

# Irish Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy Members Survey Report 2013



Survey compiled by the:



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## **1. Introduction**

This report details the findings from a members survey undertaken by the Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy.

The survey was completed by a cross section of stakeholders in the organisation encompassing students, members and supervisors at varying levels.

Participants completed the survey online, with more than 700 completing an initial survey and about 500 a subsequent or follow-up survey. The survey was not necessarily completed in two sittings, but involved two separate questionnaires. The data from the two separate questionnaires is only partially linkable.

This analysis has been prepared by Behaviour & Attitudes, who did not field the original survey, but were engaged to provide their perspective of its implications based on their experience at undertaking similar studies in other sectors and fields.

## 2. Summary & Conclusions

A number of interesting themes are apparent from the 2013 IACP Members Survey.

Firstly, the recession has had a significant impact on members' practices and case load, and 45% of them spontaneously cite the recession and/or business development and clients' inability to pay for counselling as their significant problem at present. Although data based upon averages can be sometimes misleading, the survey illustrated that participants see roughly 21 separate clients in a given month for up to 28 hours, tending to charge fees that averaged at about €44 an hour. This would suggest a projected income of somewhere between €1,200 and €1,300 a month.

A second point to note is that the vast majority work part time in this area, are mainly women and have come to counselling and psychotherapy more recently: generally having trained in another area first. However, for many of these, counselling and psychotherapy is their sole occupation, although they may well have started out in careers such as teaching, charity work and so forth. The implication of this is that many are keen to learn and meet other members, but they may lack confidence and focus more upon learning about counselling and psychotherapy than upon developing their businesses.

Relatedly, much of the focus of the survey participants is on learning about new areas of counselling or psychotherapy, or new therapeutic skills that may be useful to them. There seems to be a much more limited appetite to learn about developing their practices and targeting clients in a more formalised way. The vast majority of clients come by virtue of word of mouth recommendation.

There is a very positive perspective of the central organisation of the IACP, of contact with staff and indeed of the website and of the various publications that the IACP issues. That said, as few as 10% have ever submitted articles to a publication, although up to a third might be prepared to do so. There is a clear sense that the structure and publications of the Association constitute an important element of community and there is evident enthusiasm to take part in CPD meetings and so forth.

Up to 44% suggest that they would like to see some changes made to the accreditation procedure and principally concern seems to be around a perceived lack of simplicity or speed.

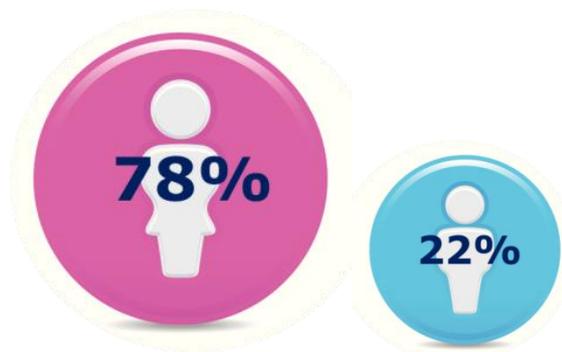
Marketing is felt to be an issue, with just 25% considering the IACPs public profile to be 'excellent' or 'very good'. More than a quarter suggest that the Association should advertise more. This presumably relates to comparatively light case loads and a need to drive up the amount of business that each is doing.

There is significant enthusiasm for research and an acknowledgement that it is important in counselling and psychotherapy. Nonetheless, there is distinct reluctance to share research and it would seem that there is a lack of confidence about presenting research in an authoritative and confident manner. Members may need assistance in formulating research plans, but also in developing the presentation and other skills necessary to communicate it more widely to their peers.

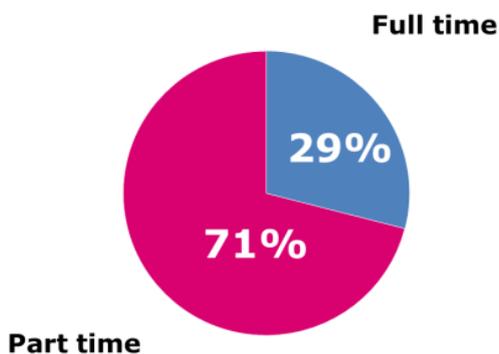
Overall, a positive perspective emerges, but there are distinct needs apparent in the context of business development and in helping the membership to speak and communicate more authoritatively about the benefits of counselling and psychotherapy.

### 3. Members & their Work

The sample for the IACP survey is quite distinctive: almost 4 in 5 are women and their average age is around fifty. The comparatively high average age suggests that Counselling and Psychotherapy is an area they may be coming to after another career (or that they may be gravitating towards it as a result of their work or life experience).

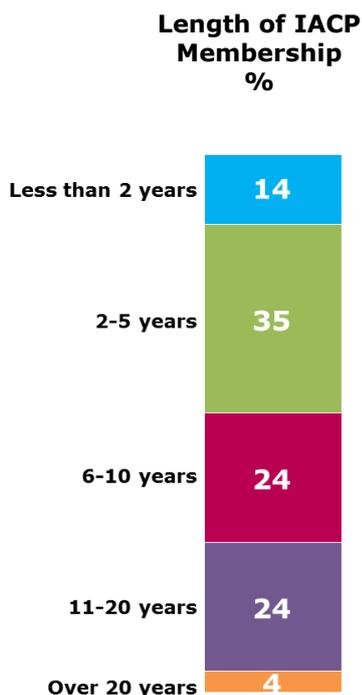


#### *Predominantly female and part time workers involved in the sector*

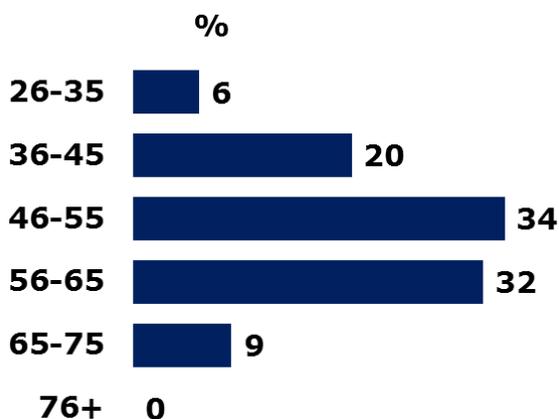


7 in 10 work in counselling/psychotherapy on a part time basis but fewer than a half (44%) have another occupation.

Where they have another job it is most likely in education/training or the charity/community care sector. They are tending to be comparatively newly involved in this sector with a median length of membership of the IACP of about 5 years.

