



# **The impact of COVID-19 on front-line practitioners**

## **What have we learned and what's next?**

Lunchtime talk 21<sup>st</sup> October 2020

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# Structure

- Why study the impact of Covid-19 on front-line workers?
- What have we learned so far from our Covid-19 research study?
  - Key findings from our online survey and follow-up interviews
- How can we use this learning to prepare for the continuation of this pandemic?
  - Small group discussions and whole group reflection



# Why we carried out this work

1. *To understand the impact of COVID-19:* we wanted to learn about its impact on work and, in particular, supporting clients/services users.
2. *To create a way to share experiences:* we saw a role for the Tavistock Institute to gather, analyse and relate the stories of individuals.
3. *To contribute to professional development:* as PD programmes respond to the changing nature of work, we hope our learning can contribute to re-shaping delivery and content.

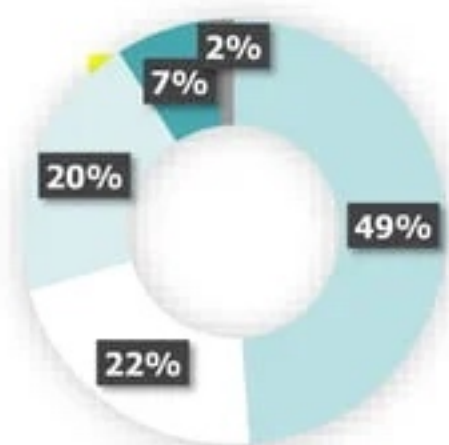


# How we carried out the survey

- Online survey disseminated via our website and social media channels between April and June 2020
- Over 250 professionals completed the survey from all over the world

