

ALBERTA PSYCHOLOGY  
DURING A PANDEMIC:



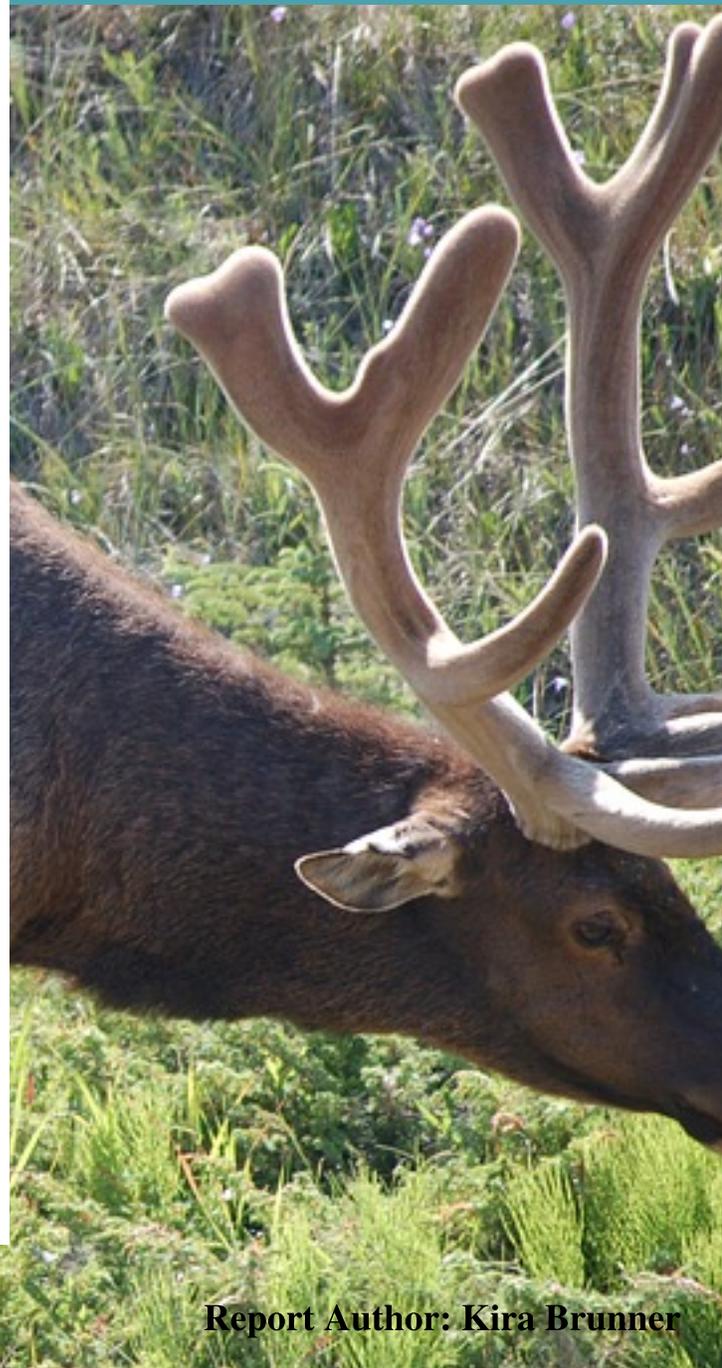
# PAA Member Survey

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Fourth Edition

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July 2020



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Psychological practice in Alberta has been impacted by the pandemic in a variety of ways. For this fourth survey, respondents reported increased workloads and also increased social commitments. The majority had transitioned to telepsychology, increasing confidence in working conditions and personal privacy.

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. Reports of perceived “connectedness” and “wellness” (during telepsychology) have been increasing. Interestingly, 81% 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 BMS and then PAA, respectively. Advocacy was considered to be most useful but resources such as infographics, social media, and ENews also had high (and increasing) usage rates.

15% of respondents reached out to PAA directly. Those who did found the PAA staff team to be highly responsive and to have provided exceptional services under the circumstances (all responses rated service as satisfactory or better).

Overall, the first 20 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 July 2020 sought to help understand the experience of being a psychologist in Alberta 20 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.

