

WOS Around the World: EAP Counseling Use and Effectiveness in Six Global Regions from the Workplace Outcome Suite[®] 2024 Report

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Free Friday Webinar Series for EAPA Members



1

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Independent Scholar and Research Consultant – 17 years
Past - Led National Data Cooperative at Watson Wyatt – 2 years
Past - Managed Research Department at Optum – 10 years
Past - Chair of EAPA Research Committee – 5 years
Created over 250 scholarly papers, presentations, and trainings
Award from EASNA for Outstanding Service to EAP Field – 2009

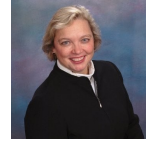
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Question 1

What is the WOS and the EAP Industry Benchmarking Project?

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The Workplace Outcome Suite

- It measures five kinds of outcomes (4 work-related & 1 general clinical). Originally 25 items, now most EAPs use the brief 5-item version with one question per outcome area, rated on a Likert-style 1 to 5 scale of agreement.
- Requires completion two times at pre and post use.
- Reliable and valid brief self-report measures.
- Work-related outcomes are relevant to more than 3 in 4 of all EAP counseling users regardless of issue.
- Typical EAP counseling case shows significant improvement in all five outcome areas on WOS.
- Few factors meaningfully moderate improvement over time on the WOS – except for clinical severity (based on depression) and differences between specific EAPs.
- Useful for estimating financial ROI for EAP benefit.

4

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WOS is Best Practice in EAP

- The literature has over 60 published papers, reports, and conference presentations featuring the WOS.
- The WOS is the most widely used self-report outcome measure in EAP industry worldwide. A recent study by EAPA featured a sample of 147 providers of EAP services (McNutt & Frey, 2023). Of the total, 72 EAPs collected self-report data from their users on work-related outcomes and 53 EAPs were using the WOS for this purpose. Thus, **74% of the EAPs that assessed work-related outcomes used the WOS**. These EAPs can compare their results against the industry benchmarks for the WOS available in the recent annual report.
- But in the bigger picture for the industry, only about 1 in 3 EAPs overall use the WOS. EAPA encourages the remaining two-thirds of EAPs to also adopt the WOS as a best practice.

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WOS Industry Project Financial Sponsors

EAPA has endorsed the WOS



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WOS White Papers



- 1 – Chestnut Global Partners. (2016). *Workplace Outcome Suite® (WOS) Annual Report 2016: EAPs Can and Do Achieve Positive Outcomes*. [White paper - 10 pages]. Bloomington, IL, United States. Authors: D. Sharar & G. DeLapp. <http://hdl.handle.net/10713/6376>
- 2 – Chestnut Global Partners. (2017). *Workplace Outcome Suite® (WOS) Annual Report 2017: Comparing Improvement After EAP Counseling for Different Outcomes and Clinical Context Factors in Over 16,000 Cases Worldwide*. [White paper - 46 pages]. Bloomington, IL, United States. Authors: M. Attridge, G. DeLapp, P. Herlihy, P. Ihnes, M. Jacquart, R. Lennox, M. London, L. Servizio & D. Sharar. <http://hdl.handle.net/10713/7171>
- 3 – Morneau Shepell. (2019). *Workplace Outcome Suite® (WOS) Annual Report 2018: Understanding EAP Counseling Use, Longitudinal Outcomes and ROI, and Profiles of EAPs that Collect WOS Data*. [White paper - 86 pages]. Toronto, ON, Canada. Authors: M. Attridge, R. Lennox & D. Sharar. <http://hdl.handle.net/10713/11204>
- 4A – Morneau Shepell. (2020). *Workplace Outcome Suite® (WOS) Annual Report 2020: Part 1 - Decade of Data on EAP Counseling Reveals Prominence of Presenteeism*. [White paper - 95 pages]. Toronto, ON, Canada. Author: M. Attridge. <http://hdl.handle.net/10713/13758>
- 4B – Morneau Shepell. (2020). *Workplace Outcome Suite® (WOS) Annual Report 2020: Part 2: Profiles of Work Outcomes on 10 Context Factor of EAP Counseling Use*. [White paper - 42 pages]. Toronto, ON, Canada. Author: M. Attridge. <http://hdl.handle.net/10713/13759>
- 5 – LifeWorks. (2022). *Workplace Outcome Suite® (WOS) Annual Report 2021: EAP Counseling Use and Outcomes, COVID-19 Pandemic Impact, and Best Practices in Outcome Data Collection*. [White paper - 109 pages]. Toronto, ON, Canada. Author: M. Attridge. <http://hdl.handle.net/10713/18701>
- 6 – Attridge, M. (2024). *Workplace Outcome Suite® (WOS) EAP Industry Global Report No. 6: Use and Effectiveness for Over 140,000 Counseling Cases from 2010 to 2022*. [White paper – 99 pages]. TELUS Health & the Employee Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA). <http://hdl.handle.net/10713/22543> Slides & Video: <http://hdl.handle.net/10713/22811>

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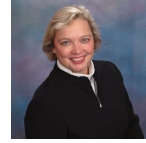
The 2024 report is the sixth in a series on WOS.

The project features data collected from 61 different EAP vendors or internal programs between the years 2010 and 2022. Of these, 26 EAPs provided new additional data for the current report.

Cumulative total includes over 141,000 EAP counseling cases with data at start and over 62,000 cases with longitudinal repeated data on one or more of the WOS measures.

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Question 2

What is the descriptive profile of counseling use for the over 141,000 cases in the full sample for the study?

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Data on Counseling Use

- We have case-level data on the WOS and many use factors (if provided by the EAP). We have data on many use factors:
 - EAP provider types
 - EAP benefit and employer context
 - Client (EAP user) background demographics
 - Counseling delivery options
- *Note:* The total number of all users and the total employees covered by the EAP is unknown. Thus, the annual EAP program utilization case rate is unknown.

