

Recognition Scheme Award
for Organisations



COSCA

Counselling & Psychotherapy
in Scotland

Survey of COSCA Recognised Organisations November 2021

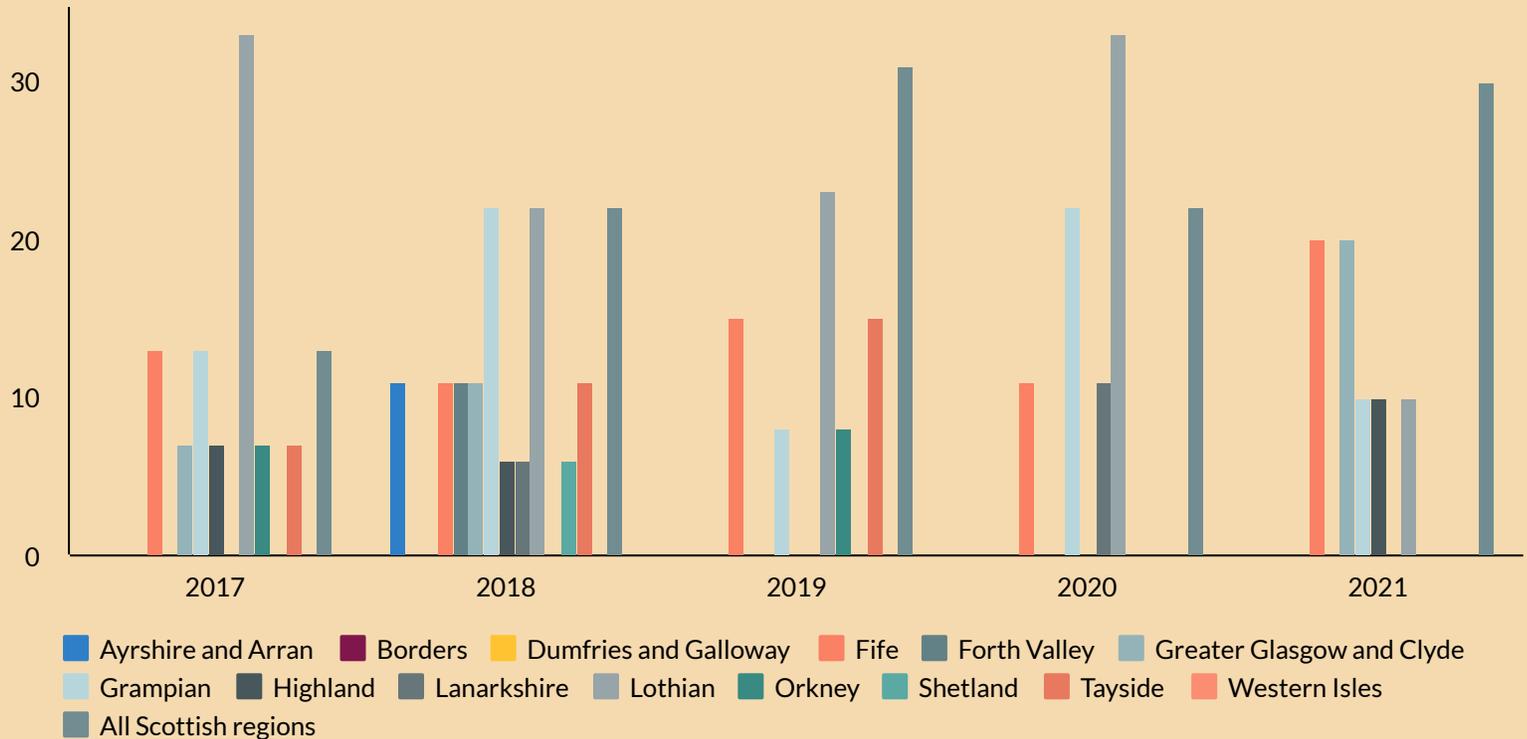
SURVEY RESULTS 2021

Introduction

There are currently 28 COSCA Member Organisations who have gained the COSCA Recognition Scheme Award. During Autumn 2021 COSCA Recognised Organisations were asked to respond to our survey. This year the questions shifted a little away from the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic whilst still acknowledging its effect. The relatively low response rate shows that COSCA Recognised Organisation still have many demands on their time and COSCA is grateful to those who were able to respond.

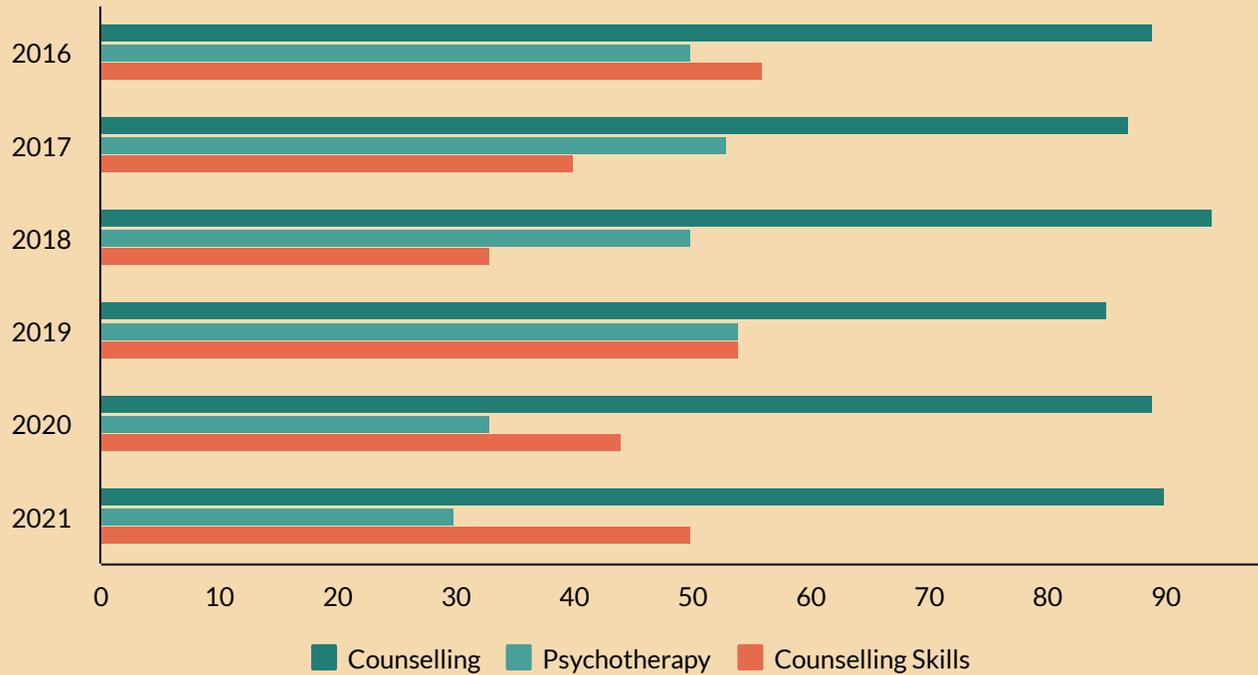
10 Recognised Organisations responded to the survey and the insights they provided are given below.

1. In which health board region(s) of Scotland does your organisation provide services?



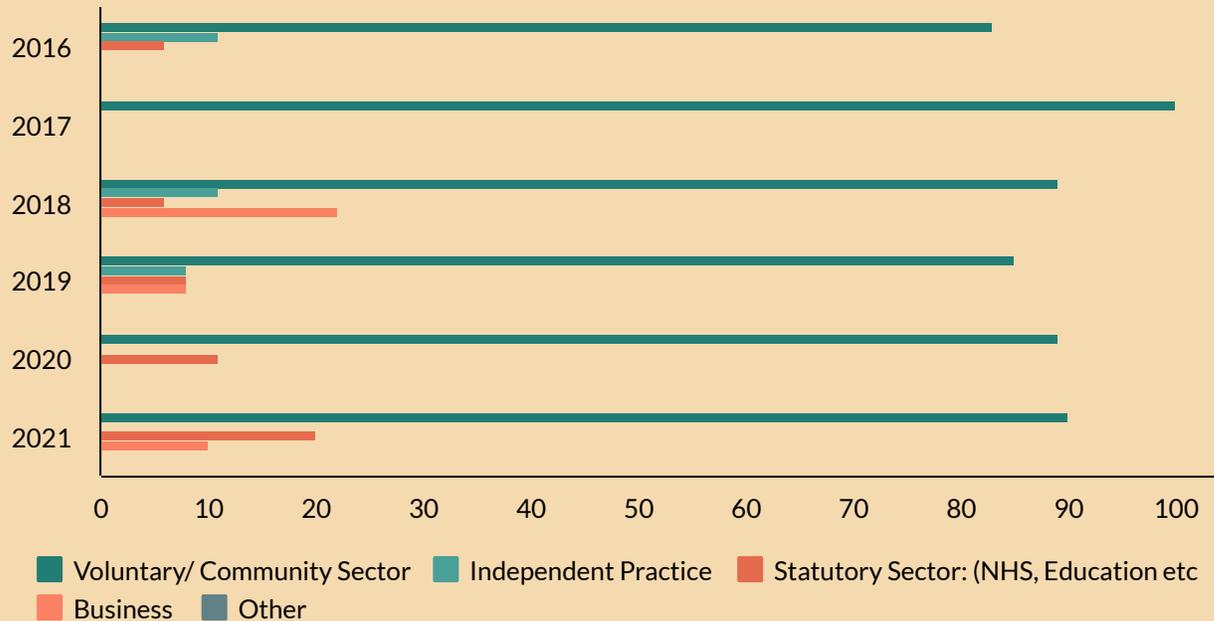
There is a continuation in services working Scotland-wide (30%), with other respondents from the highlands to the central belt giving a good spread of services throughout the country. 9 regions went unrepresented.

2. What services does your organisation provide?



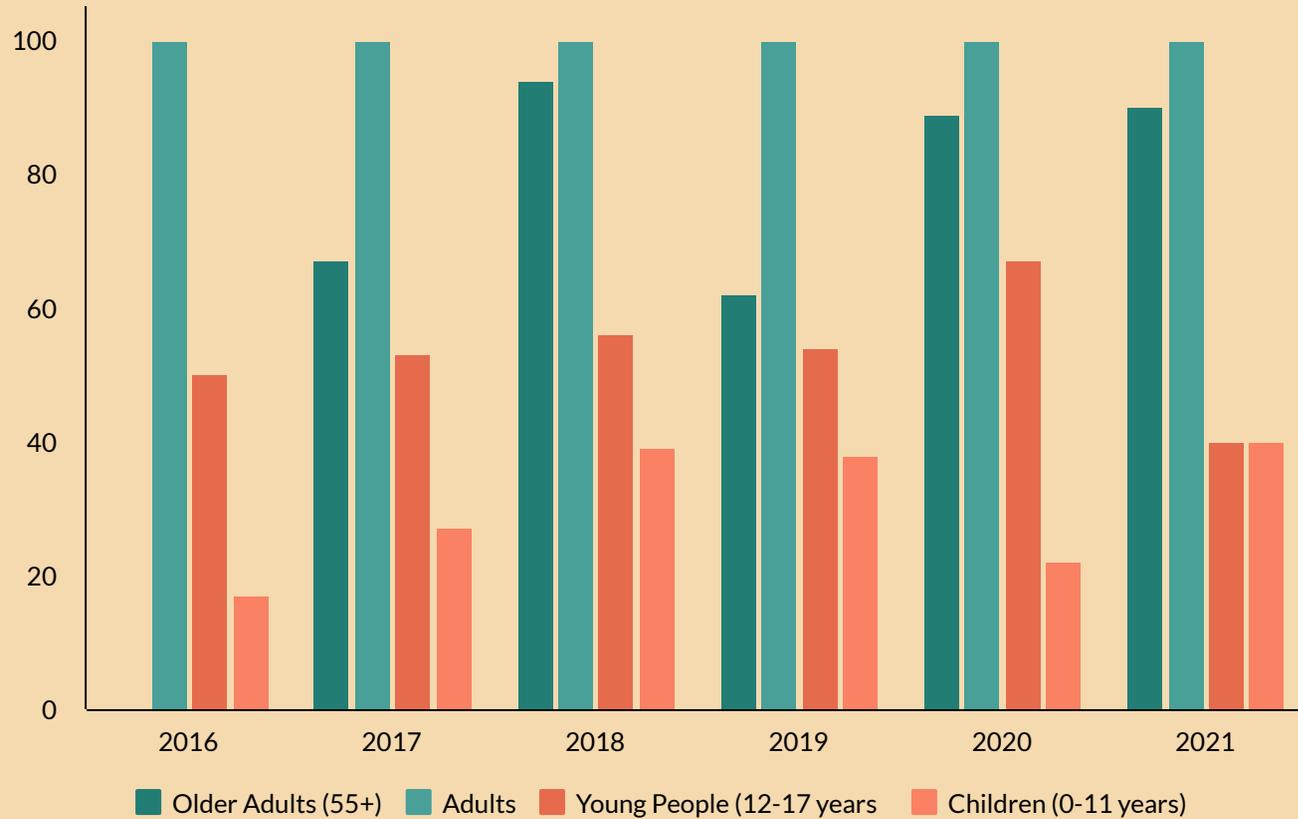
Most respondents are offering counselling (90%) with 50% offering counselling skills. Those offering Psychotherapy continues to decline (30%).

