



Virtual Conference
March 24, 2022
60-minutes

Techno Trends in Workplace Mental Health: Industry Survey Reveals Challenges and Opportunities

Dr. MARK ATTRIDGE

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Speaker: Mark Attridge, PhD, MA

President, Attridge Consulting, Inc.
Minneapolis, MN USA
mark@attridgeconsulting.com



Dr. Attridge is a research scholar and business strategy consultant as President of Attridge Consulting in Minneapolis. Since starting his own practice in 2007, he has supported over 70 corporate and non-profit clients across the United States and internationally, most of whom are providers of employee assistance programs (EAP) or other workplace mental health specialty services. Mark is a prolific writer, scholar and trainer with more than 30 peer-reviewed published papers and book chapters and 250+ other written works, presentations, industry workshops and corporate trainings. Get free downloads from: <https://www.eaarchive.org>

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Overview

1. Increased Virtual Delivery of EAP Counseling since Pandemic
2. Effectiveness of Human Therapy and Digital / Techno-therapy Tools
3. The Role of Technology in the Future for EAPs

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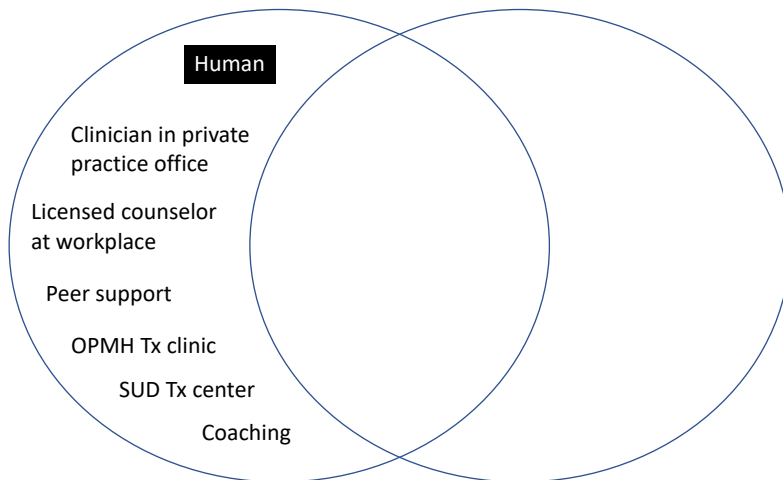
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Key Issue with Techno-Therapy Tools is if a Human Counselor/Coach is Involved or Not

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Human / Machine Overlap for Mental Health Support

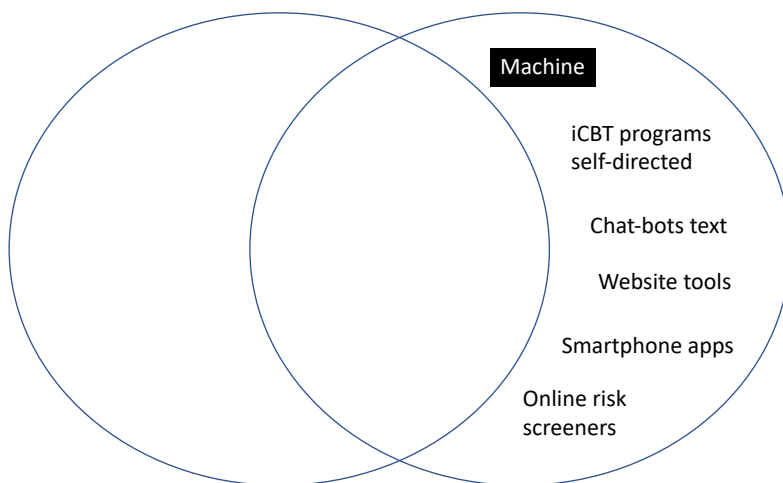


OPMH = outpatient mental health. SUD = substance use disorder. Tx = treatment.

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Human / Machine Overlap for Mental Health Support

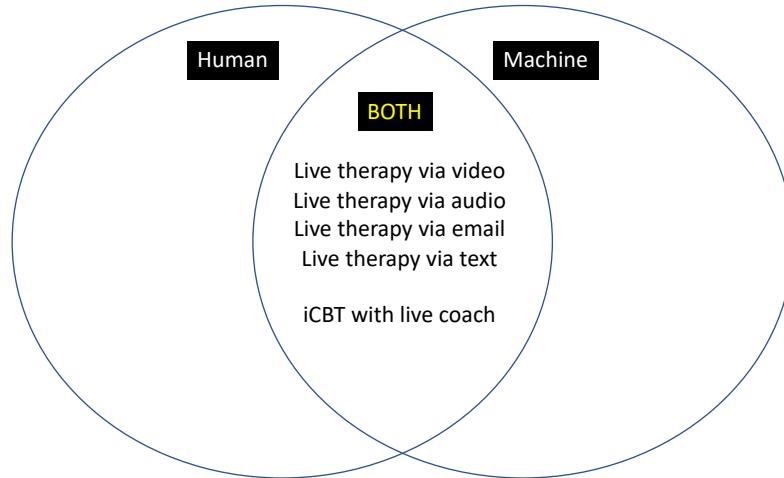


iCBT = internet cognitive behavioral therapy.

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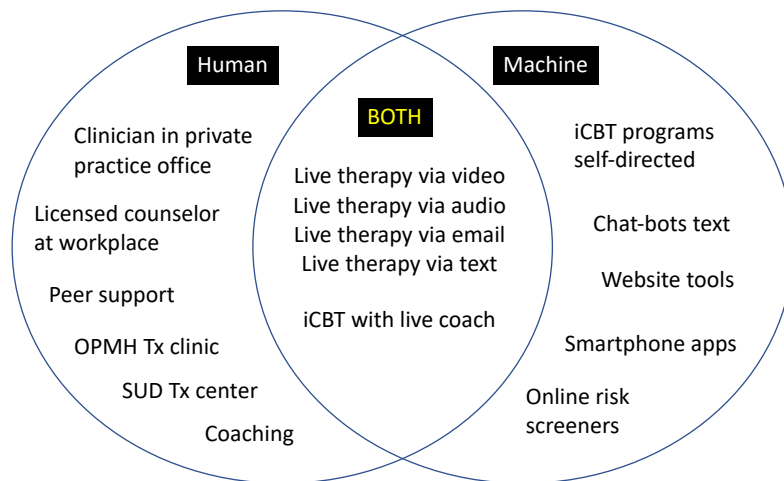
Human / Machine Overlap for Mental Health Support



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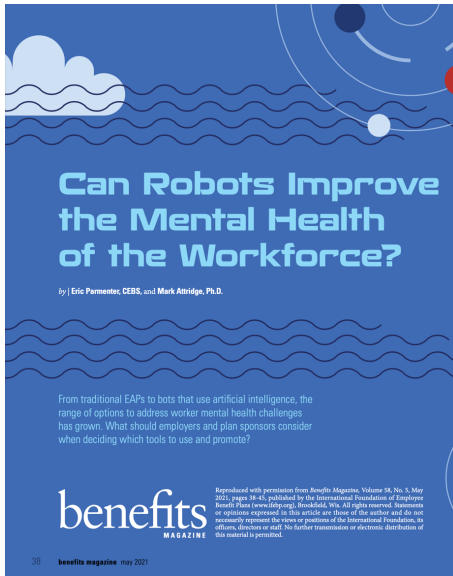
Human / Machine Overlap for Mental Health Support



OPMH = outpatient mental health. SUD = substance use disorder. Tx = treatment. iCBT = internet cognitive behavioral therapy.