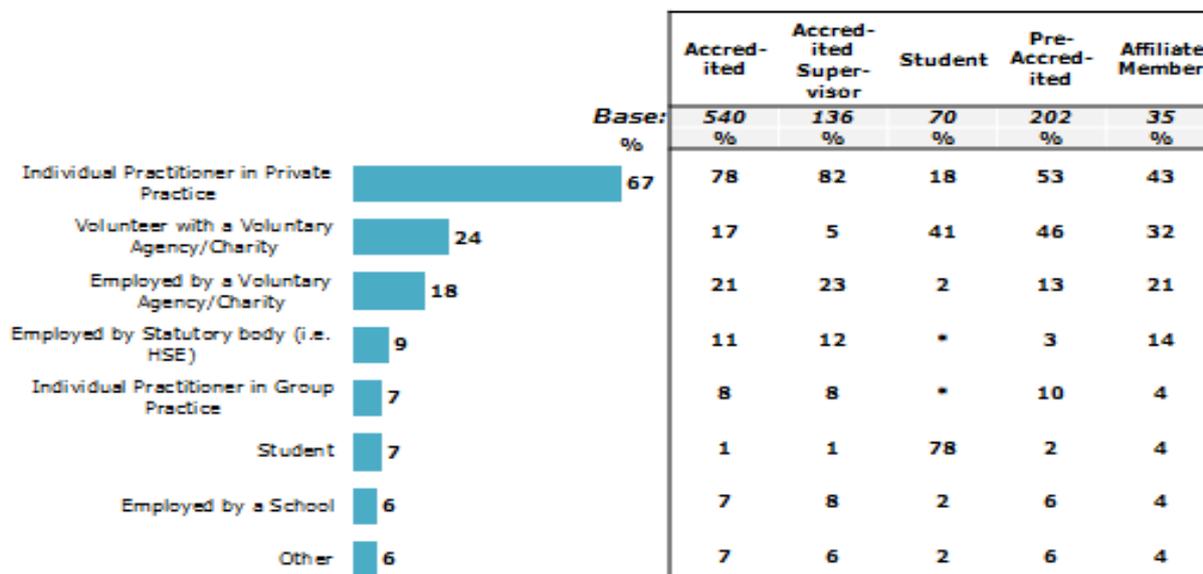


#### Age of Members



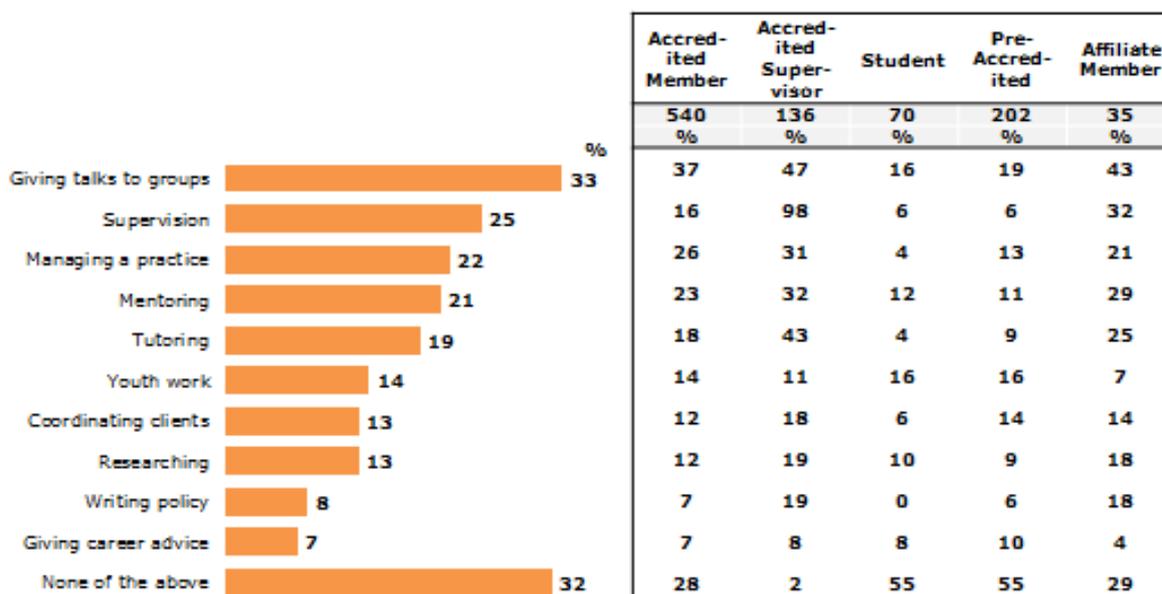
*Almost half have been a member for less than five years, although a quarter are members for between 6 and 10 years. The median length as a member is just over 5 years*

## Work Situation



Two out of three are in self-employed practice, but many are volunteers (mainly those who are students or pre-accredited members).

## Work Other than Counselling / Psychotherapy

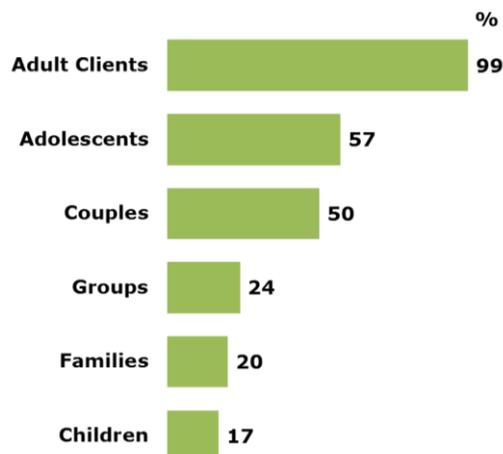


The average survey participant is involved in 1.75 of the activities above. Supervision, managing, mentoring and tutoring are significant elements for Accredited Members / Supervisors. Up to a third give talks to groups. However, Students and Pre-accredited members do little of these overall, with the exception of youth work and volunteering.

Attending workshops and CPD Events is largely self-funded: 91% pay for these themselves and just 7% have employer support. 4% say that these are fully employer funded.

## 4. Clients

Clients are a reasonably coherent group.



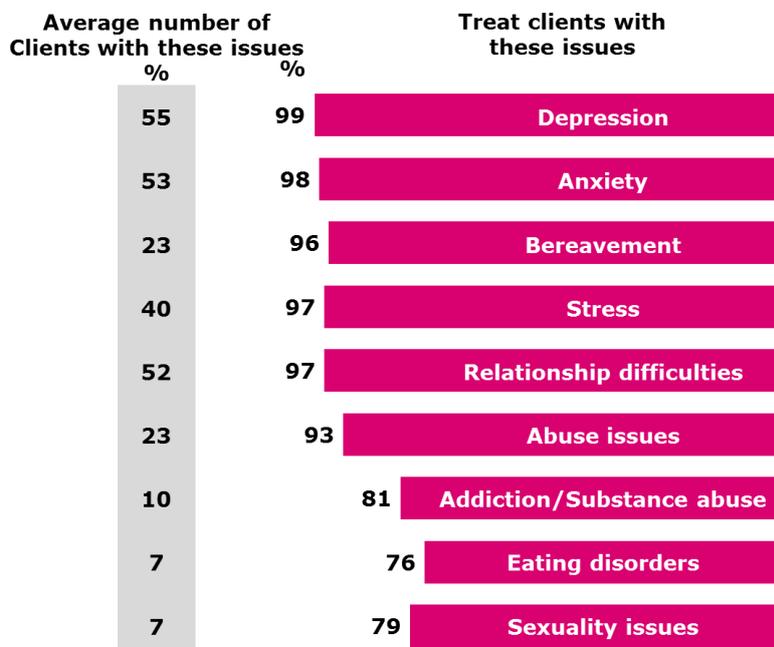
The key client group for most members tends to be adults, followed in turn by adolescents and couples.

Depression, anxiety, bereavement and stress are widely treated.

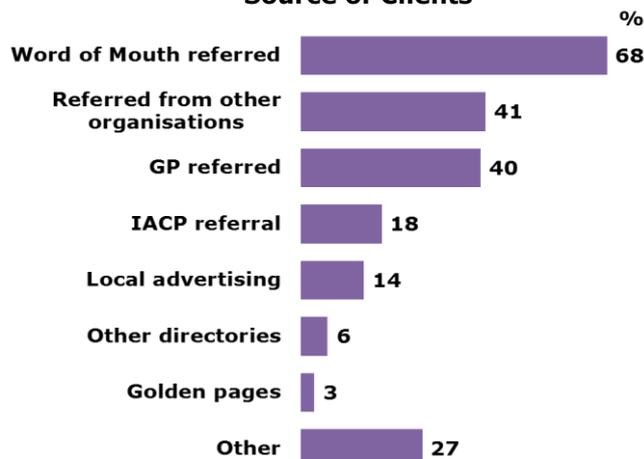
A high proportion of clients are struggling with depression and anxiety while relationship difficulties also present among half of all clients.

Abuse issues are apparent of about 1 in 4, addiction for 1 in 10 and eating disorders and sexuality issues being experience by 7% each.

Roughly a fifth of clients tend to present with some degree of suicidal intent, although the greatest proportion of therapists suggest that just 10% or fewer of their clients are so affected. More than 3 in 4 of these therapists (77%) have had training in the area of suicide prevention.



### Source of Clients

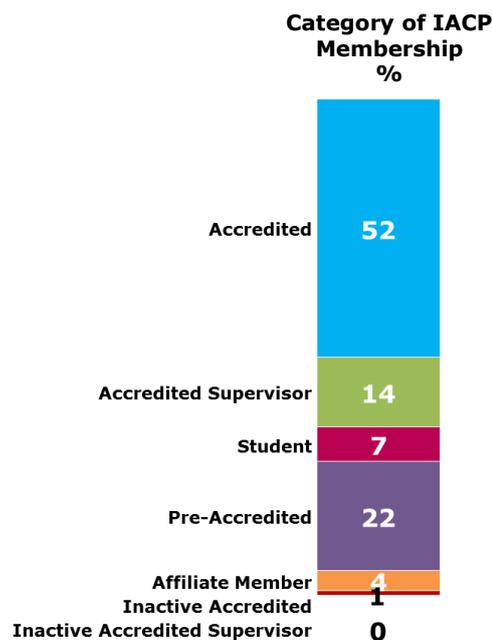


Sourcing of clients is apparently a significant issue at present, but it seems that much of this happens in an informal or adhoc manner.

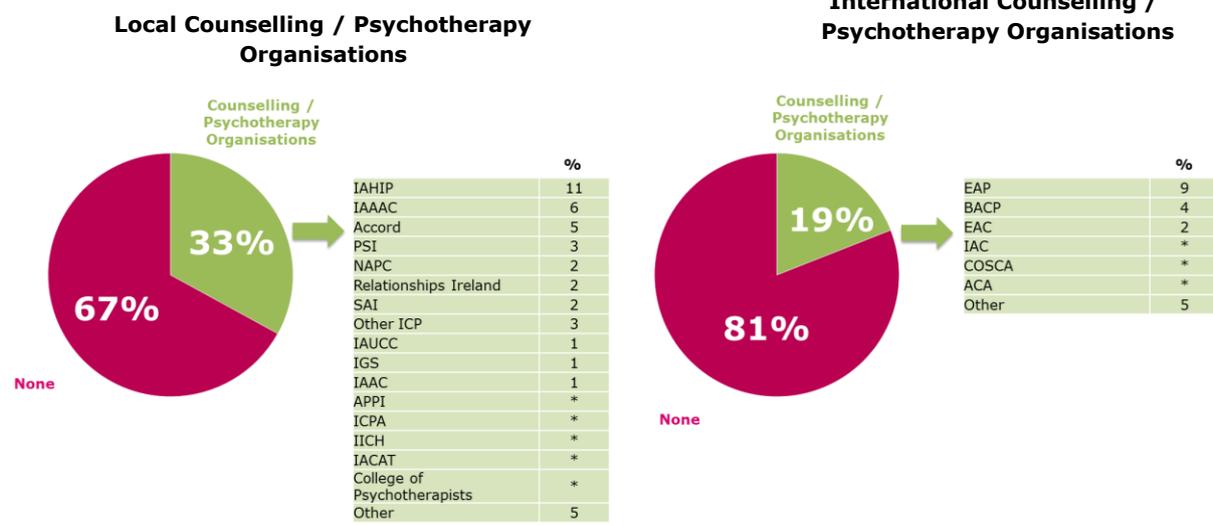
2 in 3 feel that their clients mainly emerge from Word of Mouth referral, with 2 in 5 being referred by other organisations, a similar number by GPs and half this level (18%) by the IACP itself.