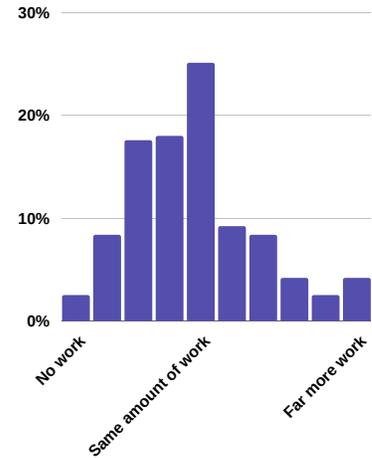
This survey asked about the impact of the pandemic on members professionally, personally, and on those to whom they provide psychological services. It also asked about members' use of telepsychology, their practice clarity, and the effectiveness of PAA's communications and professional support for them.

There are 3-4 questions in each of 7 areas with an opportunity for members' comments and qualitative feedback at the end of the survey. The response rate varied from 219 to 47 participants.



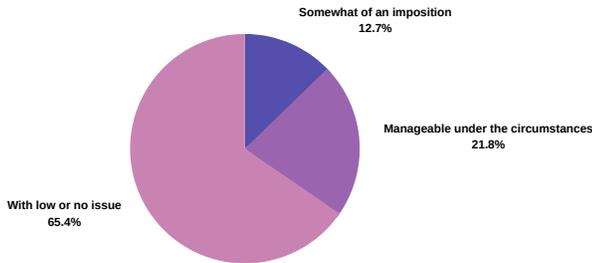
# Area 1: Professional Impacts

How has the pandemic impacted your workload as a psychologist?

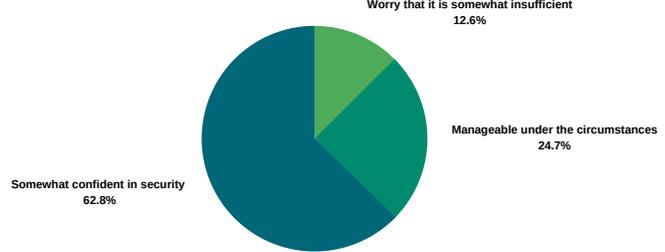


Of the 69.04% of respondents that are currently in a home office, how easy has it been to address:

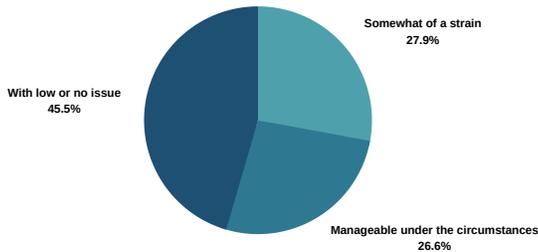
## Personal Privacy:



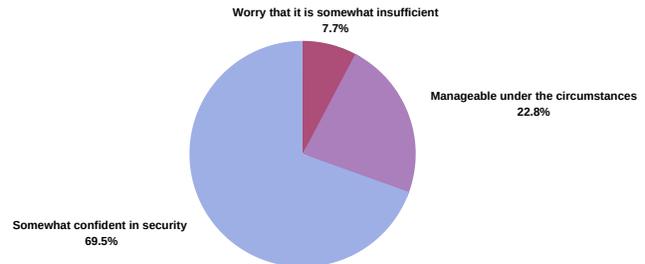
## Client Privacy:



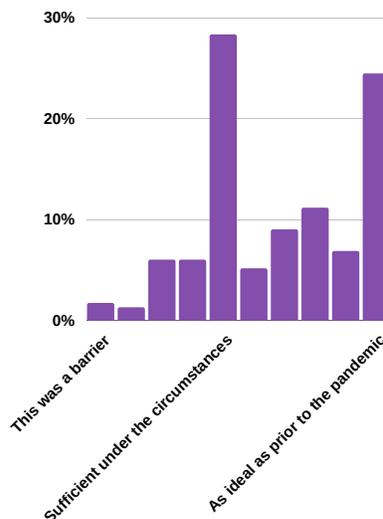
## Current Working Conditions:



## Security of Information:



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

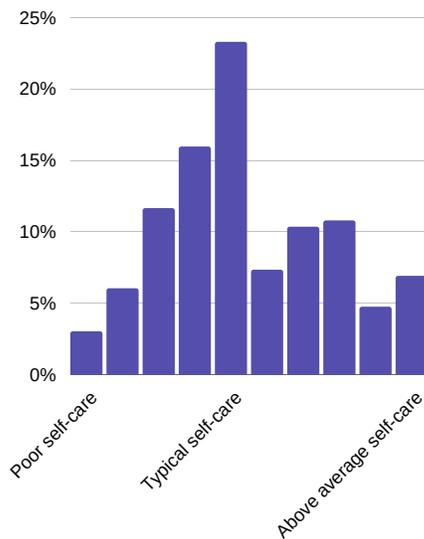


Workload remains raised significantly from inaugural. Confidence in current working conditions has also increased to statistically significant level.

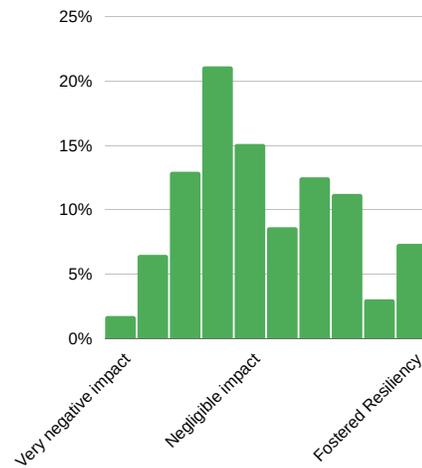
# Area 2: Personal Impacts

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

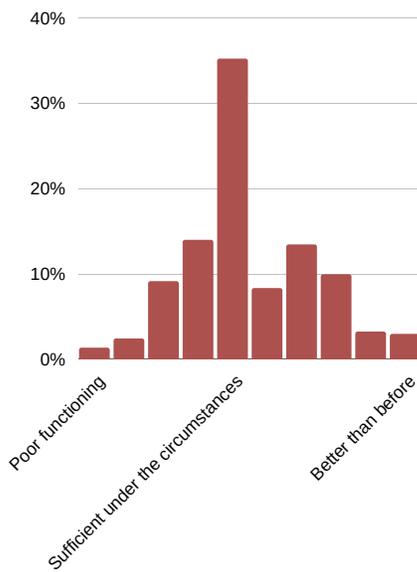
Self-care:



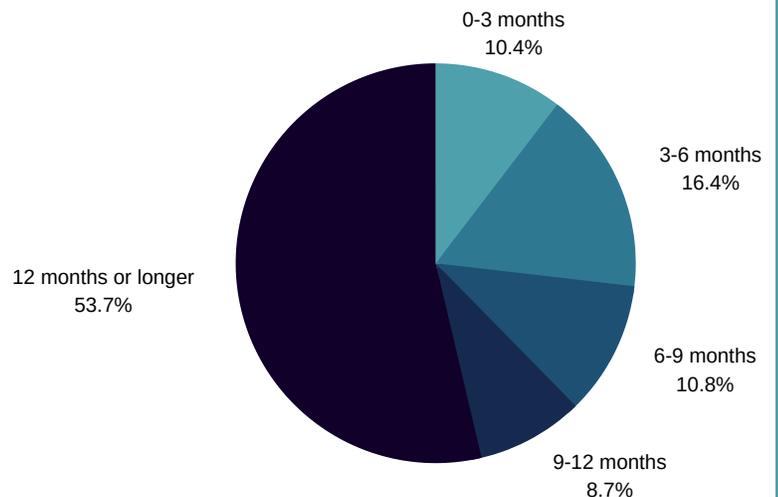
Psychological health:



Functioning (employment, relationships):

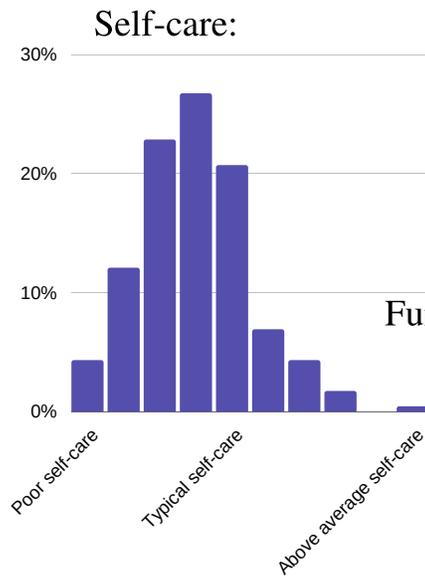


How long can you sustain business practices to provide adequate client care given the current financial impacts of the pandemic?