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Parmenter, E., & Attridge, M. (2021, May).
 Can robots improve the mental health of the workforce?
Benefits Magazine, 38-45.



Available from: <http://hdl.handle.net/10713/14684>

See **handout**

New Virtual Behavioral Health Services in USA

MARKET MAP - VIRTUAL BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

LOW SEVERITY - DIGITAL APPS AND SELF-MANAGEMENT TOOLS



Type of Support:

Machine only
(no human)

TECH-FORWARD PLATFORMS FOR LOW / MODERATE SEVERITY



Human counselor
or coach engaged
via technology
channels (audio,
video, text)

Source: (2021-Q2) <https://www.triple-tree.com/TripleTree/media/Research/TripleTree-A-New-Era-of-Virtual-Health.pdf>

Bloomberg Businessweek

Businessweek
Future Of
Work

Digital Startups Are Challenging the Veterans of Employee Assistance

Soaring anxiety has created an opening for tech-savvy newcomers.



Illustration: Jordan Speer

By Matthew Boyle
March 4, 2022, 6:00 AM CST

<http://hdl.handle.net/10713/18156>

“Investment in such startups more than doubled last year to \$5.5 billion, according to researcher CB Insights, and 10 of those companies have valuations topping \$1 billion.”

[And none of them are EAPs]

11

11

Part 1

Increased Virtual Delivery of EAP Counseling & Supports

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Employee Assistance Programs

EAPs serve organizations and employees in multiple ways, ranging from consultation at the strategic level about workplace issues to individual support to employees and family members with personal difficulties.

The delivery model and operation of each EAP varies from external vendors, internal staff programs or hybrids.

Source: Attridge, M. (2009). Employee assistance programs: A research-based primer. In J.C. Quick, C. Cooper, & M. Schbracq (Eds.), *The handbook of work and health psychology, 3rd Edn.* (pp. 383-407). New York: Wiley.

Core Services

Brief Counseling & Referral
High Risk Cases
Critical Incidents
Employee Trainings
Financial / Legal
Family Child Elder
Manager Consultations
Organizational

Face to Face
Telephone
Internet & mobile apps

13

13

EAP Industry Trends Study 2021

Total Sample = 351 respondents.

EAP Industry = EAP Programs (52%), Clinicians (36%) & Employer Purchasers (12%)

Country = 90% United States & 10% from 15 other countries

Gender = 77% Female; 22% Male; <1% Other

Age = 55 years average (range 25 to 65+)

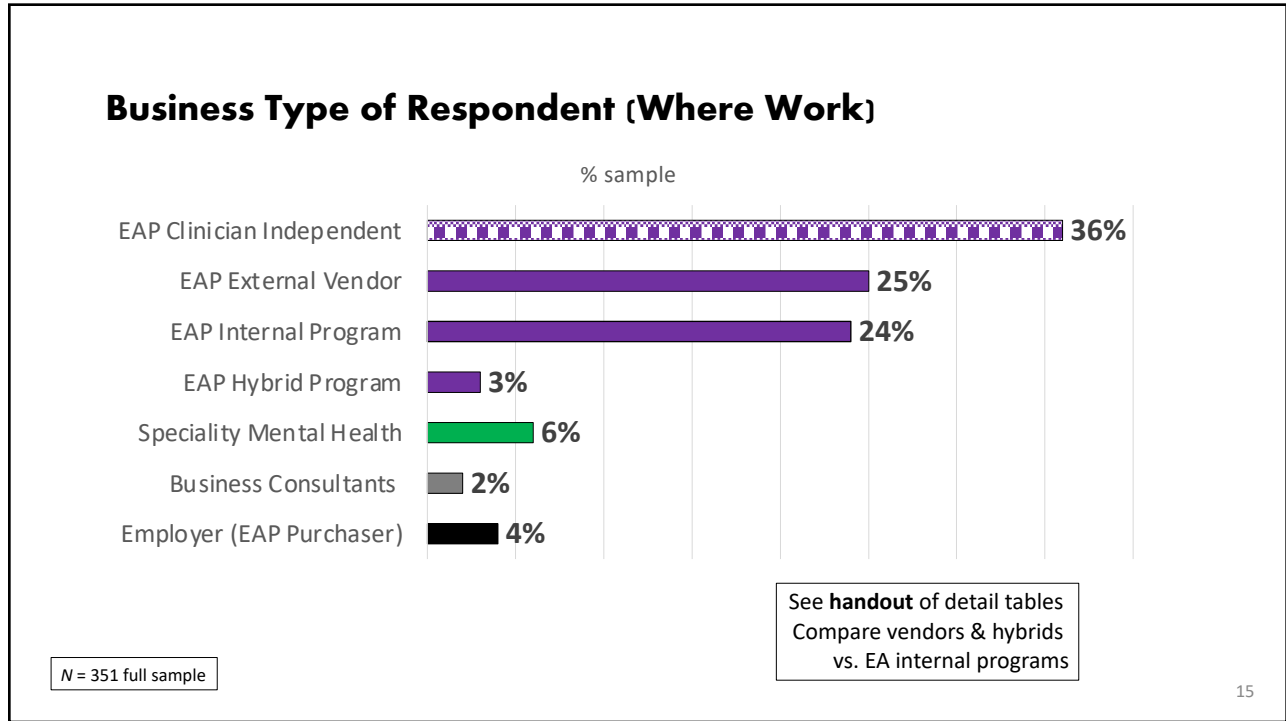
Job Type = Mix of 56% Clinician; 38% Managerial; 4% Other