## 5. Professional arrangements

Slightly more than half (52%) are accredited members and another 14% accredited supervisors, but pre-accredited and student members account for almost 3 in 10 of those surveyed.



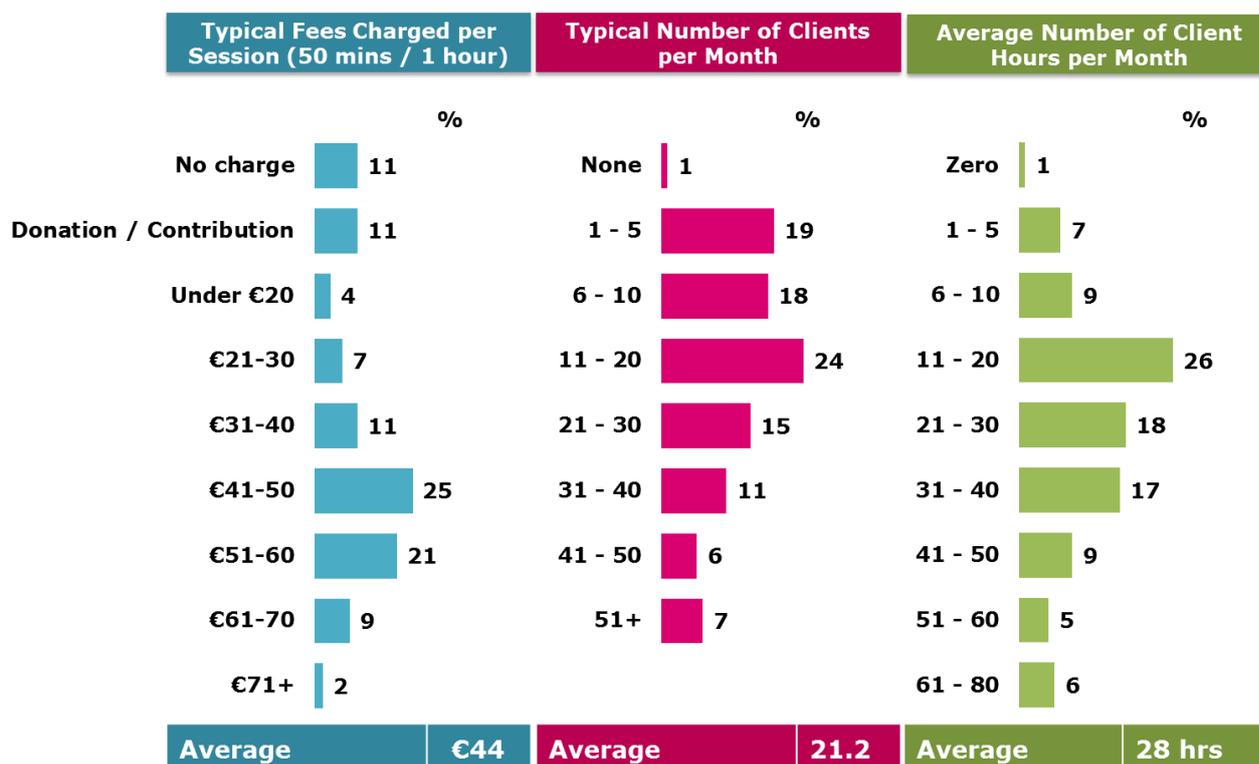
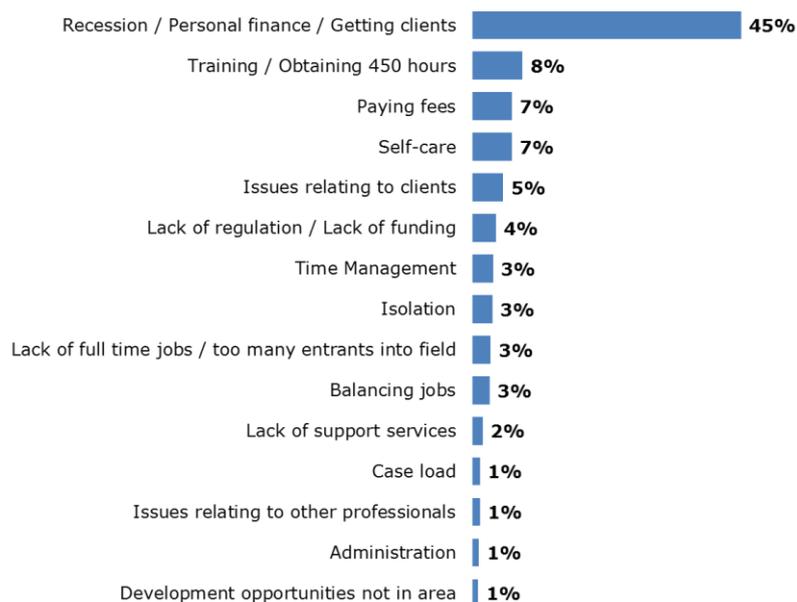
A third are members of other *local* counselling and psychotherapy organisations (with IAHIP, IAAAC and Accord all prominent) while just less than a fifth are connected with an *international body*, with EAP and BACP to the forefront.



### Challenges faced by Counsellors / Psychotherapists (spontaneous, post coded)

The major issue in the profession is the depressive effect of the recession, in terms of impact on clients and their perceived inability to fund treatment. A near majority of respondents have difficulty attracting clients.

Additionally, funding fees is a problem, as is the need to train for a specified number of hours.

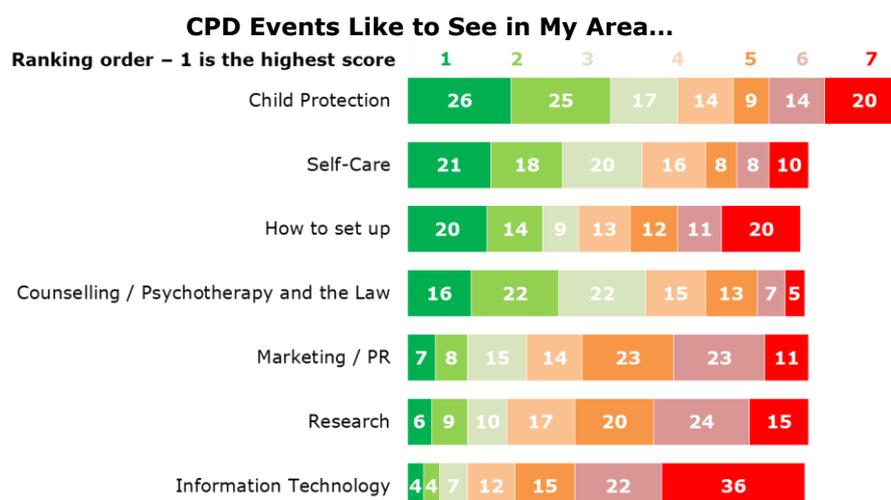


There is wide diversity in terms of the caseloads of different counsellors and psychotherapists. While almost 2 in 5 see less than 10 clients a month, a quarter see more than thirty and an average monthly client base of 21 is claimed.

A fifth charge little or nothing and an average charge per session (billed) of €44 applies. A typical monthly caseload of 28 billable hours, combined with an average amount per billable hour of €44 suggests a typical monthly income of roughly €1250.

## 6. Development needs

Although many may clearly be struggling to develop and grow viable practises, most seem more interested in learning about developing *areas of treatment* rather than about how to *market, develop or establish their practise*.



Areas of particular interest include child protection, self-care and counselling/psychotherapy and the law.

Information Technology is an area of least claimed interest while research is second least likely to be chosen from a selection of potential CPD events. This seems to underscore a contention that counsellors may be passionate about their discipline but perhaps less good at organising and establishing their own businesses or thinking more strategically.

### Workshops Like to See in My Area...

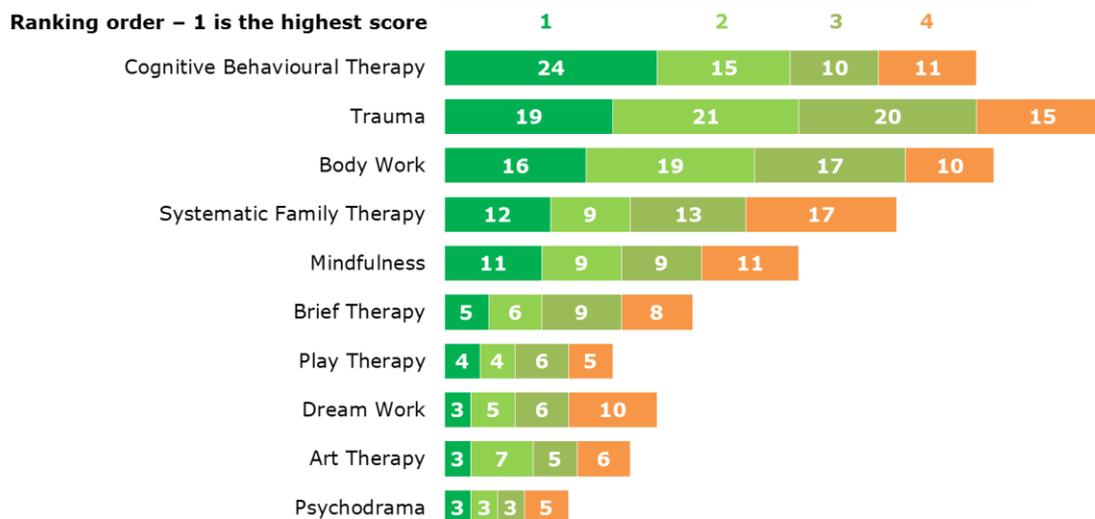


In terms of client typologies that practitioners would like to learn more about focussing upon we see greatest interest in suicide, followed by abuse victims, couples with relationship difficulties and clients with special needs.

