

Recognition Scheme Award
for Organisations



COSCA

Counselling & Psychotherapy
in Scotland

Survey of COSCA Recognised Organisations November 2020

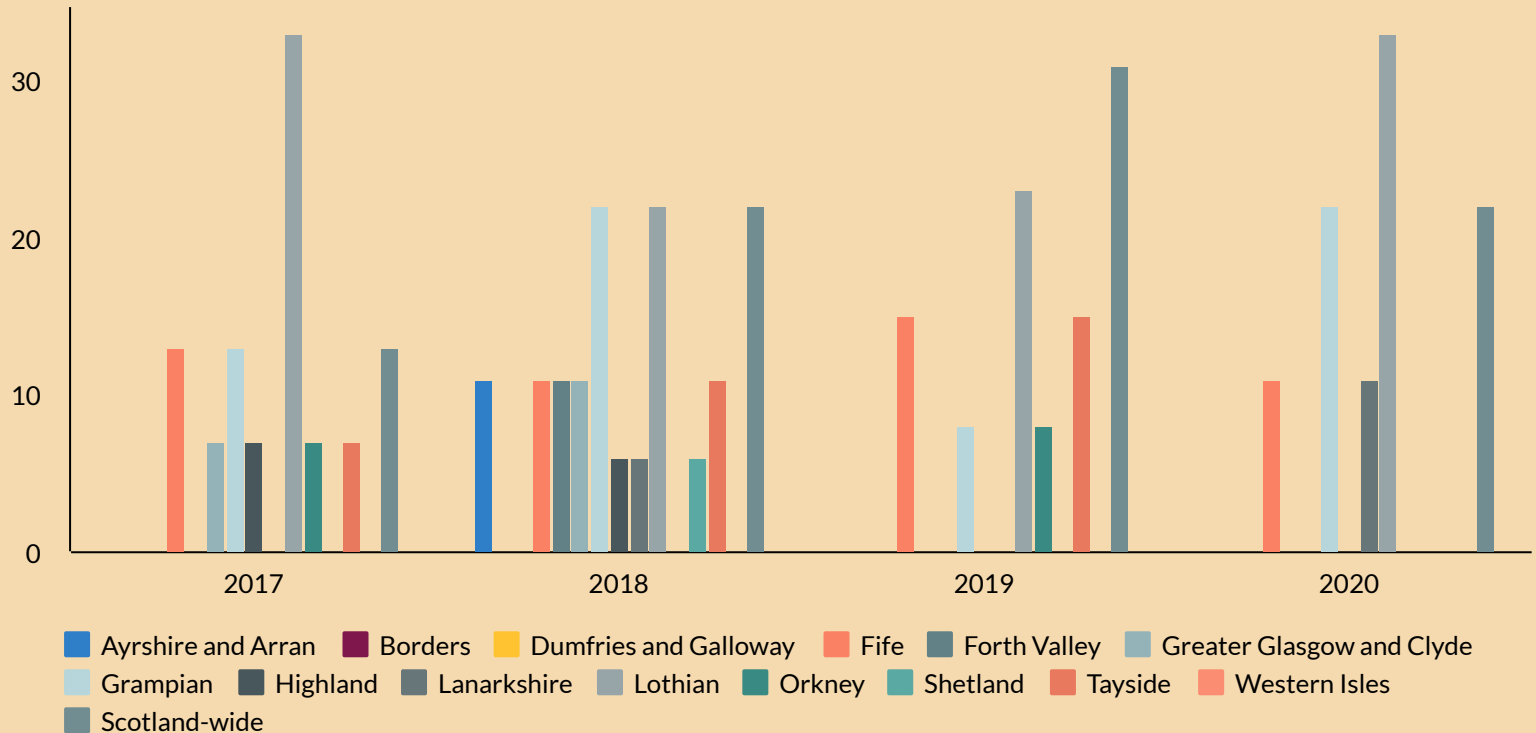
SURVEY RESULTS 2020

Introduction

There are currently 26 COSCA Member Organisations who have gained the COSCA Recognition Scheme Award. During Autumn 2020 COSCA Recognised Organisations were asked to respond to our survey. This year many of the questions reflected the challenges placed upon Recognised Organisations by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Its effects can also be seen in the relatively low response rate showing that Recognised Organisations time is at a premium as we continue through this crisis.

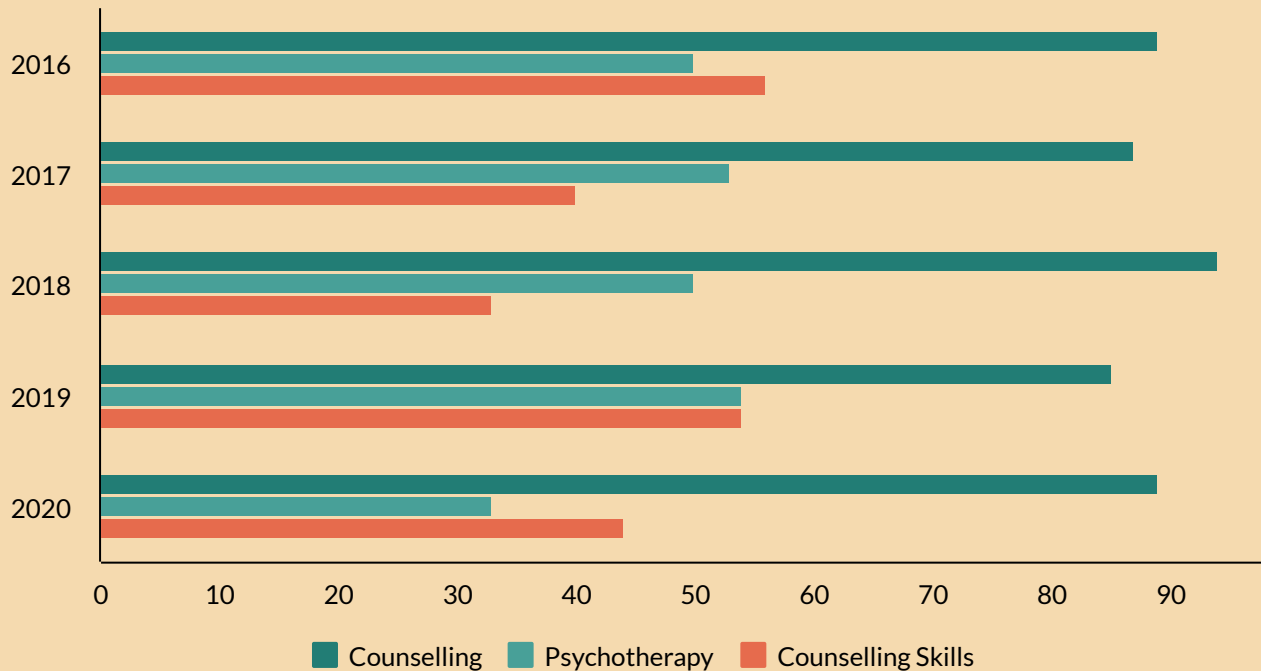
9 Recognised Organisations responded to the survey and the insights they provided are given below.

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



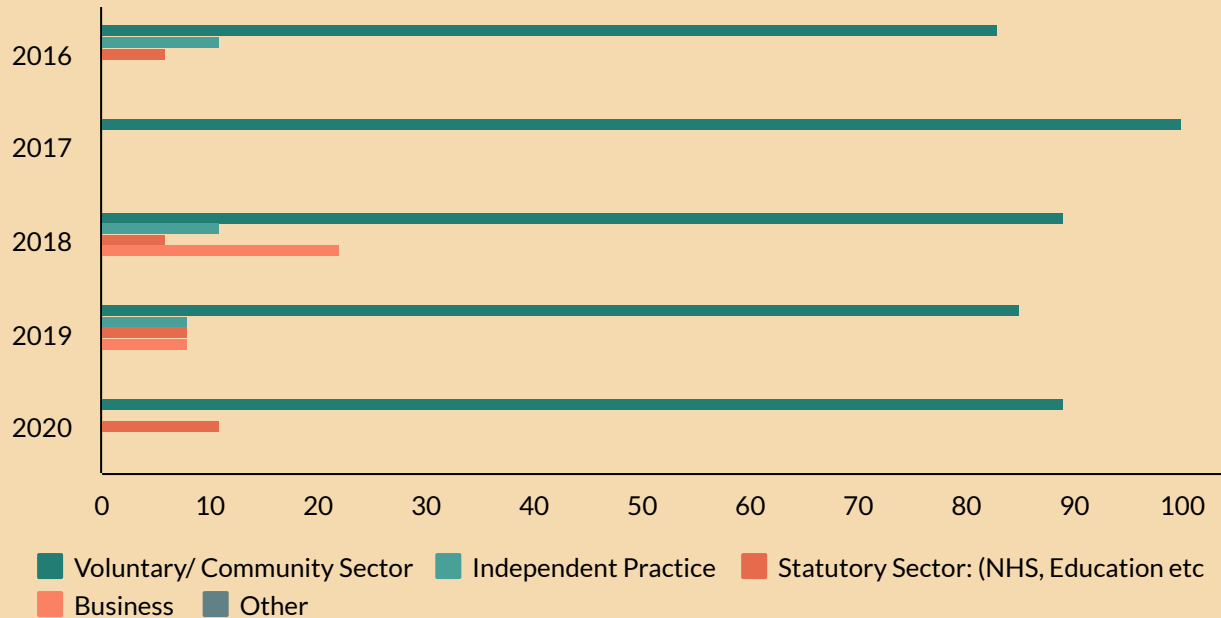
This trend to more respondents working Scotland-wide has continued (22%), with Lothian services being the most responsive (33%). 10 regions went unrepresented.

2. What services does your organisation provide?



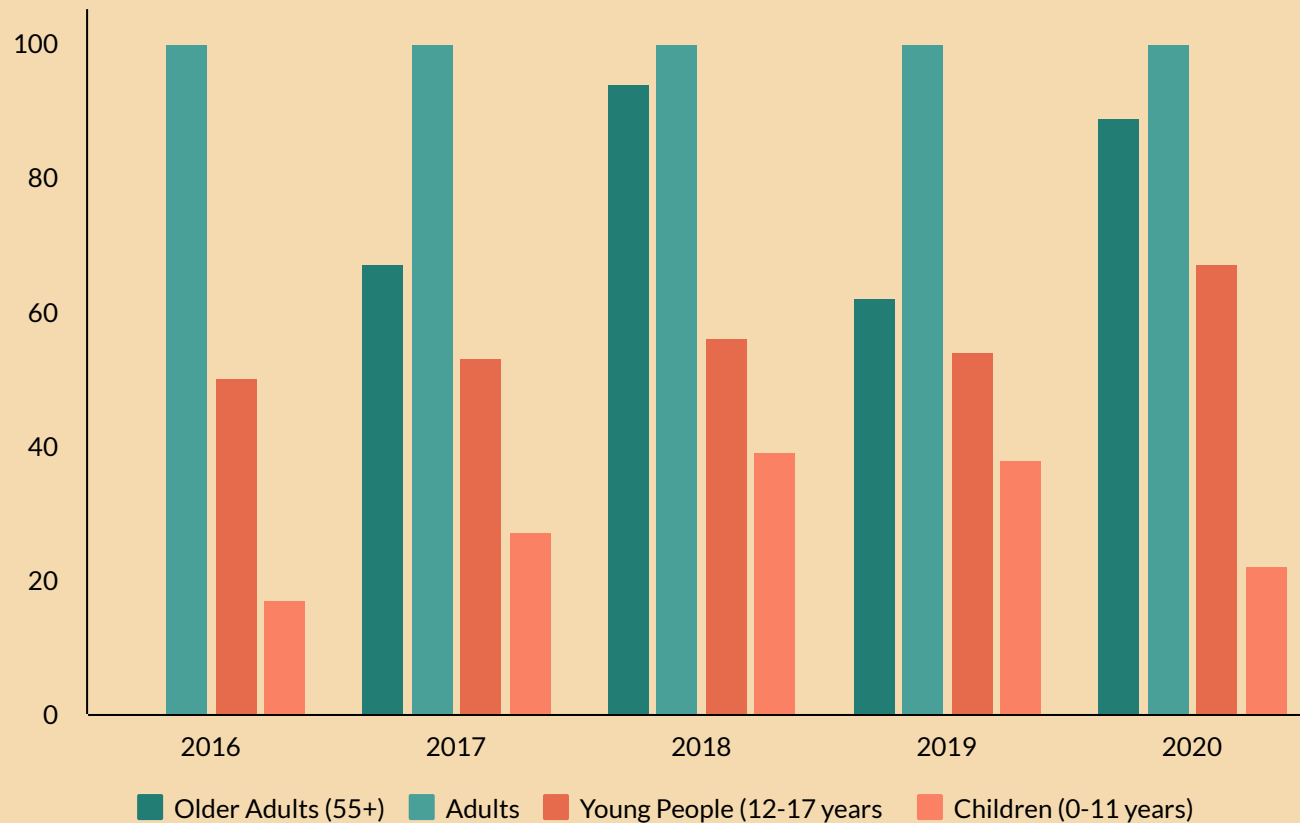
The split between respondents offering counselling, psychotherapy and counselling skills is roughly what we would expect from previous years. 89% provide counselling, 33% psychotherapy and 44% providing counselling skills. This suggests that despite fewer respondents the sample is still representative.