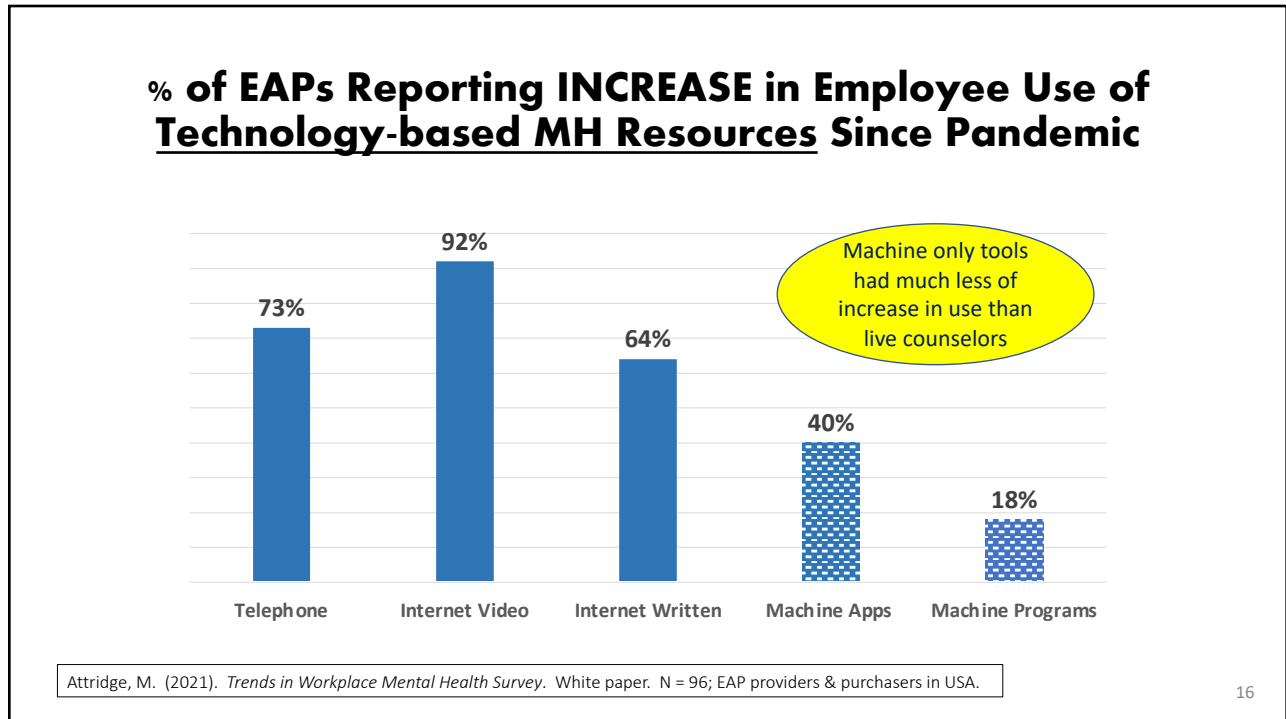
Attridge, M. (2021). *Trends in Workplace Mental Health Survey*. White paper.

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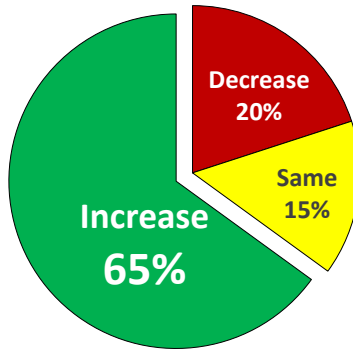
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EAPs Reporting CHANGE in Annual Rate for Use of Counseling Services Since Pandemic

% of EAP Programs

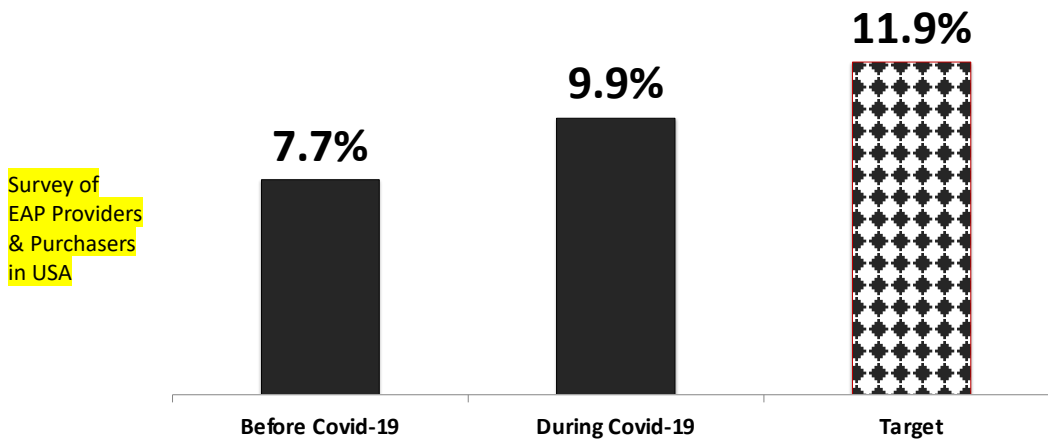


Attridge, M. (2021). *Trends in Workplace Mental Health Survey*. White paper. N = 96; EAP providers & purchasers in USA.

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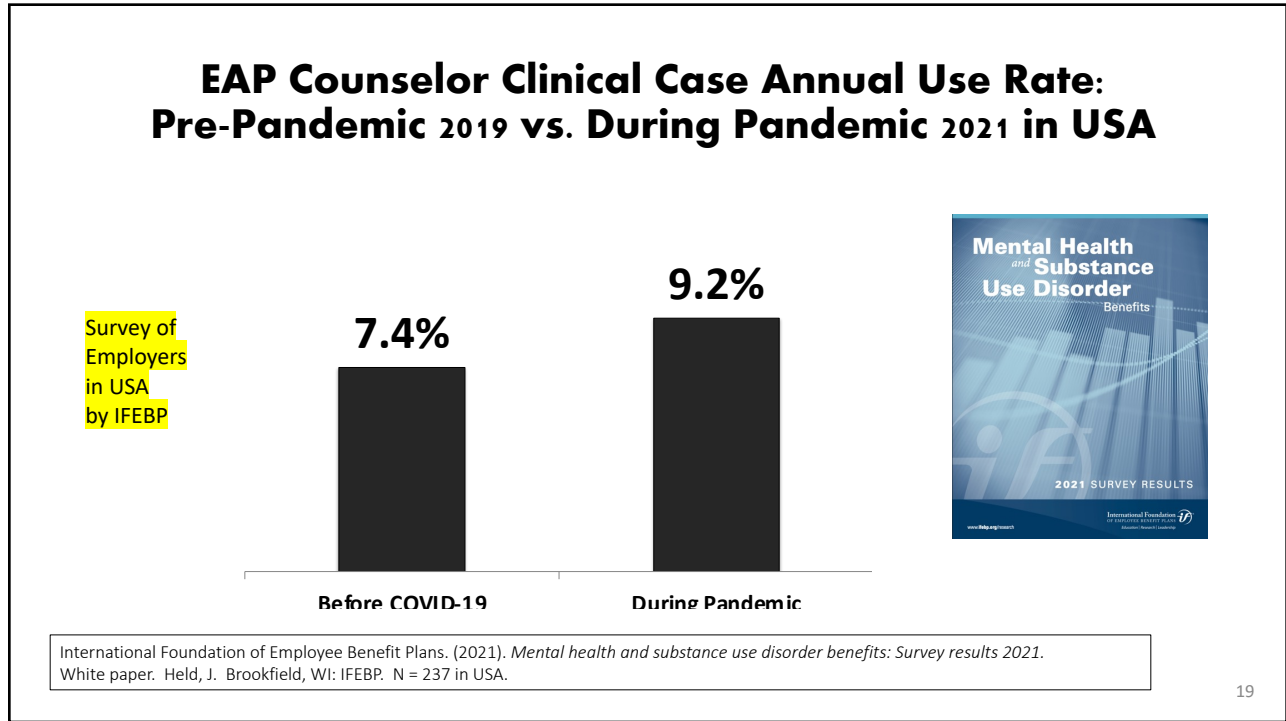
EAP Counselor Clinical Case Annual Use Rate: Pre-Pandemic 2019 vs. During Pandemic 2020/2021