Comparatively less enthusiasm is voiced for learning more about how to address the needs of religious groups, of travellers or of non-Nationals.

The major interest would seem to be upon areas of greatest probable business.

### Skill Based Therapy Workshops Like to See in My Area



Disciplines and therapy areas in which practitioners would be keen to boost their skills include Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, body work, trauma and systematic family therapy, with much more limited development needs claimed in the context of art or music therapy, Brief Therapy or Play Therapy.

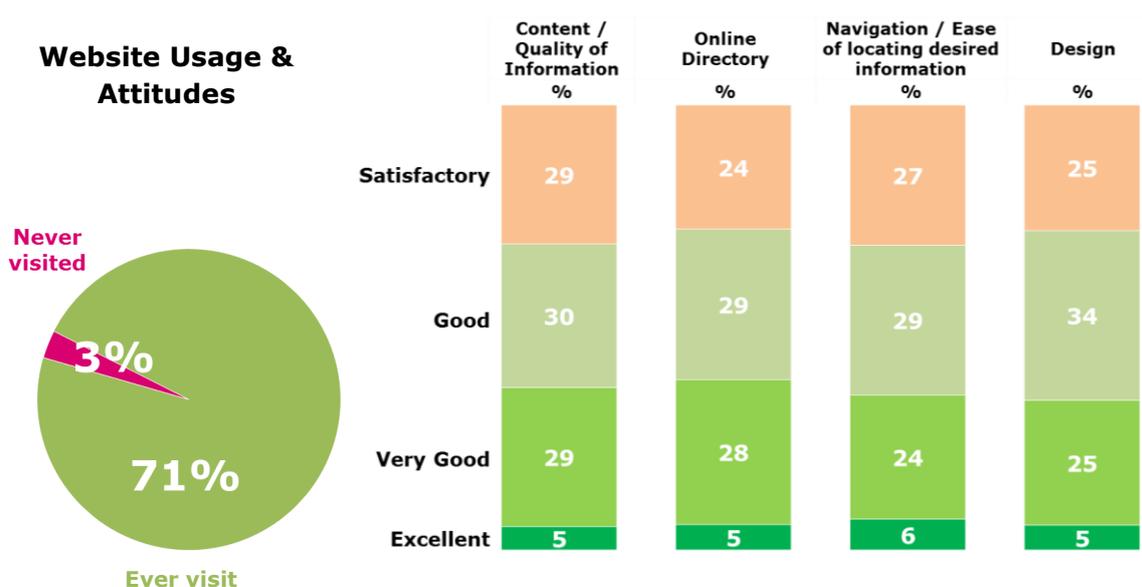
That said, the claimed level of interest in a wide range of CPD territories suggests a significant willingness to engage more with the IACP and the community of other Psychotherapists and Counsellors.

## 7. Members' benefits and services, website and head office interaction

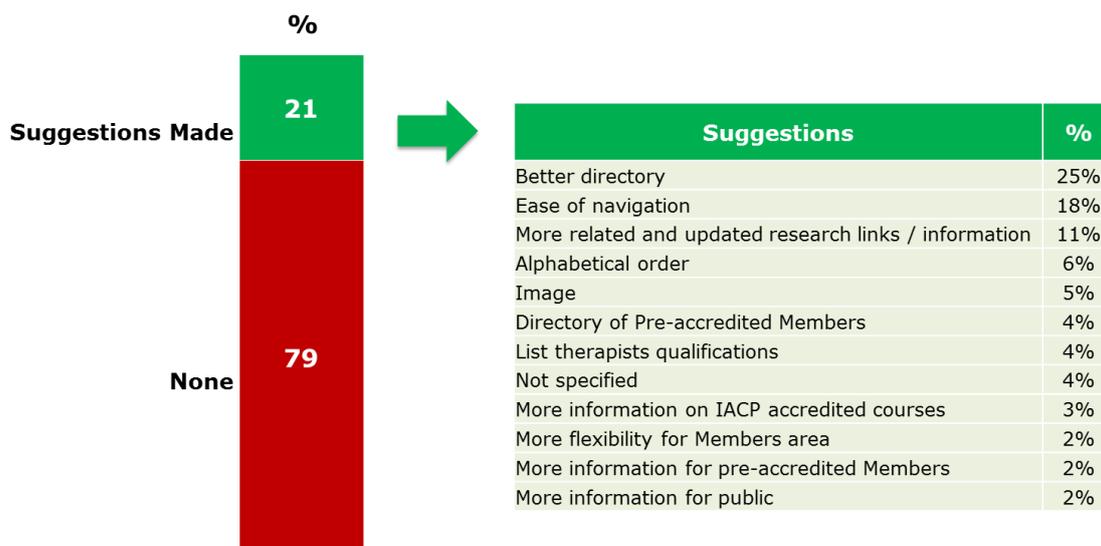
Many members (59%) avail of the IACPs free seminars and half attend regional workshops at the reduced members' rate. Less than half (45%) include themselves in the online directory listings facilitating telephone referrals and just over a quarter use the IACP members accredited logo. More than 7 in 10 (71%) would like to see membership cards for accredited members.



The vast majority visit the IACP Website and it is well judged in most regards although a fifth made suggestions for improvement to it while almost a third would like to see the provision of other web based services to members.



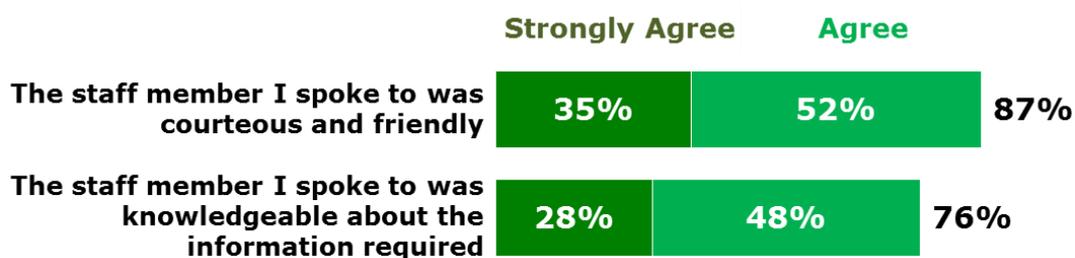
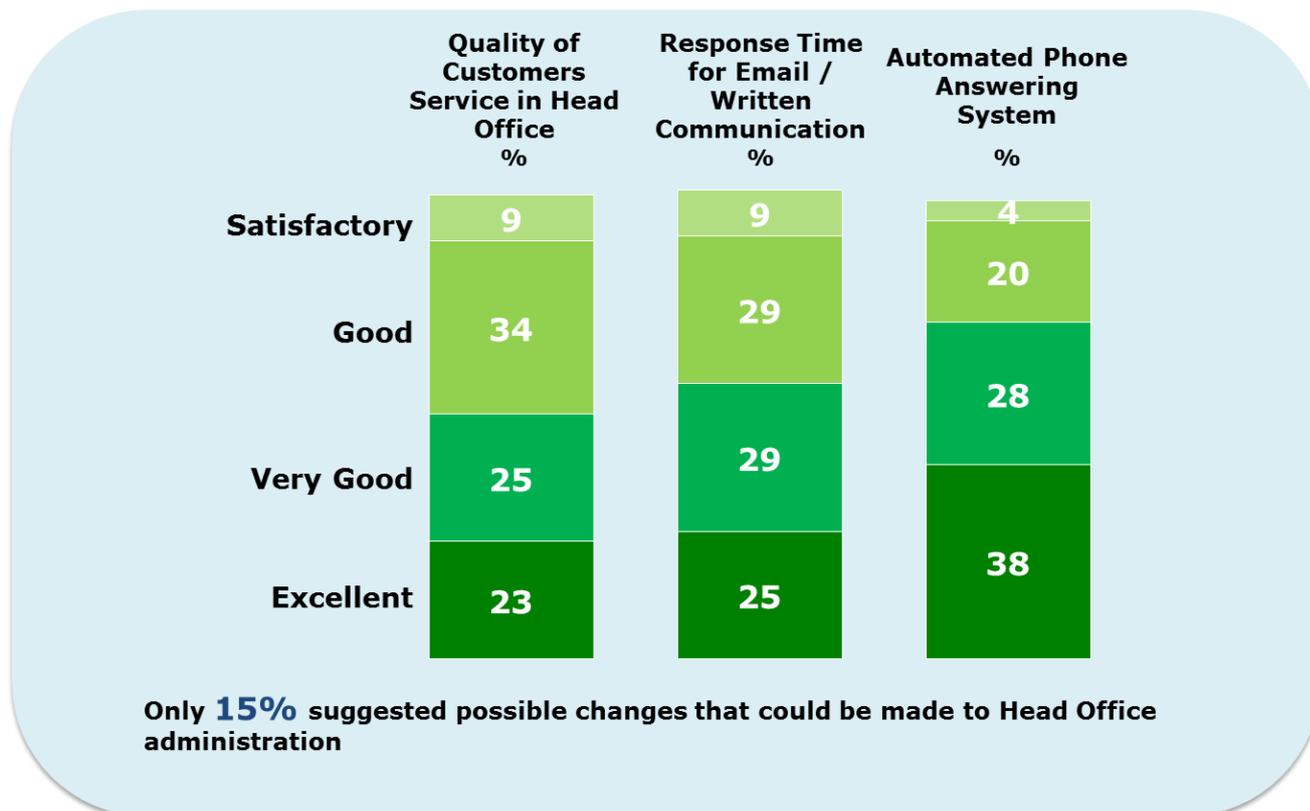
## Suggestions for Improvement to IACP Website



The improvements suggested are largely in respect of having a better directory and improved on-site navigation. Better links were also mentioned.