3. In what context does your organisation work?



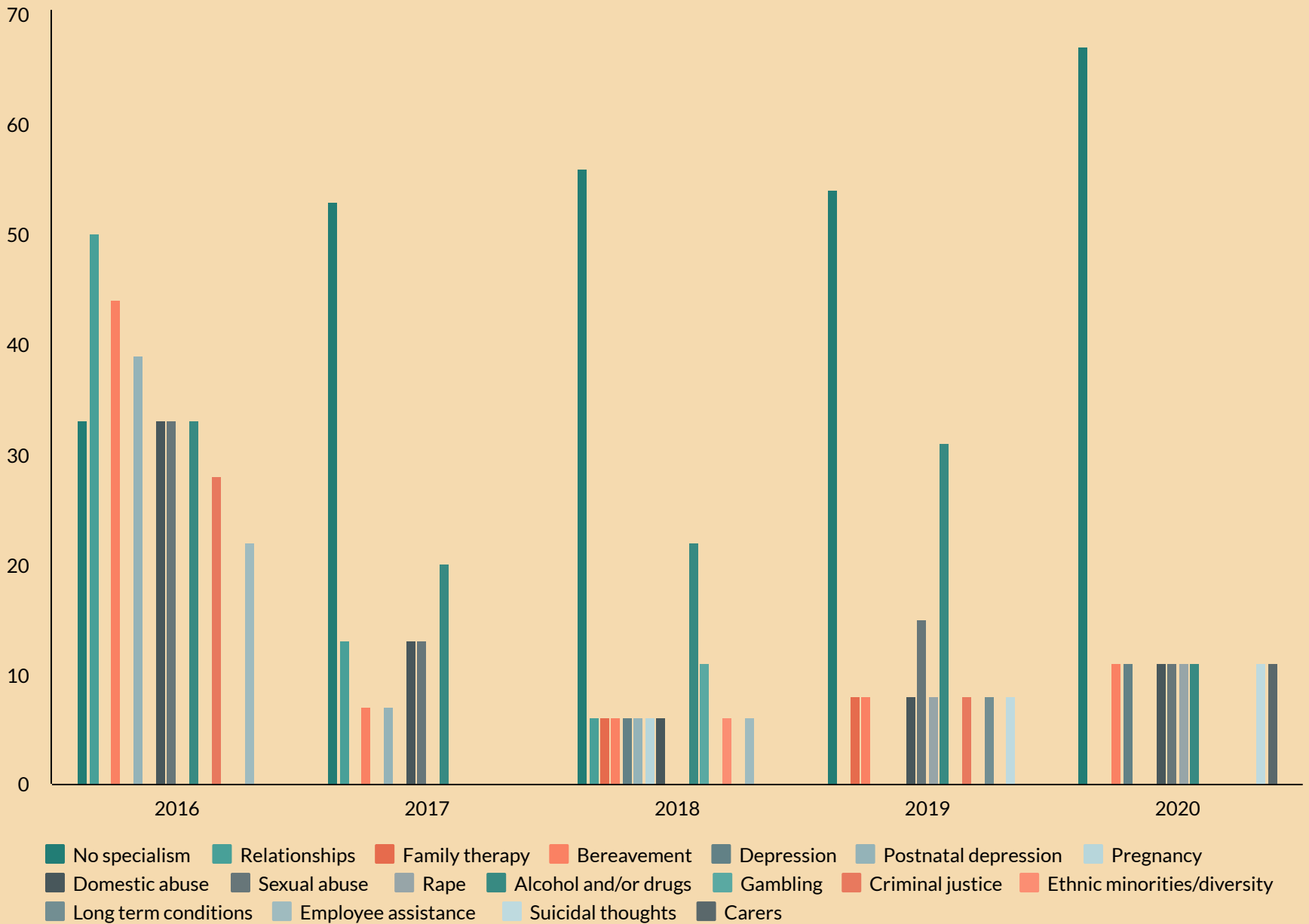
The trend continues with the voluntary/community sector being the most represented in the survey at 89%. Other sectors only made up 11%. Does this show that the voluntary sector conducts most of the counselling/skills work in Scotland or perhaps that other sectors do not feel the need to join a professional body?

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



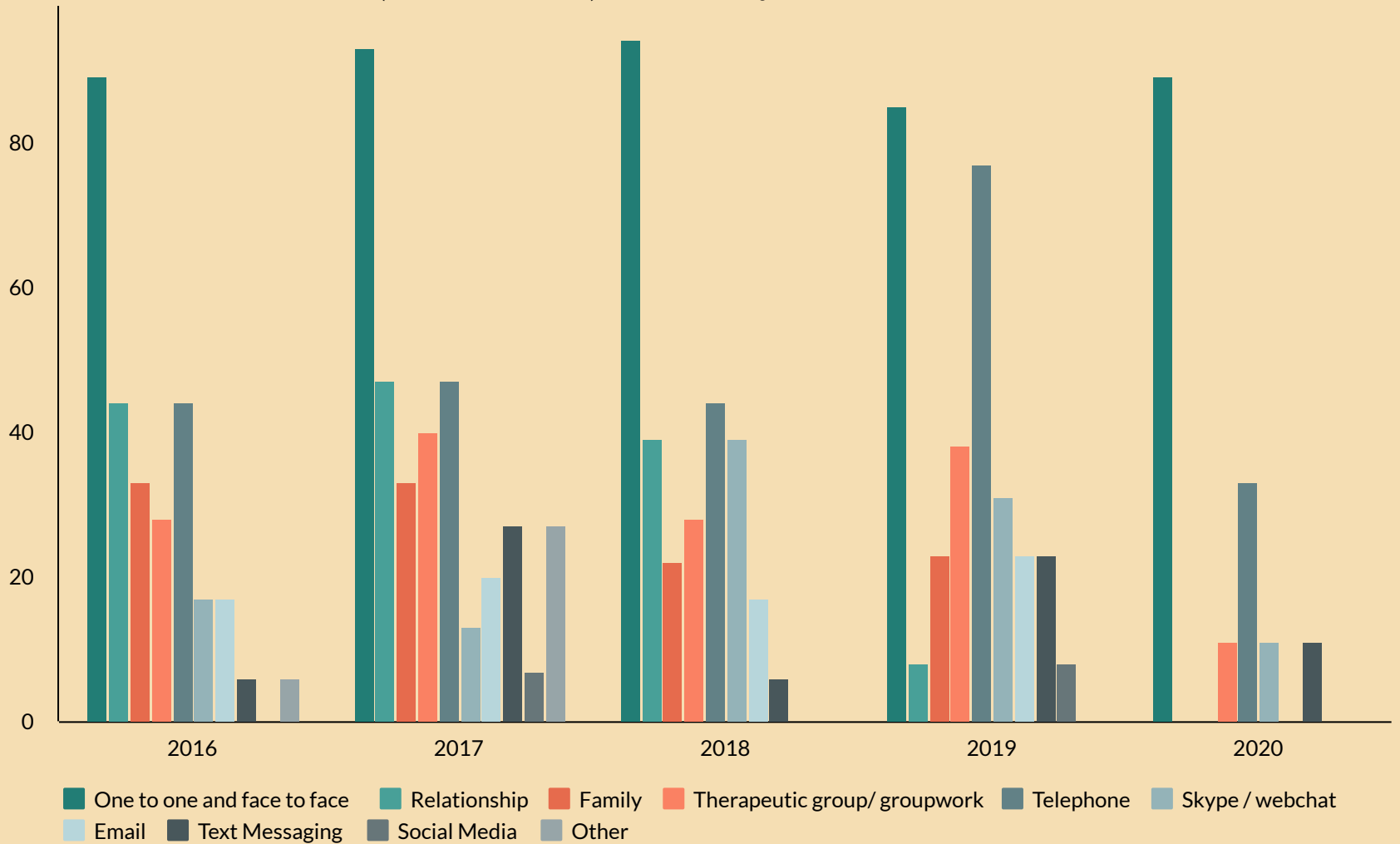
All services offered support to adults with a small, but steady increase in the amount of services offering support to young people 67%. This suggests that COSCA's Recognised Organisations have increased their efforts to attract younger service users, but are mainly still targeted at adults. There is still a relatively low amount of provision for children (22%). As we will see later, some COSCA Recognised Organisations are involved in The Scottish Government's pledge to increase provision in schools, colleges and universities.

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



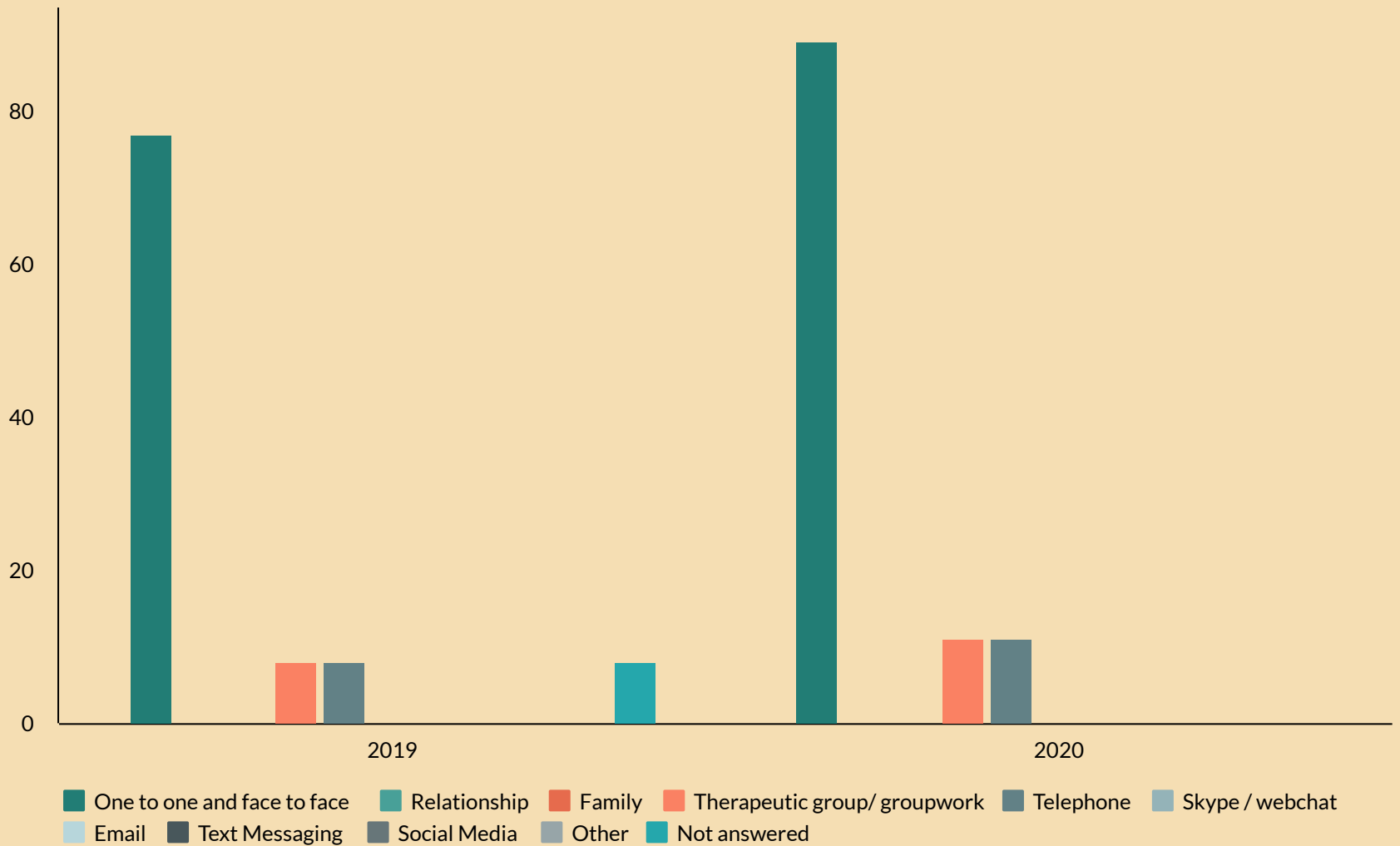
The majority of Recognised Organisations offering a generic service continues to be more than half of those surveyed (67%). Carers appeared for the first time this year.