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10

Profile of Counseling PROVIDERS

- 61 different EAP providers with HQ located in 15 countries
- EAP business model by user sample:
 - 68% of cases from national/global large external vendors
 - 21% of cases from regional smaller external vendors
 - 11% of cases internal staff at one employer (half also with vendor support as hybrid EAPs)

11

Profile of Counseling CONTEXTS

- Year when used EAP from 2010 to 2022
- Cases from 43 different countries globally
- All major geographic regions within USA
- 8 major types of industries of employers
- Variety of promotional tactics for EAP
- 95% of cases are the covered employee
- 94% of cases are self-referral to EAP

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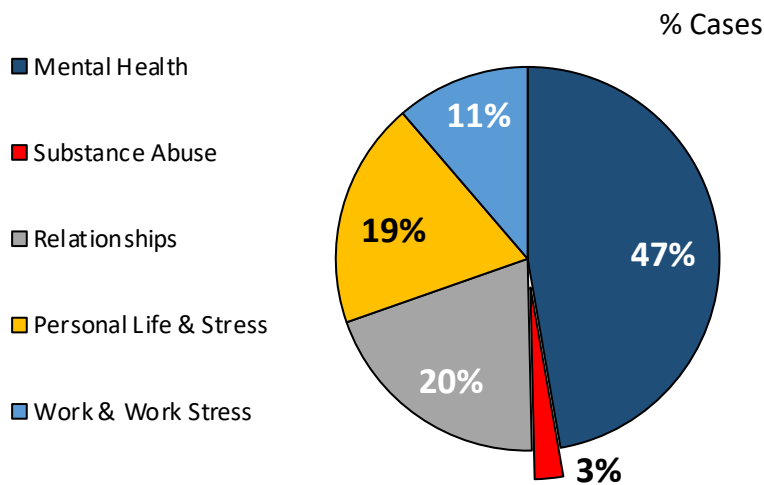
Profile of Counseling CLIENTS

- 67% of cases were female gender / 32% male / <1% other
- Average age of client is 38 years old
- 44% of cases at-risk for clinical depression at start (based on PHQ score)
- 62% of employee cases below normal level of job performance at start of use (in 0 to 7 range on 0-10 rating scale)

13

13

Profile of Counseling ISSUES



N = 122,002 counseling cases (54 EAPs) with primary presenting issue

14

Profile of Counseling DELIVERY

- 69% delivered using remote technology (online video, phone, text, e-mail) and 31% of cases used counseling delivered in-person at a local office – although varies by year (pre/during/post pandemic) and EAP provider.
- Average of 5.4 sessions of counseling used per case (range 1 to 10+) – although varies by EAP provider with many in the 3 or 4 session average range.
- 60 days clinical treatment episode duration (range 1-12 months) – although varies substantial by case within EAP.

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Questions or Comments

EAP Use Profile Results?

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Question 3

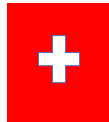
What specific outcomes are measured on the WOS?

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Workplace Outcome Suite (WOS)

The WOS was developed in 2010 (published peer-reviewed research).
Used by EAP vendors and internal programs globally to measure changes from before to after use of EAP counseling.



**Work
Absenteeism**



**Work
Presenteeism**



**Workplace
Distress**



**Work
Engagement**

**(Non-work
outcome)**



**Life
Satisfaction**

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18

Workplace Outcome Suite - Items

LS	So far, my life seems to be going very well.				
	Strongly Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Somewhat Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
WE	I am often eager to get to the work site and start the day.				
	Strongly Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Somewhat Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
WD	I dread going into work.				
	Strongly Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Somewhat Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
WP	My personal problems kept me from concentrating on my work.				
	Strongly Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Somewhat Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
WA	How much time did your personal problems cause you to miss work during the past 30 days? Include complete workdays and partial days when you came in late or left early. Please choose the category that best represents the total hours of absence you experienced (if any):				
	0 hours 1	1 to 3 hours 2	4 to 8 hours 3	2 to 3 days 4	4 or more days 5

19

Problem Status Scoring on WOS Items

LS	So far, my life seems to be going very well.				
	Strongly Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Somewhat Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
WE	I am often eager to get to the work site and start the day.				
	Strongly Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Somewhat Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
WD	I dread going into work.				
	Strongly Disagree 1	Somewhat Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Somewhat Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
WP	My personal problems kept me from concentrating on my work.				
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	0 hours 1	1 to 3 hours 2	4 to 8 hours 3	2 to 3 days 4	4 or more days 5

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Get the WOS

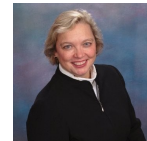
The WOS is free to use.

Getting a license for use is encouraged.

Send request to email: wosanalytics@telushealth.com

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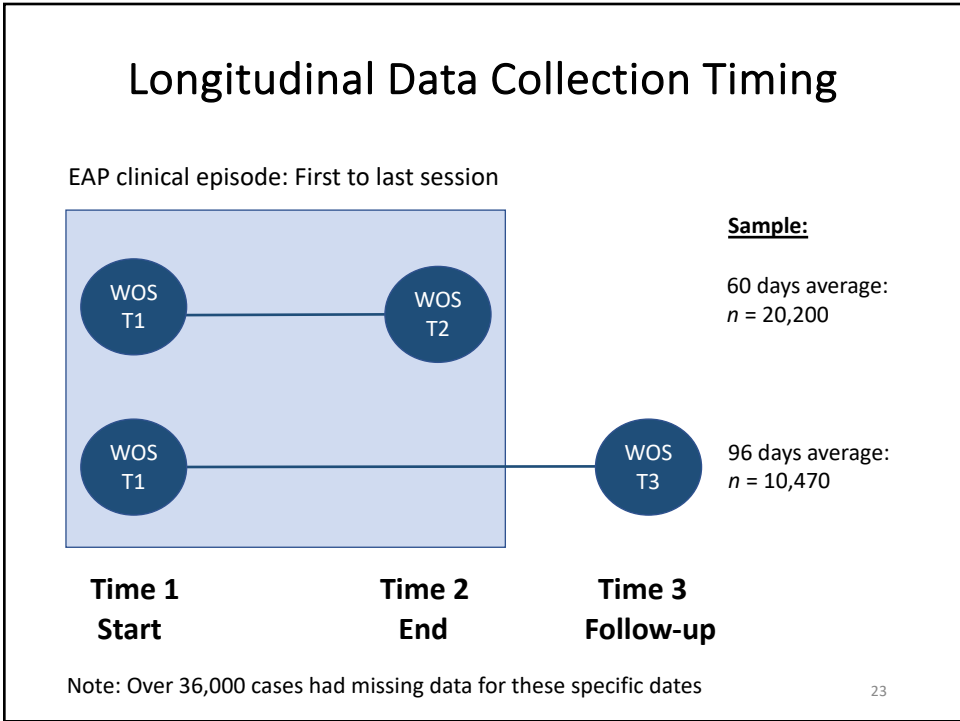


