![American Psychological Association logo] AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Patients with Depression and Anxiety Surge as Psychologists Respond to the Coronavirus Pandemic

NOVEMBER 2020

More than six months into the global pandemic, many psychologists reported seeing more patients with anxiety and depression, according to the American Psychological Association's COVID-19 Telehealth Practitioner Survey.
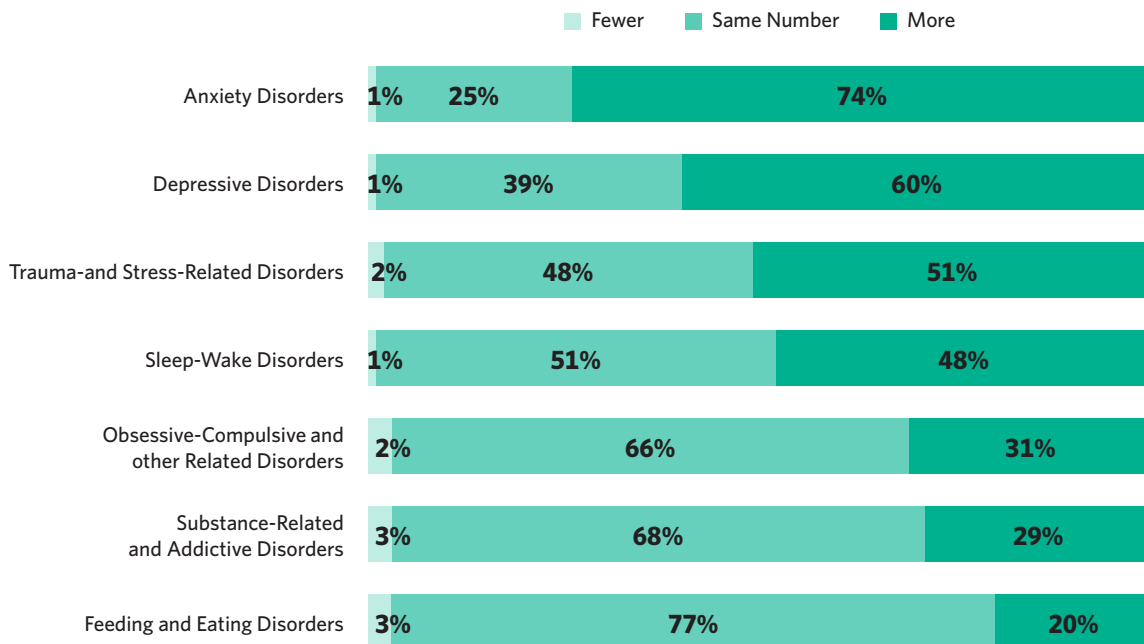
In responding to this mental health crisis, many psychologists were seeing more patients, getting more referrals, and experiencing fewer cancellations. Most psychologists were treating patients remotely, and a third were treating patients living in a different state from where they practice. Although some were experiencing burnout, most psychologists have been able to practice self-care and maintain a positive work-life balance.

INCREASES IN PATIENTS WITH ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

In responding to the survey in September, most psychologists reported seeing more patients for anxiety disorders (74%) and depressive disorders (60%), compared with before the pandemic. Other treatment areas with significant increase of patients included trauma and stress-related disorders and sleep-wake disorders.
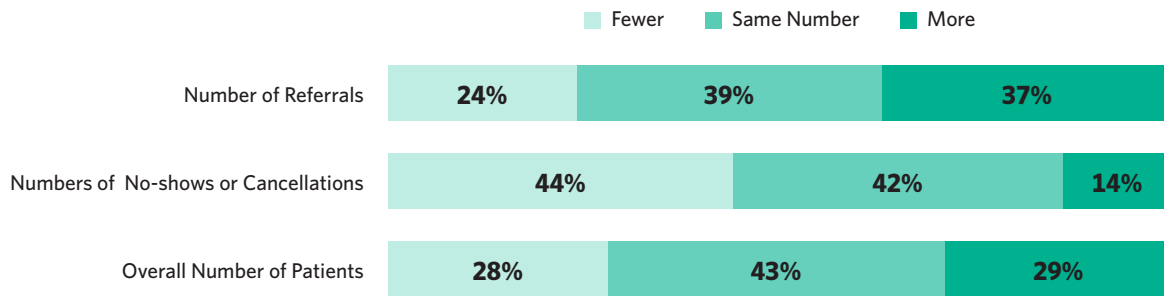
FIGURE 1

CHANGES IN DEMAND BY TREATMENT AREA SINCE THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Legend: Fewer | Same Number | More