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



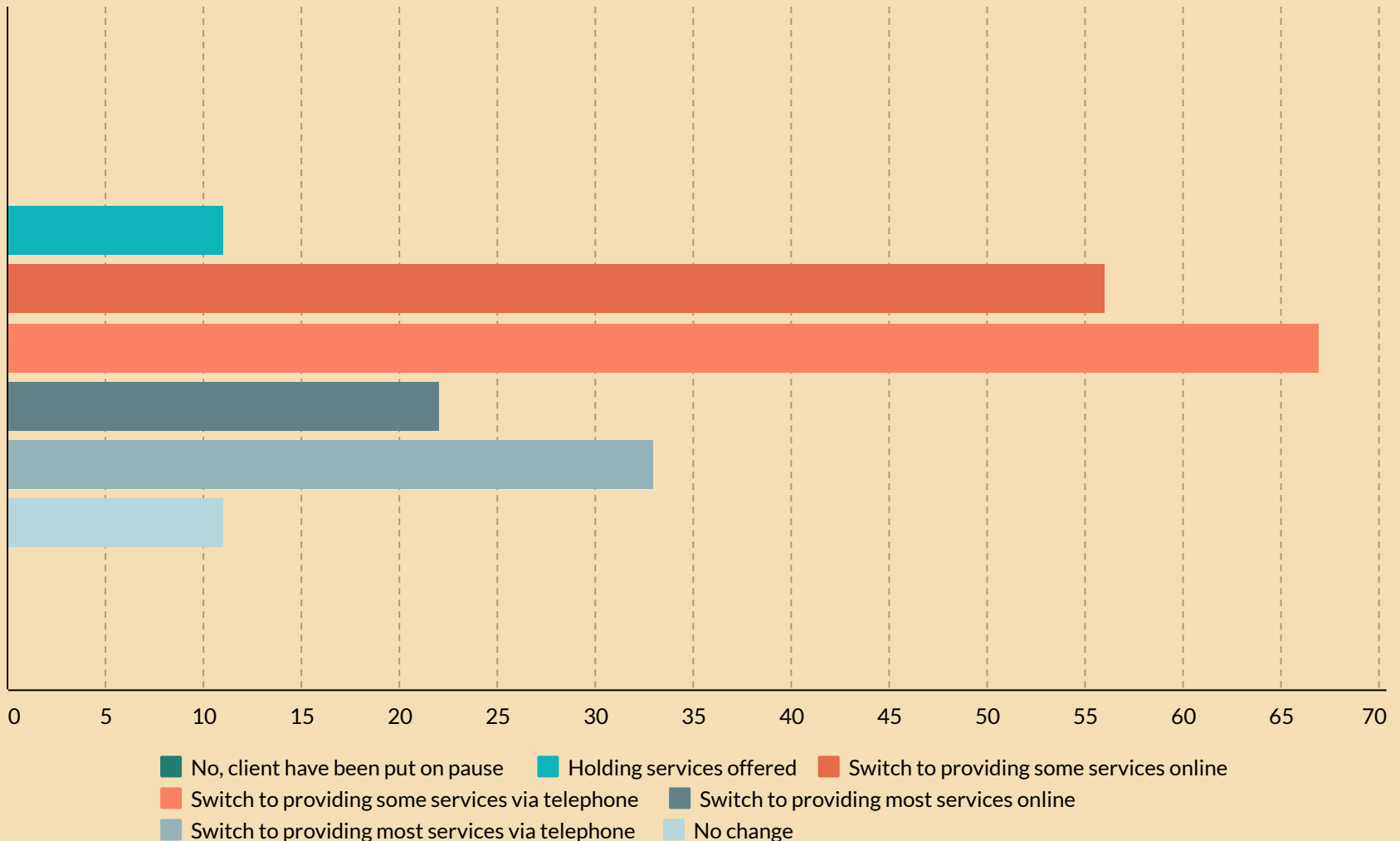
The vast majority of counselling and counselling skills is still mainly offered face to face and groups (89% and 11%) with 33% (telephone), 11% (webchat) and 11% (text) offered remotely. It is not surprising that the lockdown in March had such a high impact (and still does) on organisations to deliver services.

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



When we remove those offered as additional as opposed to main services, the impact of being unable to meet with clients face to face is clear. 89% of services mainly offer one to one face to face. It also shows us how the majority of services had to create non face to face services from practically nowhere.

Have you been able to continue these services during Covid-19?

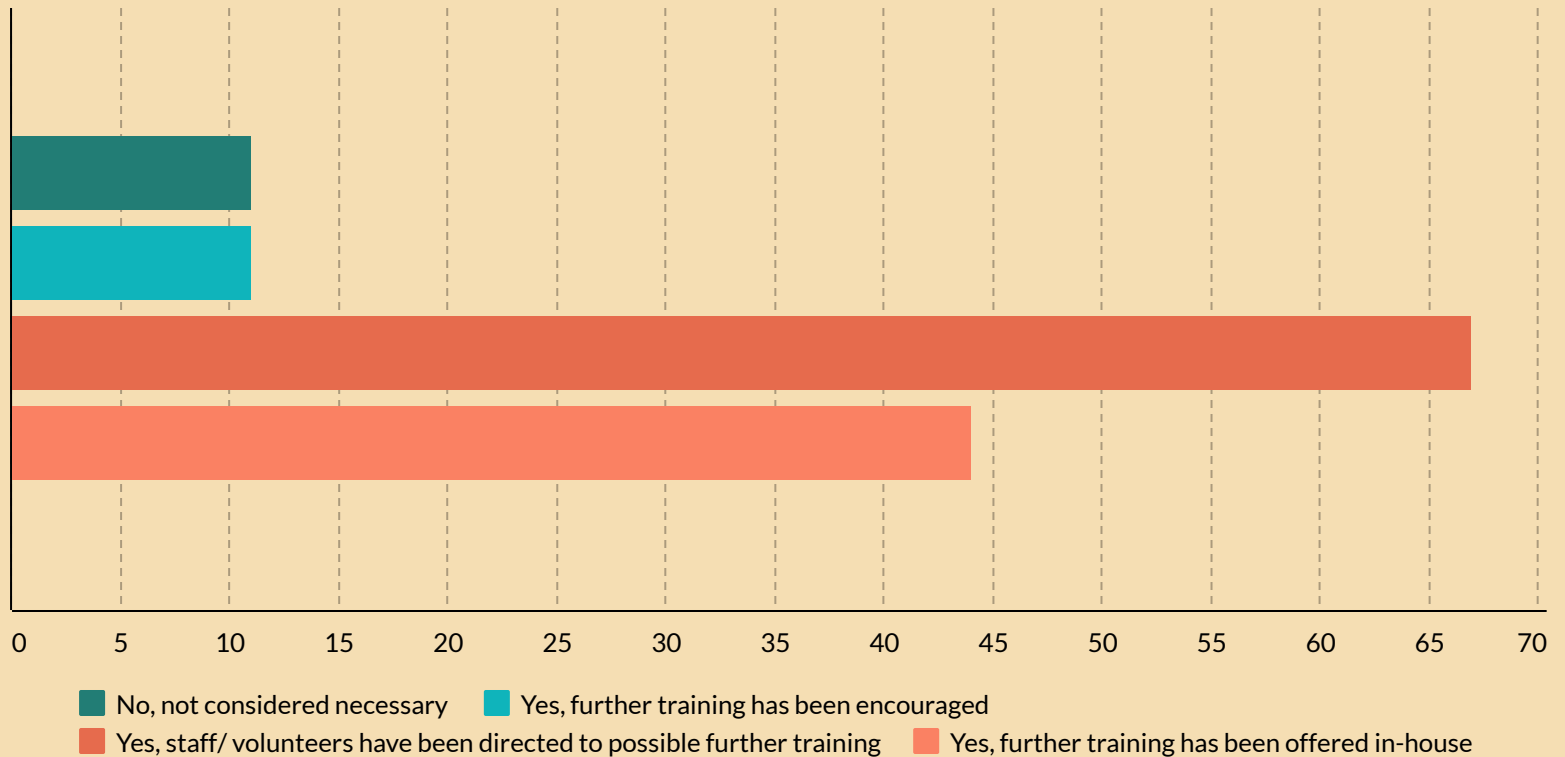


Only 11% reported that their service was unaffected. All other services had to switch to telephone, online or a mixture of both.

"We were able to move around 90% of current clients from face to face to telephone counselling within a week to continue supporting [clients]. We were also able to set up online counselling quickly (from mid-April) to offer video calling to clients..."

It will be interesting to see if services continue to offer more remote services or revert back to mostly face to face.

Have you requested your staff/ volunteers to undertake any extra training to continue to deliver services?



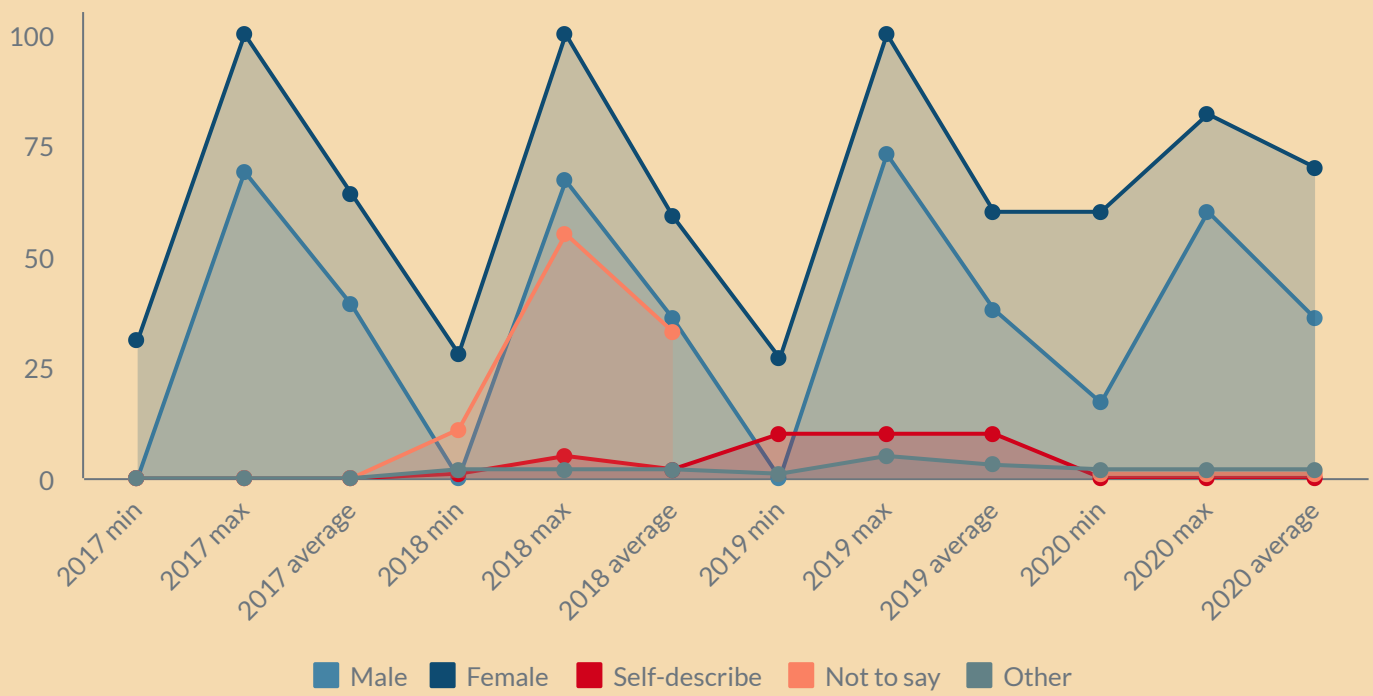
COSCA's Recognised Organisations did not take the switch to online services lightly and recognised that the ability to work remotely required new skills and considerations. 67% directed their counsellors and counselling skills users to further training and 44% delivered training in-house.

"All staff and volunteers had to go through distance counselling courses before seeing existing or new clients". "All staff including sessional and students attended on-line telephone and online counselling training at the start of Lockdown".

It is not just the Organisations that have learned a great deal during the pandemic. In order to continue safely counsellors, psychotherapists and counselling skills workers have also had to learn a great deal in a short time.