Question 4

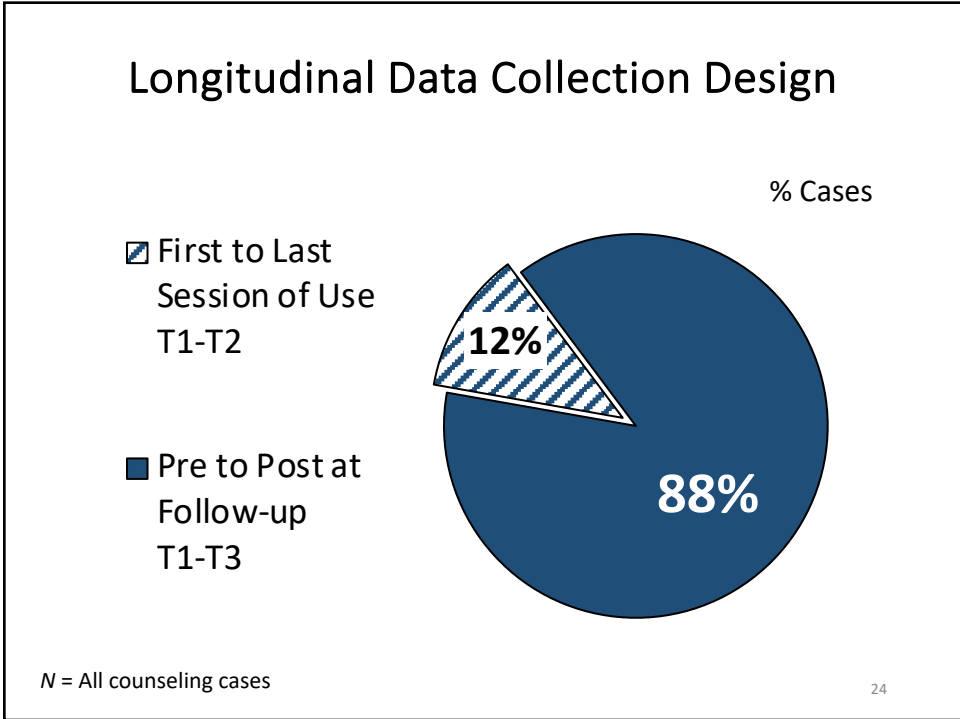
What methodology is used for collecting WOS data?

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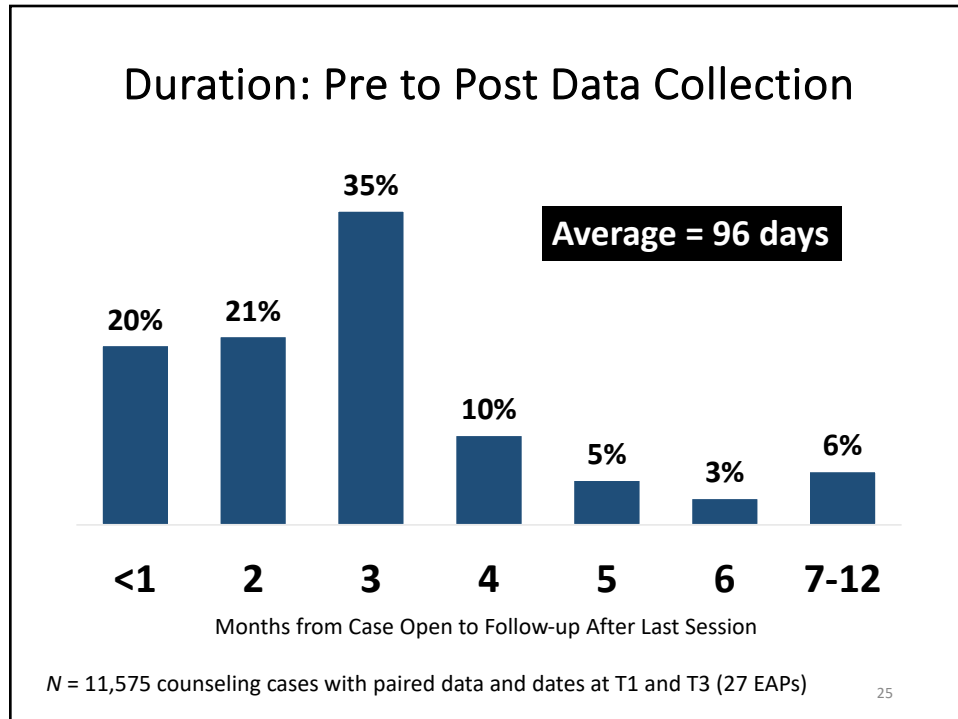
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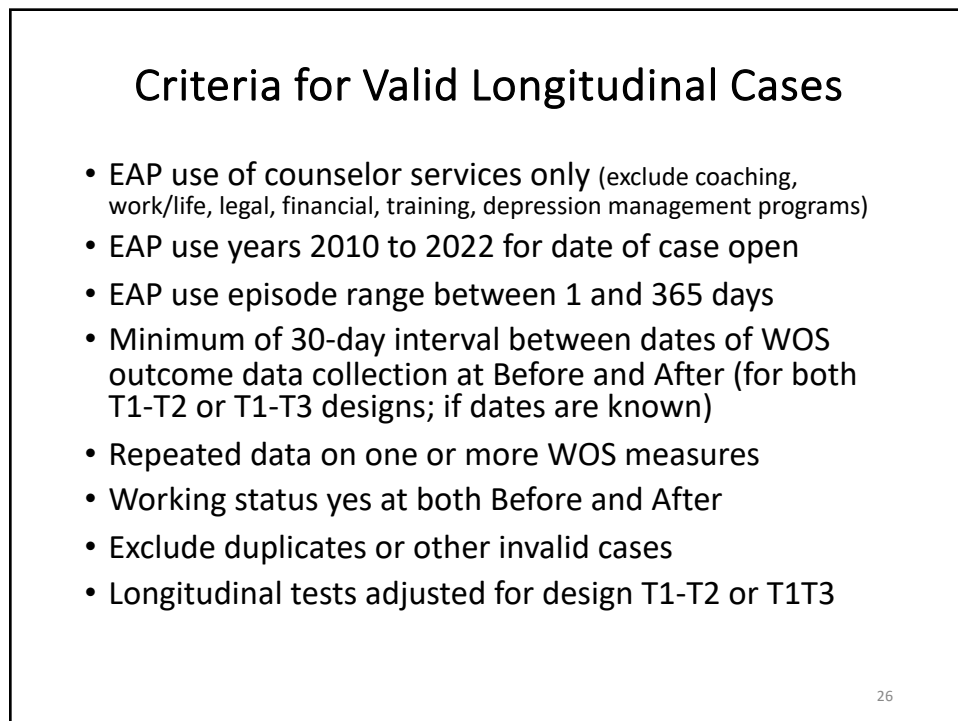
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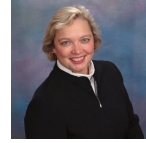
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Question 5