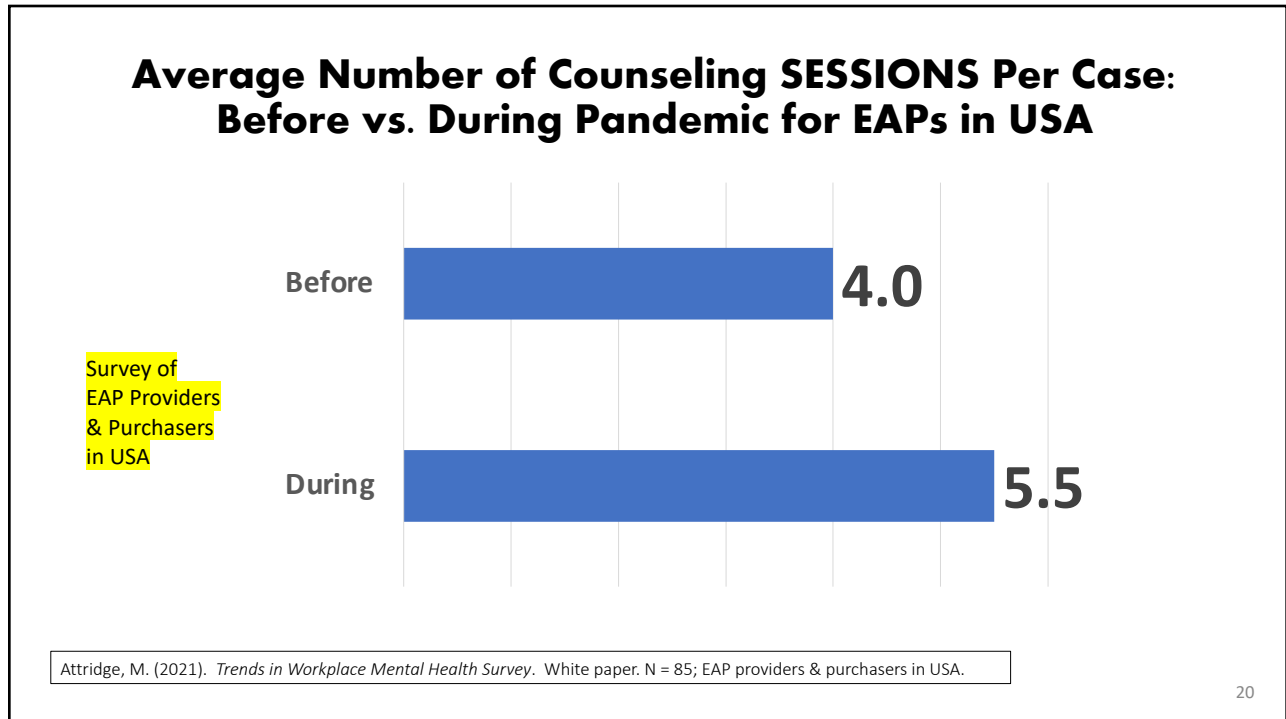
Attridge, M. (2021). *Trends in Workplace Mental Health Survey*. White paper. N = 96; EAP providers (vendors + internals) & purchasers in USA.

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Part 1 - SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a shift from providing counseling and other support services from in-person at the worksite or at local clinical offices to now using remote technology channels.

Now emphasize live interactions between the client and a licensed professional over the telephone or online video. But some clients prefer written exchanges in email, text, or chat.

For EAPs, the overall clinical use rate and the number of sessions of counseling per case have both increased since the pandemic.

21

21

Questions?

Increased Virtual Delivery of EAP Counseling & Supports

22

22

Part 2

Effectiveness of Human Therapy and Digital/Techno-therapy Tools

23

23

What does the research say?

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24


Major Reviews of Literature on Human Delivered Therapy & EAPs

- Carlbring, P., et al. (2018). Internet-based vs. face-to-face cognitive behavior therapy for psychiatric and somatic disorders: An updated systematic review and meta-analysis. *Cognitive Behaviour Therapy*, 247(1), 1-8.
- Castro, A., et al. (2020). Effectiveness and adherence of telephone-administered psychotherapy for depression: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 260, 514-526.
- Fernandez, E., et al. (2021). Live psychotherapy by video versus in-person: A meta-analysis of efficacy and its relationship to types and targets of treatment. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy*, 28(6), 1535-1549.
- Kraus, R., Stricker, G., & Speyer, C. (Eds.). (2010). *Online counseling: A handbook for mental health professionals*. Academic Press.
- Lipsey, M. W., & Wilson, D. B. (1993). The efficacy of psychological, educational, and behavioral treatment: Confirmation from meta-analysis. *American Psychologist*, 48(12), 1181.
- Muller, I., & Yardley, L. (2011). Telephone-delivered cognitive behavioural therapy: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Telemedicine and Telecare*, 17(4), 177-184.
- EAP - Attridge, M., Sharar, D., DeLapp, G., & Veder, B. (2018). EAP Works: Global results from 24,363 counseling cases with pre-post data on the Workplace Outcome Suite. *International Journal of Health and Productivity*, 10(2), 5-25. <http://hdl.handle.net/10713/8962>
- EAP - Csiernik, R., et al. (2021). EAP evaluation 2010–2019: What do we now know? *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health*, 36(2), 1-21.
- EAP - Joseph, B et al. (2018). Evaluating the effectiveness of employee assistance programmes: A systematic review. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 27(1), 1-15.

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25

specialreport



Work Outcomes and EAP Use During the COVID-19 Pandemic

| By Mark Attridge, PhD, MA, & Ivan Steenstra, PhD, MS

The following are key findings from the forthcoming Workplace Outcome Suite (WOS) 2021 Annual Report by LifeWorks and endorsed by EAPA. For the full report, see the LifeWorks website: <https://wellbeing.lifeworks.com/resources/wos/>.

What is the WOS?
Created in 2010, the WOS examines four key aspects of workplace functioning and overall life satisfaction. Originally 25 items, the brief 5-item version has one question per outcome area. It is a measure of longitudinal change that requires collecting self-report data at before and after the use of counseling services. The WOS is the only publicly available, free instrument that has been psychometrically validated and tested for use in employee assistance program (EAP) settings. It has been extensively studied in over 40 peer-reviewed and applied research reports.

Industry-wide Profile of EAP Counseling Service Use
The new annual report has data from 45,726 users of EAP counseling services over the span of 2010 to early 2021 from:

- 27 external vendors;
- 11 internal staff programs; and
- 11 hybrid programs at specific employers.