7. How many of your clients state they are:

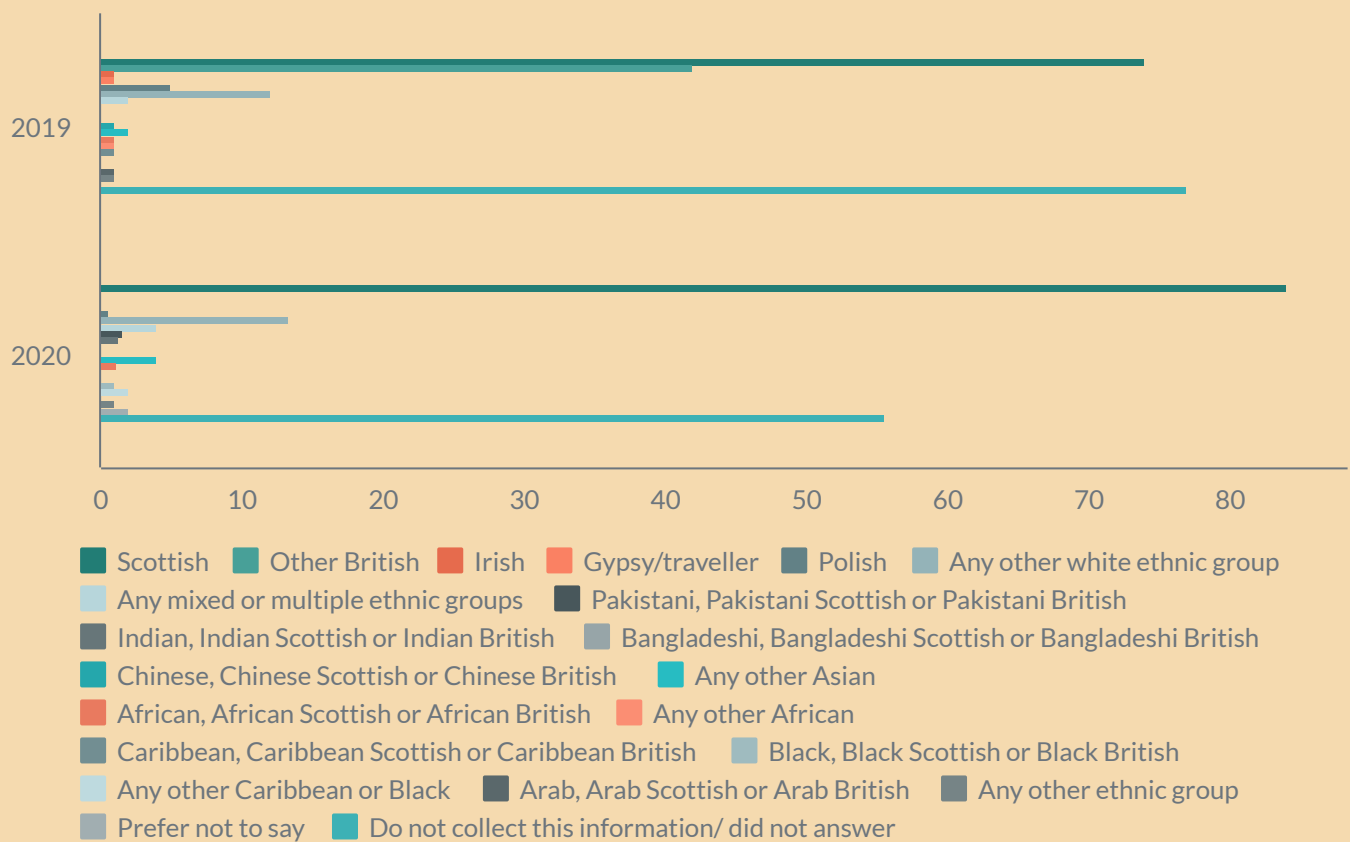
Gender:



This year's data differed slightly from previous years: there were no all male or all female services. Nearly half of the Recognised Organisations surveyed did not collect this data at all. Those that did recorded self-describe and prefer not to say, but they were very small numbers that of clients that chose those options. Women continue to use counselling and counselling skills services more than men.

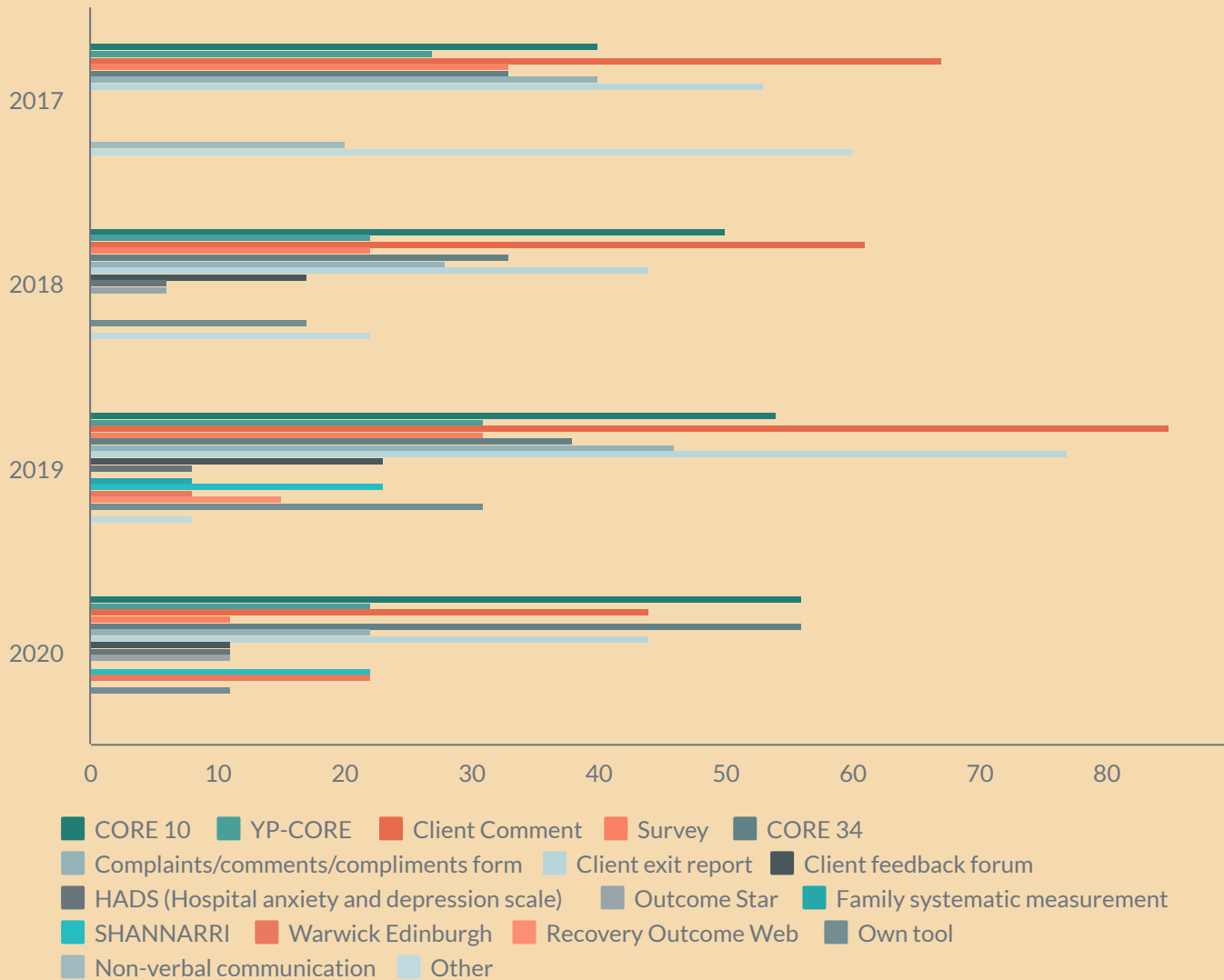
It is so very important that we know who is using services so that we can know who needs more support and encouragement to be able to access them.

Ethnicity:



As expected, the vast majority of COSCA's Recognised Organisation's clients are white Scottish (84.1%), with a few other ethnicities represented. 55.6% of organisations did not collect this data. 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?



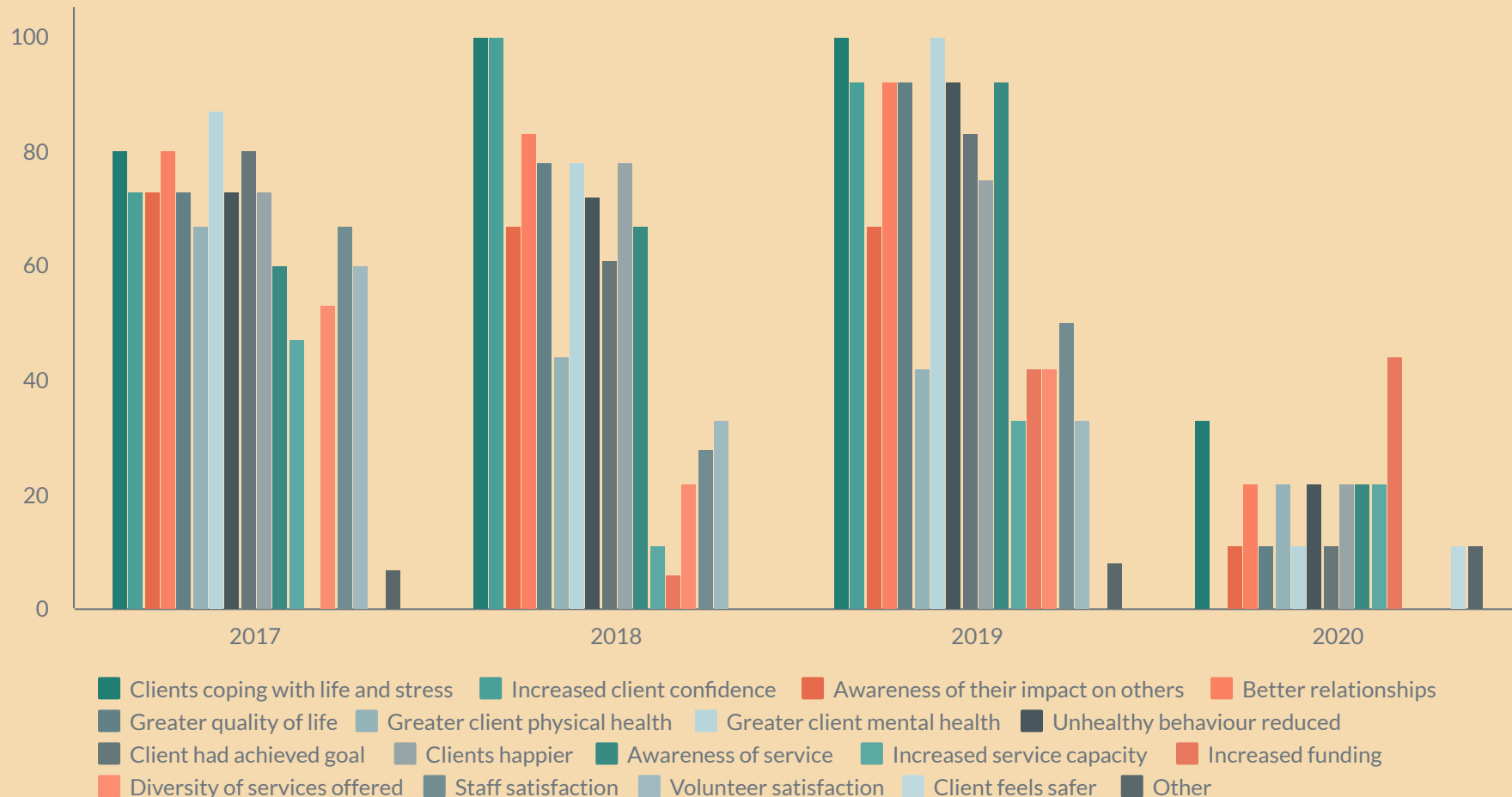
CORE measures feature pretty strongly: 56%, 22%, 56%, but there are still a great number of different methods used. Client comment and survey are not as heavily weighted as before (44% and 11%).

9. How have you managed complaints in the past year?



This is a new question for this year, suggested by the PSA. Most COSCA Recognised Organisations have no complaints or are able to manage their complaints informally. This reflects the integrity and quality of service that COSCA Recognised Organisations deliver. COSCA's hope is that organisations will not have to use their COSCA approved complaints procedure, but it is still important to have them fit for purpose as it is too late to put them in place if a complaint has been made.