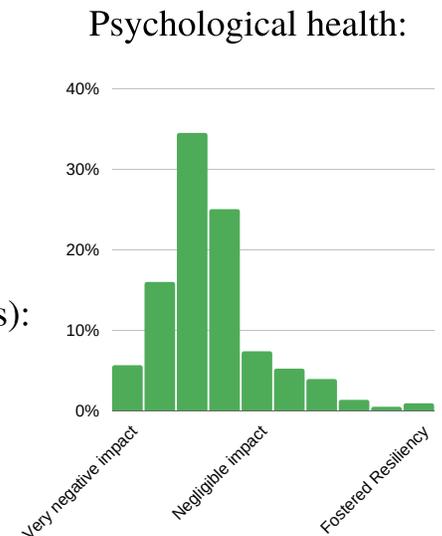
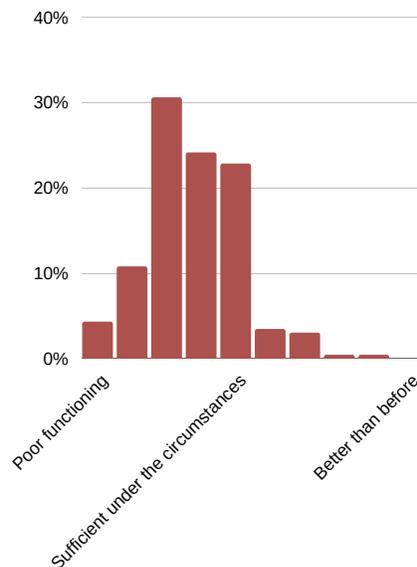


# Area 3: Perceived Impacts

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



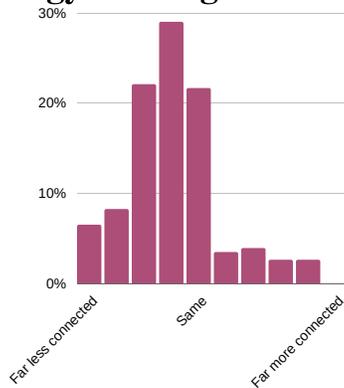
Functioning (employment, relationships):



Changes in impacts remain non-significant within both psychologists and those they serve. Some respondents report that clients and families vary greatly and is difficult to capture on a single scale, thus possibly inflating the median value.

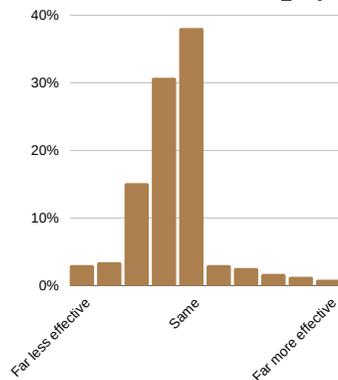
# Area 4: Telepsychology

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

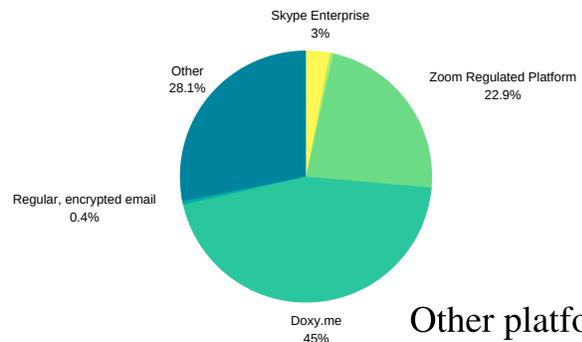


96.97% of respondents are now using telepsychology services, up 4.77% from survey one. All values remain statistically stagnant.