## 8. Head Office Interactions

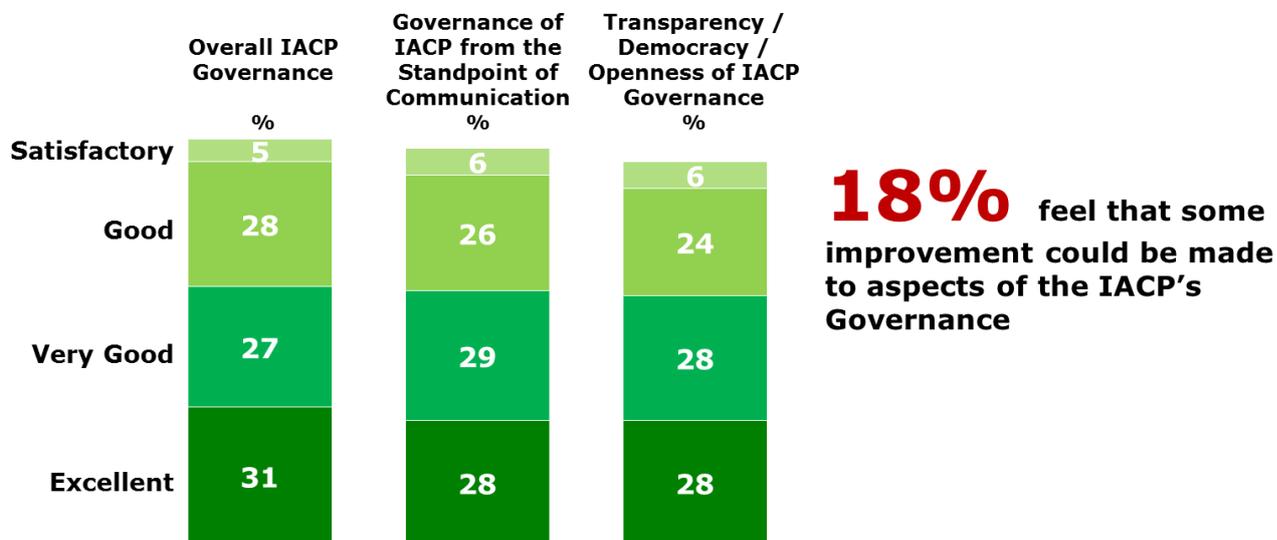
In general, the perspective of member: staff interaction by phone is positive but with a more muted regard for the impact of automated call answering/IVR systems. Nonetheless, just 15% suggested other possible changes that might be made to head office administration.



Staff are knowledgeable and courteous and there is no evidence of any tangible issue in this area.

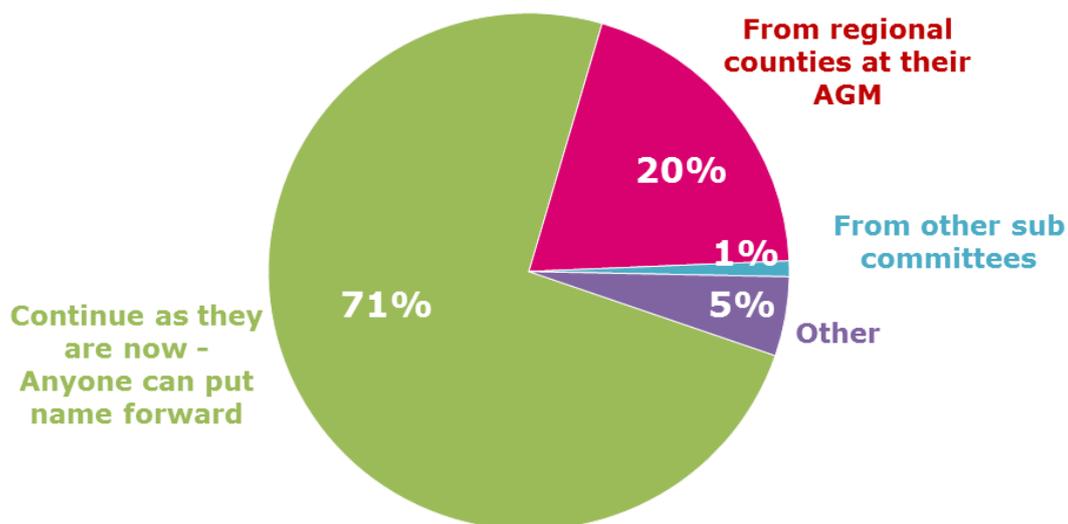
## 9. Corporate Governance

Perspectives of the IACPs Corporate Governance regime are positive, with less than 1 in 5 suggesting potential enhancements to it.



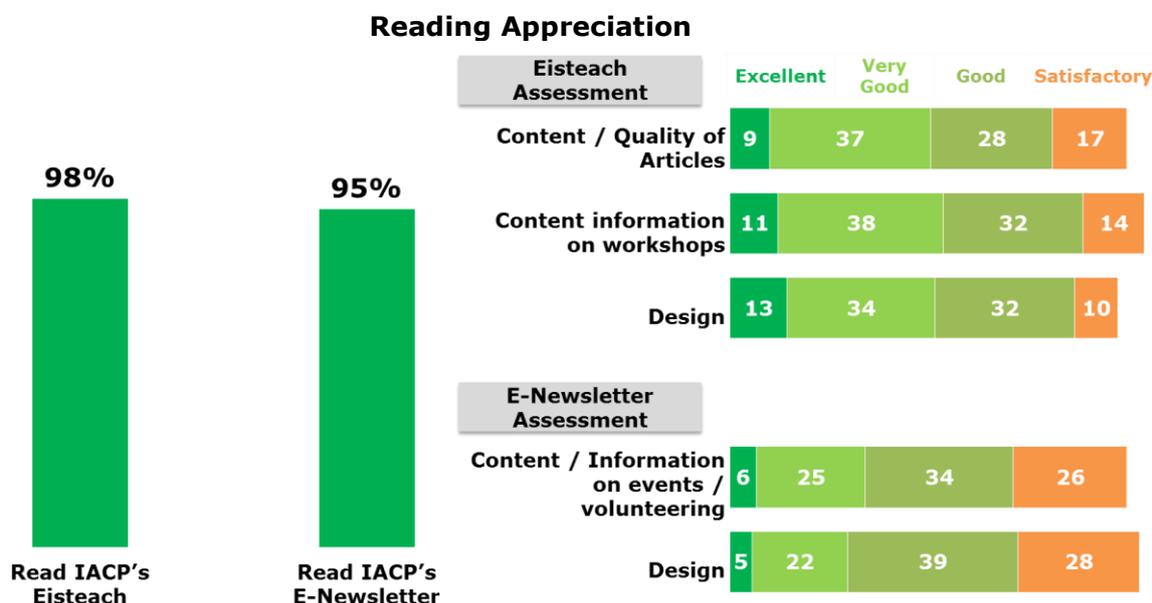
Indeed as many as 71% would preserve the status quo situation in relation to how members go forward for election to the National Executive Committee, but a fifth suggested that regional structures or committees be allowed nominate appropriate candidates too.