 Not all of these EAPs provided data on each of the profile factors or WOS measures at both pre and post EAP use. This aggregate dataset offers a valuable profile of EAP counseling across a wide range of contexts.
 A range of industries are represented, with 28% of employees working in government, 16% in health care, 11% in colleges, 18% in manufacturing, 14% in technology, and 13% in other industries.
 Most of the cases were living in the United States (77%), but 12% are from China, 6% from New Zealand and 5% from 37 other countries. The gender mix of cases was 68% women and 32% men.
 Cases also ranged in age, with an average of 38 years. Most cases were self-referrals into the EAP (84%), with 10% being referred by a supervisor at work or 6% by family.
 The reason for seeking counseling from the EAP was most often for a mental health (28%) or personal stress (27%) problem. Another 22% used the EAP for help with a work problem or work-related stress. Marital or family issues accounted for 20% of cases. Support for alcohol and substance abuse was only 3% of cases using the EAP.
 The number of counseling sessions used ranged from 1 to 6 or more, with an average of 3.3 sessions per case. The period of EAP treatment averaged about 7 weeks.
Employee Outcomes Improve After EAP Counseling
 The WOS scores were collected longitudinally at the first session and again at a follow-up about 45 days after the last session of counseling. The sample sizes for paired WOS data at both before and after EAP use ranged from 38,302 to 39,115, depending on the measure. The data from the earlier 25- and 9-item versions was adapted to match the more popular 5-item brief version of the WOS.
Work Absenteeism (hours missed from work during the past month due to a personal concern) was reduced from an average of 6.8 hours missed per employee before counseling to only 2.9 hours missed at follow-up. By comparison, other research shows the typical employee misses less than half a day of work a month. When defined as missing 4 or more hours of work as a "problem level" of this outcome, the percentage of all EAP cases with an absenteeism problem was reduced from 43% before to 15% of cases after counseling.
Work Presenteeism (not being able to concentrate on work because of personal problems) was reduced from 56% of cases at a problem level before use to 30% at follow-up.
Workplace Distress (dreading going into work) was reduced from 23% of cases at problem level before use to 15% at follow-up.
Work Engagement (being eager to get to work the start the day) was improved from 31% of cases at problem level (lack of engagement) before use to 23% at follow-up.
Life Satisfaction (feeling that life overall was going very well) was improved from 37% of cases at problem level (not being satisfied) before use to 16% at follow-up.
 The number of total WOS outcomes experienced at a problem level was reduced from 2.42 per person (out of five possible) when first seeking assistance to 1.07 problems after counseling.
 The simple conclusion is that brief counseling from EAPs improved multiple aspects of work functioning. All five WOS outcomes showed statistically significant results, although there were different degrees of impact and improvement. Of the five measures, work presenteeism is the most defining outcome for EAP users, in terms of both severity of initial adverse impact before use and the extent of improvement after use.
 Also important was that the extent of improvement on all WOS measures was generally consistent across different countries, EAP delivery models, clientographics, and other clinical factors.
COVID-19 Pandemic and WOS
 Other data from a survey study of industry (N = 110 vendors, internal programs, purchased) found a higher utilization rate for counseling during the recent pandemic period than in the prior year: 7.5 EAP cases per every 100 covered employees, respectively.
 There also an increase in the average number of sessions of counseling per case: 5.5 during the pandemic vs. 4.0 in the year before. About half of EAPs also reported increases since the pandemic in the use of work/life kinds of services and increases in workplace/organizational services too.
 Although the usage rates increased during the pandemic, the effectiveness of EAP counseling remained strong when based on examining the profile of WOS outcomes. The pandemic period cases (n = 4,505) tended to have a very similar profile, in general, on the five WOS outcomes at Pre and Post use compared to cases in the year 2019 (n = 4,289). There were no differences on work engagement or life satisfaction and just slightly higher levels of workplace distress, work presenteeism, and work absenteeism in the pandemic year. However, these differences were all very small, statistical effect sizes.
 Improvement on all WOS outcomes also occurred to a similar extent when comparing cases who used traditional in-person office visits and cases who used technology-based modalities to virtually access EAP counseling (telephone or internet video/text).

Maximize exposure

Outcomes on WOS similar for EAP cases in Year 2019 vs. Pandemic periods

development@eapassn.org

30 | JOURNAL OF EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE | 4th Quarter 2021 | WWW.EAPASSN.ORG

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26

Literature Review of Research on Human Therapy Effectiveness

Advantages:

- Generally effective at improving both clinical and work outcomes
- Effectiveness similar across in-person and remote delivery options
- Video, telephone, chat/text and email modalities for client-clinician interaction tend to be equally effective - but client preference is key
- Variety of conceptual approaches to counseling are supported
- Differences in purpose/goals of short-term vs. longer-term therapy
- Little evidence of professional treatment doing harm to clients
- EAPs are cost-effective (often <1% health benefit \$ budget)

27

27

Literature Review of Research on Human Therapy Effectiveness

Disadvantages:

- Potential need for escalation and pharmacotherapy based on risk
- Substantial co-morbidity on mental health and substance use
- Lack of local availability of providers for in-person care
- Cost of onsite office facilities and staffing
- Wait time to get appointment with counselor
- Social stigma can limit help-seeking behavior
- Lack of trust in confidentiality of employer-funded EAPs
- Lack of employee and supervisor awareness of their EAP

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28

Major Reviews of Literature on Machine-Only Techno-Therapy

Andersson, G. (2018). Internet interventions: Past, present and future. *Internet Interventions*, 12, 181-188.

Davies, E.B., et al. (2014). Computer-delivered and web-based interventions to improve depression, anxiety, and psychological well-being of university students: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 16(5), e130.

Firth, J., et al. (2017). The efficacy of smartphone-based mental health interventions for depressive symptoms: A meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials. *World Psychiatry*, 16(3), 287-298.

Kampmann, IL., et al. (2016). Meta-analysis of technology-assisted interventions for social anxiety disorder. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, 42, 71-84.

Karin, E., et al. (2018). "Wish you were here": Examining characteristics, outcomes, and statistical solutions for missing cases in web-based psychotherapeutic trials. *JMIR Mental Health*, 5(2):e22

Karyotaki, E., et al. (2015). Predictors of treatment dropout in self-guided web-based interventions for depression: An 'individual patient data' meta-analysis. *Psychological Medicine*, 45(13):2717-2726

Lattie, E.H., et al. (2019). Digital mental health interventions for depression, anxiety, and enhancement of psychological well-being among college students: Systematic review. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 21(7), e12869.

Serrano-Ripoll, M.J., et al. (2022). Impact of smartphone app-based psychological interventions for reducing depressive symptoms in people with depression: Systematic literature review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials. *JMIR mHealth and uHealth*, 10(1), e29621.

Seyffert, M., et al. (2016). Internet-delivered cognitive behavioral therapy to treat insomnia: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *PLoS One*, 11(2), e0149139.