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

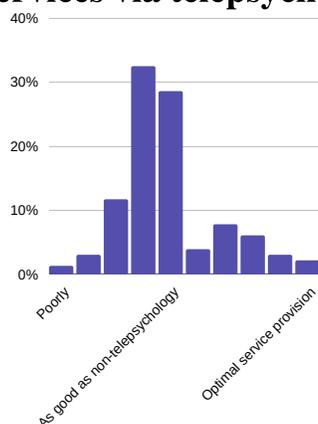


**Which platform do you use?**

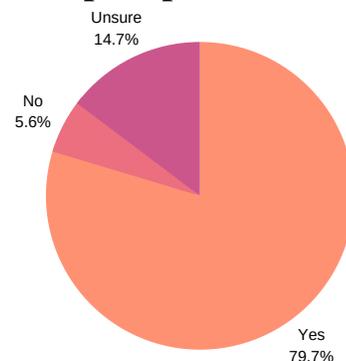


Other platforms included Jane.app, Facetime, OWL, and telephone calls

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



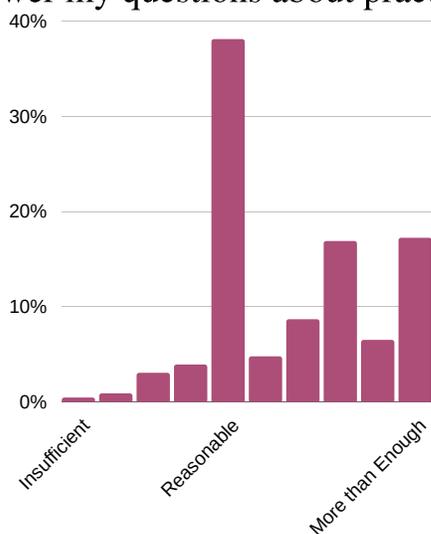
**Are you likely to integrate some (or all) telepsychology into your practice post-pandemic?**



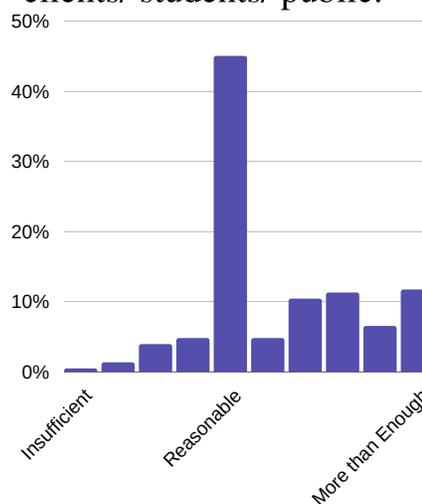
# Area 5: Practice Clarity

**83.98% of respondents accessed the PAA's online COVID-19 resource page. They found that:**

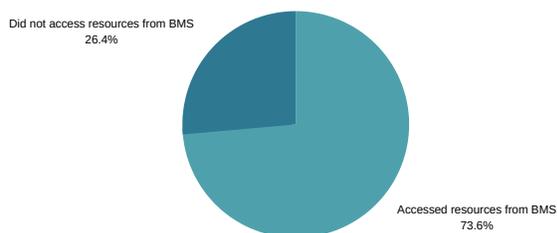
There were sufficient resources to answer my questions about practice.



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



**73.59% of respondents accessed the BMS CPA/ CPAP Liability Insurance Policy's COVID-19 communications.**



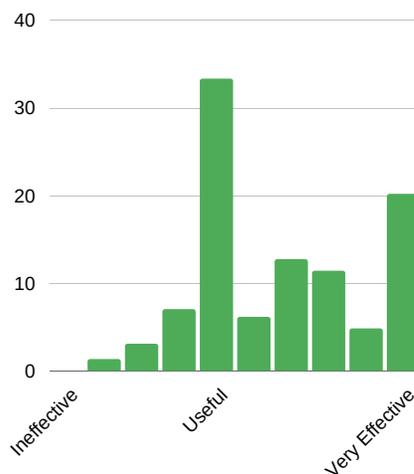
38.10% were able to secure more useful resources elsewhere, from sources including the APA, Jane.app, AHS, CAP, the CPA, CMHA, and PESI.

Telepsychology remains popular and more respondents plan to implement it to some extent post-pandemic. Respondents report that some areas of clinical practice, such as play therapy, are unable to be completed via telepsychology, thus creating a gap in care for some groups. Data from communications questions continue to be obstructed and meaningful data will be produced by survey 5 -- though accessibility rates continue to rise.