...working in different sectors

.... having different roles



■ Private sector

■ Public sector

■ Not for profit sector

■ Other

■ Local authority/council



Direct delivery of services to clients/service users



Director or similar senior role



Manager of projects/programmes



Other

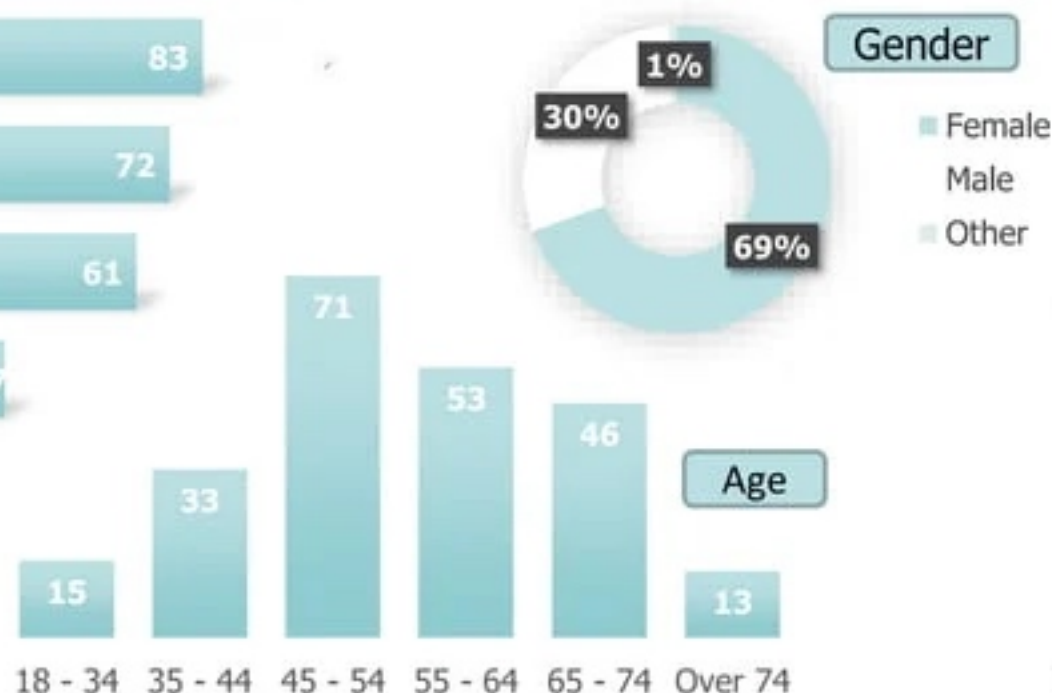


# How we carried out the survey

...carrying out different types of work



.... having different demographics

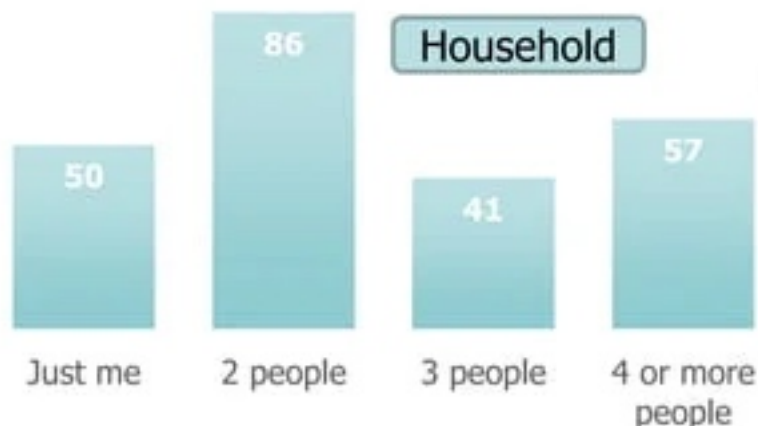




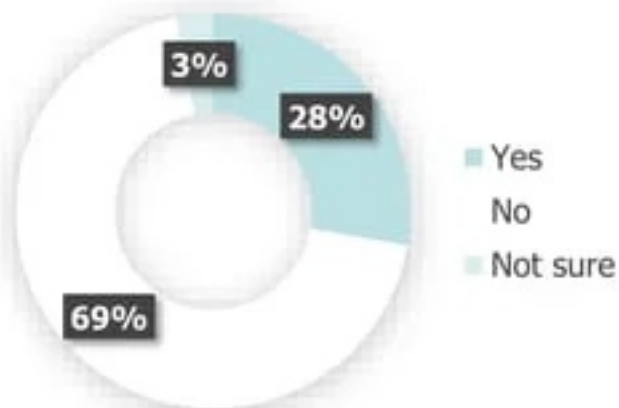


# How we carried out the survey

...and having different experiences



Someone close has been seriously ill over the last few weeks



# Findings from online survey - changes



93% Changed how they work face-to-face with clients

79% Carried out ALL their work remotely

75% Found working quite or very challenging

Private sector  
< public/NGO

## Technical challenges

*"Lack of IT available for service users/clients.. At times difficult to explain screening tools over the telephone."*



## 'Human' challenges

*"Missing of the 'human factor' - we only work with one/two senses. More exhaustion working online 10 h/day. Boundary management is more difficult."*

# Findings from online survey - challenges

Of those 180 who found carrying out work in the previous weeks at least 'quite challenging' experienced:

- 31% Carrying out face-to-face work with social distancing
- 23% Supporting other colleagues remotely
- 23% Having caring responsibilities for someone in my household (e.g. a child or parent)
- 20% Working from home
- 9% Lack of access to equipment for remote working as a considerable or great challenge!



# Findings from online survey - challenges

As illustrated by:

"Lack of interaction and distraction from the emotions of both work and personal circumstances "

"Level of energy needed to retain engagement online and learn new things at such a fast rate."

"Being able to hold my motivation and the therapeutic frame for clients when I haven't always felt great"

At the same time there where some positive experiences:

Flexibility

Increased reach

Technology

All together

Less travelling

# Findings from online survey - challenges

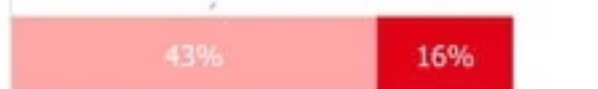


People found it challenging to work in isolation:

IT HAS SOMETIMES BEEN DIFFICULT TO FIND THE INNER RESOURCES TO DO MY WORK EFFECTIVELY



I HAVE OFTEN FOUND MYSELF WORRYING ABOUT OTHERS (COLLEAGUES, FRIENDS, RELATIVES, CLIENTS, ETC.)



I HAVE OFTEN FELT VERY ISOLATED



IT HAS BEEN DIFFICULT TO SUPPORT OTHERS FACING PARTICULAR DIFFICULTIES OR WORRIES



On the upside **58%** felt well supported in doing their work

# Findings from online survey – what's next

79% expected their working practices to change after  
the end of this pandemic

## Increased remote working

*"I am expecting that remote working will become part of the 'new normal'. We will need to make significant changes/adaptations going forward."*

## Less travelling

*"I will travel less often and work in a more sustainable way. Less international work than before."*



# Our interviews

- Asked people who completed the survey to volunteer.
- Focused on *their experiences supporting clients/service users and themselves* in therapeutic/practical ways.
- We 'met' with *14 individuals* for open-ended discussions:
  - psychotherapists and counsellors
  - coaches and consultants
  - teachers and trainers
- From *public, private and not-for-profit* sectors working with company CEOs, children and DV services
- Based in *six countries* (mainly UK).



## What we learned: key themes

- The practical, organisational and personal challenges
- How I have supported myself as a practitioner
- What's worked well for me
- And what's next?



# The practical, organisational and personal challenges: contradictions!

- Technology
- Seeing into homes and homes seen into
- Providing/obtaining sufficient support and supervision
- Seeing or not seeing colleagues

Communicating with others remotely is more emotionally draining as you're having to 'use different senses' to interpret how your client is feeling as they're not physically in the room with you. Silences on zoom feel a lot longer than they do in person and you have to concentrate more when the person isn't right in front of you.'



# What's worked well?

- More focused
- More alert to what I'm seeing
- Greater control over time
- Opened up new ways of thinking

*'I found the co-working space quite distracting. Whenever somebody passed you, you would have a little chat, which can be of course beneficial for networking. Once the lockdown came, it was actually a valuable insight to see who still stayed in touch with you and who didn't, so with whom it's actually just office chat but no real interest.'*

# Supporting yourself

- Had more supervision
- Used informal networks
- Joined online groups
- Taken more time for myself

When I get tired, I can just lay on the couch and watch some Netflix.'

'Probably not had the support I needed. My supervisor struggled, was furloughed so no phone call or email. I would have liked that as a supervisor needs to be there at all levels. I spoke to other counsellors, friends, mutually supportive and through my course found a buddy and we talk so may become more active supervision.'



## What's next?

- No going back
- Political readiness at all levels
- Pessimism and realism
- Hope and optimism?
- Maximising learning



'I want to work towards a more hopeful future, to keep hold of the way society has slowed down. To an extent, it's been an equalising experience of everyone feeling their vulnerabilities and that's motivating towards wanting to change / address some of the inequalities in society.'





**Any questions so far?**





# Small group discussions

- Continuation of the pandemic:
  - Group 1: what continued?
  - Group 2: what changed?
  - Group 3: what stopped?



30 min



# Whole group reflection

How can we use our learning from the first wave?

- what continued?
- what changed?
- what stopped?





**Thank you!**

**For further information:**

<https://www.tavainstitute.org/projects/the-tavistock-institute-covid-19/>