What are the overall results for improvement after counseling on the WOS measures for the 62,000+ longitudinal sub-sample of the study?

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WOS – Work Absenteeism



Defined as the number of *hours missed from work during the past month due to a personal concern*.

The average case started at 7.9 hours missed before counseling and changed to 4.3 hours after use. But majority of cases have zero absence at Pre and Post – result skewed by non-zero subset.

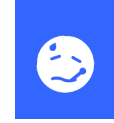
When defined as missing 4 or more hours of work as a problem level of this outcome, the percentage of EAP cases with an absenteeism problem was reduced from 32% before use to 17% after counseling.

Tests of a 1-5 rating for this measure indicated a significant change from 2.0 to 1.6. This is a medium size statistical effect (Cohen $d = .34$).

28

28

WOS – Work Presenteeism



Defined as *not being able to concentrate on work because of personal problems.*

Estimated hours of lost productive time associated with presenteeism per month per case was reduced from 42.8 hours to 33.1 hours after use for the average employee.

Having a presenteeism problem was reduced from 57% of cases before use to 34% of cases after use. Presenteeism is most common and thus defining kind of work deficit for EAP cases.

Tests of mean scores on the 1-5 rating of work presenteeism indicated significant change from 3.3 to 2.7. This is a large size statistical effect ($d = .45$).

29

29

WOS – Workplace Distress



Defined as *dread going into work.*

Problem status on workplace distress was reduced from 26% of cases at before use to 18% of cases after use.

Tests of mean scores on the 1-5 rating of workplace distress indicated significant change from 2.4 to 2.2. This is a small size statistical effect ($d = .17$).

Note: Stronger results for cases with a work-related issue.

30

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WOS – Work Engagement



Defined as *being eager to get to work the start the day.*

Having a problem of not being engaged in work was reduced from 33% of cases at before use to 24% of cases after use.

Tests of mean scores on the 1-5 rating of work engagement indicated significant change from 3.1 to 3.3. This is a small size statistical effect ($d = .18$).

Note: Stronger results for cases with a work-related issue.

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WOS – Life Satisfaction



Defined as feeling that *life overall is going very well.*

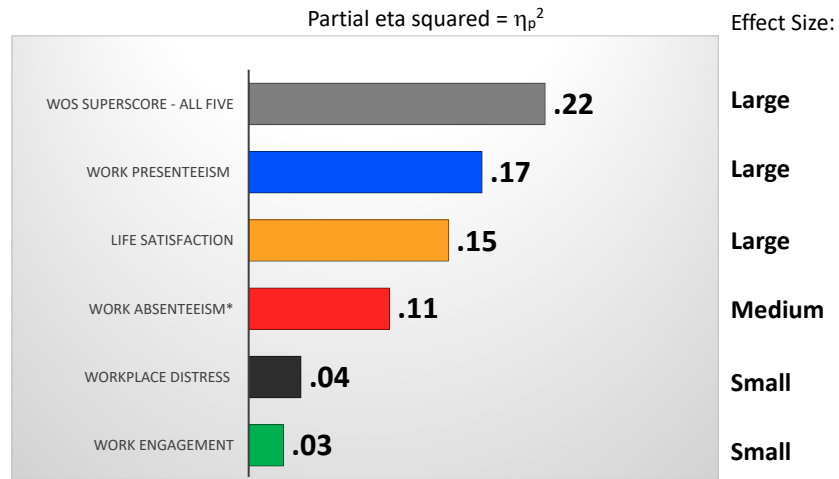
Problem status of not being satisfied with life was reduced from 35% of cases before use to 17% of cases after use.