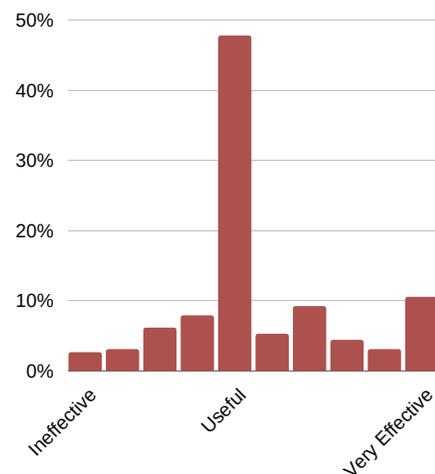
# Area 6: Communications

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.

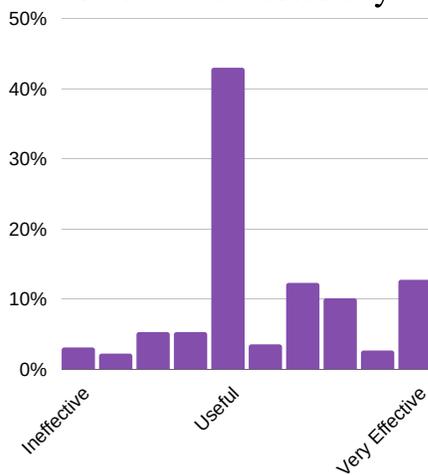
1. Regular ENews:  
95.18% Accessibility Rate



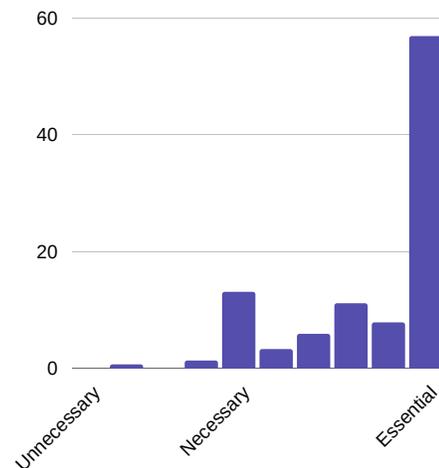
2. Social Media:  
42.98% Accessibility Rate



3. Infographics, posters, and videos:  
67.54% Accessibility Rate



4. Advocacy:  
94.77% Awareness Rate

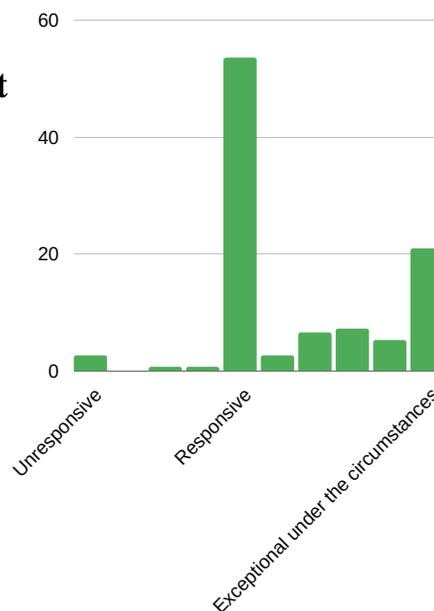


# Area 7: Professional Support

**30.72% 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:*

Thank you! Early in the pandemic, I found it very useful! I am less engaged now as I settle into the 'new normal'.

I looked forward to the weekly emails and online sessions as a means of feeling supported professionally and never felt alone in my decision making as a result.

I have not felt comfortable providing in-person play therapy, therefore a number of my clients have chosen not to attend and are therefore missing out on the support they need.

I stayed focused on my practice, family and mental fortitude. I remained gritty, hardy, resilient and now I'm taking a vacation!  
Good job PAA.

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

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 fourth monthly survey remains an informative glimpse into the experiences and needs of psychologists in relation to this pandemic. Of note, we are beginning to see clear trends (increasing confidence in, and use of, telepsychology and home offices) and statistically significant differences (awareness of advocacy work, more can sustain business for 12+ months) from the initial survey done 4 weeks into the pandemic.

## **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.