3. In what context does your organisation work?



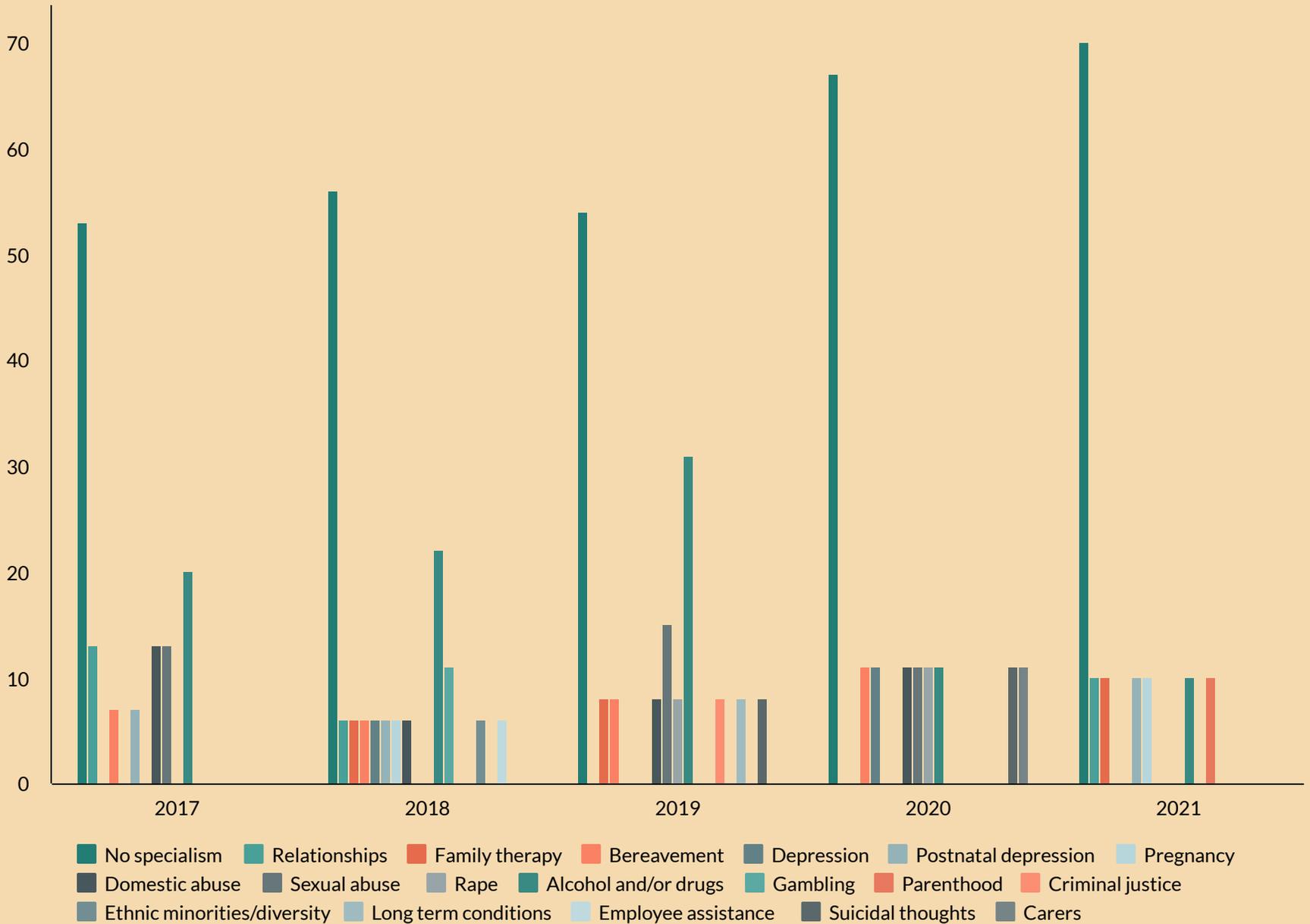
The vast majority of respondents (90%) work in the voluntary/community sector. Only 20% work for the statutory sector and 10% for business. This shows what a large role the voluntary sector plays in providing Professional Body quality assured counselling and counselling skills services across Scotland.

4. What population does your Counselling/ Psychotherapy/Counselling Skills organisation provide services for?



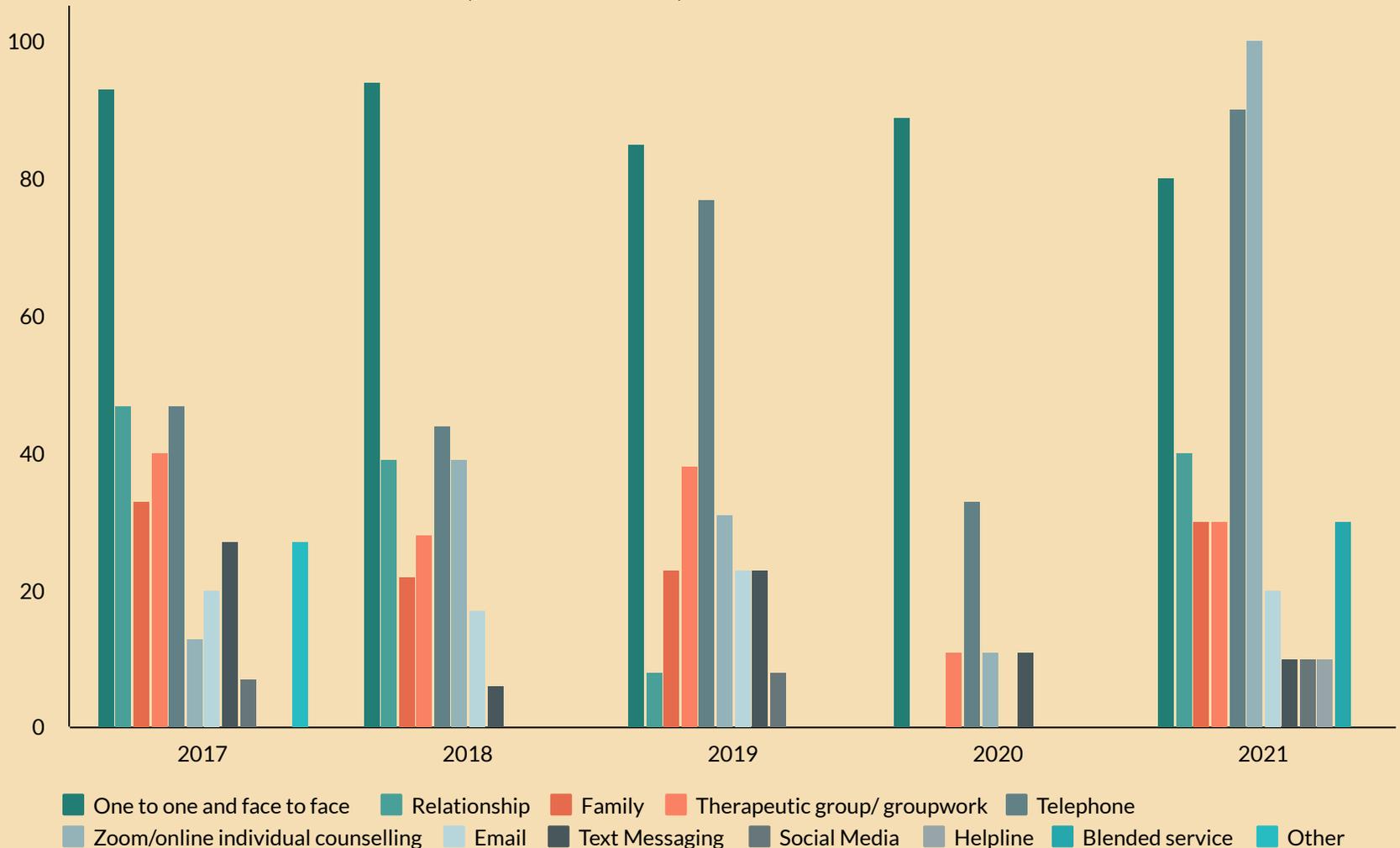
All services offered support to adults with 40% offering support to young people and children. This suggests that there are services out there for young people and children, but this is often in addition to provision for adults.

5. Does your service specialise in one or more areas?



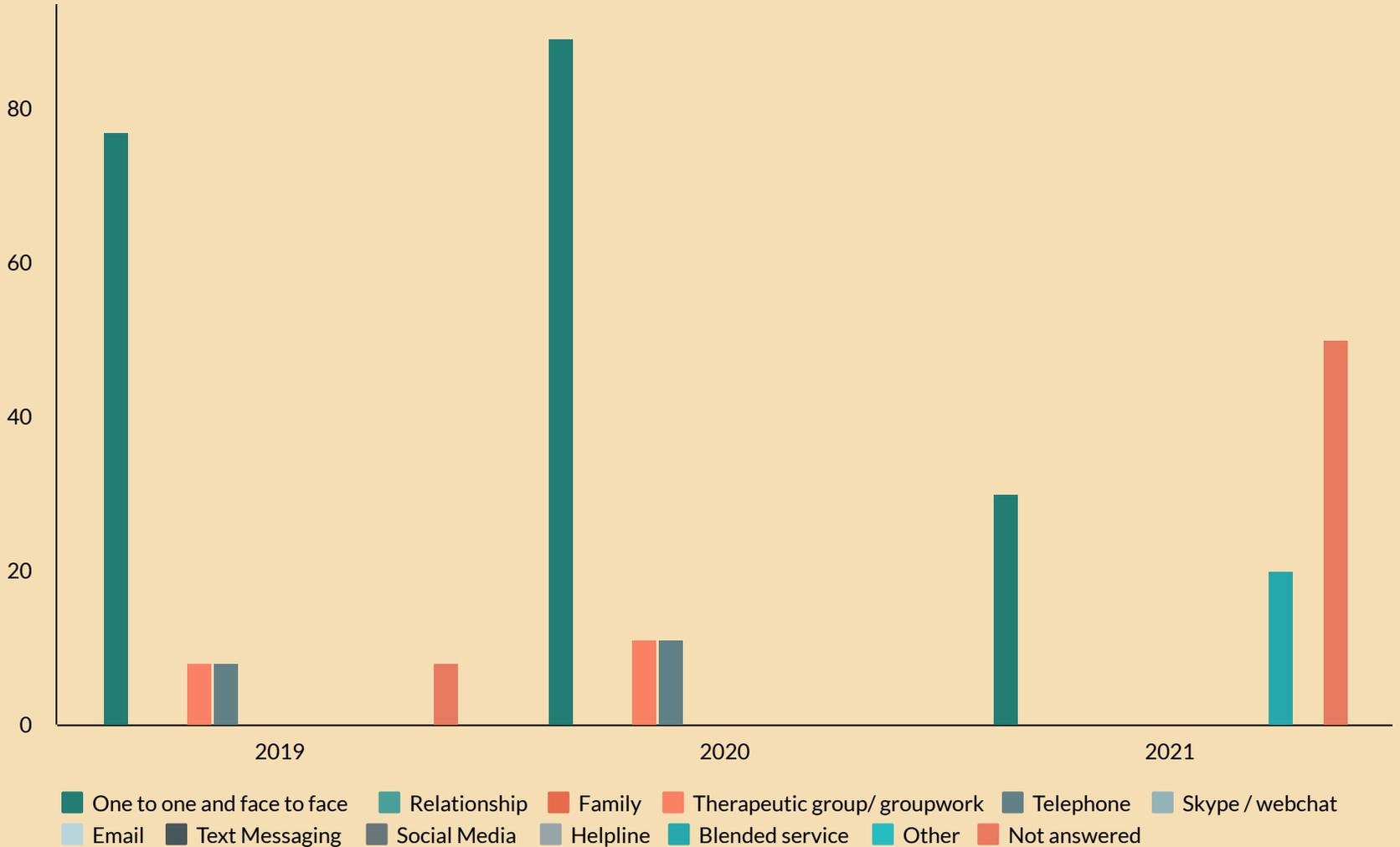
70% of those who responded offered a service that didn't specialise in a specific area, but specialisms are still represented. Family, pregnancy and alcohol services are also represented.