Tests of mean scores on the 1-5 rating of life satisfaction indicated significant change from 3.0 to 3.6. This is a large size statistical effect ($d = .43$).

32

32

Statistical Effect Sizes for Extent of Improvement on WOS Measure Ratings After Use of EAP Counseling



* 1-5 categorical measure

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Questions or Comments

WOS Longitudinal Results on Effectiveness of EAP Counseling?

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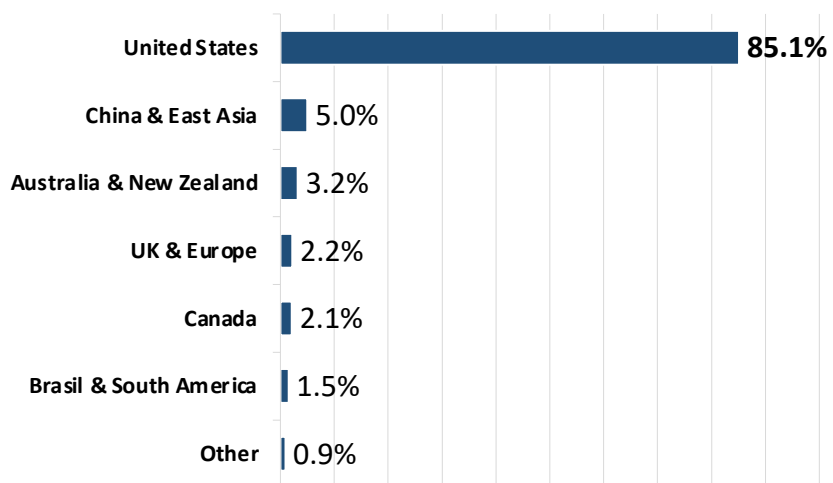
Question 6

What is the descriptive profile of counseling use by different geographic regions of the world?

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Country & Global Region

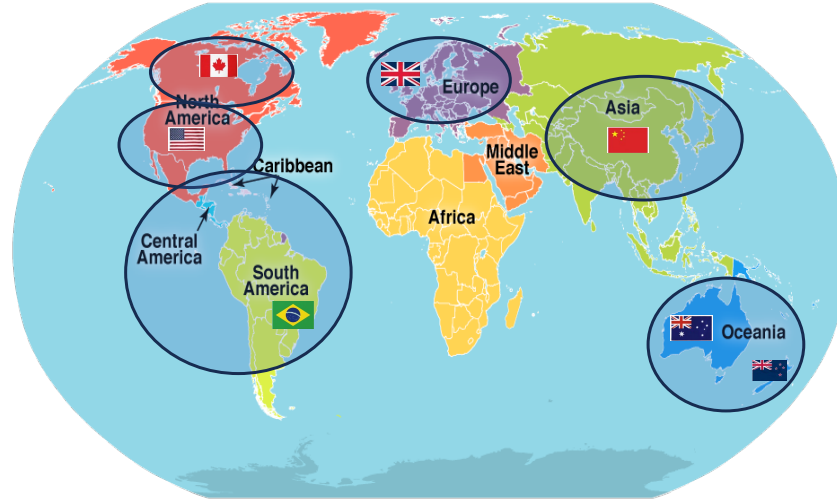


N = All 141,297 counseling cases

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36

Global Regions with WOS Data



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37

United States: User Profile

- $n = 120,237$ cases (85.1% of total study)
- EAP Model: 88% vendors (35); 12% internal programs (12)
- Client Referral to EAP: 94% self; 1% family; 5% work
- Client Benefit Status: 94% employee; 6% dependent
- Client Age: 38 average years
- Client Gender: 67% female; 32% male; <1% other
- Counseling Use Duration: 63 average days per case
- Counseling Use Sessions: 4.1 average per case
- Counseling Use Delivery: 53% online video; 32% in-person; 8% telephone; 7% text or e-mail
- Counseling Use Issue:
 - 51% mental health
 - 21% relationships or family
 - 16% personal life or stress
 - 9% work
 - 3% alcohol or drug

38

38

Canada: User Profile

- $n = 2,990$ cases (2.1% of total study)
- EAP Model: 100% vendors (2)
- Client Referral to EAP: NA
- Client Benefit Status: 88% employee; 12% dependent
- Client Age: 42 average years
- Client Gender: 66% female; 33% male; <1% other
- Counseling Use Duration: 68 average days per case
- Counseling Use Sessions: 3.2 average per case
- Counseling Use Delivery: 66% telephone; 21% online video; 13% in-person; 0% text or e-mail
- Counseling Use Issue:
 - 39% mental health
 - 25% relationships or family
 - 23% personal life or stress
 - 11% work
 - 2% alcohol or drug

39

39

UK & Europe Region: Sample

- $n = 3,178$ cases
- 94% from United Kingdom and Ireland
- Remaining 6% from:
 - France
 - Germany
 - Greece
 - Hungary
 - Italy
 - Luxembourg
 - Netherlands
 - Spain
 - Switzerland

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UK & Europe Region: User Profile

- $n = 3,178$ cases (2.2% of total study)
- EAP Model: 98% vendors (2); 2% internal programs (1)
- Client Referral to EAP: NA
- Client Benefit Status: 98% employee; 2% dependent
- Client Age: 42 average years
- Client Gender: 57% female; 42% male; <1% other
- Counseling Use Duration: 39 average days per case
- Counseling Use Sessions: 4.1 average per case
- Counseling Use Delivery: 75% telephone; 23% online video; 2% in-person; 0% text or e-mail
- Counseling Use Issue:
 - 39% mental health
 - 29% personal life or stress
 - 20% work
 - 12% relationships or family
 - <1% alcohol or drug