10. Have you experienced any positive outcomes due to the Covid-19 crisis?



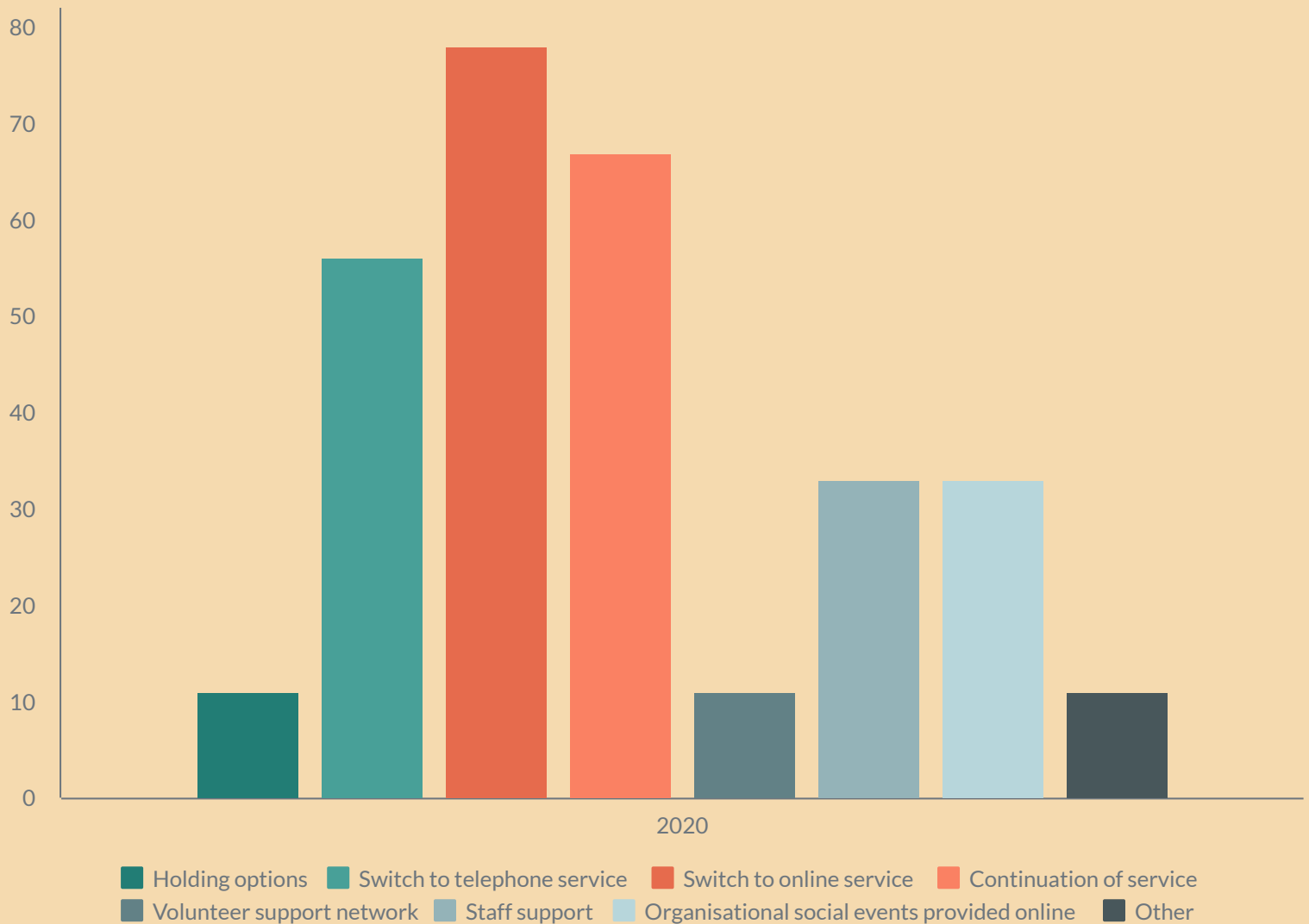
"A few clients have been positive about lockdown but generally clients have been affected negatively".

This may have been the feeling of the majority of COSCA's Recognised Organisations, but there were a few benefits. The biggest of these was an increase in funding experienced by 44% of those surveyed. I think the results would have been very different of the question had been asking for positive outcomes **DESPITE** the crisis.

"Clients reported feeling comforted by the fact they could still access support albeit in a different format. Also a few clients did show resilience that previously they doubted they had. It was noted by some staff that some of the clients who had faced multiple challenges and adversity previously reported coping better than clients who hadn't". "We have not experienced any positive outcomes as such due to the crisis ... However, we have positive outcomes for clients in counselling despite the crisis if you like and had feedback that it was a lifeline for them during lockdown".

The pandemic has affected everyone, but COSCA's Recognised Organisations have continued to go above and beyond to provide essential services for their clients and service users.

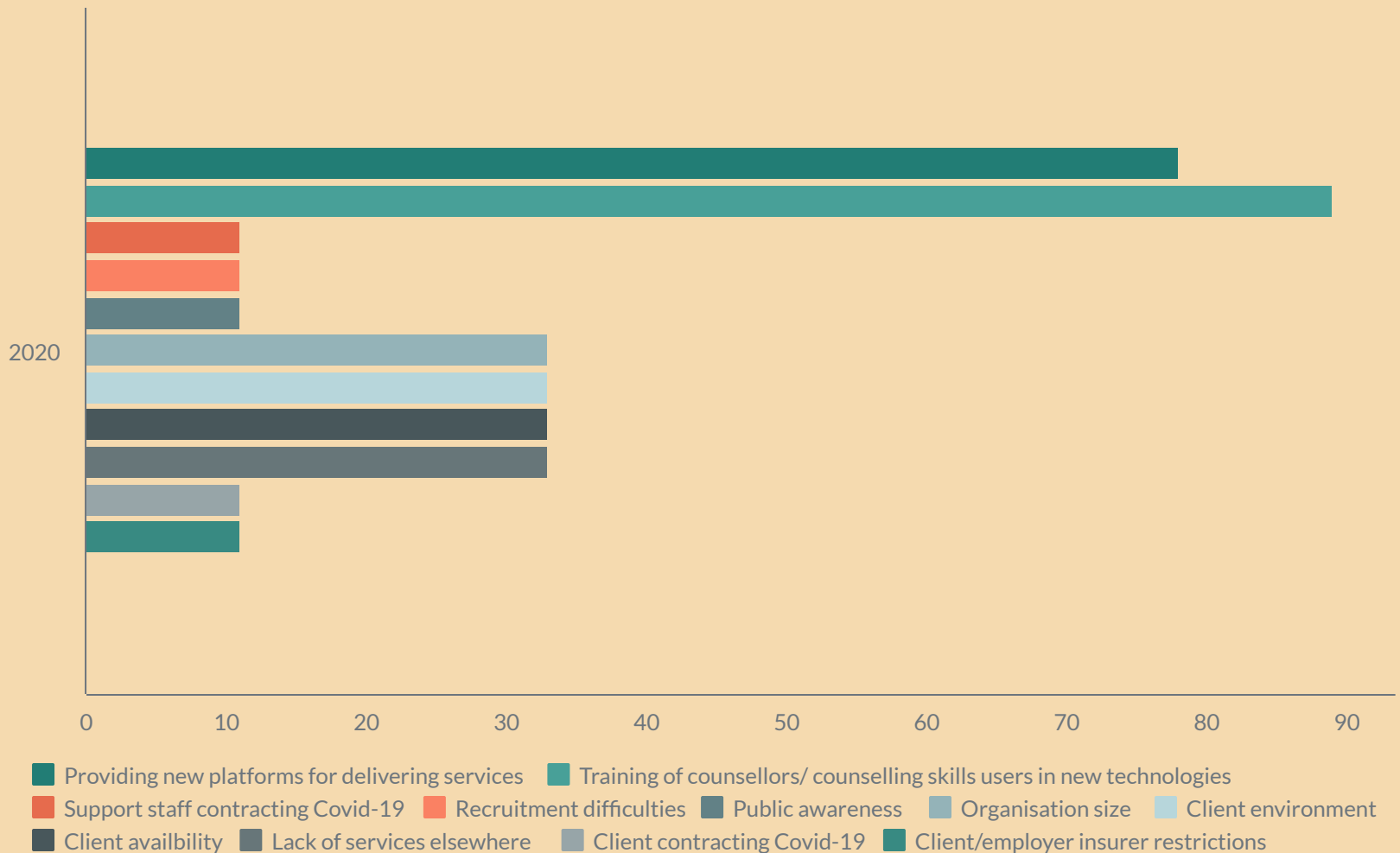
11. What activities produced the outcomes in the question above?



This year's activities had to reflect our current situation and so can't be compared to previous years. The positive outcomes above are the result of the hard work and dedication of COSCA's Recognised Organisations continuing to provide services (67%) by telephone (56%) and online (78%).

"Perhaps the variety of online sessions helped; some were more social focused e.g., bingo and keep fit while others were aimed at specific issues, e.g. anxiety; dealing with isolation. The aim was purely to ensure clients kept engaged in the services; kept a connection rather than retreating into isolation". "There have several reports of clients feeling this is happening to everyone and so they feel part of the wider community instead of feeling marginalised".

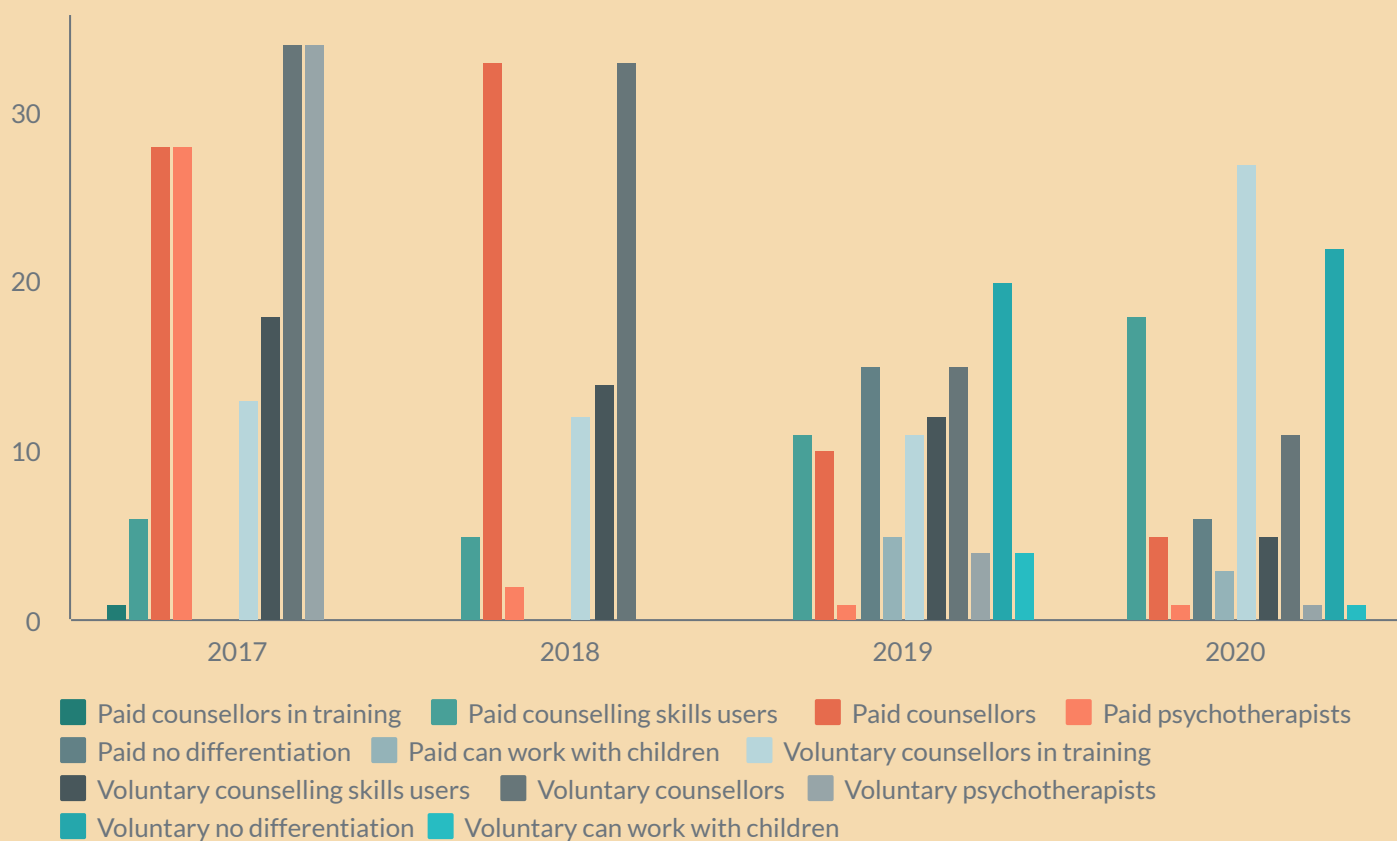
12. What were the challenges for your service in achieving the above impacts/ outcomes during the Covid-19 crisis?



Covid-19 presents COSCA's Recognised Organisations with many challenges. Mostly they were affected by the sudden switch to new platforms (78%) and training counsellors and counselling skills users in these new technologies (89%). It is good to see that insurer restrictions are not affecting as many organisations as could have been expected (11%).