6. How do your counsellors/ Psychotherapists/ Counselling Skills users (practitioners) work with clients?



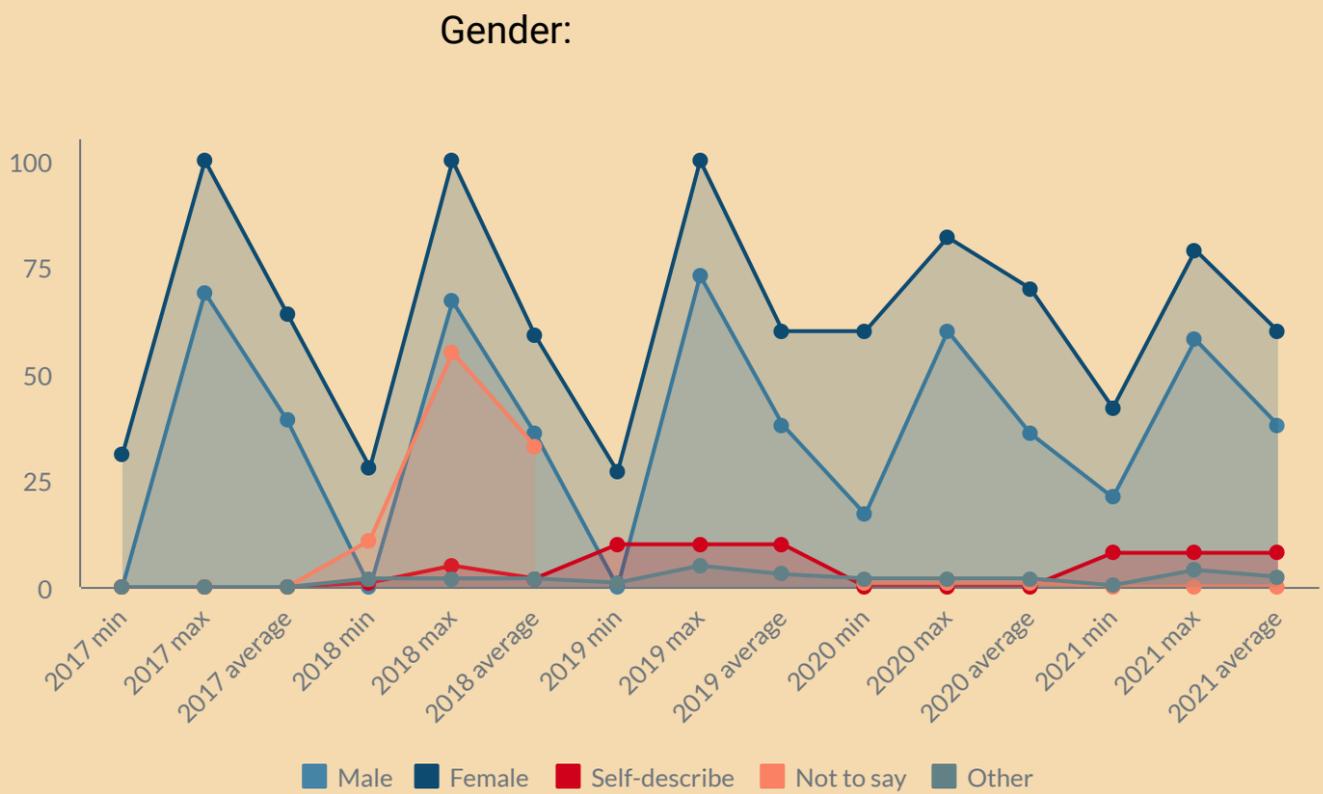
The trend towards telephone (90%) and online counselling (100%) has continued even as most COSCA Recognised Organisations have now returned to their premises. Face to Face counselling is still offered by the majority (80%). 30% of respondents continue to consider themselves a blended service. It is starting to look like a blend of telephone, online and face to face services is going to continue, even when the effects of the pandemic persist in easing.

What is the main way your Counsellors/Psychotherapists/Counselling Skills Users work with clients?



When looking at the main service offered 20% responded that they are a blended service and 30% face to face. This would seem to suggest the start of a move away from primarily face to face services toward more blended services being offered. However, this can only be a tentative suggestion as 50% of respondents did not answer this question. Whether this is due to services being unable to classify themselves or just missing the question is unclear.

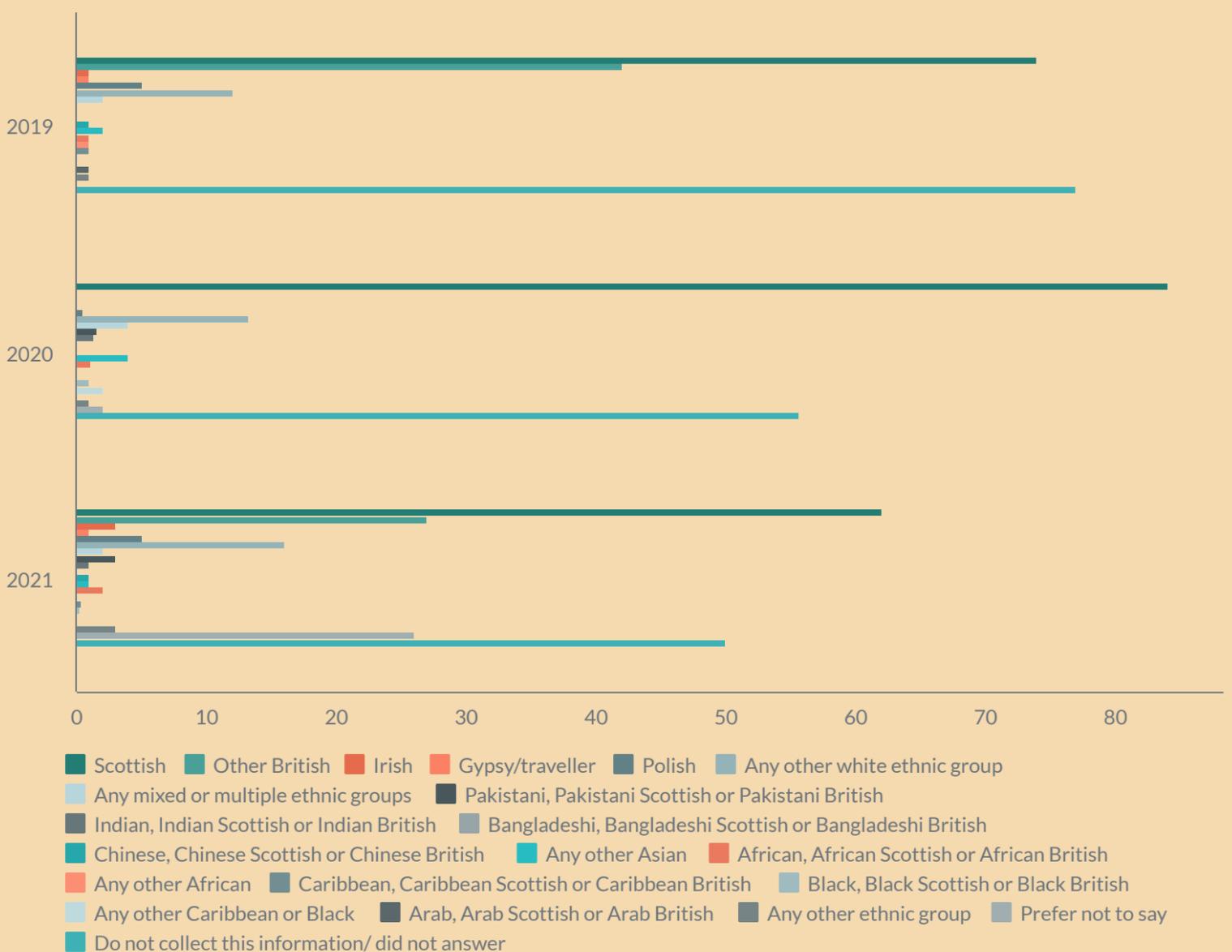
7. How many of your clients state they are:



Again this year there were no all male or all female services who responded to the survey. More of the services surveyed did collect this information with just 30% who either did not answer or did not collect this data at all. Very few clients who are asked to give this information (0.2%) would prefer not to say. Women continue to use counselling and counselling skills services more than men.

It continues to be so very important that we know who is using services so that we can know who needs more support and encouragement to be able to access them.

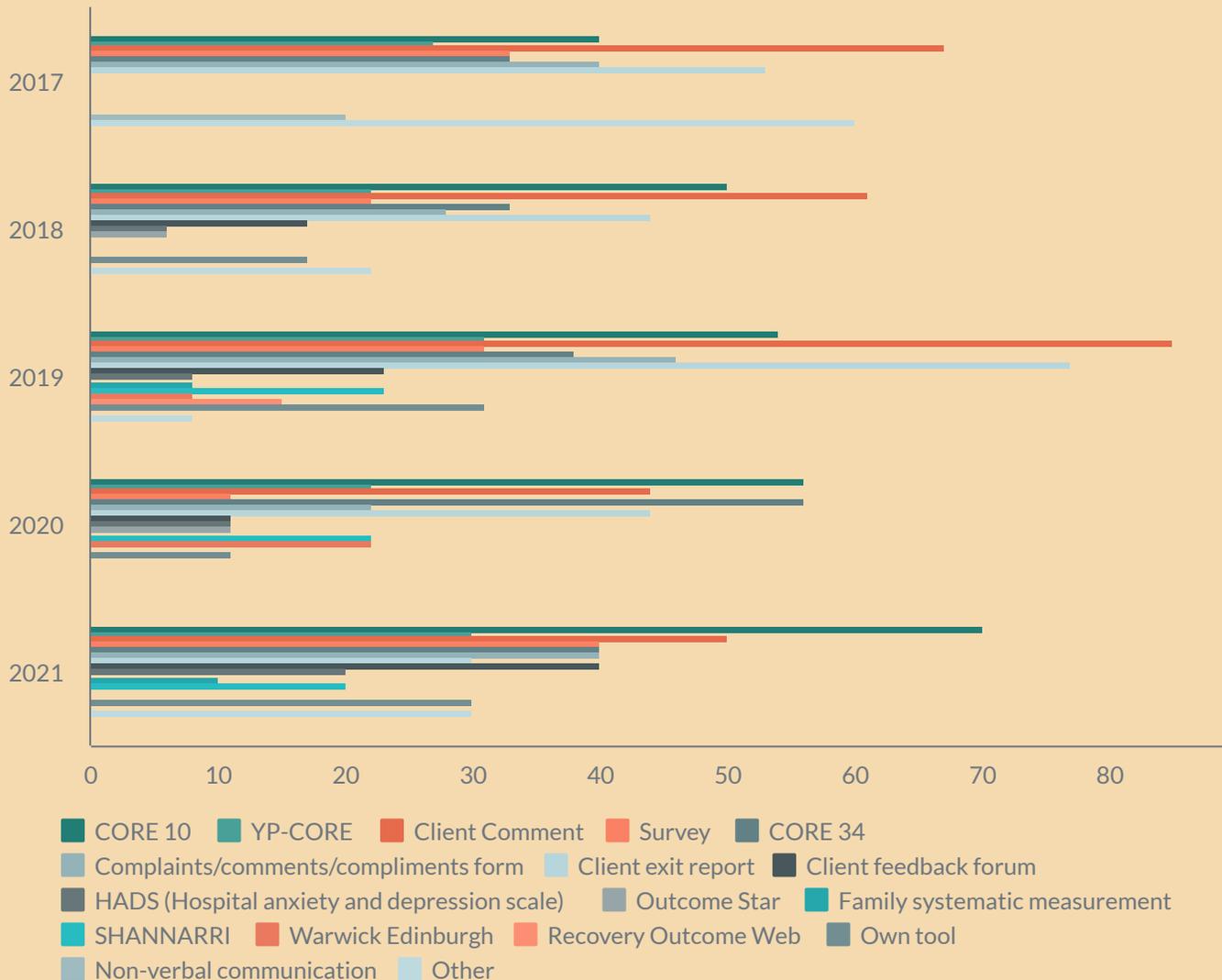
Ethnicity:



Of those who answered, the majority (62%) of those who used COSCA Recognised Organisations services are of white Scottish origin. 50%, slightly fewer than last year, do not ask for this information (one organisation did collect this data, but was unable to extract a report at this time). Interestingly only 26% of clients asked preferred not to say.