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Literature Review of Research on Machine-Only Techno-Therapy Effectiveness

Advantages:

- Greater access to therapeutic supports when remote
- Greater flexibility when can use anytime from anywhere
- Helps offset the social stigma and barriers to help-seeking
- Can be as clinically effective as in-person therapy and better than no care or controls (IF used as designed)
- Natural language text-only tools that mimic dynamic live therapist-patient verbal exchanges (x2ai.com - robot phone counselor "Tess") are different than structured computer iCBT programs or Apps
- Significantly lower cost to offer than in-person treatment services

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Literature Review of Research on Machine-Only Techno-Therapy Effectiveness

Disadvantages:

- Vast majority of new Apps and tech tools lack research testing
- Early drop-out and lack of full participation in machine-based structured programs with multiple lessons (iCBT)
- Rigid application of iCBT approach and clinically specific content may not fit goals of user (pre-clinical vs. clinical)
- Human counselors need special training for effective delivery of clinical services via different technology channels (but most adapted well to do this now for pandemic period)
- Personal preference of users for live counselor or machine tools

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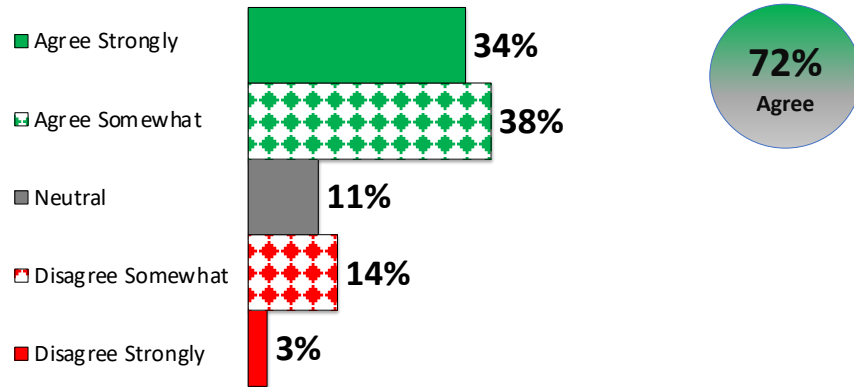
What do EAP professionals say?

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Trends for Techno-Therapy:

As long as it involves a licensed professional, live counseling provided remotely via technology is just as clinically effective as when it is provided face-to-face in an office.



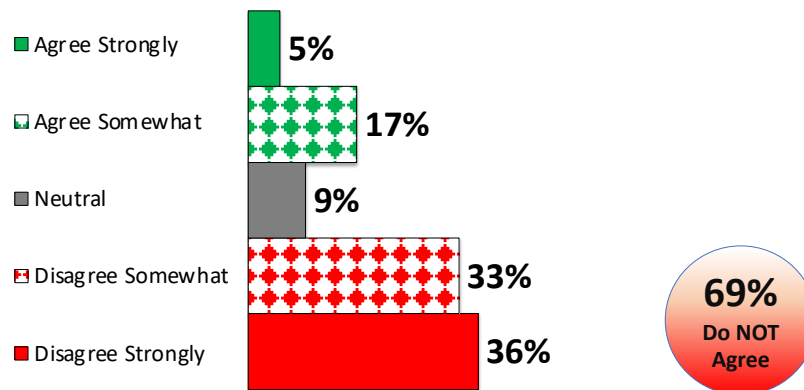
Attridge, M. (2021). *Trends in Workplace Mental Health Survey*. White paper. N = 351; EAP providers, clinicians & purchasers.

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Trends for Techno-Therapy:

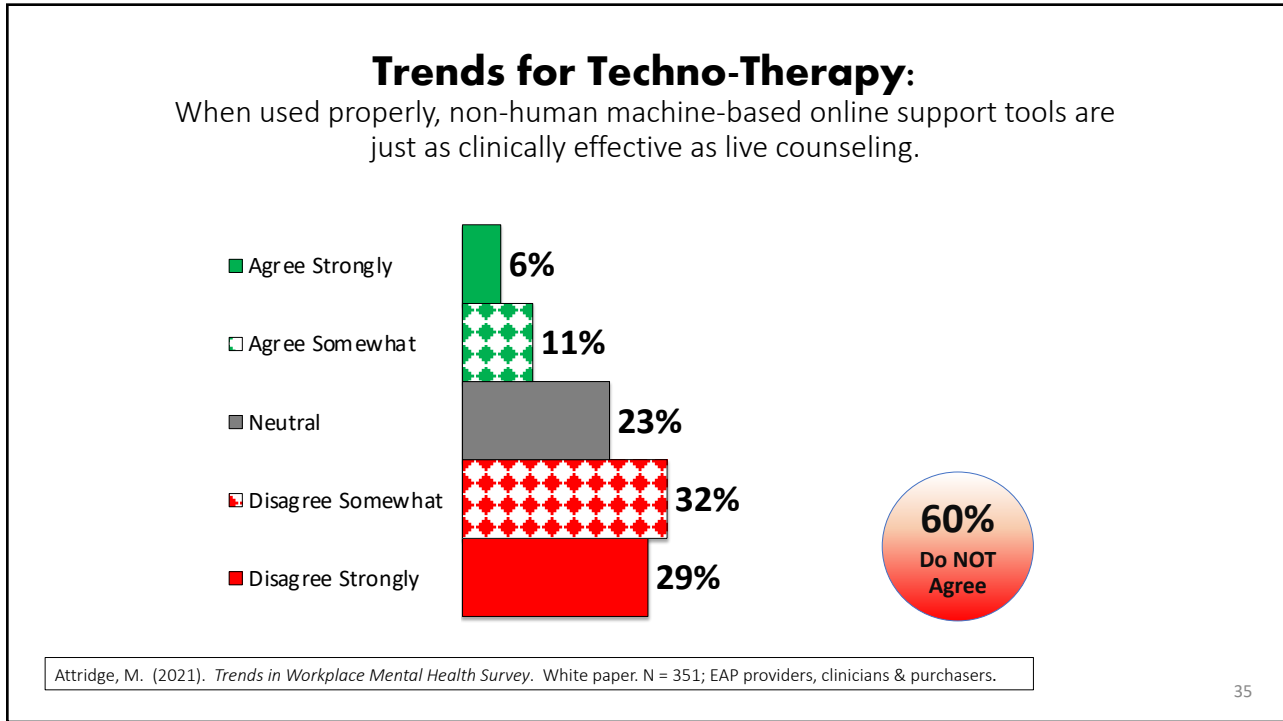
Traditional providers of in-person counseling are at serious risk of being replaced by machine-based self-guided resources on the Internet and smartphone Apps.