"One area that proved challenging was privacy at home for some clients; they were unable to secure an hour where they could engage on the telephone or online without other family members being in earshot. Or that someone else was using the electronic device at the time they needed to use it."

13. How many practitioners within your organisation are:



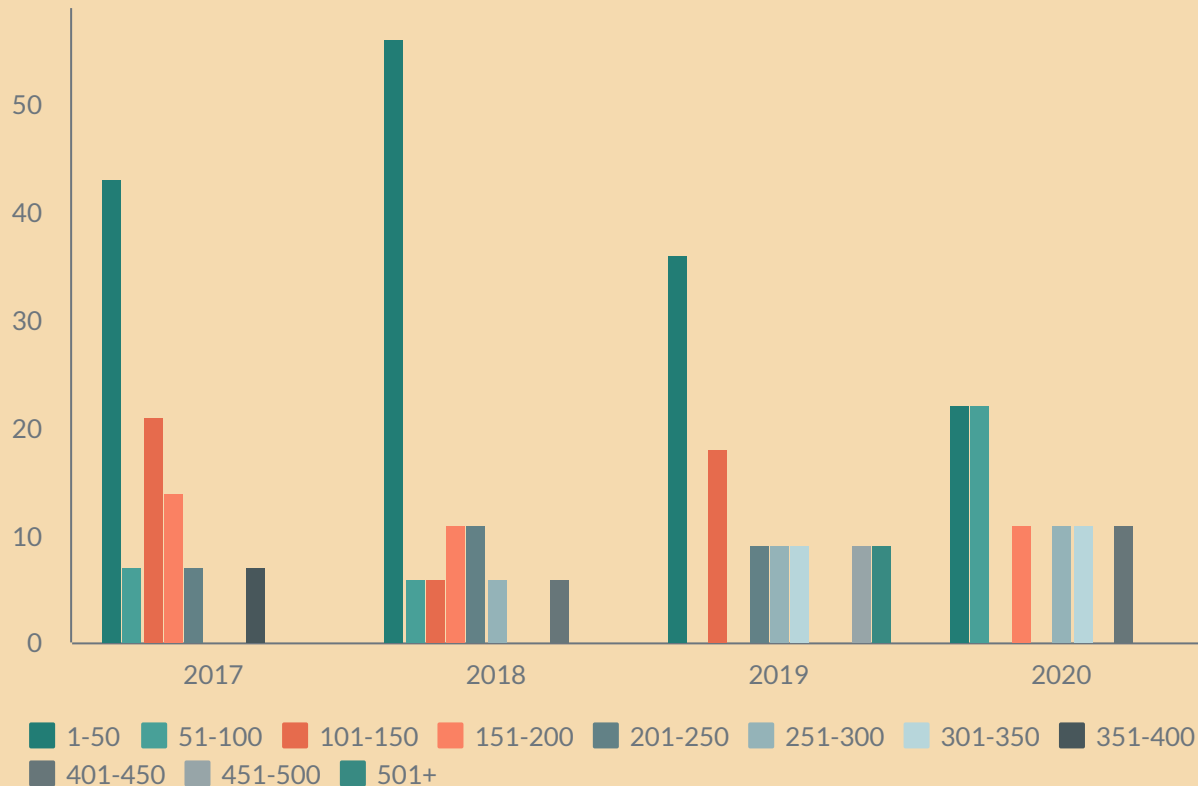
There continues to be a downward trend for the amount of paid counsellors (5%) and counselling skills users continues to rise (18%). The largest group is voluntary counsellors in training (27%). It will be interesting to see if the numbers of counsellors in training decreases as a result of organisations switching to online and telephone at the beginning of the year. Voluntary no differentiation is the next highest at 22%. This shows that the majority of work is by skilled volunteers.

Only 4% of counsellors are qualified to work with children (slightly down from 9% last year). Does this indicate a shortage of counsellors for the Scottish Government's Mental Health Strategy or does this indicate that they are currently working for the Strategy and so are no longer available for counselling organisations?

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?

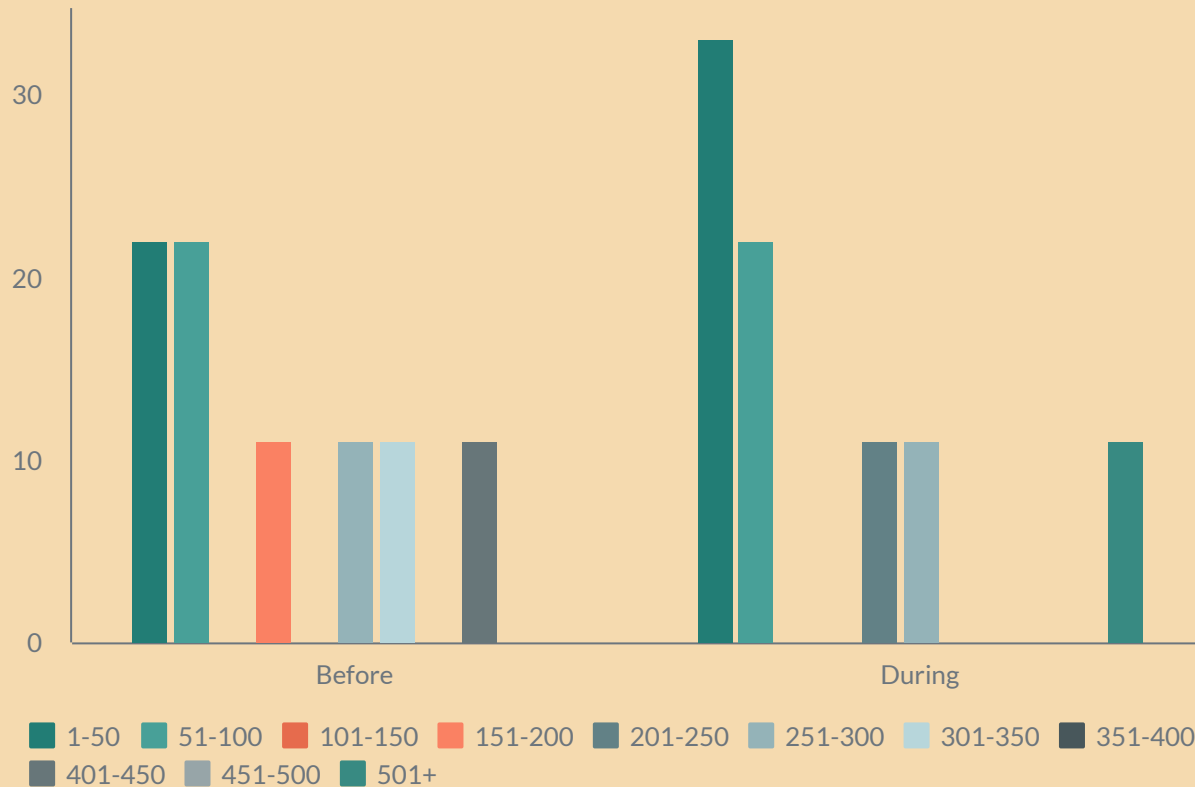
To look at this further 33% responded yes and 67% no, so some COSCA Recognised Organisations are involved in the Strategy to deliver counselling in schools. There are even fewer involved with colleges and universities with 89% no or not applicable and 11% yes. COSCA is continuing to promote the use of fully qualified and registered counsellors in schools, colleges and universities and pointing towards our members as suitable candidates.

14. On average, how many hours of counselling per week are provided by your organisation (before Covid-19)?



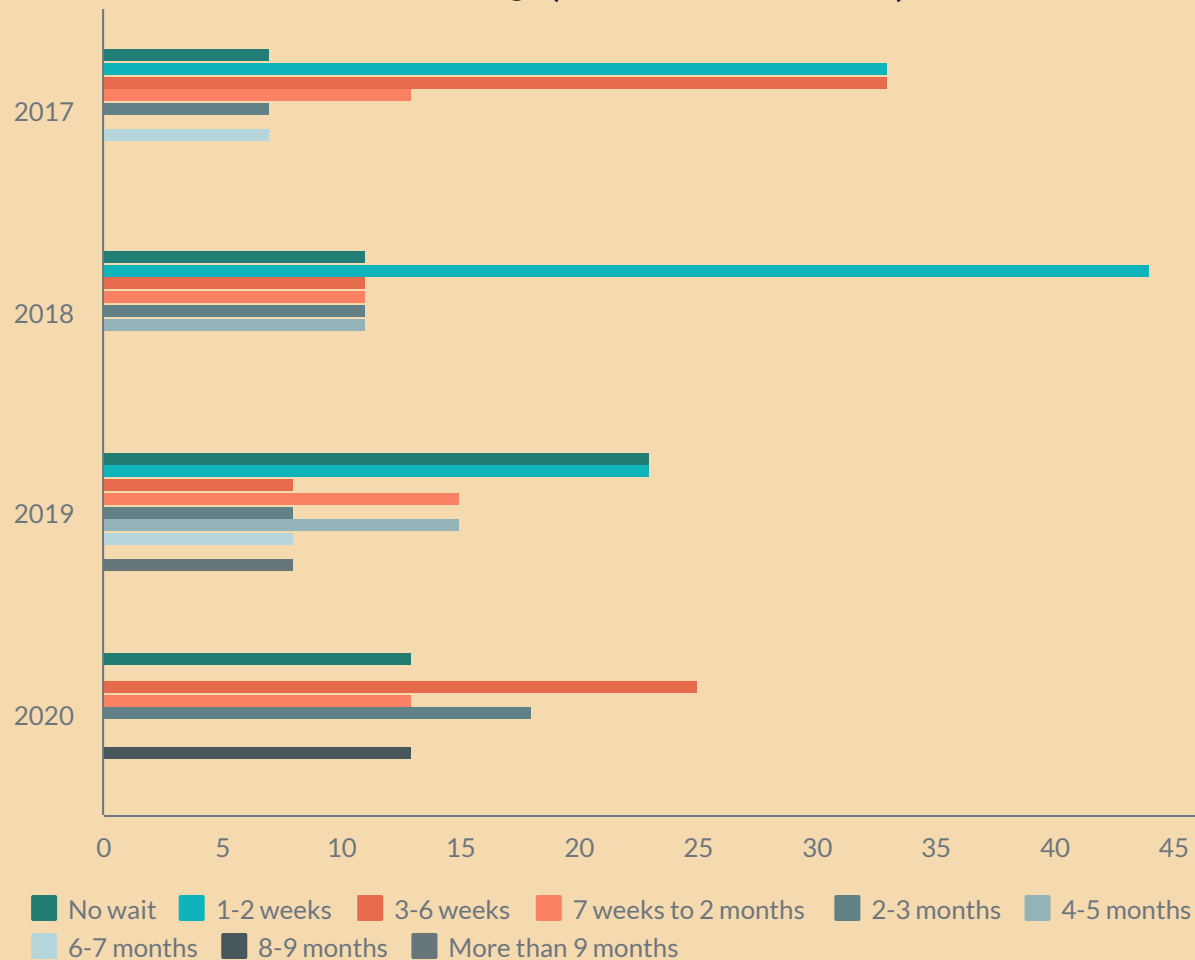
This year there is a pretty even split between organisations that offer below 100 hours per week and those offering more than 150 hours. This suggests that this year we have a pretty representative cross section of COSCA's Recognised Organisations from large to small.

On average, how many hours of counselling per week can you provide now, during Covid-19?