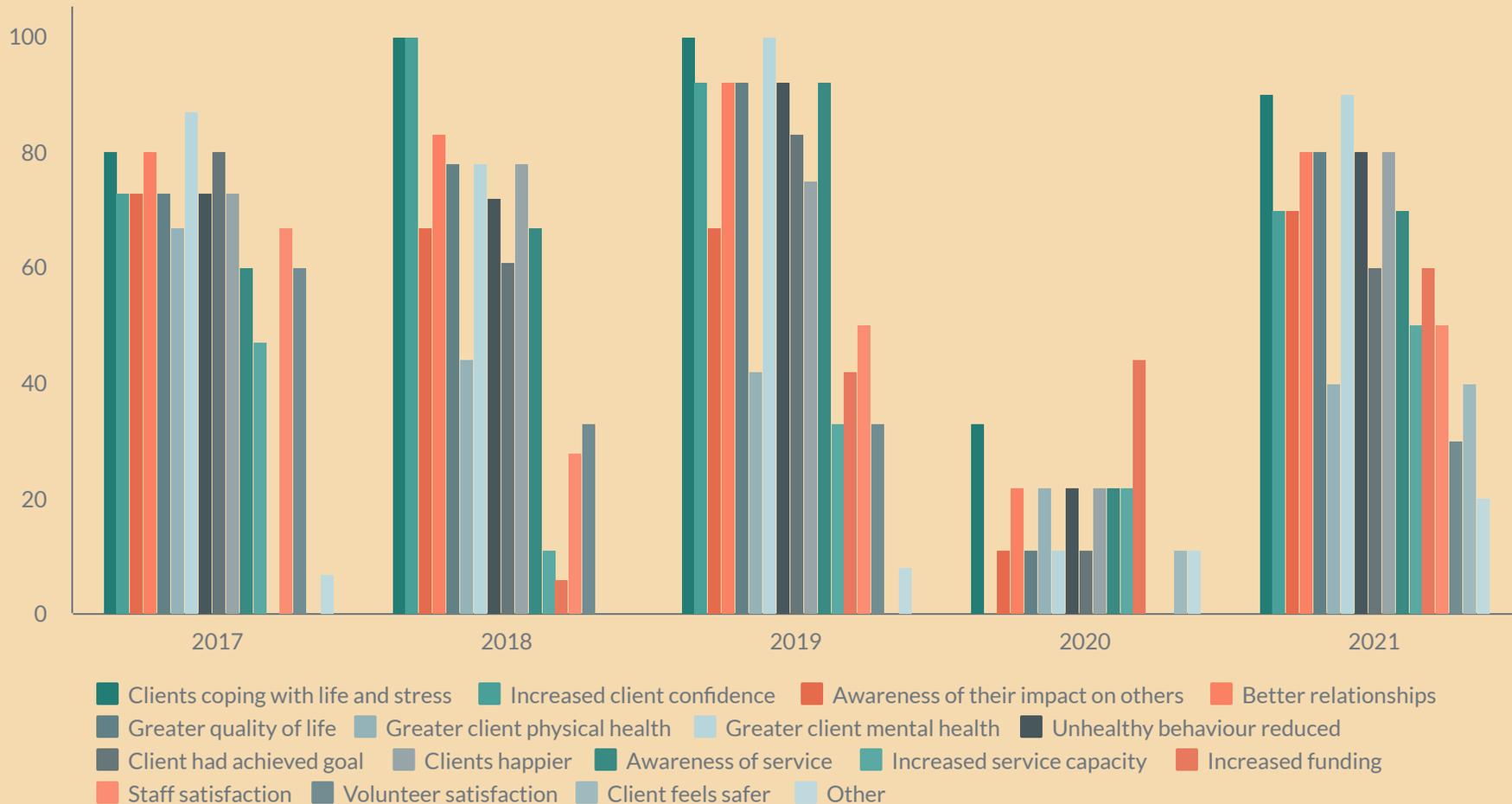
Ethnicity can be seen as a tricky subject, but from this information it looks as though 75% of people are happy to give out this information. Again, if we don't know who is accessing our services we don't know who we might be excluding.

8. How do you measure the outcomes of your service?



CORE measures continue to feature pretty strongly: 10 70%, YP 30%, 34 40%, but client comment (50%), survey (40%), complaints (40%) and feedback forum (40%) are also well utilised. It is also interesting to note that 30% used their own tool or another not listed. It shows that a variety of tools are needed to gain a variety of different insights.

9. What are the outcomes of your service in the past year?

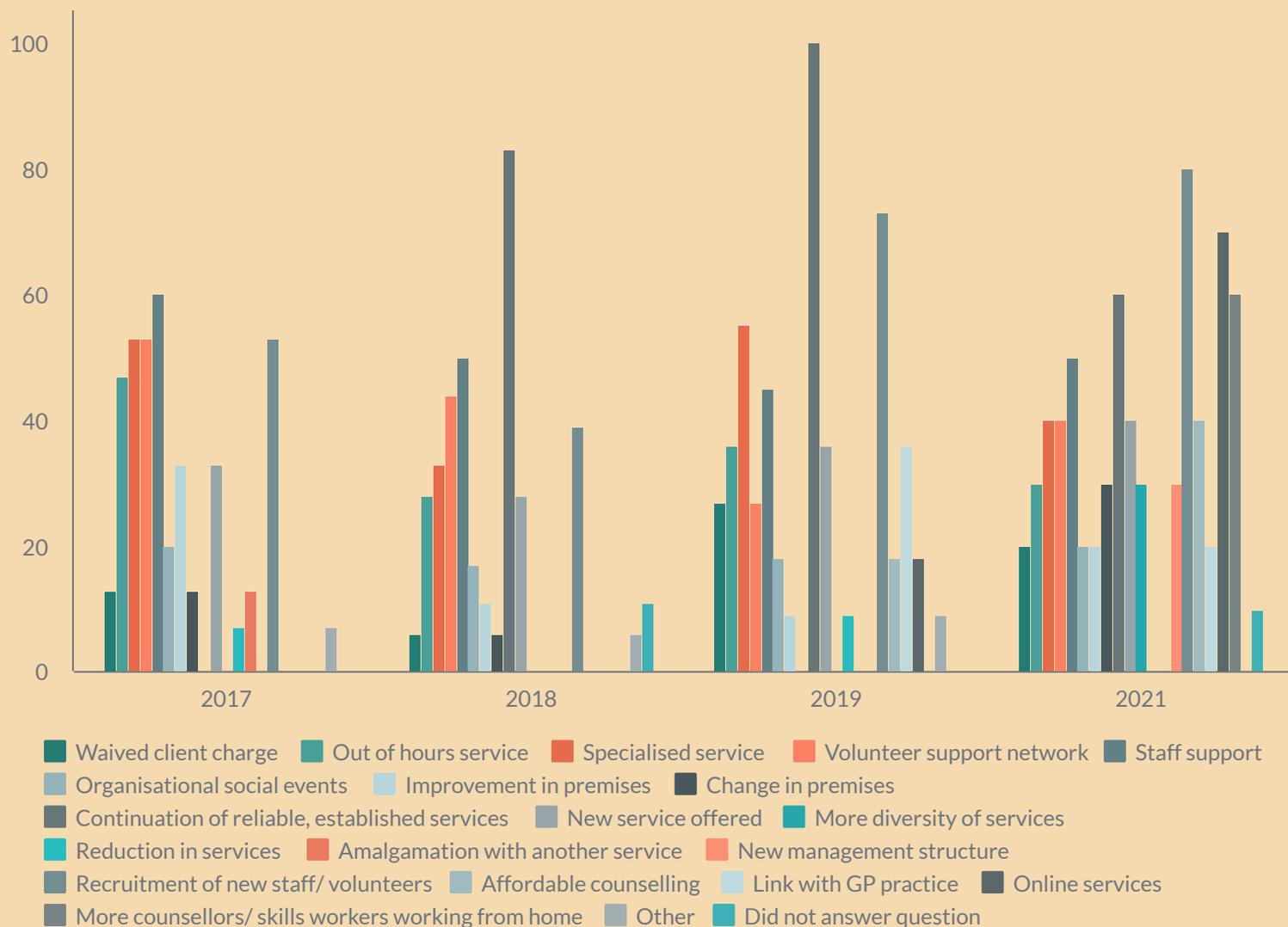


The dip in 2020 was due to the question being worded to reflect the impact of the pandemic. This should not be confused with a dip in service provision.

This year clients coping with life and stress continues to be the most commonly reported outcome (90%) along with greater client mental health (90%). Interestingly service capacity and increased funding have seen an increase (50% and 60%). Volunteer satisfaction being reported remains low. Is this because volunteers are not commonly asked about their satisfaction? Is this something we should be addressing more?

As one organisation pointed out, outcomes can be connected. "Clients who achieved their goal by point of discharge from counselling expressed a more positive attitude for the future".

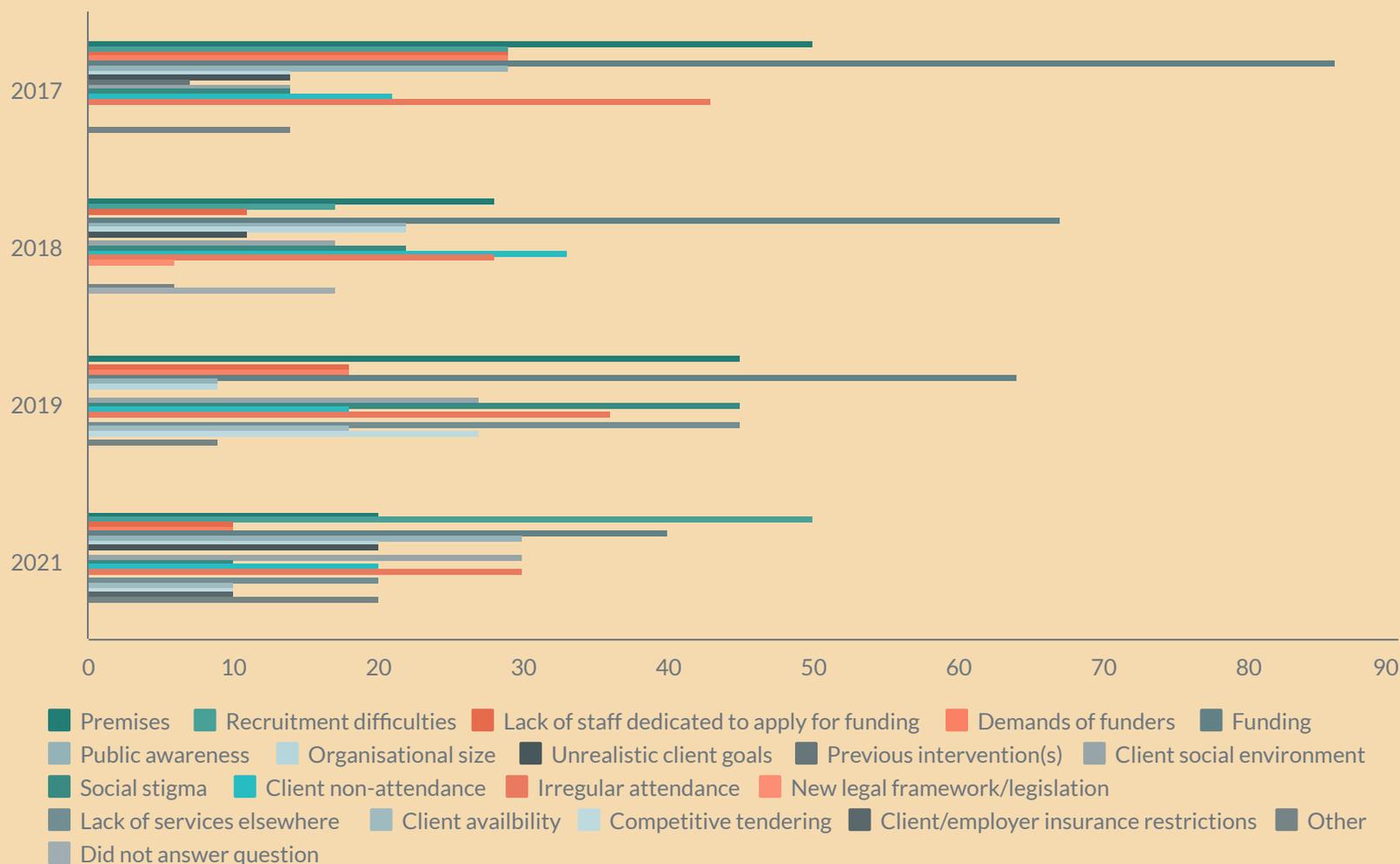
10. What activities produced the outcomes in the question above?