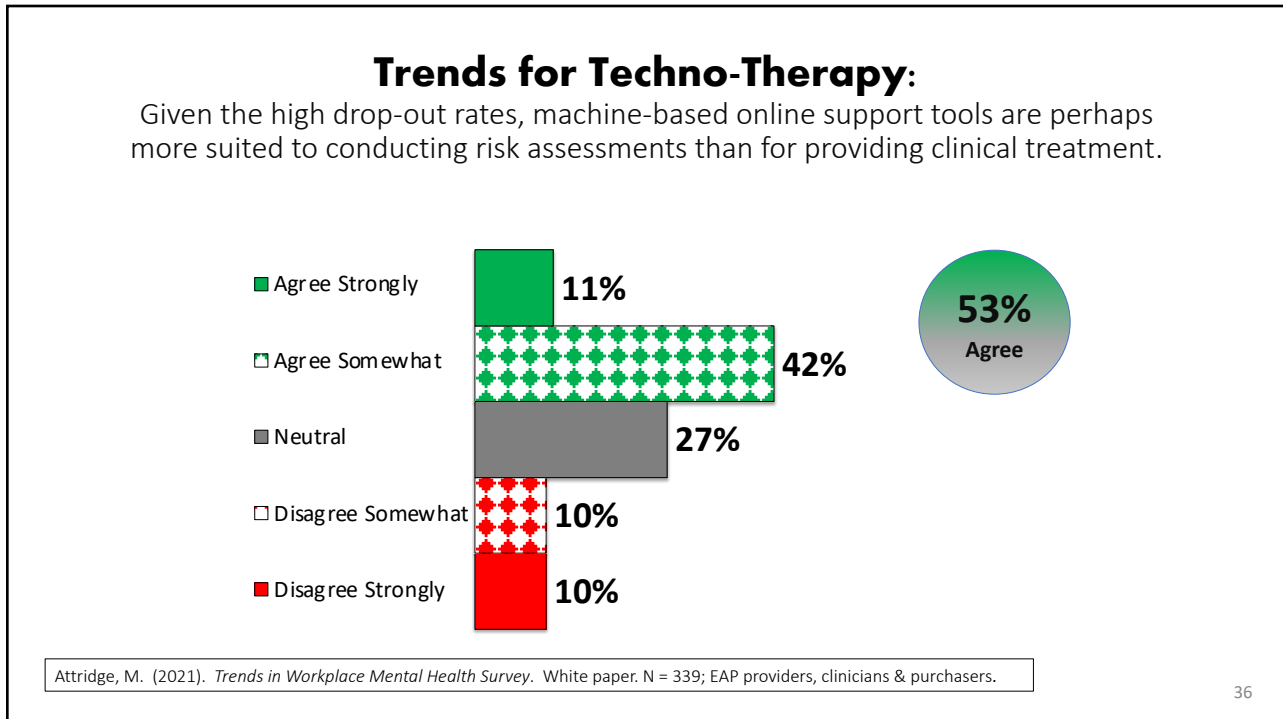
Attridge, M. (2021). *Trends in Workplace Mental Health Survey*. White paper. N = 339; EAP providers, clinicians & purchasers.

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Part 2 - SUMMARY

The research literature generally supports the clinical effectiveness of psychological treatments by provided by human professionals (including EAPs) – either in-person at counselor offices or via delivered using a range of remote access technology channels.

The research literature generally also supports the clinical effectiveness of machine tools for supporting mental health – if used as designed. But early dropout and low adherence to structured programs is widespread. Real-world effectiveness is very mixed and largely unknown for most new techno-therapy tools and service providers.

Professionals in the field of EAP evaluated the effectiveness and purpose of technology-based support tools similarly to the research reviews.

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Questions?

Effectiveness of Human Therapy and Digital/Techno-therapy Tools

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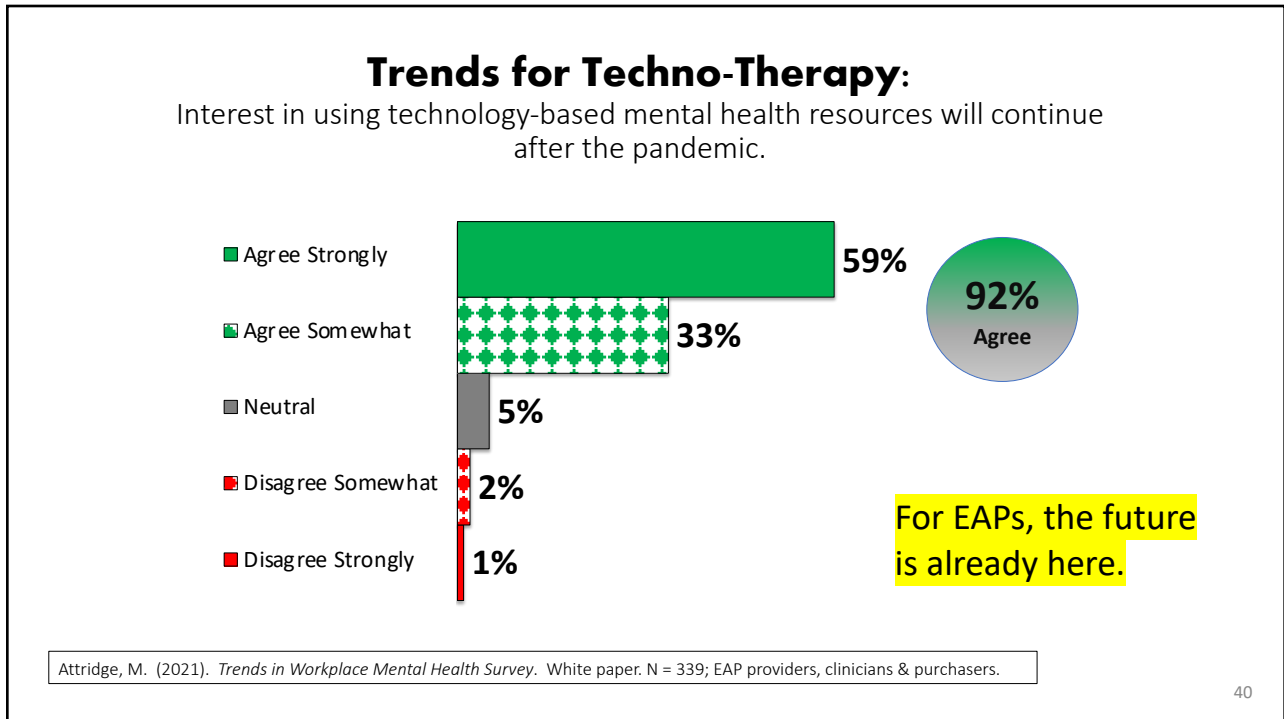
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Part 3

The Role of Technology in the Future of EAPs

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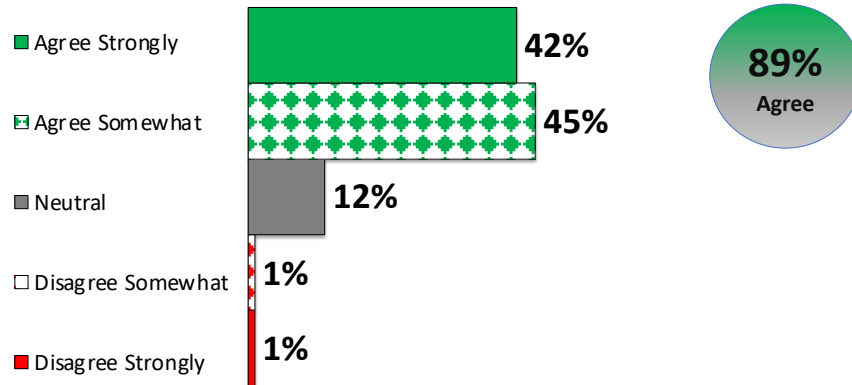


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Trends for EAP:

EAPs and technology-based providers should collaborate more to integrate their respective services to improve prevention, risk identification, and clinical support.



