



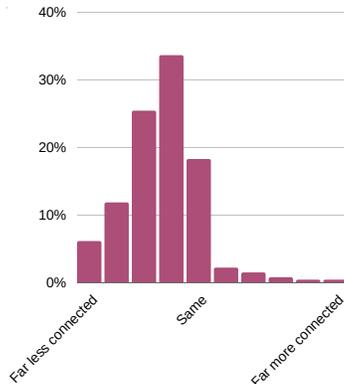
Functioning (employment, relationships):



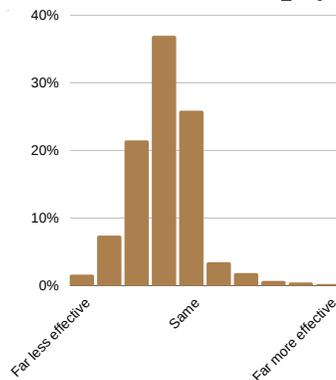
For both clients and psychologists themselves, there was no statistically significant change in functioning, self-care, or overall functioning. Psychologists themselves continue to be less negatively impacted.

# Area 4: Telepsychology

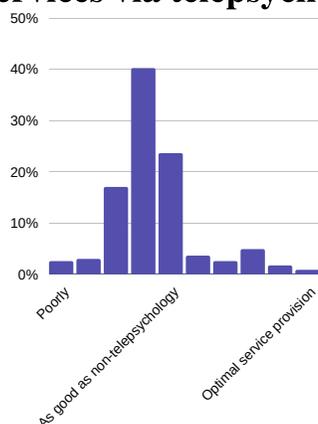
**How connected did you feel to clients/students/other service recipients during telepsychology compared to non telepsychology offerings?**



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

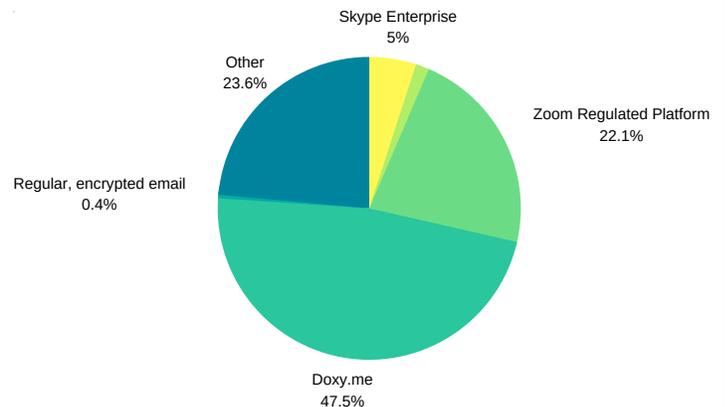


**How well do you feel that you were able to provide services via telepsychology?**

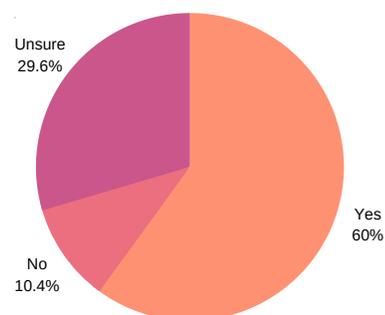


94.64% of respondents migrated to (or were already using) telepsychology services, up 2.44%

**Which platform do you use?**



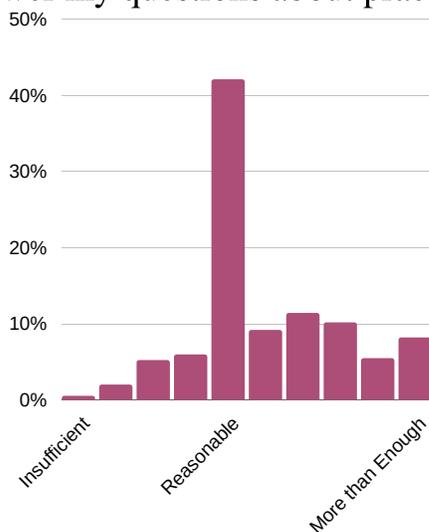
**Are you likely to integrate some (or all) telepsychology into your practice post-pandemic?**



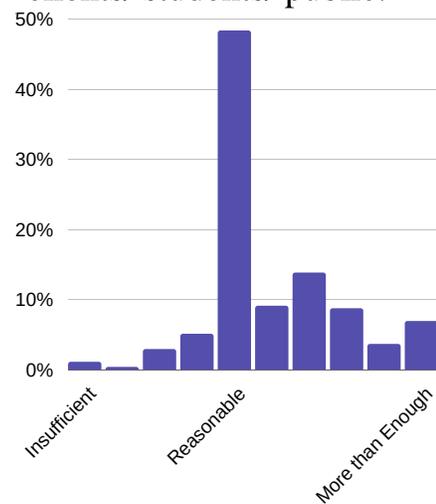
# Area 5: Practice Clarity

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

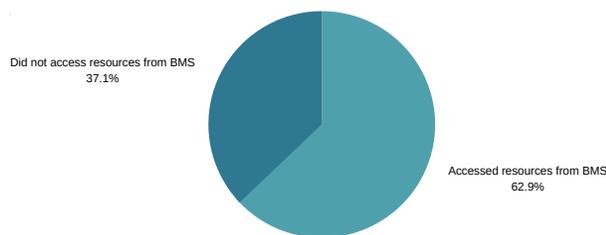
There were sufficient resources to answer my questions about practice.