41

41

Australia & New Zealand: User Profile

- $n = 4,460$ cases (3.2% of total study) – 45% AUS / 55% NZ
- EAP Model: 100% vendors (1); 0% internal programs
- Client Referral to EAP: NA
- Client Benefit Status: 95% employee; 5% dependent
- Client Age: 42 average years
- Client Gender: 68% female; 31% male; <1% other
- Counseling Use Duration: 68 average days per case
- Counseling Use Sessions: 3.2 average per case
- Counseling Use Delivery: 62% in-person; 36% telephone; 2% online video; 0% text or e-mail
- Counseling Use Issue:
 - 28% personal life or stress
 - 28% work
 - 23% mental health
 - 20% relationships or family
 - <1% alcohol or drug

42

42

China & East Asia Region: Sample

- $n = 7,106$ cases
- 84% from China
- Remaining 16% from:
 - Hong Kong 8%
 - Taiwan 4%
 - Japan 3%
 - Philippines 1%

43

43

China & East Asia Region: User Profile

- $n = 7,106$ cases (5.0% of total study)
- EAP Model: 98% vendors (6); 2% internal programs (2)
- Client Referral to EAP: 97% self; 1% family; 2% work
- Client Benefit Status: 94% employee; 6% dependent
- Client Age: 31 average years
- Client Gender: 67% female; 32% male; <1% other
- Counseling Use Duration: NA
- Counseling Use Sessions: 3.7 average per case
- Counseling Use Delivery: NA
- Counseling Use Issue:
 - 50% personal life or stress
 - 26% work
 - 21% mental health
 - 2% relationships or family
 - <1% alcohol or drug

44

44

Brazil & South America Region: Sample

- $n = 2,109$ cases
- 94% from Brazil
- Remaining 6% from:
 - Argentina
 - Chile
 - Columbia
 - Costa Rica
 - Ecuador
 - Mexico
 - Paraguay
 - Peru
 - Puerto Rico
 - Venezuela

45

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Brazil & South America Region: User Profile

- $n = 2,109$ cases (1.5% of total study)
- EAP Model: 97% vendors (4); 3% internal programs (1)
- Client Referral to EAP: NA
- Client Benefit Status: NA
- Client Age: NA
- Client Gender: 52% female; 39% male; 9% other
- Counseling Use Duration: NA
- Counseling Use Sessions: 4.0 average per case
- Counseling Use Delivery: 89% telephone; 5% online video; 5% text or e-mail; <1% in-person
- Counseling Use Issue:
 - 40% personal life or stress
 - 32% mental health
 - 19% relationships or family
 - 9% work
 - <1% alcohol or drug

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46

Conclusions on Use Profiles

The six global locations examined had roughly similar profiles for the use of EAP counseling on most factors (with enough data to test).

But they differed on the mix of delivery modality options used for counseling and the mix of kinds of presenting issues for why counseling was used.

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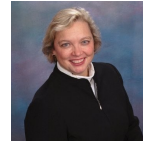


Questions or Comments

EAP Use Profiles for the
Different Global Locations

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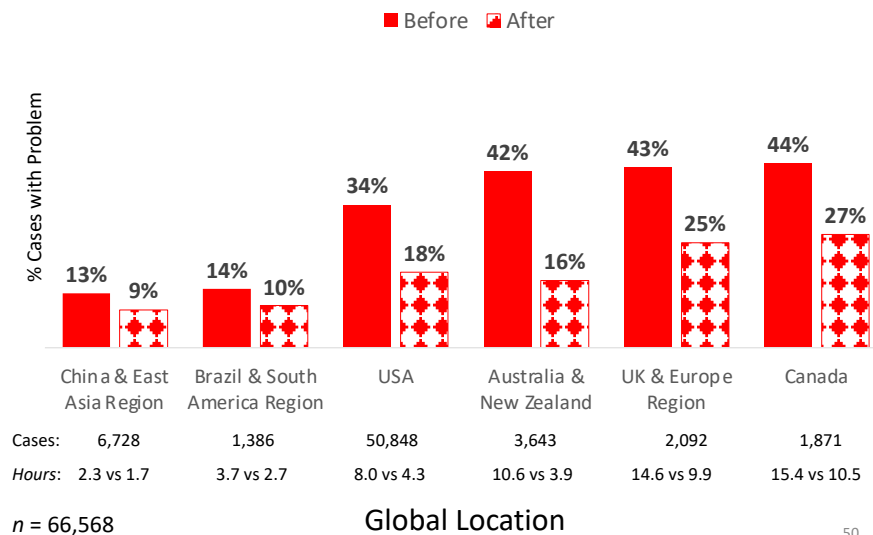
Question 7

What are the WOS results by different geographic regions?

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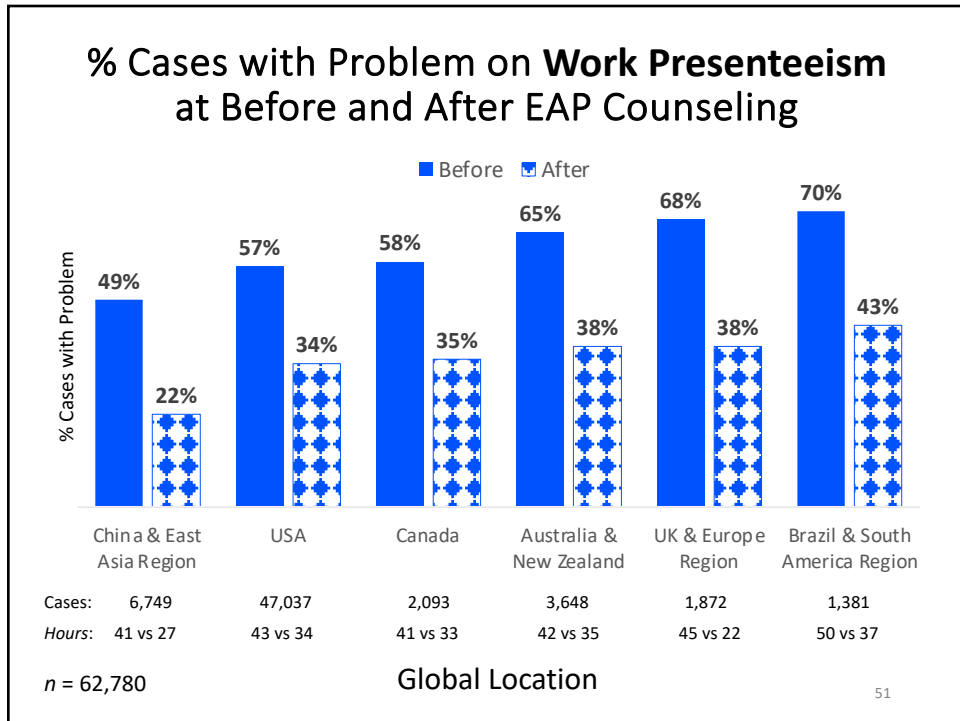
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% Cases with Problem on **Work Absenteeism** at Before and After EAP Counseling