### Appointments to National Executive Committee



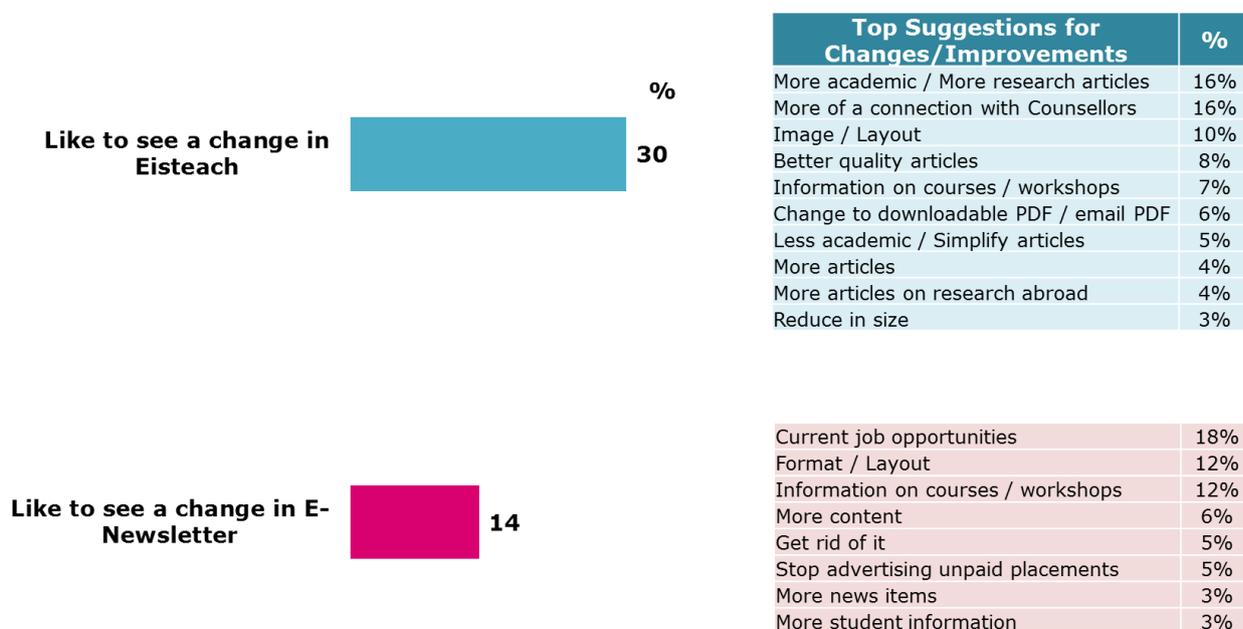
## 10. Publications

There is almost universal reading of the existing IACP publications and they are highly rated vis-à-vis content and quality. The design scores are a little weaker in the context of the e-newsletter, although perhaps to be expected in the context of a format which issues more regularly.

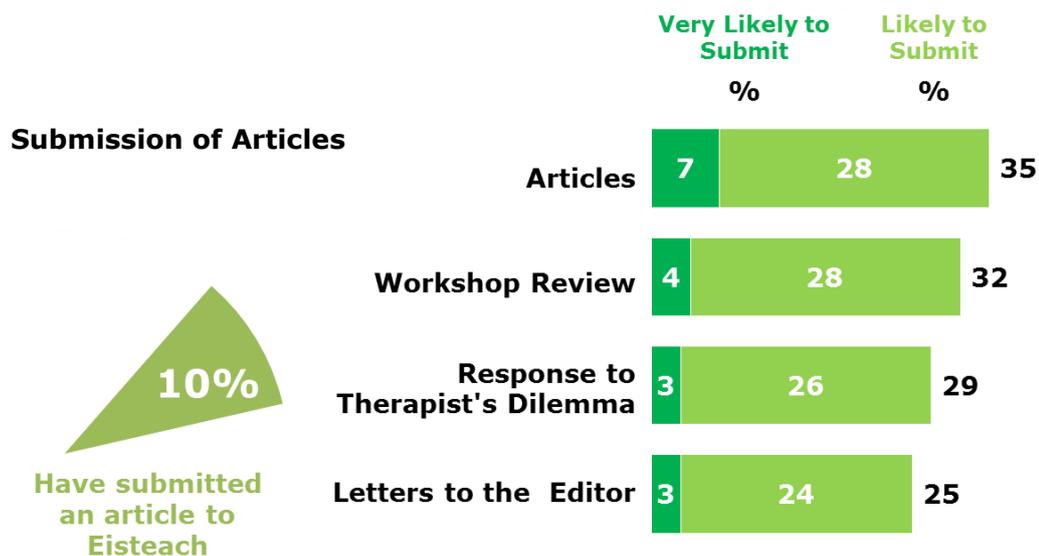


About 3 in 10 suggested possible changes to Eisteach, with the greatest proportion suggesting that they would like to see a *greater connection with therapists* or the publication taking on more of a *research based slant*.

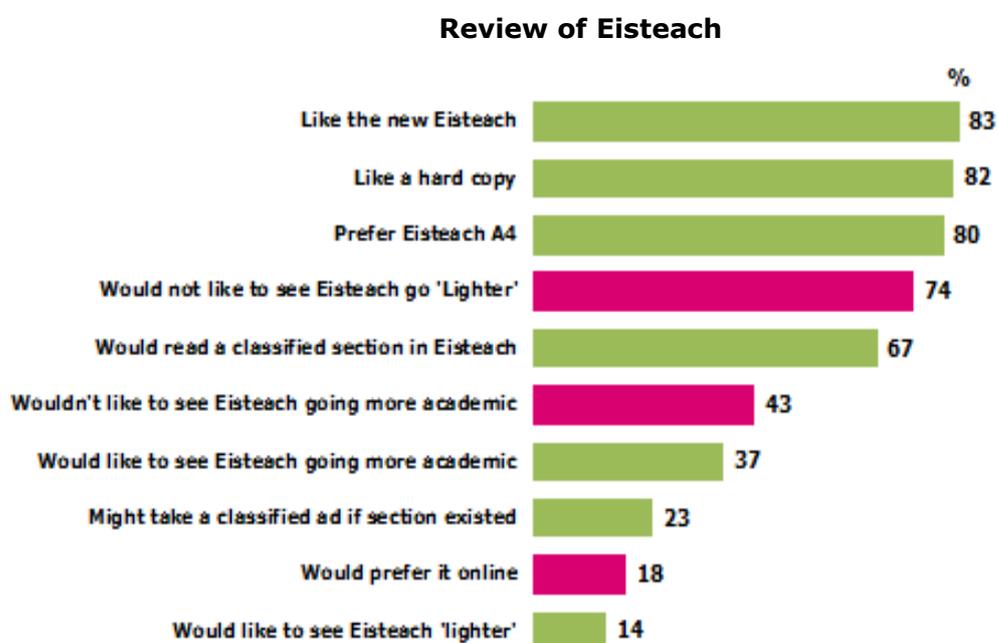
### Changes/Improvements to Publications



That said, just 10% have ever submitted an article to Eisteach, although as many as a third would be keen to submit either an article or a workshop review.



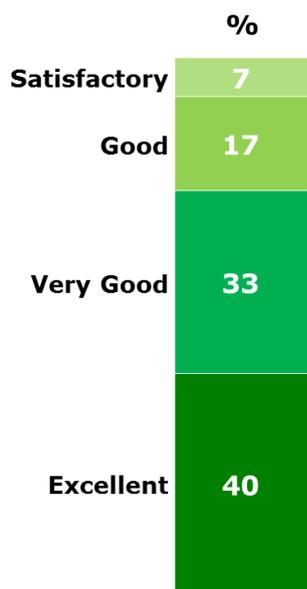
In overall terms, there is very high approval for Eisteach in general with significant approval for its hard copy format and A4 size. There is no tangible groundswell of opinion that Eisteach is too light and satisfaction with it seems broadly accepted.



There also seems to be some potential to introduce a classified advertising section in Eisteach.

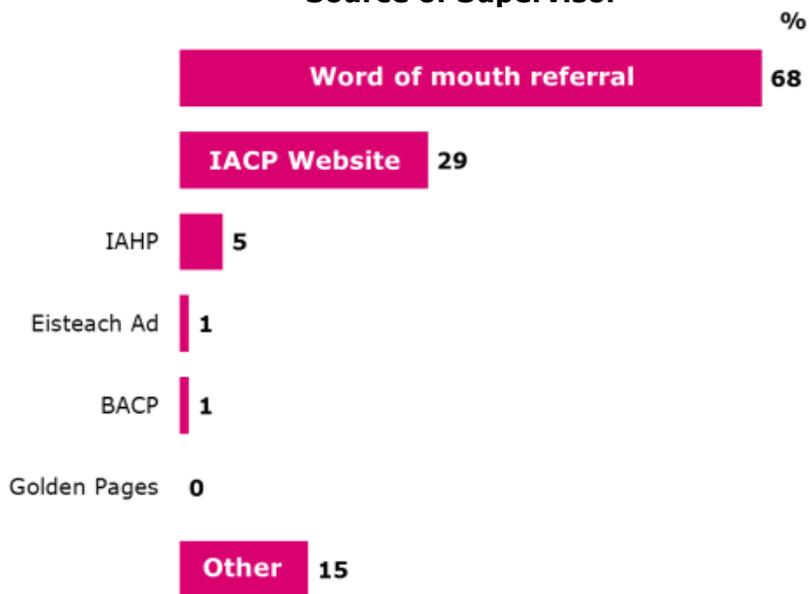
## 11. Supervisors

### Satisfaction with Current Supervisor

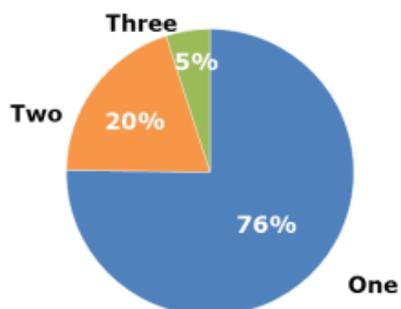


There is very broad satisfaction with existing supervisors and the vast majority rate them as excellent or very good. Less than 10% suggest that they are only satisfactory or poorer than this.