For the first time continuation of reliable established services has seen a dip (60%) with online services (70%) and more counsellors working from home (60%) being cited by a large number of respondents. Recruitment of new staff/volunteers (80%) is seen as important as in 2019, before the pandemic. 30% have changed premises this past year suggesting expansion or the need for different premises due to the demands of the pandemic.

One organisation detailed some of the great lengths they have gone to to be able to continue to offer their high quality service during the pandemic for both their service users and those providing services. "Following the imposition of Covid restrictions in March/April 2020 our Counsellors worked from home, which ensured continuity of service, and allowed flexibility of client contact by telephone. We ensured the existing counsellor support /supervision apparatus within the organisation was adapted to homeworking. We ensured all counsellors received training on telephone counselling skills. We equipped all counsellors with appropriate devices for homeworking – mobile phones and laptops. During the year we were able to continue recruiting new volunteer counsellors with full induction for service delivery taking place in the window between lockdowns".

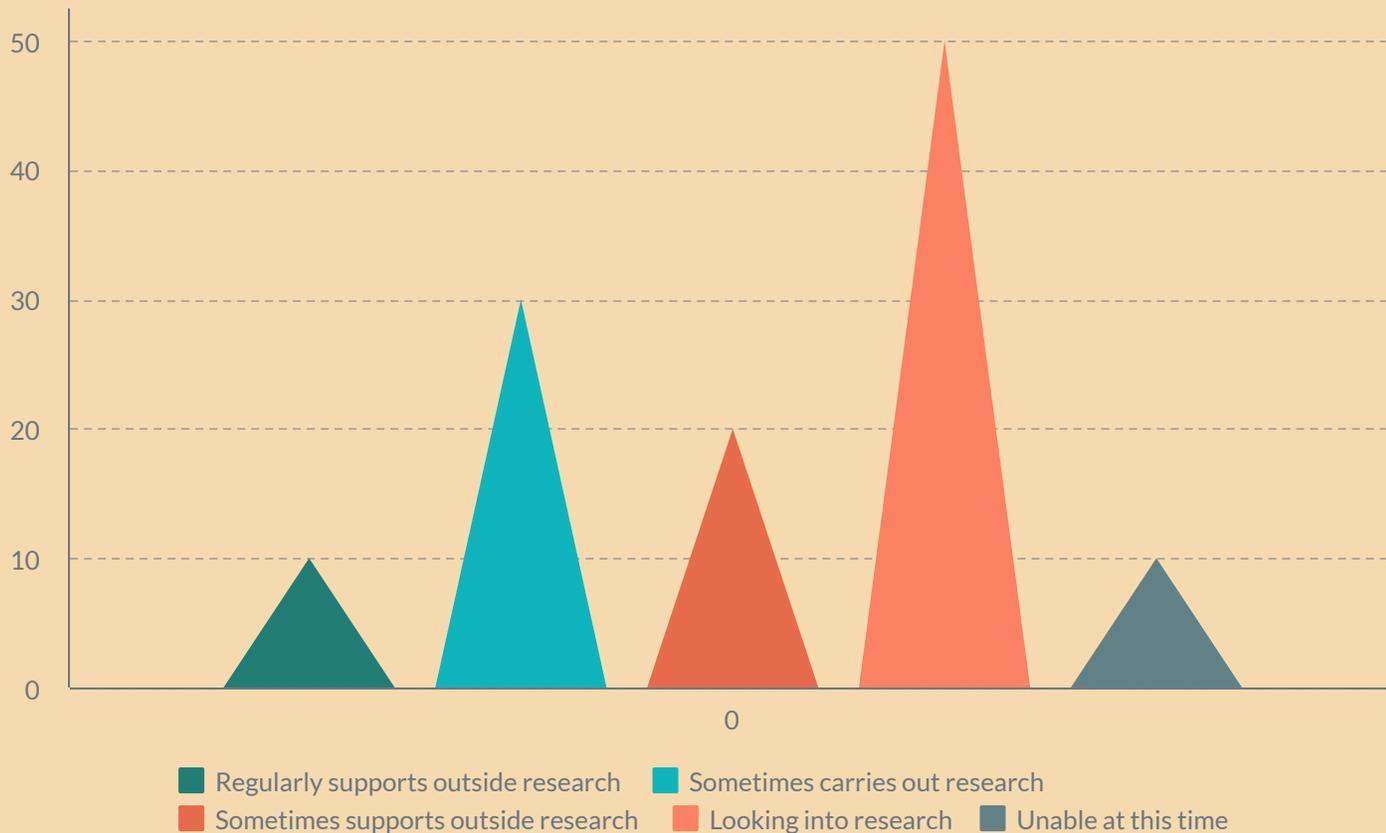
11. What were the challenges for your service in achieving the above impacts/ outcomes?



The largest concern for COSCA Recognised organisation has been recruitment difficulties, with 50% reporting this as a factor in the past year. This is the highest figure since 2017. Interestingly funding concerns has reduced to 40%, the smallest figure since 2017.

An organisation shared how they overcame their concerns during Covid-19. "Providing continuity of service under Covid restrictions required a considerable change of operating strategy and resourcing by the organisation. In Spring 2020, a Digital Strategy Working Group was established to lead organisational change, consult with staff, volunteers and clients, and arrange resources. The operation was at times complex, requiring wholesale reworking of administrative processes in the counselling service. During this period our counselling staff, volunteers and administrators worked superbly well together to achieve this."

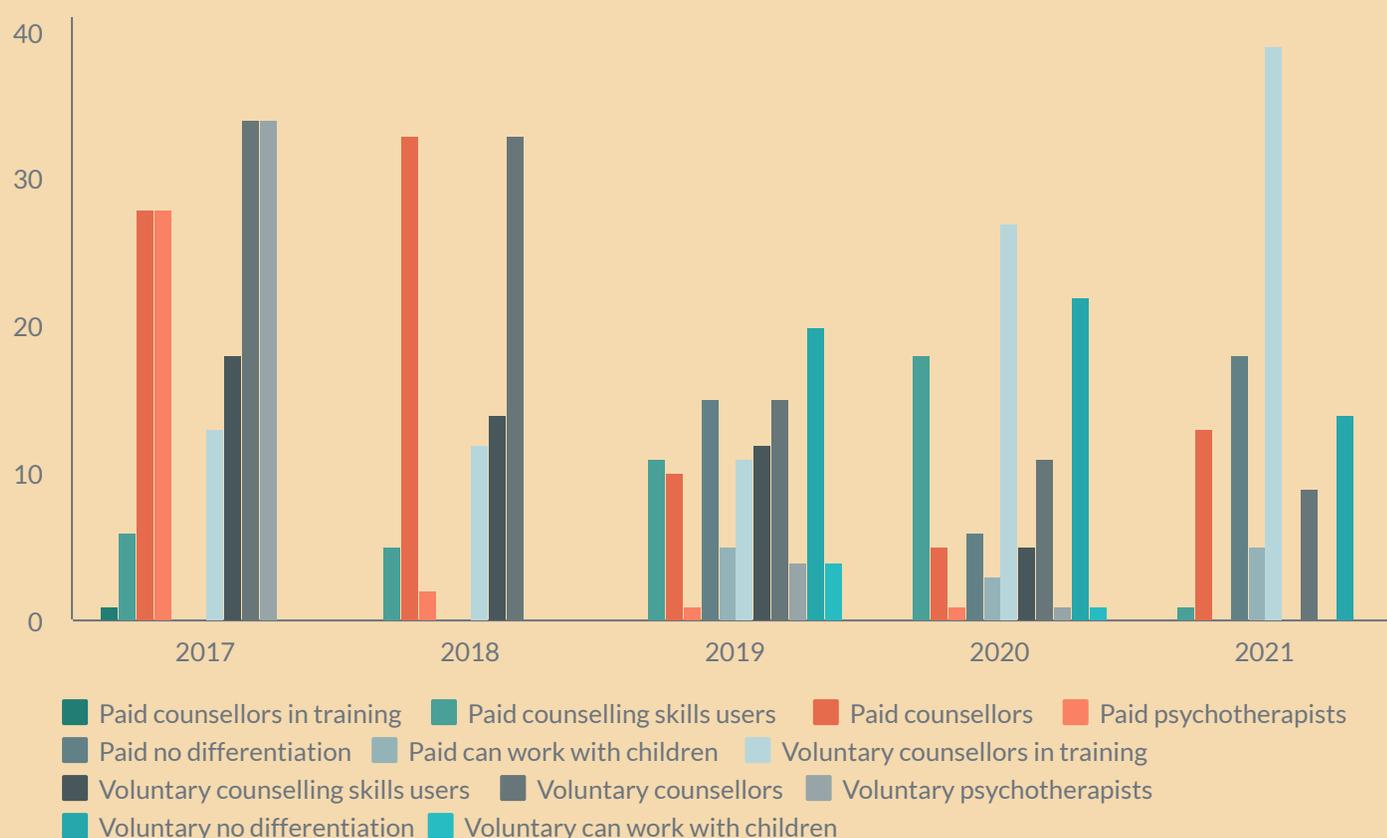
12. Have you carried out any research into the benefits/ outcomes of counselling for clients?



A new question was added this year to reflect the increasing importance of research within counselling and counselling skills services to evidence the important work that you all do. It is encouraging that most organisations are looking into research (50%), although only 30% sometimes carrying out research and none regularly conduct their own research. Hopefully this is something that we will see happening increasingly within organisations as the increased demands of the pandemic ease.

An organisation talked about the research that they are currently undertaking within their organisation. "During the year, we produced direct surveys of our clients in counselling, and other surveys of organisational needs and processes with staff and volunteer counsellors".

13. How many practitioners within your organisation are:



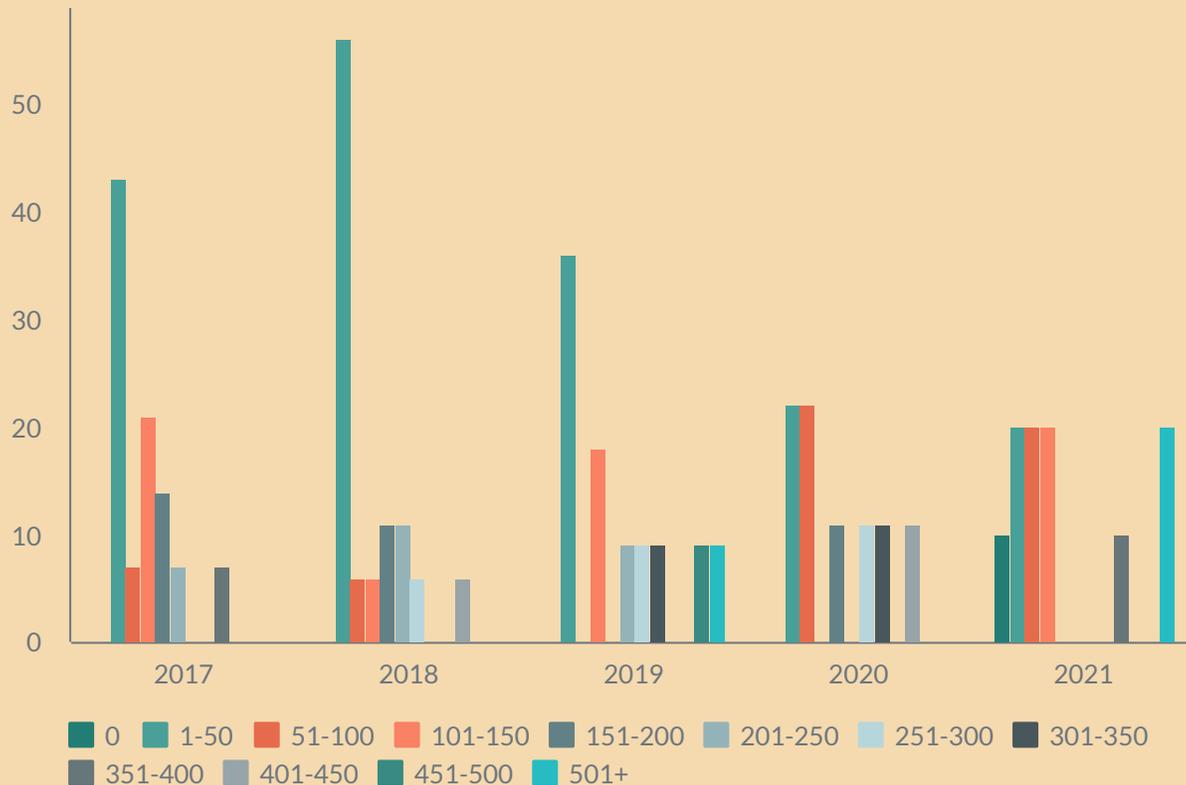
Voluntary counsellors in training (39%) has seen a steep rise, although looking at the individual responses this is down to one or two organisations greatly increasing their numbers over the past year. Encouragingly, the number of paid counsellors and paid no differentiation has seen a slight rise to 31% with voluntary counsellors and no differentiation decreasing to 23%. We will see if this trend continues in the following few years.