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



**62.91% of respondents accessed the BMS CPA/ CPAP Liability Insurance Policy's COVID-19 communications.**



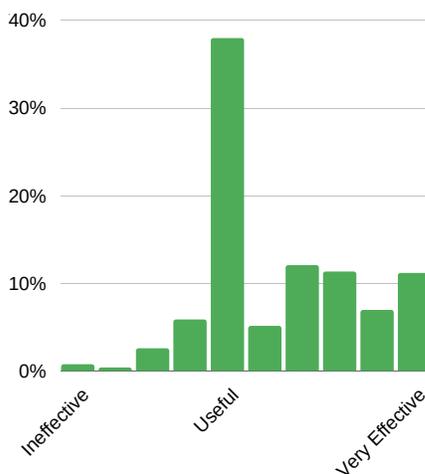
34.55% were able to secure more useful resources elsewhere, from sources including AHS, EMDRIA, the APA, the CPA, and CAP.

Overall confidence in and perceived effectiveness of telepsychology has increased marginally, though now more practitioners are unsure of implementing telepsychology post-pandemic. Practice clarity and communication responses have not changed, though we acknowledge a glitch in data collection made significance of these questions lowered. Please note that these issues have been fixed for survey 5.

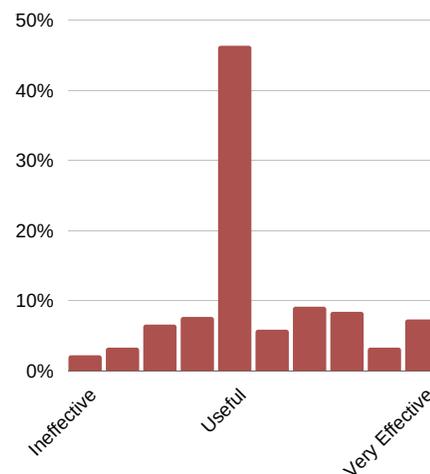
# Area 6: Communications

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.

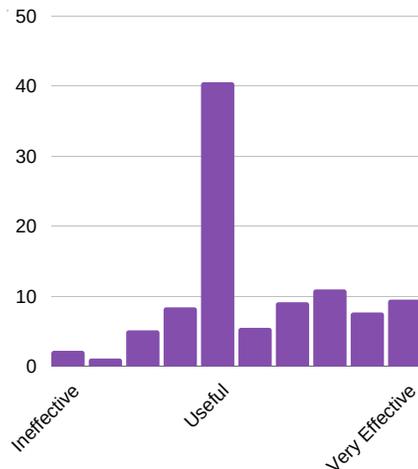
1. Regular ENews:  
95.62% Accessibility Rate



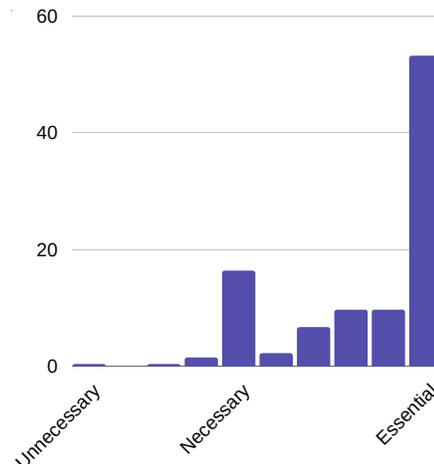
2. Social Media:  
42.70% Accessibility Rate



3. Infographics, posters, and videos:  
70.07% Accessibility Rate



4. Advocacy:  
92.19% Awareness Rate

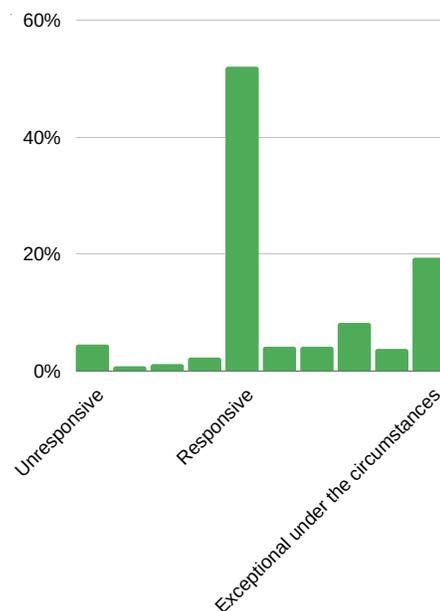


# Area 7: Professional Support

**24.16% of respondents reached out to PAA directly, via phone or email, to access staff support services.**

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:*

Though PAA is overall very helpful and I am appreciative, I have found that with the pandemic there are too many emails with too much information - not brief and concise enough.

In the end, offering clients in-person sessions or telehealth can provide better access to services for many people.

I have struggled with balancing the expectations of my work place and maintaining best practice and safety precautions.

My practice is largely based on assessment. We desperately need tools that are normed and designed specifically for telepractice.

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

# Conclusions and Recommendations

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## **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 second survey was an informative glimpse into the continuing experiences and needs of psychologists in relation to this pandemic.

## **Recommendations**

At the second month mark, recommendations have not changed.

### **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.