### Source of Supervisor



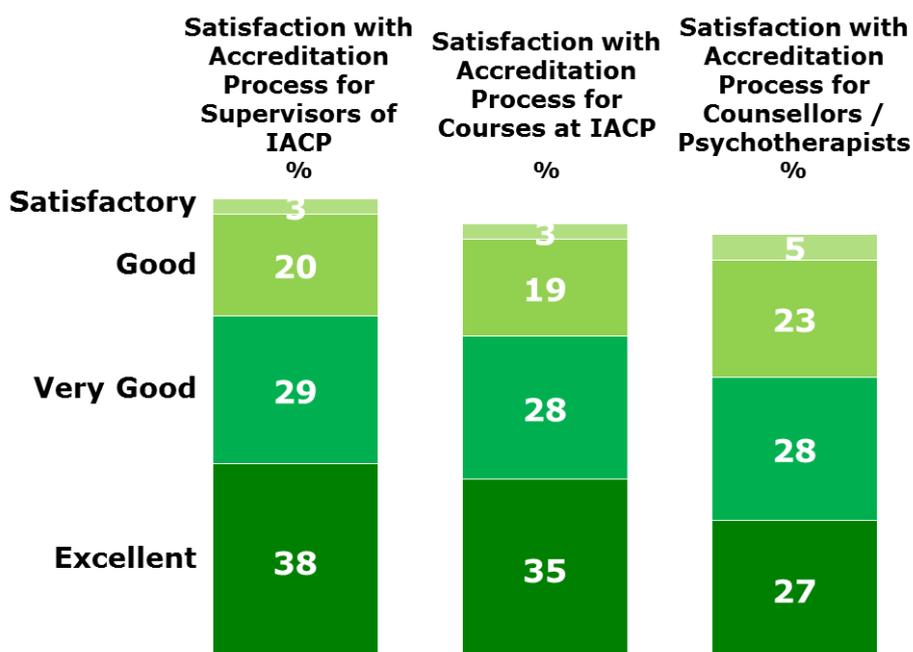
### Number of Supervisors



Supervisors have generally been sourced by word of mouth referral and they tend to be paid an average amount of about €60, with most members making do with a single supervisor.

The vast majority who didn't source their supervisor by virtue of word of mouth recommendation tend to have used the IACP website.

## 12. Accreditation

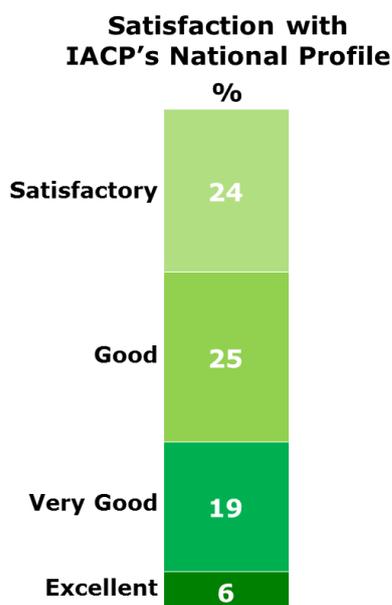


There is broad satisfaction with the accreditation process for members and indeed for courses and supervisors themselves. However, the proportion giving excellent or very good ratings is somewhat more modest than in other areas indicating that there is perhaps room for improvement in this regard.



Indeed 44% would like to see changes in the IACP's professional accreditation process and the vast majority indicated that they would like to see this made simpler and speedier. There is some view that more regular reaccreditation might be considered but the key issues appear to be a lack of simplicity and speed.

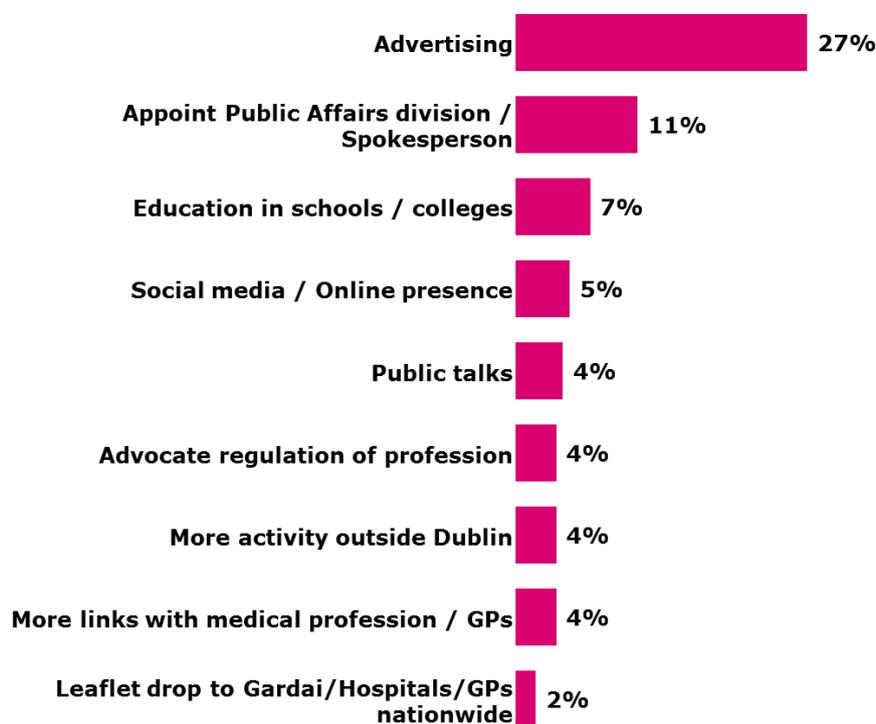
### 13. Marketing & Profile



Although there is broad satisfaction with the IACPs national profile, and 3 out of 4 survey participants are at least satisfied, the proportion suggesting it is either excellent or very good is comparatively modest at 1 in 4.

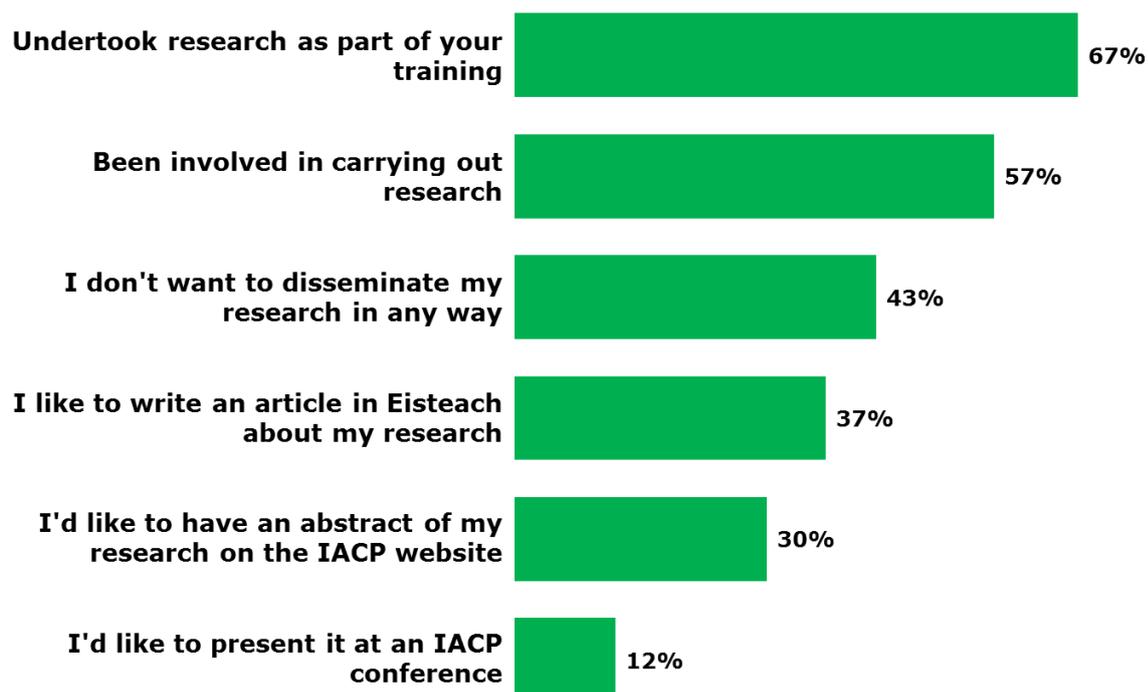
Clearly there is scope to enhance the profile of the organisation and indeed 42% believe that the IACP could do more to promote itself.

#### Suggested Ways to Promote the IACP



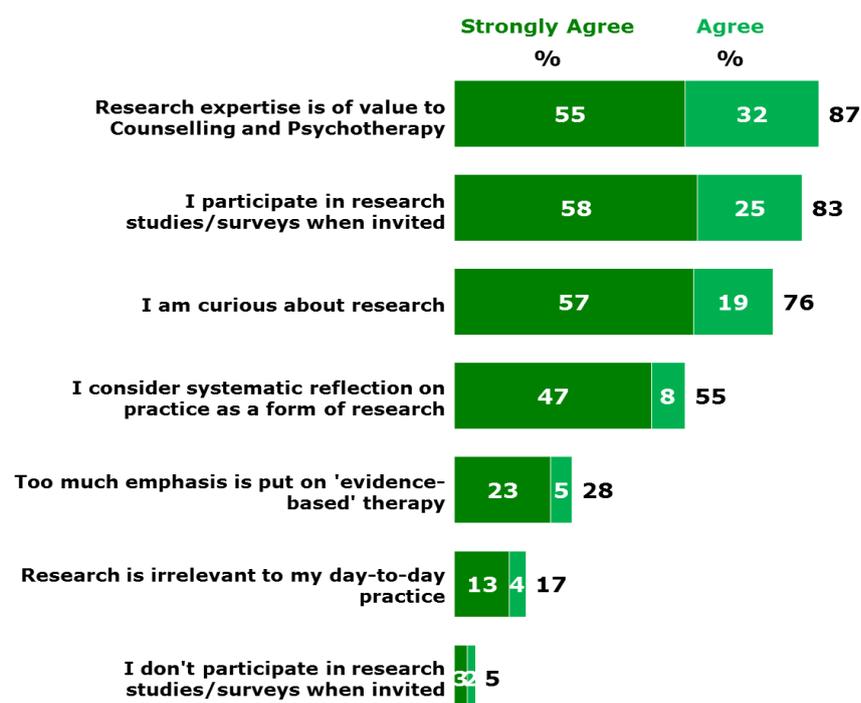
By and large, the principal suggestion is that the IACP might do more advertising and that this be coupled with a strengthening of its public affairs dimension, greater focus on education in schools and colleges, an online presence and public talks etc.