Has your organisation applied or been involved in the move to deliver counselling in schools/ colleges and universities under the Scottish Government’s Mental Health Strategy?

Only 30% of COSCA Recognised Organisations completing the survey have been involved in delivering counselling in schools and none in universities. It looks like the Scottish Government's Counselling in Schools and Universities Projects has had little to do with existing organisations providing counselling.

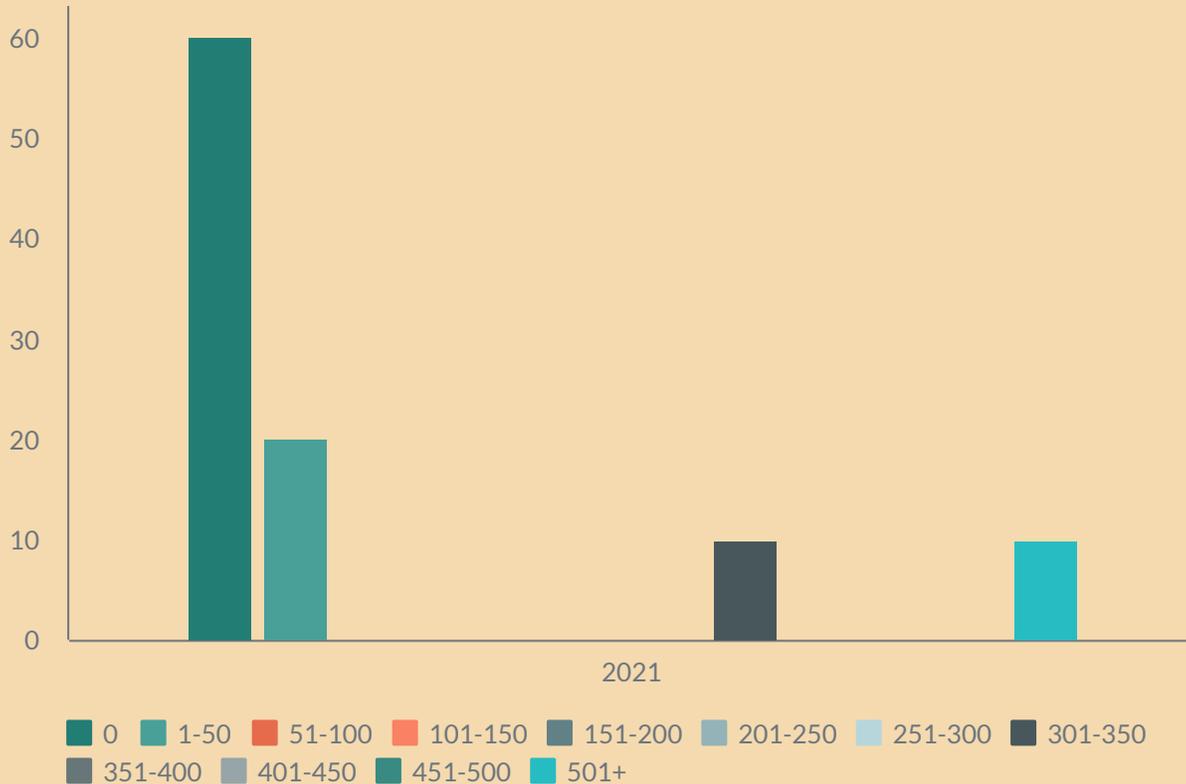
Despite this, one organisation pointed out that they do support students. "We provide input to many students who contact our service. This has always been the case." From speaking to COSCA Recognised Organisations this is true of a lot of services.

14a. On average, how many hours of counselling per week are provided by your organisation?



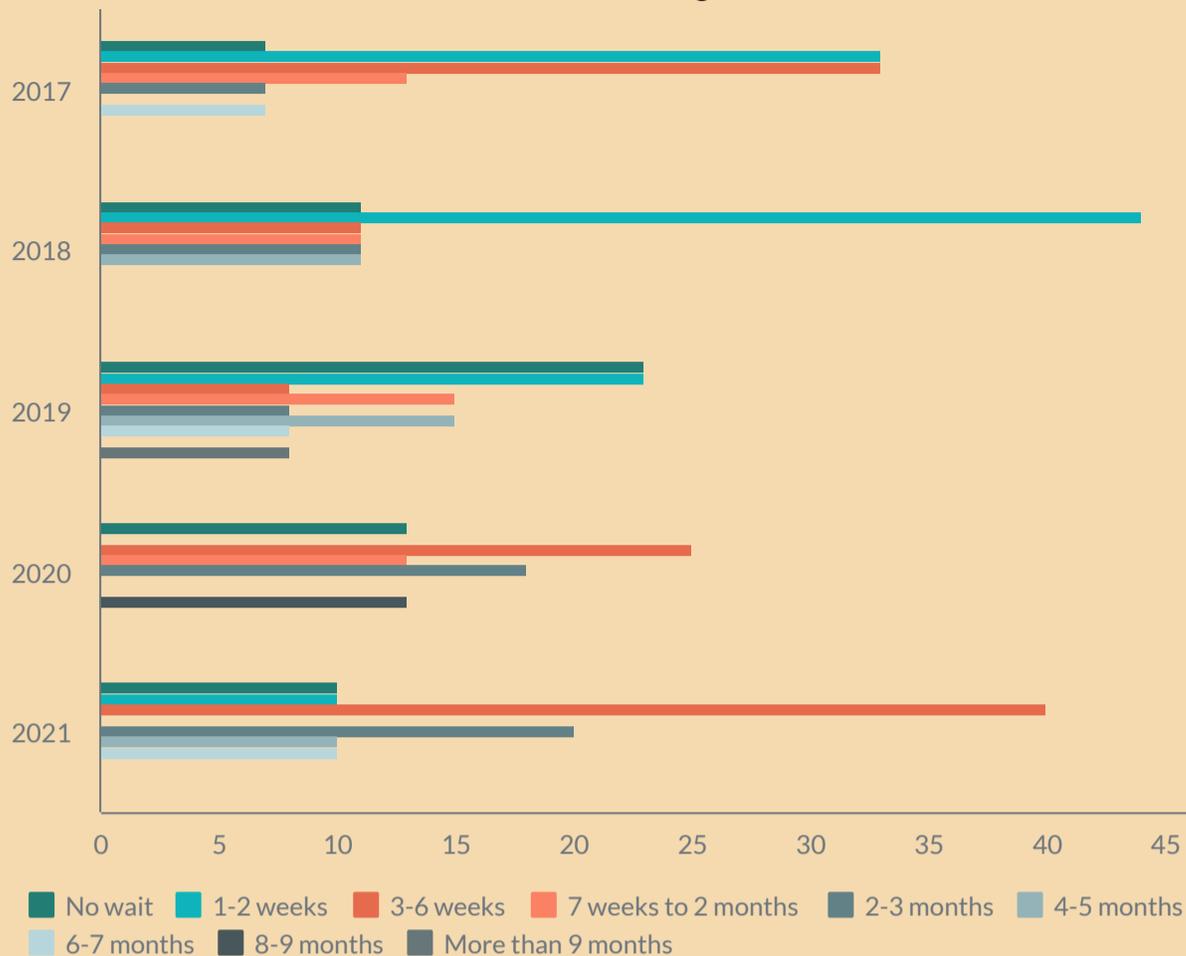
This year the number of counselling and counselling support hours offered were split to give a clearer idea of what is available to potential clients. It looks as though there are still organisations offering a smaller amount of counselling within their communities, but larger organisations are on the rise. We shall see if this continues in the next few years.

14b. On average, how many hours of counselling support per week are provided by your organisation?



It looks as though most support offered by COSCA Recognised Organisations is by counselling alone (60%), but where counselling support is offered it can be a small amount, perhaps in addition to other services, or a very large amount, probably as a stand alone service.

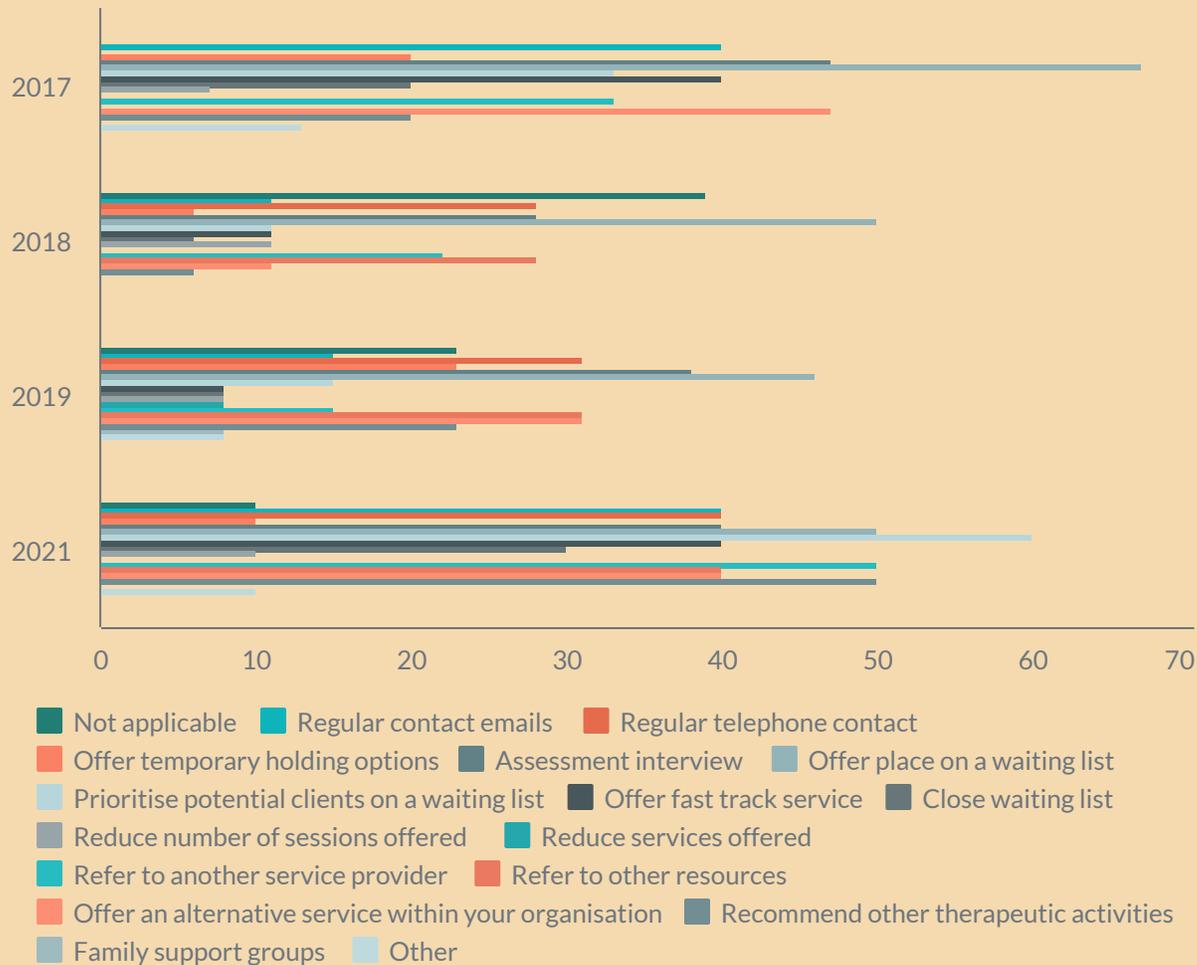
15. How long can a client expect to wait from first contact with your organisation to the start of regular counselling?



Although those only waiting 0 or 1 to 2 weeks has decreased (10%) suggesting an increase in waiting times, if we look at the maximum, minimum this year sees a slight decrease with 60% waiting between 0 and 2 months and 40% waiting between 2 and 7 months. The maximum waiting time has reduced from 8 to 9 months to 6 to 7 months.

There are many factors involved in waiting times. One organisation pointed out "The start of counselling is in part dependent on client availability".

16. What are you doing to manage these waiting times?



Prioritise a place on the waiting list has seen a sharp increase to 60% (from 15% in 2019). Offer place on the waiting list, refer to another provider and offer other therapeutic activities are almost as high at 50%. It can be seen from the graph that a wide range of options are utilized by COSCA Recognised Organisations to keep waiting lists as low as possible.

17a. How many sessions are your clients usually offered?