Treatment Area	Fewer	Same Number	More
Anxiety Disorders	1%	25%	74%
Depressive Disorders	1%	39%	60%
Trauma-and Stress-Related Disorders	2%	48%	51%
Sleep-Wake Disorders	1%	51%	48%
Obsessive-Compulsive and other Related Disorders	2%	66%	31%
Substance-Related and Addictive Disorders	3%	68%	29%
Feeding and Eating Disorders	3%	77%	20%

More than a third (37%) of psychologists reported having more patient referrals, and 44% were having fewer no-shows or cancellations. Compared with before the pandemic, 29% of psychologists were seeing more patients overall, 43% were seeing the same number of patients, and 28% were seeing fewer patients.

FIGURE 2

CHANGES IN NUMBER OF PATIENTS SINCE THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Legend: Fewer | Same Number | More

	Fewer	Same Number	More
Number of Referrals	24%	39%	37%
Numbers of No-shows or Cancellations	44%	42%	14%
Overall Number of Patients	28%	43%	29%

While the majority of psychologists reported no changes in number of patients within particular racial/ethnic groups, some reported increases: 9% of psychologists reported seeing more Asian patients, 11% reported seeing more African American/Black patients, 8% reported seeing more Hispanic patients, and 19% reported seeing more White patients. By age group, 29% of psychologists reported seeing more adult patients (ages 18-64), 21% reported seeing more adolescent patients (ages 13-17), 17% reported seeing more older adult patients (ages 65-79), while 30% of psychologists reported seeing fewer children under 13.

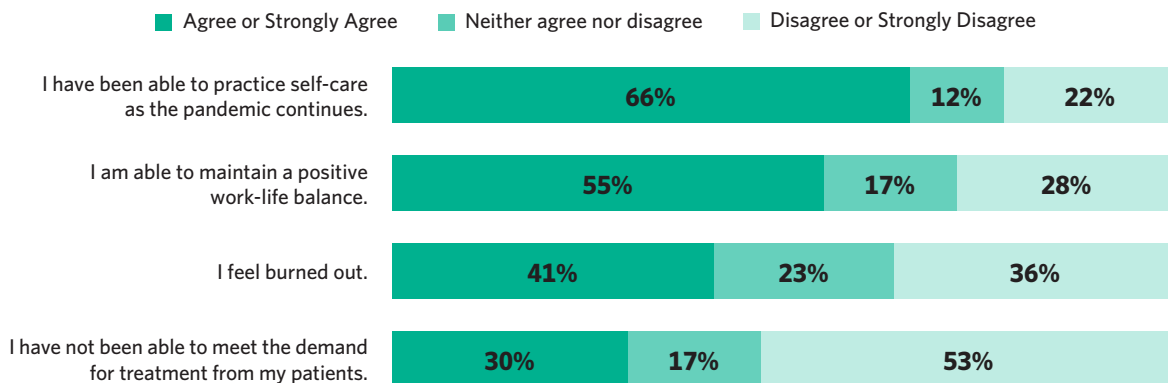## PROVIDING SERVICES REMOTELY, BURNOUT AND SELF-CARE

The vast majority (96%) of psychologists were treating patients remotely – 64% were treating all patients remotely, and 32% were treating some patients in person and some remotely. A third (33%) of psychologists were working with patients who live in a different state from the one they practice in, and 6% were working in a state they were not licensed in.

The majority of psychologists (63%) reported that treating patients remotely is more challenging than treating patients inperson. About 26% of psychologists reported a fair amount of or more challenges or barriers for patients to receive treatment via telehealth, 58% reported a few challenges or barriers, and 16% reported no challenges or barriers related to telehealth. When asked what kind of challenges or barriers do patients experience when receiving treatment remotely, internet access or connectivity, general technical difficulties, and privacy issues were ranked as the top barriers to telehealth.

Given the increased demand and challenges related to telehealth, more than 4 in 10 psychologists (41%) said that they felt burned out and 30% said that they have not been able to meet the demand for treatment from their patients. However, a majority of psychologists say they have been able to practice self-care (66%) and maintain a positive work-life balance (55%).

FIGURE 3

WORKFORCE BURNOUT, SELF-CARE, AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Legend: Agree or Strongly Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree or Strongly Disagree

	Agree or Strongly Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree or Strongly Disagree
I have been able to practice self-care as the pandemic continues.	66%	12%	22%
I am able to maintain a positive work-life balance.	55%	17%	28%
I feel burned out.	41%	23%	36%
I have not been able to meet the demand for treatment from my patients.	30%	17%	53%

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