## 14. Research



A quite substantial proportion of survey participants have had direct experience of research as an element of their training programme. Almost 3 in 5 have been involved in carrying out research but there is a marked reluctance to be involved in disseminating their findings, suggesting a lack of confidence perhaps.

### Engagement with Research

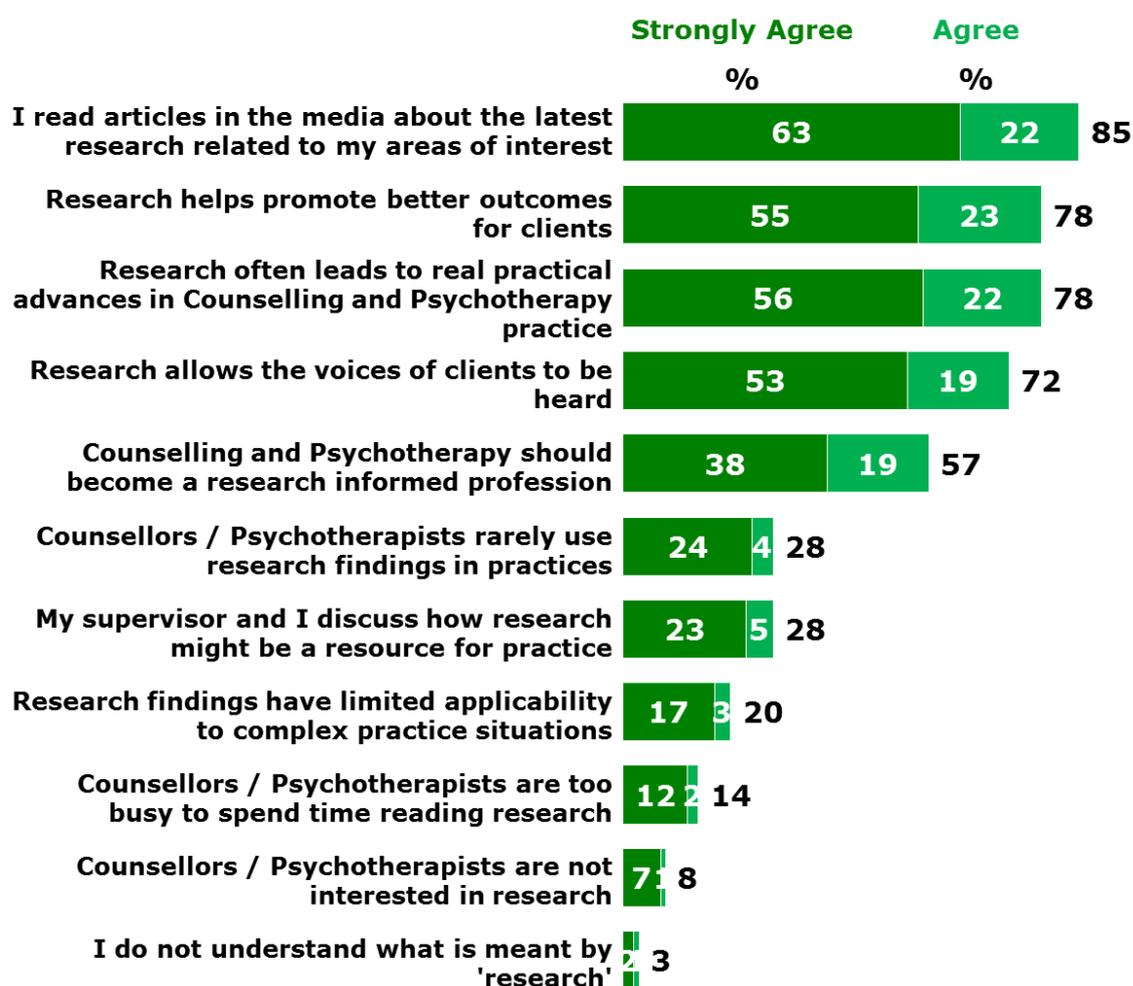


Whatever reluctance there may be to tell others about their own research, there are very high levels of acceptance that research expertise is valuable and many are keen to participate in studies and admit to an innate curiosity about research.

There is a substantial appetite to read more articles in media about research related to areas of specific personal interest and an acceptance that research can help promote better outcomes and lead to practical advances in counselling and psychotherapeutic practice.

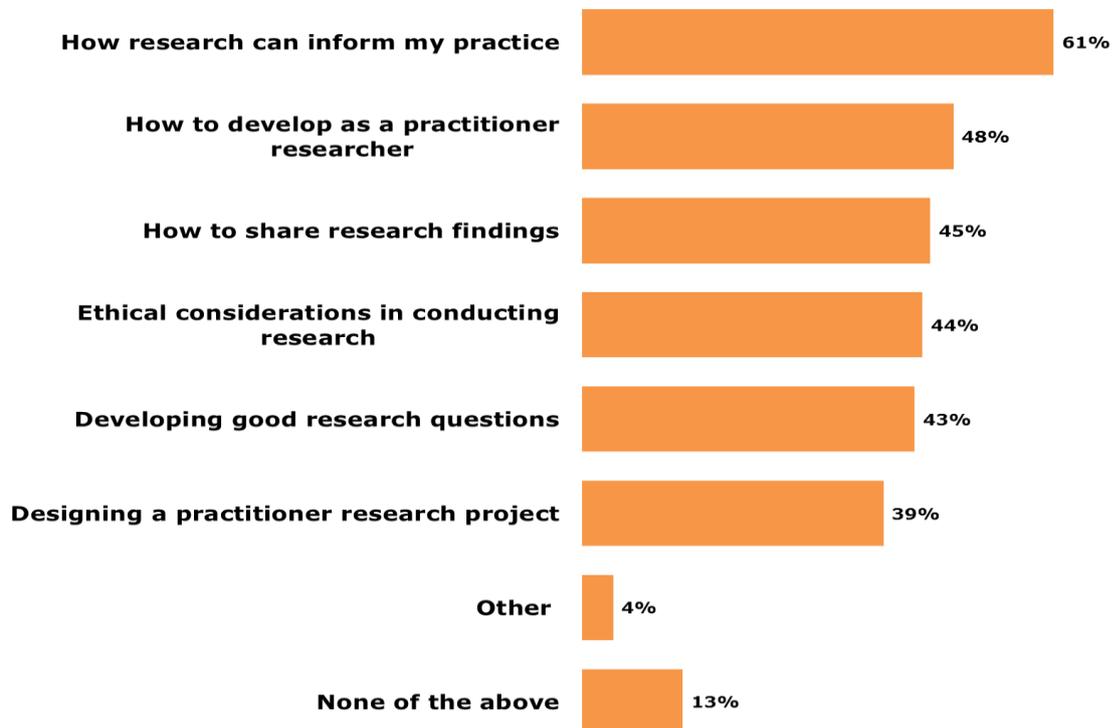
Indeed there is a particularly positive perspective of research by and large, with only the minor reservation that the discussion of research between supervisor and practitioner is somewhat more limited than might be the case.

### Attitudes to Research in Practice



When asked to indicate the types of continuing professional development research events that they might like to attend, a variety of different options were endorsed at a high level.

## Topics Like to See in IACP Research



Greatest interest is in how research might inform their own practice, and how to develop as a practitioner researcher.

Not surprisingly, in light of the stated reluctance to share ones research findings, up to half the sample are interested in finding out more about how to share research findings. More than 2 in 5 are also interested in finding out more about designing good research questions and slightly fewer how to design a practitioner research project.

All in all, there is clearly widespread interest in fostering a more research focused culture and an acceptance that this is important in modern counselling and psychotherapy. However, there is evidently some anxiety about having to share and publicise research findings and clearly many are uncertain about their abilities to communicate their findings authoritatively.

Some focus on communications skills might perhaps be considered: if some are returning to work or changing career, they may lack innate confidence and this is something that might be addressed in training or CPD sessions.

## Appendix

### Profile of Sample

	Total Sample	Accredited Member	Accredited Supervisor	Student	Pre-Accredited	Affiliate Member
<b>Gender:</b>						
Male	22	23	19	24	21	28
Female	78	77	81	77	79	72
<b>Age:</b>						
26-35	6	3	2	16	13	0
36-45	20	16	1	37	35	10
46-55	34	37	33	33	32	24
56-65	32	36	51	12	14	38
66+	9	9	14	2	6	28