Year	Min	Max	Average
2019	6	Open ended	23
2020	6	Open ended	30
2021	6	Open ended	30

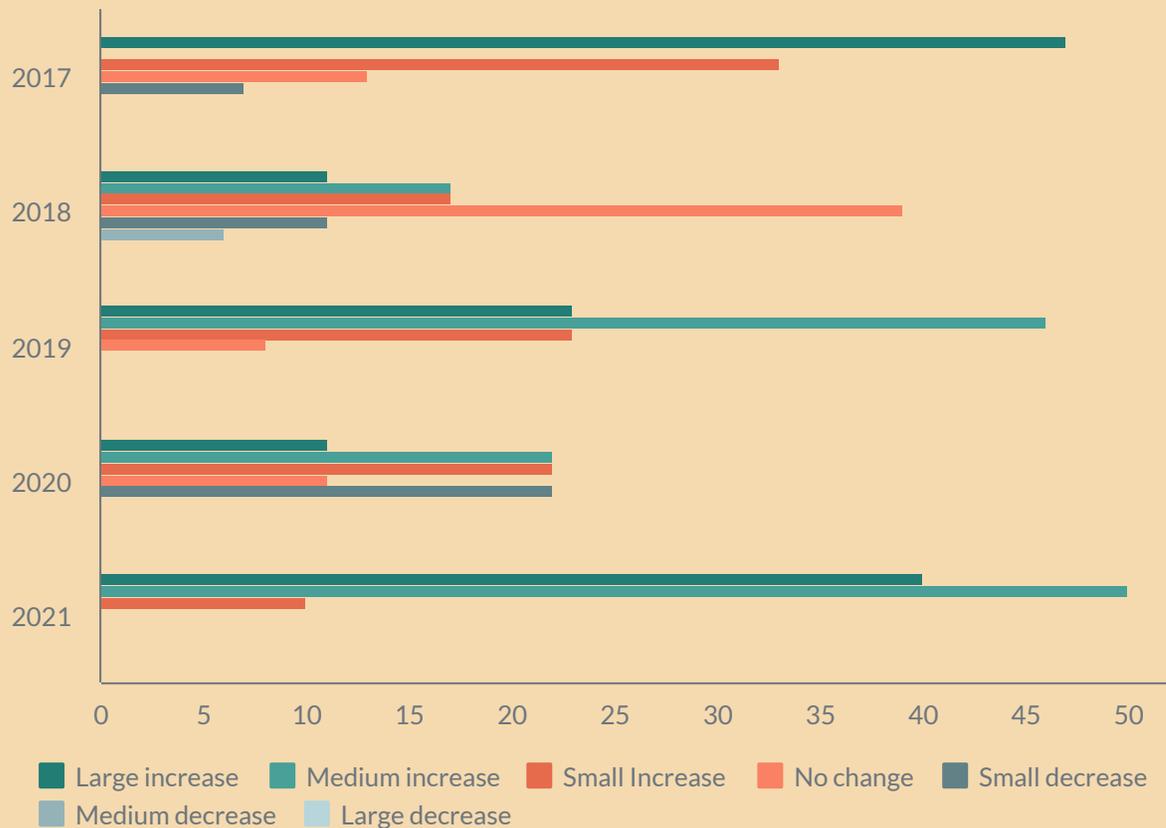
Clients were offered sessions from 6 to up to open ended. With the open ended removed the average was 30. Exactly the same as last year.

17b. How many sessions did your clients usually attend on average?

Year	Min	Max	Average
2019	1.85	25	11
2020	7	20	12
2021	6	33	13

Clients attended between 6 and 33 sessions (on average per organisation) with the average of all COSCA Recognised Organisations that responded with 13. There seems to be a very small rise in the number of sessions attended.

18. Has your organisation experienced an increase or decrease in demand for support over the last 12 months?



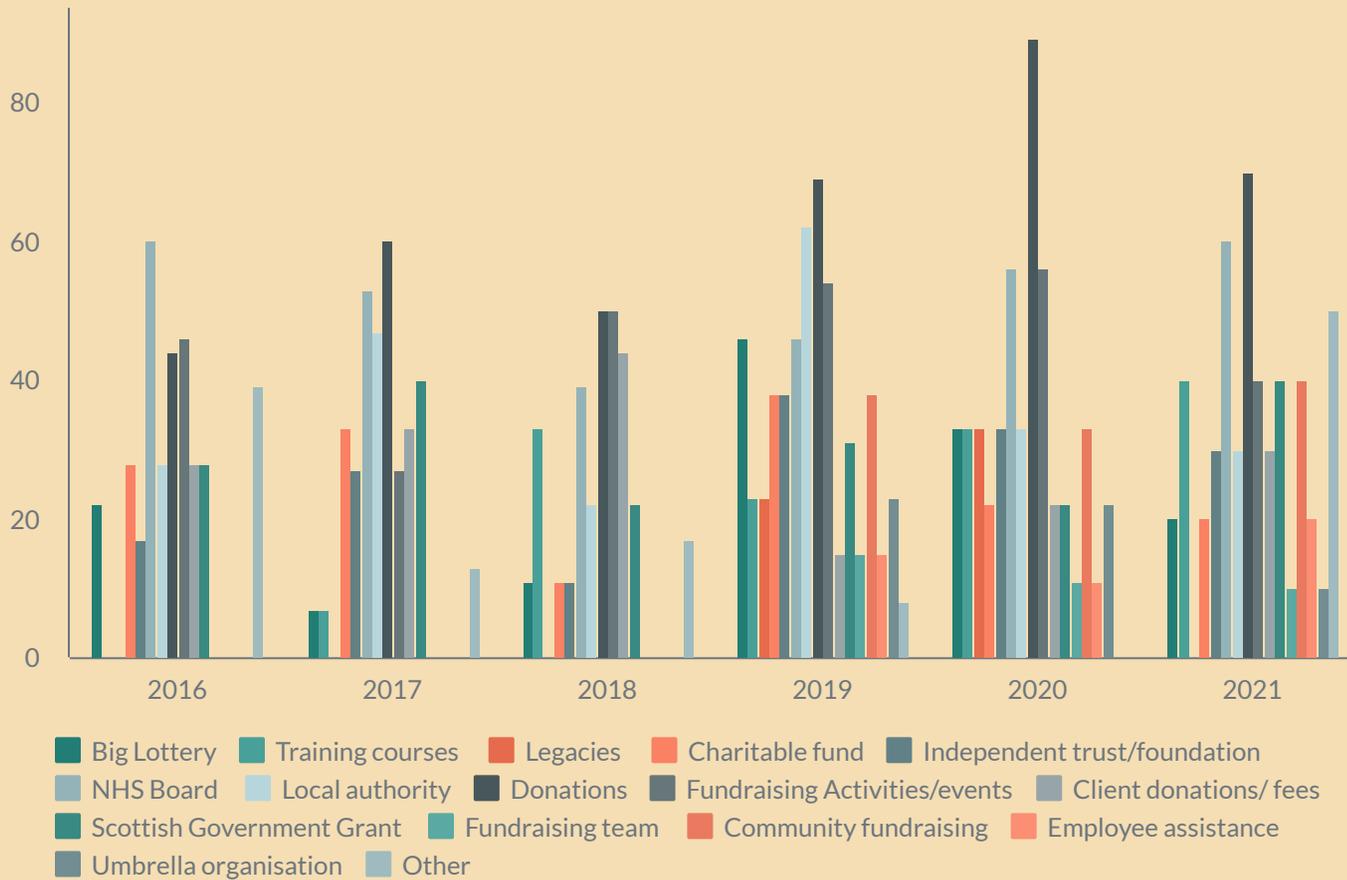
All COSCA Recognised Organisations saw an increase in demand from last year with 50% reporting a medium increase (25% or more) and 40% reporting a large increase (50%) or more. Some organisations see an increase each year, but this is the first time that all organisations have seen an increase and that increase is mostly above 25%. It is pretty clear that demand for counselling and counselling skills has grown at a rapid rate in the past year.

To reinforce how much demand has increased are comments from two organisations:

"Significant increase in call demand. Staff exhaustion. Service level difficult to maintain due to increase even with additional staffing. This continues to date."

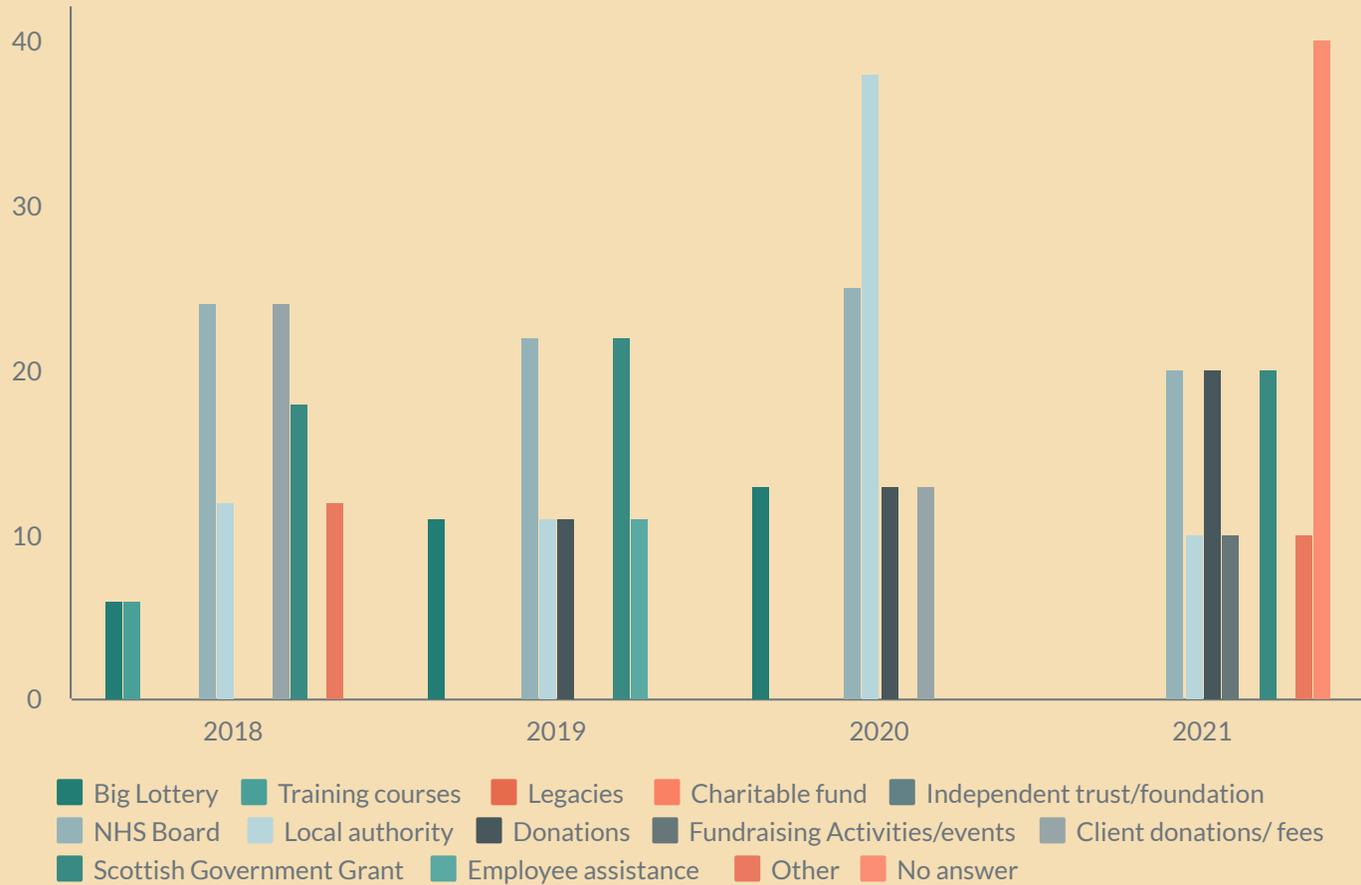
"In reality the percentage is over 100% increase in demand".

19a. In what way(s) do you generate income for your organisation?



Donations are still the most common source of funding used by 70% (down slightly from 89% last year to match 2019). NHS Board is not far behind at 60%. Training courses, fundraising events, Scottish Government Grant and community fundraising are not far behind that at 40%.

19b. Which of those is your main source of income?