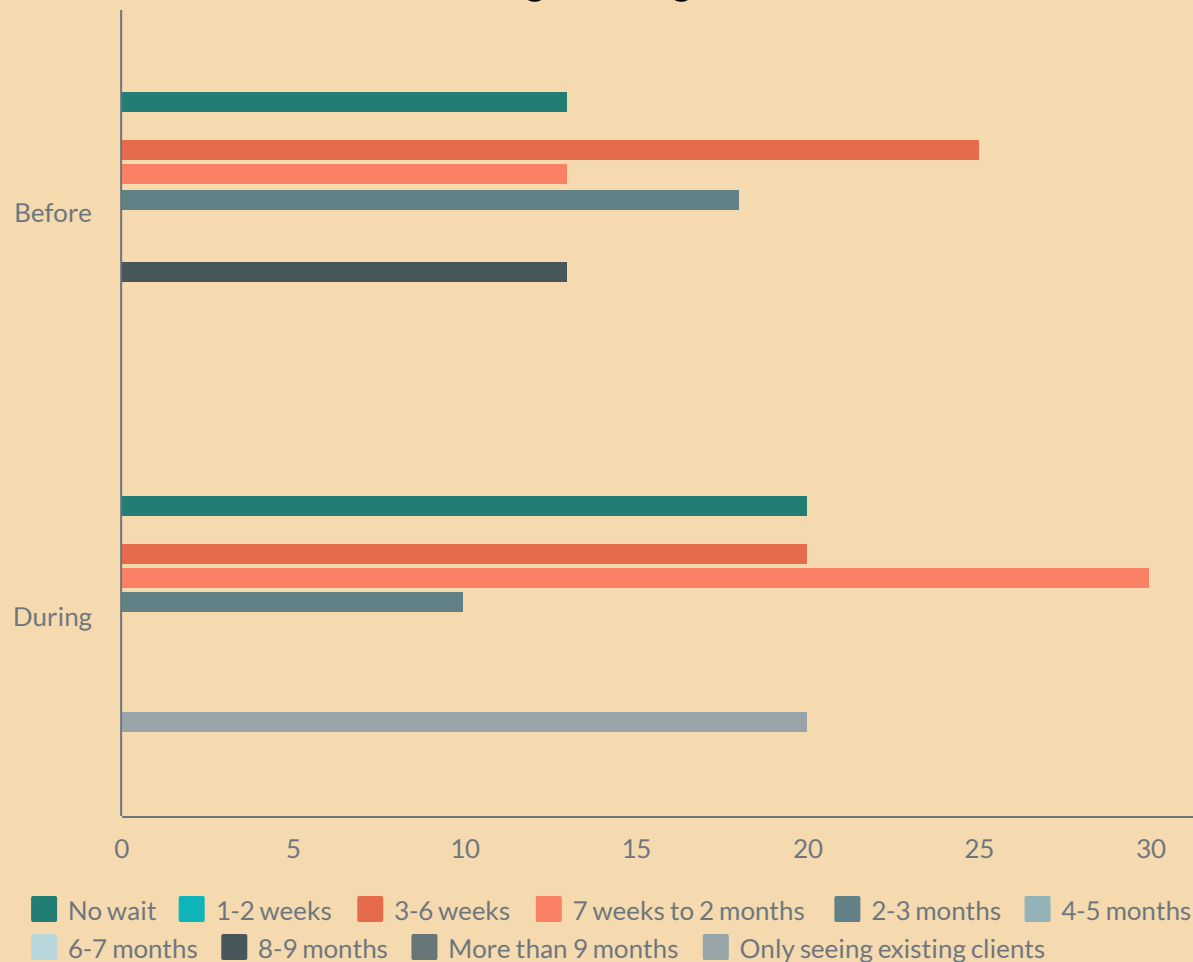
Whereas some COSCA Recognised Organisations were able to offer the same (and one even more) most have seen their ability to offer hours reduce during the Covid-19 pandemic.

15. How long can a client expect to wait from first contact with your organisation to the start of regular counselling (before Covid-19)?



This year sees a decrease in no wait and 1 to two weeks (23% to 13% and 23% to 0%) and growth in 3-6 week wait to 25% from 8% when compared to last year. This suggests an increase in waiting times and so also demand.

How long can a client expect to wait from first contact with your organisation to the start of regular counselling during Covid-19?



Covid-19 has seen a decrease in waiting lists, although it should be noted that 20% of COSCA Recognised Organisations were only seeing existing clients and that other Organisations will have had a period where their priority was to meet the needs of their existing clients before taking on new ones.

"Many [clients] wanted to wait until we return to face to face counselling".

16 How many sessions are your clients usually offered/ offered now?

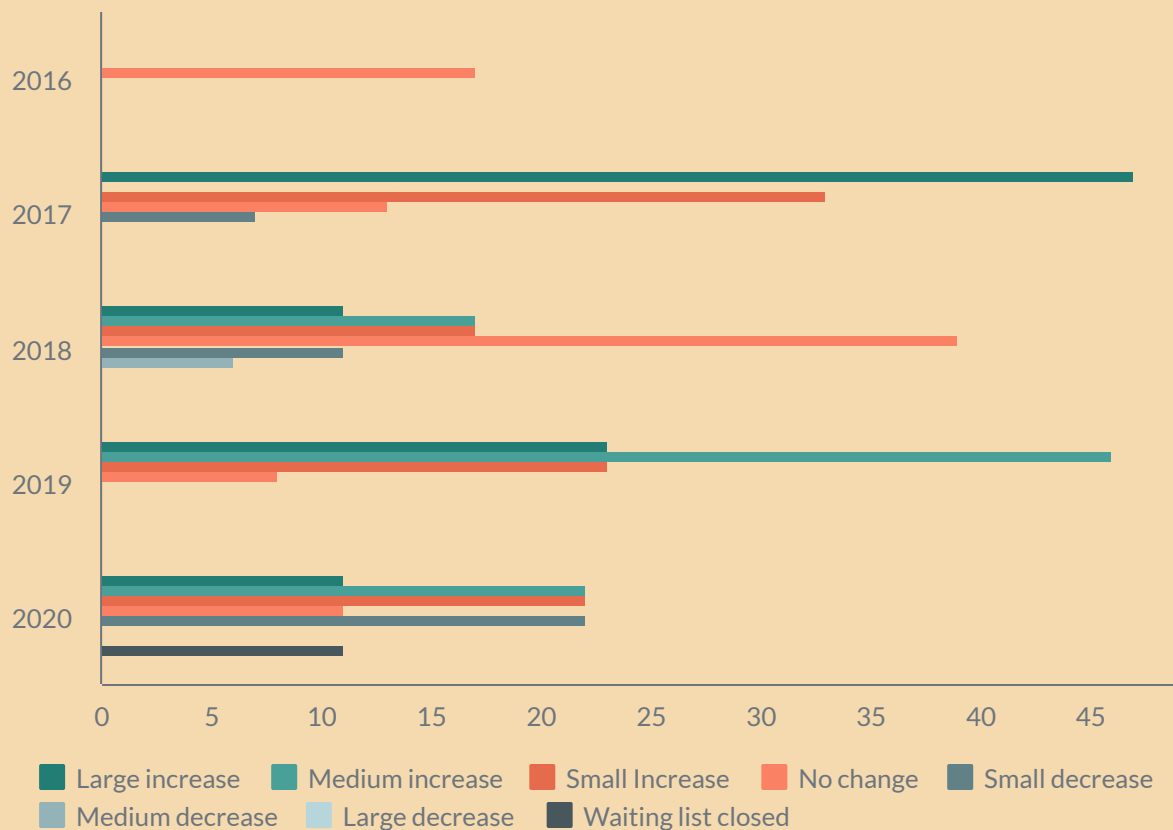
Clients were offered sessions from 8 to up to open ended. With the two years and open ended removed the average was 15. After Covid-19 all offered the same, except one that offered more. This show how hard COSCA Recognised Counselling Organisations have been working to provide their much needed services during Covid-19.

How many sessions did your clients attend on average/ do they attend during Covid-19?

Before Covid-19 clients attended between 7 and 20 sessions (on average per organisation) with the average of all COSCA Recognised Organisations that responded with 11. During the pandemic clients attended from 10 to 20 sessions (on average per organisation) with an average of all of 13. All organisations reported the same or higher average number of sessions attended during the pandemic. Does this show that clients are more in need or that being able to see clients via telephone and online makes the services more accessible to them?

"There are some reports that client's DNA rates have fallen during Covid-19- this is something we are exploring with the data we have so far".

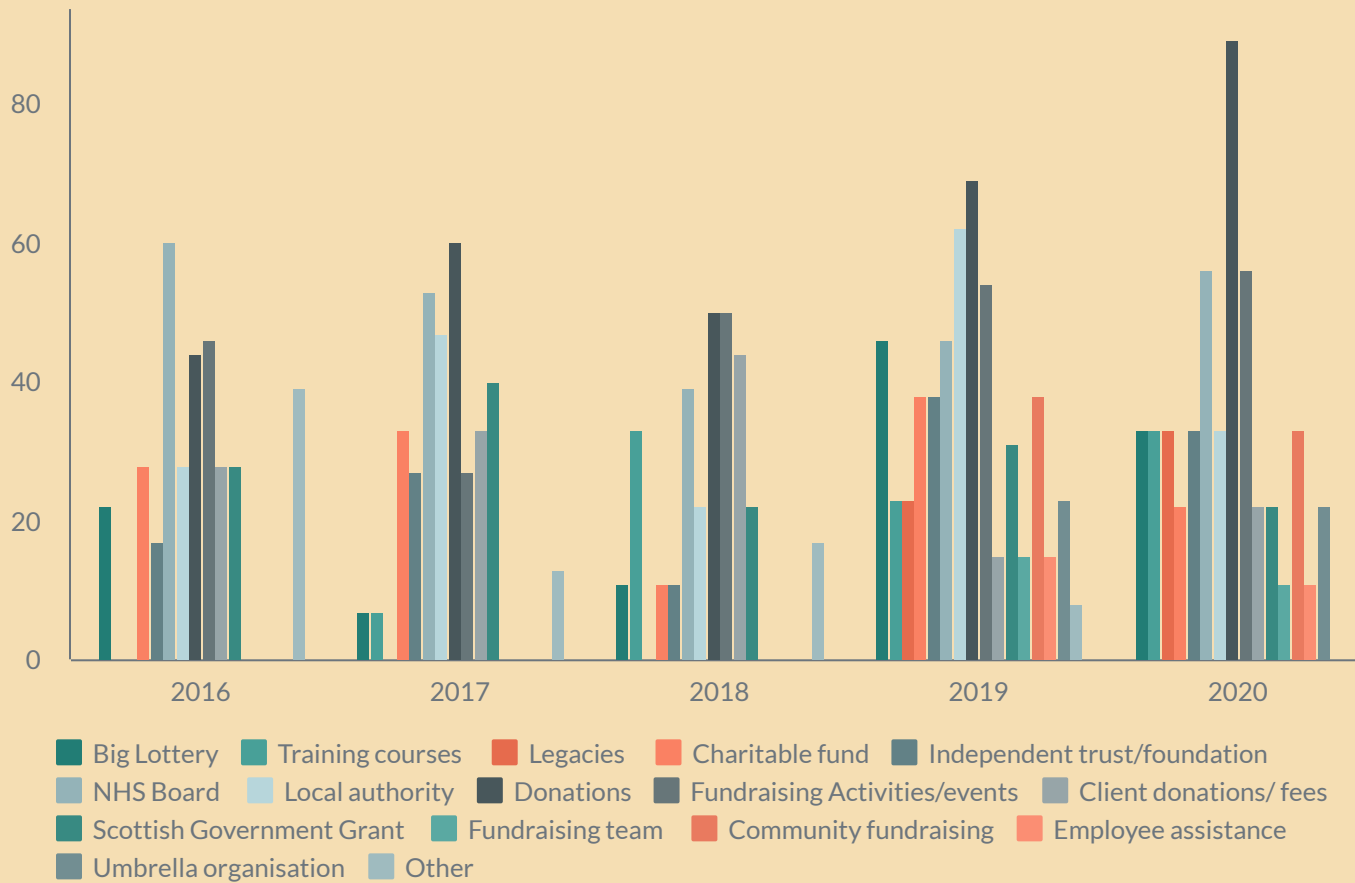
17. Has your organisation experienced an increase or decrease in demand for support over the last 12 months/ during the Covid-19 crisis?



55% of Recognised Organisations saw some sort of increase, only 22% saw a small decrease. 11% have closed their waiting lists while the pandemic is ongoing.