Attridge, M. (2021). *Trends in Workplace Mental Health Survey*. White paper. N = 339; EAP providers, clinicians & purchasers.

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Integration with Techno Tools is Future for EAPs

Most employers that added new technology-focused service providers already also sponsor an EAP benefit. Many just trying to do whatever they can to provide support options for mental health.

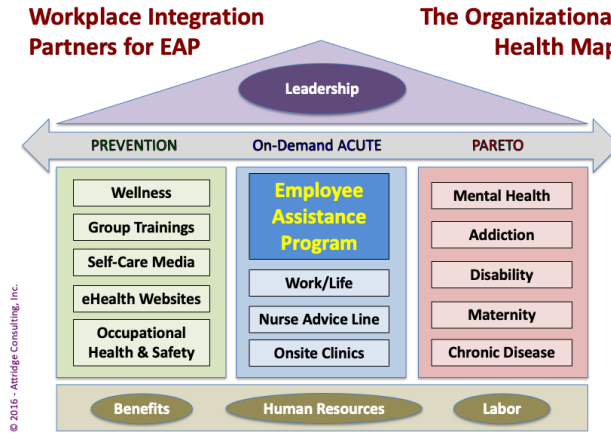
Goal of using the best parts of EAPs and new tech tools to provide the best care across multiple access points to match the personal preferences of employees with a range of clinical severity needs.

The different benefits operate largely as separate and independent services. An interesting question in this new era is how EAPs and other digital-first providers can become better integrated.

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Revisiting How EAPs Support the Work Organization

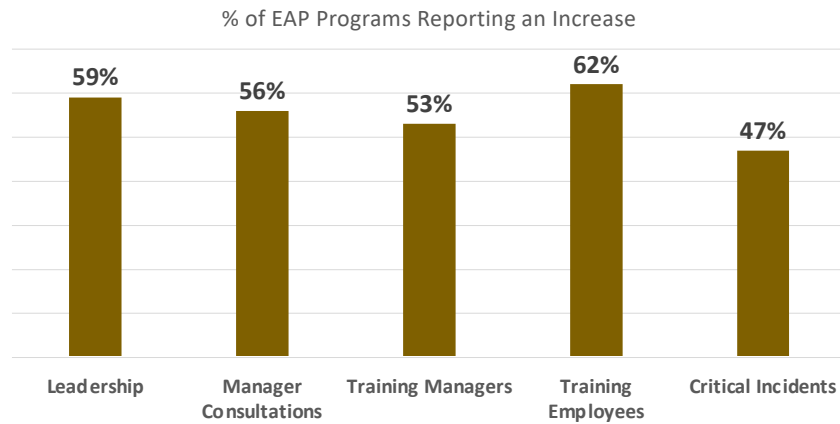


Attridge, M. (2016, November). *Integrating employee assistance programs into other workplace programs: The Organizational Health Map*. Keynote address at EAPA Conference, Chicago, IL. <http://hdl.handle.net/10713/7292>

43

% of EAPs Reporting INCREASE in Use of Organizational Services Since Pandemic

Survey of EAP Providers & Purchasers in USA



Attridge, M. (2021). *Trends in Workplace Mental Health Survey*. White paper. N = 96; EAP providers & purchasers in USA.

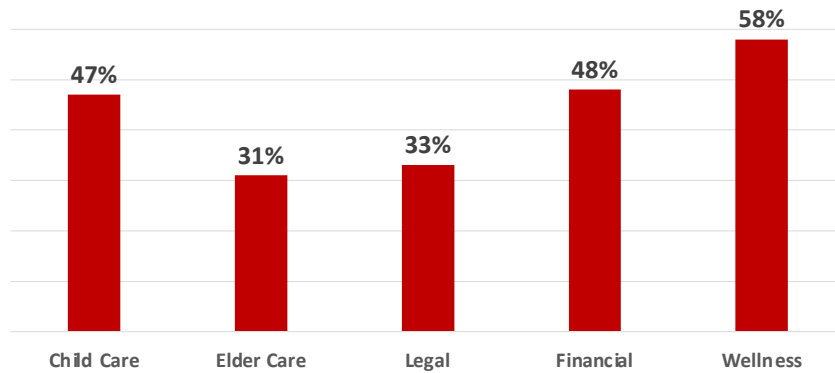
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% of EAPs Reporting INCREASE in Use of Work/Life Services Since Pandemic

% of EAP Programs Reporting an Increase

Survey of EAP Providers & Purchasers in USA



Attridge, M. (2021). *Trends in Workplace Mental Health Survey*. White paper. N = 96; EAP providers & purchasers in USA.

45

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Workplace Focused Services are (back to the) Future for EAPs

How many of these workplace-focused EAP specialty services are provided by the new digital-first therapy companies ?

Core Services

- Brief Counseling & Referral
- High Risk Cases
- Critical Incidents
- Employee Trainings
- Financial / Legal
- Family Child Elder
- Manager Consultations
- Organizational

- Face to Face
- Telephone
- Internet & mobile apps

46

46

Part 3 - SUMMARY

The pandemic has **increased the need** for mental health care and increased employer interest in providing a range of care resources.

Professionals in EAP do not fear losing their jobs to robot counselors - but they recognize the \$5 billion invested in digitally delivered live and/or machine counseling and self-care tools has **changed the field**.

Future success involves **greater integration** of EAPs at the operational and data sharing levels with techno tools and online therapy providers.

EAPs can re-emphasize the **workplace focus** part of the core technology of the field. Counseling individual employees is not enough. Changing workplaces to be better places to work helps to prevent and reduce behavioral health risks.

47

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Final Questions?

The Role of Technology in the Future of EAPs

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Attridge, M. (2009). Employee assistance programs: A research-based primer. In J.C. Quick, C. Cooper, & M. Schbracq (Eds.), *The handbook of work and health psychology, 3rd Edn.* (pp. 383-407). New York: Wiley.

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Attridge, M. (2021, November 5). *Employee Assistance Programs: Trends and technology.* Work, Stress, health: 2021 Virtual Conference, American Psychological Association / National Institutes of Health and Safety (NIOSH). <http://hdl.handle.net/10713/17890>

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Parmenter, E., & Attridge, M. (2021, May). Can robots improve the mental health of the workforce? *Benefits Magazine*, 58(5), 38-45. <http://hdl.handle.net/10713/14684>

49