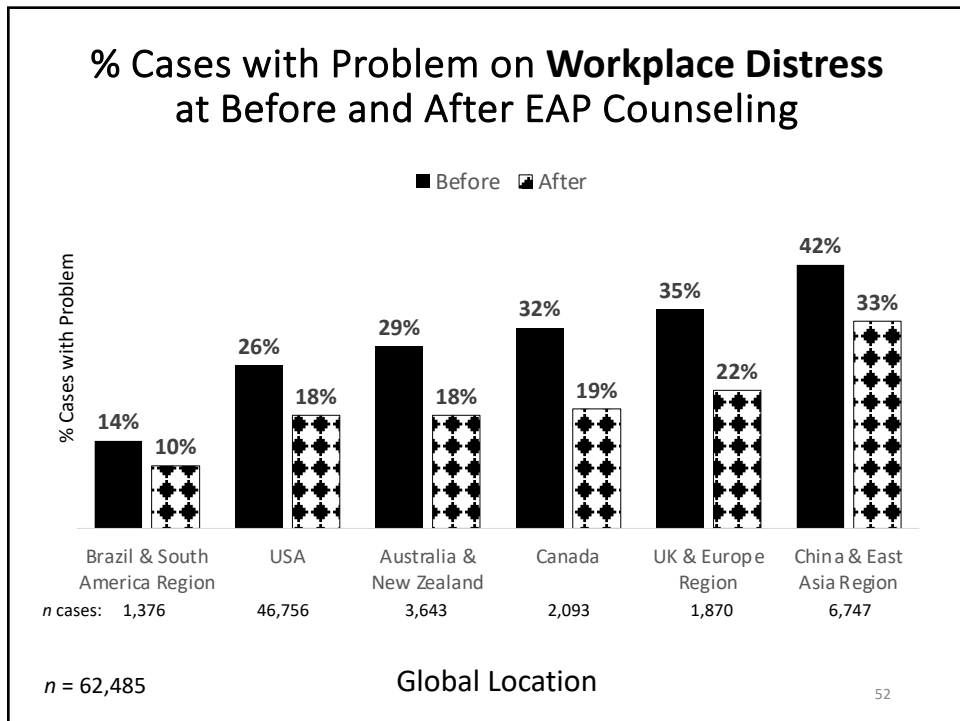


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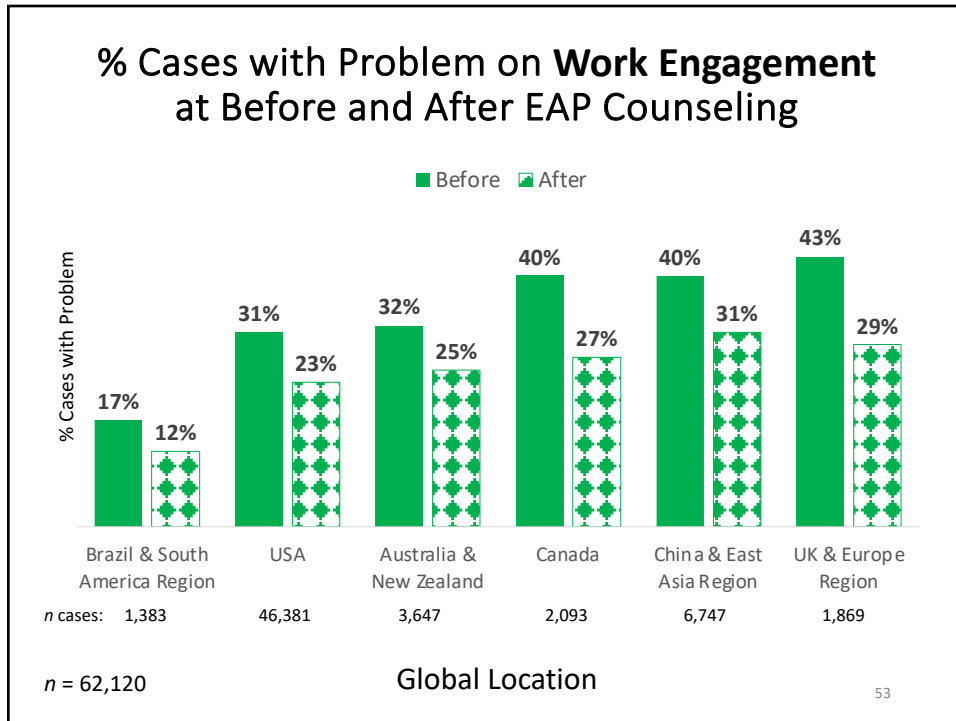
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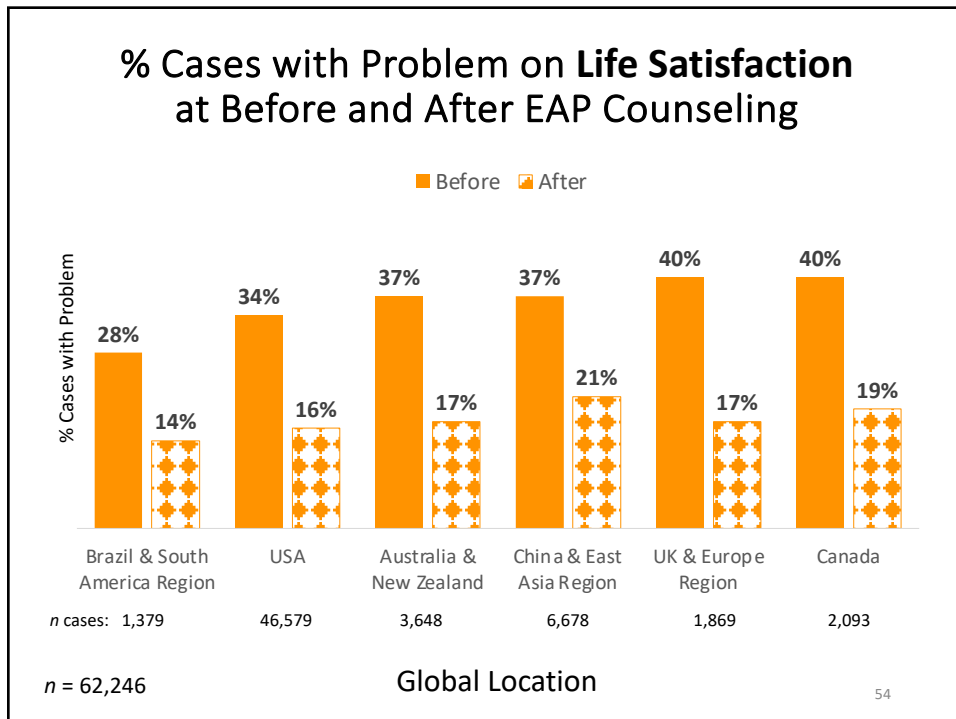
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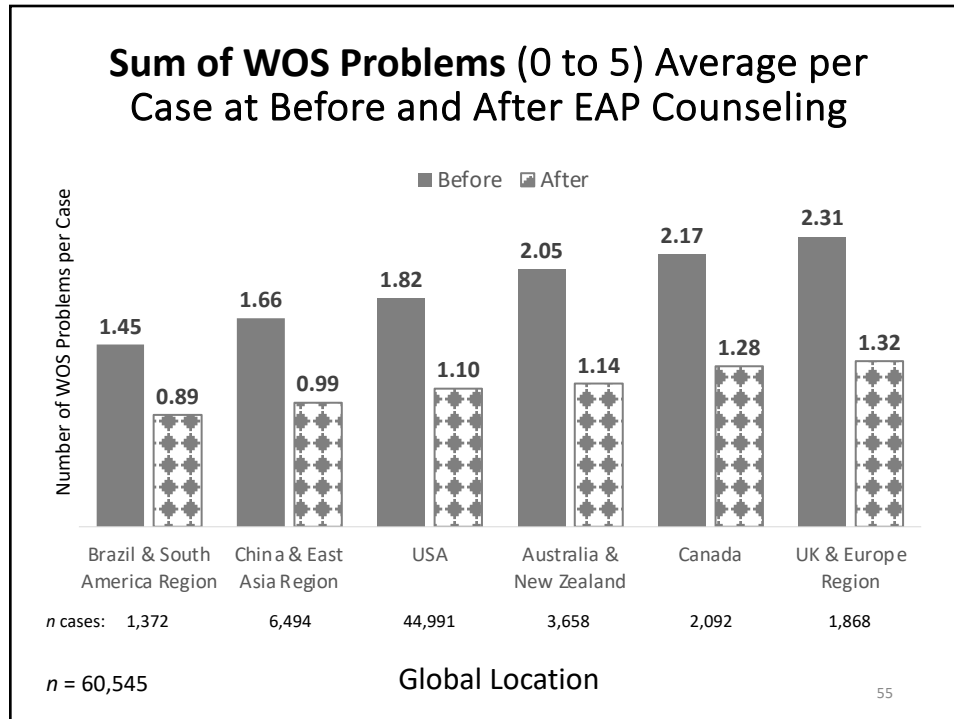
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Conclusions on Levels of WOS

The range in relevance (% of cases at a problem level) of WOS outcomes to employees in different global locations merits further study.

- Absenteeism problem % at Pre ranged from 13% to 44% [net difference of 31 points]. Why was this so much lower in both China and Brazil?
- Workplace distress problem % at Pre ranged from 14% to 42% [net 28]. Why was this lowest in Brazil and highest in China/East Asian countries?
- Work Engagement problem % at Pre ranged from 17% to 43% [net 26]. Why was this lowest in Brazil and highest in the UK?
- Presenteeism problem % at Pre ranged from 49% to 70% [net 21]. Why was this so high in Brazil?
- Life Satisfaction problem % at Pre ranged from 28% to 40% [net 12]. Why was this lowest in Brazil and highest in Canada and the UK?
- Overall, the UK and European region had the highest level of problems when starting counseling on the combined WOS measure.

56

56

Conclusions on Change in WOS

Despite the differences in where they started on the outcome, other longitudinal tests indicated that none of the WOS measures had a *rate of improvement* that differed meaningfully between the different geographic locations (all statistical effect sizes were trivial). Each global location had significant improvement on all outcomes.

Thus, brief counseling from EAPs was effective to a similar extent for clients living in many different countries all over the world.

57

57

Coming in November...

Look for my article on the 2024 WOS report that features these global comparisons. It is in-press now for the next issue of the *Journal of Employee Assistance* for EAPA members

The Journal of
Employee Assistance

58

58



Questions or Comments

Outcome Levels and Effectiveness
for the Different Global Locations

59

59



60

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