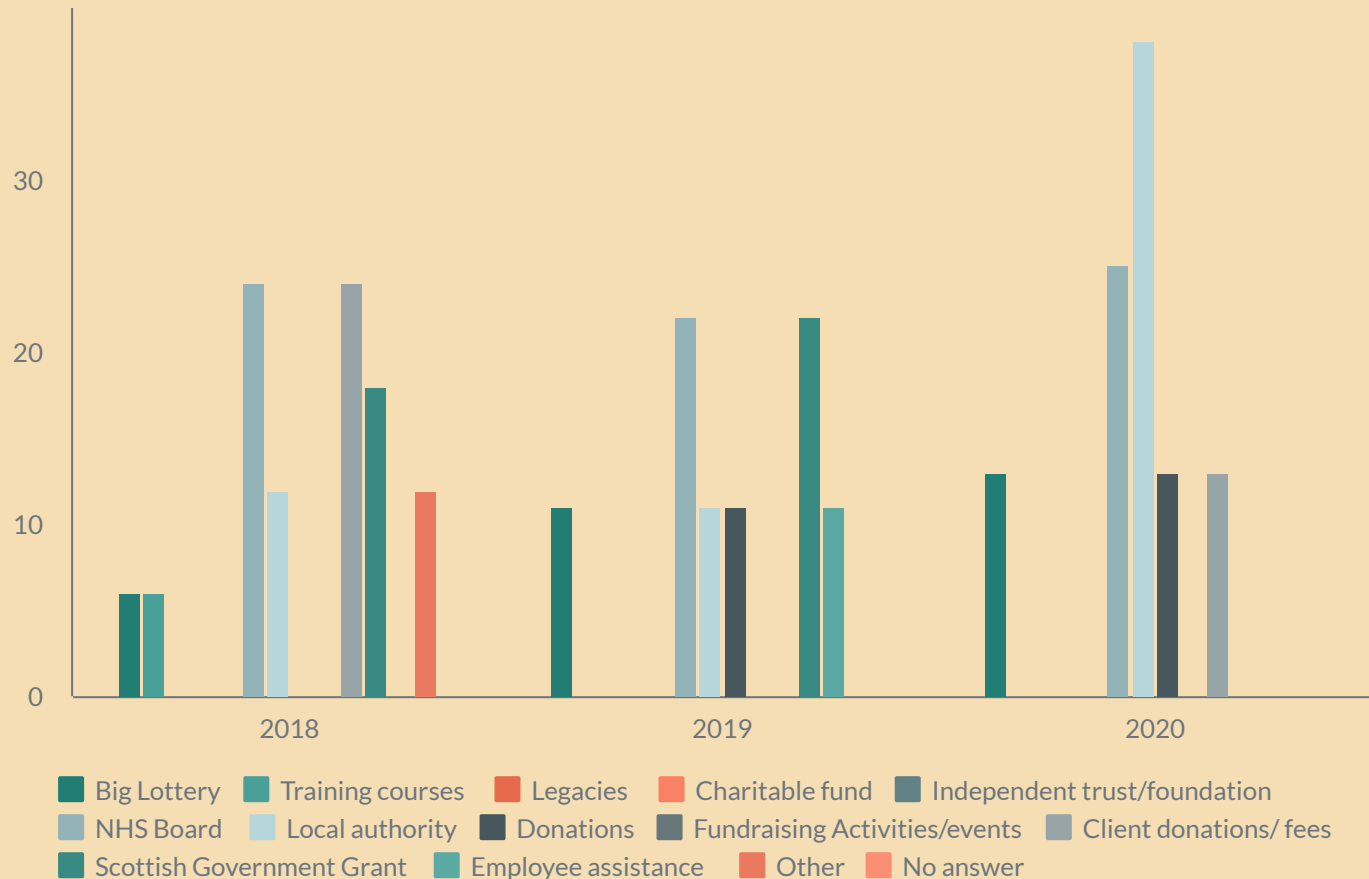
"This is difficult to quantify because the clients have been supported by a telephone helpline also which has changed the forms of contact on offer".

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



Donations are by far the most common source of funding used by 89% of COSCA Recognised Organisations (up from 69% last year). NHS Board (56%) and Fundraising Activities (56%) are the closest behind donations.

Which of those is your main source of income?



The importance of donations reduces slightly when looking at the main source of funding with 38% of Recognised Organisations is Local Authority, closely followed by NHS Board at 25%. It must however be appreciated that a wide range of funding sources are essential to the sustainability of Organisations.

Has this Changed During Covid-19?

67% of Recognised Organisations reported no change as Local Authority and NHS Board funding continued. The main change was in client donations. The least affected cited a 30% decrease, but the others pointed to a reduction or total absence of client donations. It is unclear if this is due to a reduction in the incomes of clients and service users due to the pandemic or that donations are more readily given when receiving a face to face service.

19. Is there anything of which you are particularly proud to have achieved during this crisis?

There are many things of which our Recognised Organisations are very justifiably proud.

"Transitioning to remote working for all staff and most counsellors & clients, within one week of lockdown. We have managed to keep seeing most clients. Establishing a telephone helpline immediately and also to keep the service open to counsellors working with clients in new ways. A total restructure of our service with new policies and procedures to provide a robust online service. We mobilised to online support quickly and efficiently and linked in with community supports to support the wellbeing of clients in high risk groups. We worked with a high volume of clients with a fast response and worked in partnership with a range of organisations. The speed and variety of online sessions developed; approximately 12 days after lockdown we had a 7 day week telephone support service and a schedule of approximately 40 weekly online sessions. We also attracted funding to provide approximately 80 families with weekly food parcels and essential household items for 15 weeks. Our staff and volunteers adapted and carried out all sorts of tasks to ensure this worked for the benefits of our clients and community. Providing consistent service to people in Scotland experiencing distress in their lives. Passed a milestone of having received 1 million calls answered to our service since opening (July 2020). Going from delivering face to face counselling to telephone counselling virtually overnight in order to avoid any break in service for clients. We have maintained our heat targets and have responded to several crisis calls particularly as Lockdown went on. Our staff team have shown a commitment and compassion to the individuals we are there to help while dealing with their own anxieties and stresses which have come about due to. We managed to continue supporting clients who were able to switch to telephone or online counselling within a week. My team of counsellors was very flexible and adapted extremely well to the new way of working. Client feedback suggests that our counselling service and support service was a lifeline for carers."

20. Have you found anything particularly helpful or inspiring during Covid-19?

Commitment of volunteer counsellors, with 90%+ transferring to online. Given people new skills and knowledge that may be useful for the future. The willingness of our staff and volunteers to help. How volunteers staff and clients have adapted to the new way of working. Organisations working together to help. Funding bodies contacted us to offer help; they provided swift payment with very little requirements for application forms etc. It made an extraordinary difference to our work. Staff energy in keeping up their commitment to the service to deliver care to those in distress and to those experiencing suicidal ideation. People's capacity for change and adapting to new ways of delivering and receiving Counselling- also the therapeutic relationships built with clients who we have never met in person reinforced the skills and commitment our team have had. One positive is that we had to switch to digital ways of providing counselling and this would never have happened so quickly. We are now able to offer a mix of telephone, video calling and face to face counselling.

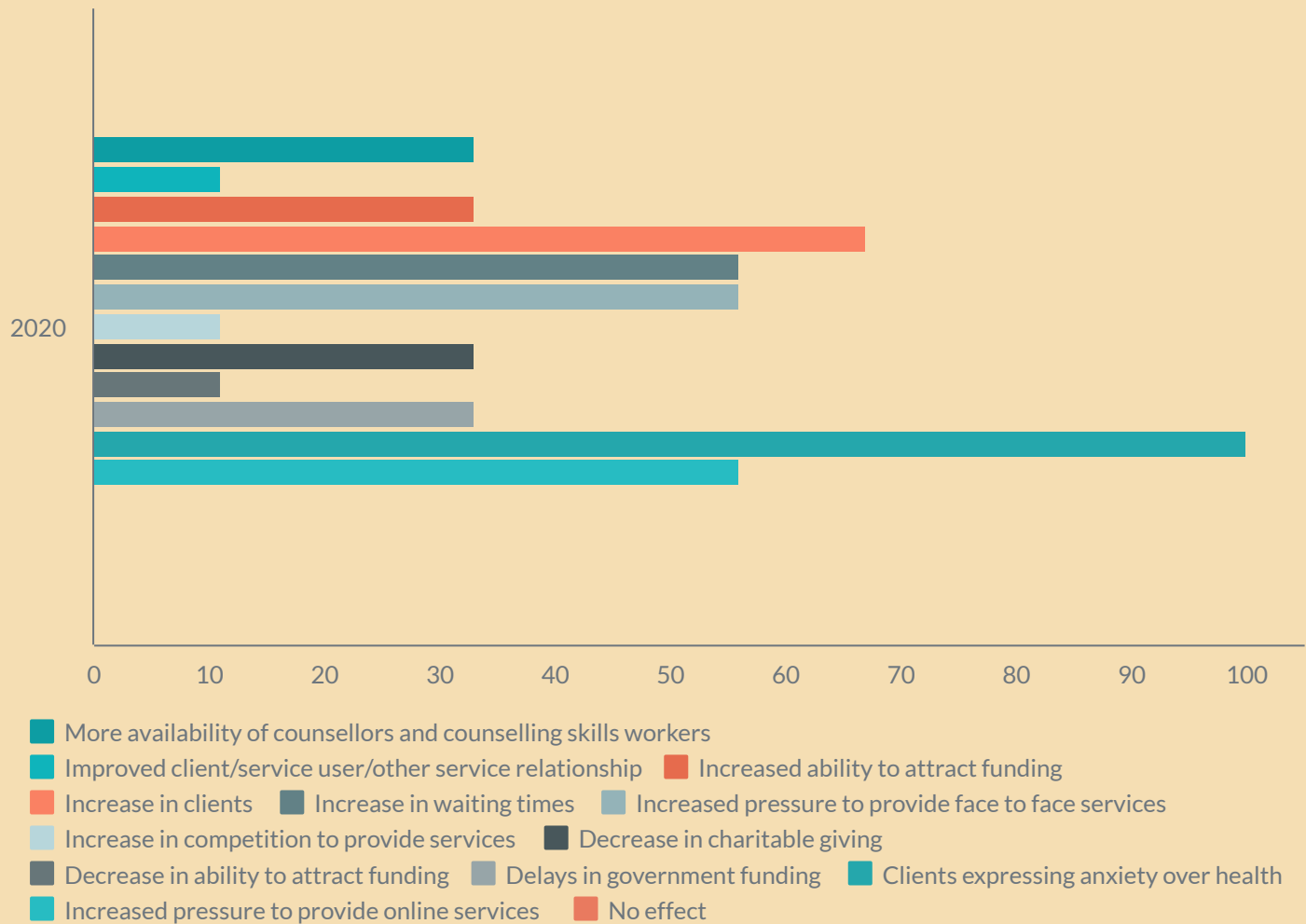
21. What are your hopes for next year?

To move on to a new normal as soon, safely and well as possible. Grow number of counselling hours. Increase in our funding and to be recognised in our own right. To be able to offer a blended service to suit the needs of clients. To go back to normal keeping what we learned. To identify and secure funding for our volunteer service which has operated for 5 years without funding; the increase in demand around mental health will hopefully allow this to happen. To keep up service level and to further roll out webchat. 80% of people who use webchat are under 34 years of age. It is extremely popular way for people to engage. That we are still here to develop and hone our skills as practitioners delivering Counselling & support on a robust menu of platforms to suit the clients and to be as accessible as possible. Ideally to be delivering mostly face to face but to embed the new ways of working as well. That the risks associated with the coronavirus pandemic are well contained and wellbeing of people increases overall.

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 on your counselling and counselling skills services when your services reopen?



All COSCA Recognised Organisations agreed that they expected clients to be expressing anxiety over their health. Most also expect an increase in clients (67%), increased waiting times (56%), increased pressure to provide face to face services (56%), and increased pressure to provide online services (56%). In short, Recognised Organisations are expecting more people to be seeking their help after this crisis.

"There will be losses and gains going forward- I think as a service we have a duty of care to the individuals who seek our help and we will continue to instill hope in those we work with".

Conclusions

This year's survey has seen a lot of changes due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but it also shows that the high quality of Counselling and Counselling Skills services provided by COSCA Recognised Organisations in Scotland hasn't changed at all.

With 89% of services offering one to one and face to face services we can see that lockdown had a serious effect on Counselling Skills and Counselling services. The majority of Organisations had to find new ways of supporting those clients and service users practically overnight. 56% switched to delivering services via telephone and 78% online. The challenges of this sudden switch to new platforms was cited by 78%, but even more challenging was training their counsellors, psychotherapists and counselling skills users to use those platforms 89%. This could have been due to those working with clients and service users having to support them to use the new way of working. Whatever the reason this was still a great undertaking.

This big switch was not taken lightly. COSCA Recognised Organisations required their staff and volunteers to undertake additional training with 44% of them providing training in house. The rest provided resources by directing them to suitable training.

There has been a little evidence that clients and services users have attended more sessions and there have been fewer DNAs. It is unclear if this is due to the individual needing more support or that the use of technologies makes the service more accessible. This will be interesting to explore further. The reduction in client donations must be considered if services continue to offer more remote services. It may be due to a reduction in the incomes of clients due to the pandemic, but it also may be that donations are more readily given when clients and service users are face to face with a service.

There is also a suggestion that client demand has increased during the pandemic, but this is difficult to quantify as many services offered a variety of new services or closed their waiting lists to concentrate on supporting existing clients and service users.

I usually edit down the comments that Recognised Organisations write in response to questions 19-21 about their achievements, inspirations and hopes. This year I have left them (mostly) in their entirety as I found it quite powerful to read them as they are. The common thread is that they are proud of what they and their staff and volunteers have been able to achieve to continue to support those in need of their services.

It's been a challenging year for everyone, but COSCA Recognised Organisations have risen to that challenge and continued to provide essential services to their clients and service users. We have all learned a lot, achieving what we would not even have considered possible before the pandemic, and hopefully we will be able to put that learning to good use to develop what we offer in future.

**COSCA (Counselling &
Psychotherapy in Scotland)
16 Melville Terrace
Stirling
FK8 2NE**

Charity Registered in Scotland No. SC00188887
Charitable company limited by guarantee.
Registered in Scotland No. 142360