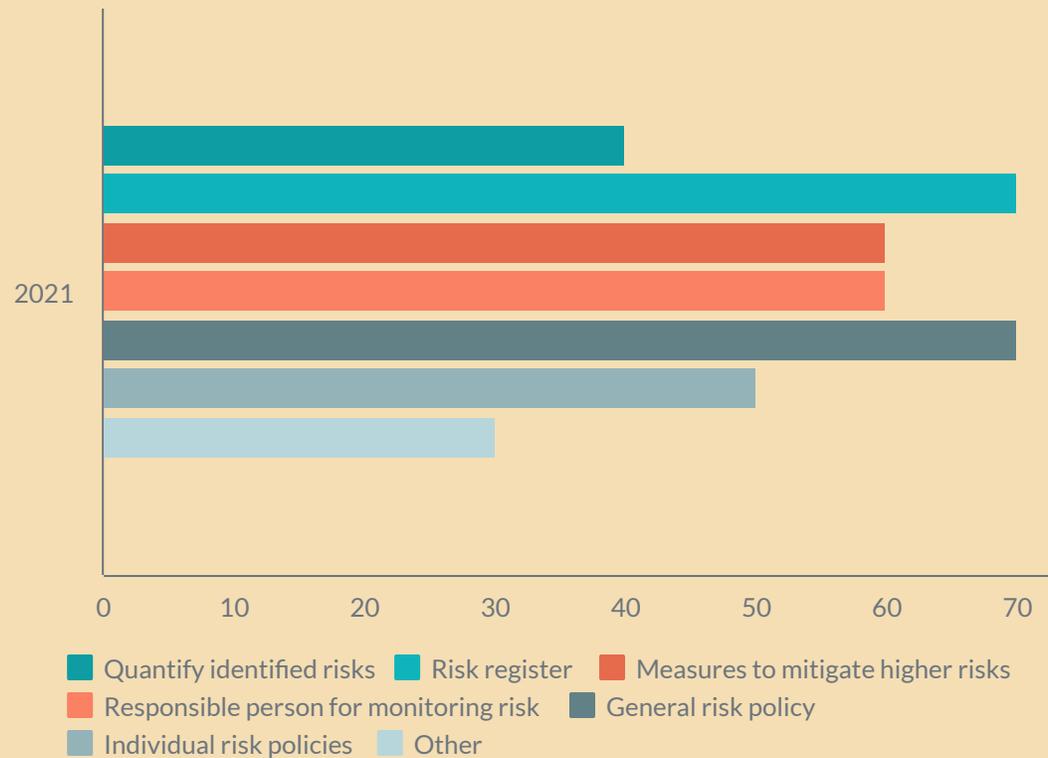
When looking at the main source of income NHS Board, Donations and Scottish Government Grant are all ties at 20%. Unfortunately 40% did not answer the question and it is unclear if they have no main source or they just missed the question.

20a. In what ways do you identify risk within your organisation?



This is another new question added this year, designed to think about risk from multiple angles: both to and from those providing the service and to and from those receiving the service both within and outside the organisation. Most organisations identify personal risks and risks with the client's situation (90%), but only 50% seem to identify possible risks from their organisation.

20b. In what ways do you manage risk within your organisation?



This follow-up questions was designed to look at what is done to mitigate those risks. 70% of organisations have a risk register and policy.

COSCA Recognised Organisations take all types of risk within their organisations very seriously. One organisation chose to evidence this further: "The organisation keeps a risk register for vulnerable adults and their dependents. The counselling support apparatus in the organisation, i.e. line management, counselling administration, and practice supervision, is tasked to identify risk to individuals and organisation at an early stage so timely action can be taken and monitored. Feedback from clients is encouraged and the organisation has full grievance and complaints processes in place".

21. Is there anything of which you are particularly proud to have achieved in the past year?

Despite the continuation of challenging circumstances, there are many things of which our Recognised Organisations are very justifiably proud. A few are mentioned below:

"Schools Counselling Framework and New Premises for Community Initiative project New Connections to help with re entry Anxiety from Covid"

"Staff commitment, all staff continuing to work in situ, Webchat development, partnership working despite Covid restrictions, use of Microsoft Teams to increase reach of service, no halt to engagement – services noting advantage of not having to travel especially from remote and rural areas".

"Transfer of service to online model to allow continuity of client work."

"To have completed an in-house training cohort during a pandemic and to have kept the ship afloat and sailing".

"During Covid we managed our business continuity plan to meet the needs of our clients during lockdown and our services grew to meet demand by over 60%. We managed to offer volunteers placements when they had lost their placements with others".

"The service was a designated essential service during the Pandemic restrictions, and we were required to continue to support our clients throughout the lockdowns. The dedication and attitude of staff and volunteers during the year was superb, and we were able to move very quickly to digital platforms and maintain our service throughout".

"The move to take on more students in a time when placements were scarce and the waiting list growing".

"The significant amount of digital services set up and undertaken in a short space of time. The management of Increased capacity within the service. The additional training offered and number of students undertaking new training programmes".

"Onboarded 7 staff increase in reserves increase in output increase in sessional staff".

22. Have you found anything particularly helpful or inspiring during the past year?

The hard work and dedication of staff and volunteers at COSCA Recognised Organisations has been truly inspiring.

"The Community response and togetherness from covid and a massive shift in understanding the importance of wellbeing as individuals"

"Webchat service rolled out and evaluation to be published Oct 21"

"Team connections in making things happen".

"The lengths the staff and volunteers will go to support their clients".

"The way our staff and volunteers adapted to the new way of working with enthusiasm and commitment to their clients".

"The commitment and willingness of staff and volunteers to upskill and adapt our service delivery using new digital and telephone platforms during March/April 2020. Many of our clients, both old and new were struggling during lockdowns and relied heavily on telephone support from the service".

"The way that all staff has adapted to working remotely and then moving back into the centre".

"The ability of the staff team to step up to the challenges of recent times. The positive comments received from clients".

23. What are your hopes for next year?

The challenging circumstances seem not to have dampened COSCA Recognised Organisation's determination to thrive and develop so that they are able to continue to deliver their valuable services. A few of these hopes are below:

"Development on Drugs and Alcohol as well as community enterprising groups and innovations"

"Continuation of excellent staff commitment, further development of services with specific communities of interest, engagement and Development within Highland area, focus on specific themes, self Harm Strategy development, development of Mental Health Hub, need for more staffing and capacity to deal with call demand which, as stated, is increasing".

"To continue with a blended option for clients ie face to face and online counselling".

"To see the Agency continue to flourish amid staff and premises changes".

"To move back to blended working".

"We will continue to build on the lessons we learned during the Pandemic, developing the service as a blended model with face to face and digital-telephone counselling provision that is flexible and adaptable to client needs".

"Focus on growth of the service."

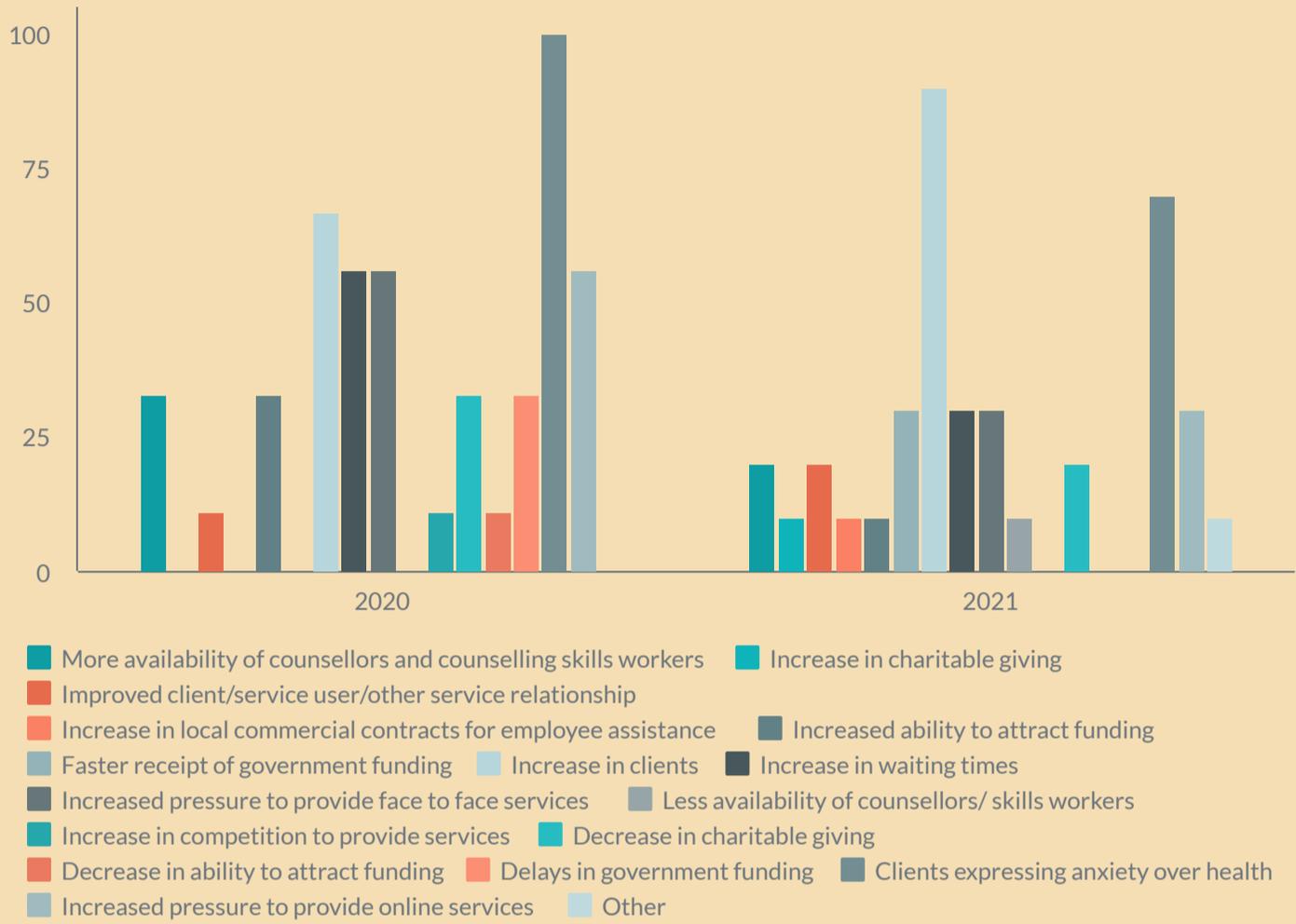
"Continued growth".

"Stabilise & recruit, develop digital and increase sustainability".

Some areas do not need to be explored every year, but are very relevant at the time. To capture and share this information COSCA ask a guest question.

Guest Question:

What effect do you think Covid-19 and the lockdown will have/ have had on your counselling and counselling skills services when your services reopen/ed?



In an attempt to identify what COSCA Recognised Organisations thought would happen due to the pandemic and what actually happened due to the pandemic, the guest question remained the same as last year. The biggest concern in 2020 was clients expressing anxiety over health. This appears to be true with 70% of organisations reporting that this is the case. The second biggest concern in 2020 was an increase in clients. This too seems to have happened with 90% of organisations reporting an increase in clients due to Covid-19. Other concerns and hopes do not appear to be as prominent as predicted and 30% of organisations actually reported faster receipt of government funding, which no-one had predicted.

It looks like COSCA Recognised Organisations were good at predicting the challenges they were going to face due to the pandemic, but that many of these were not as bad as was feared.

It is hard to capture a global event in just one question and so comments here are especially helpful. One organisation shared how their experience didn't seem to fit into neat boxes: "I found it hard to tick any of the above boxes, as none of them really seemed to apply to us. The biggest impact of the periods of lockdown and remote working has been on the connections and sense of community within the volunteer counsellor team. This has diminished due to the lack of unstructured contact and little of online CPD." Hopefully those connections will be regained as we are able to meet more in person.

Conclusions

There is no getting away from it, the past couple of years have been hard. In 2019 77% of COSCA Recognised Organisations offered support by telephone and just 31% online. In 2018 even telephone support was only offered by 44% of organisations. This year, 2021, 90% of organisations offered support by telephone and 100% online. Although 80% still offer a face to face service this shows a huge shift in how counselling and counselling skills services are now offered.

This, coupled with the increase in demand across all the organisations who completed the survey, with 40% of those having an increase in excess of 50%, shows just a little of what COSCA Recognised Organisations have had to face.

Despite this, what they have all achieved has been phenomenal. They have changed, adapted and thrived. This is clearly due to the hard work and dedication of every person within those organisations and their determination to continue supporting their communities.

"The lengths the staff and volunteers will go to support their clients".

"The way our staff and volunteers adapted to the new way of working with enthusiasm and commitment to their clients".

"The commitment and willingness of staff and volunteers to upskill and adapt our service delivery."

"The ability of the staff team to step up to the challenges of recent times".

It's been a challenging year for everyone, but COSCA Recognised Organisations have risen to the occasion. They should be proud of what they've accomplished.

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