



Centre for Research on Educational
and Community Services



Centre de recherche sur les services
éducatifs et communautaires

Graduate Students In Psychology's Mental Health: Needs Assessment Findings

AD HOC MENTAL HEALTH COMMITTEE AND WORKING GROUP

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RESULTS

PREVALENCE RATES

From empirical studies with graduate students

DEPRESSION
11-39%

ANXIETY
18-41%

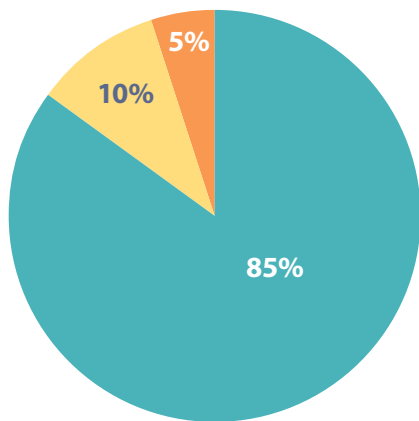
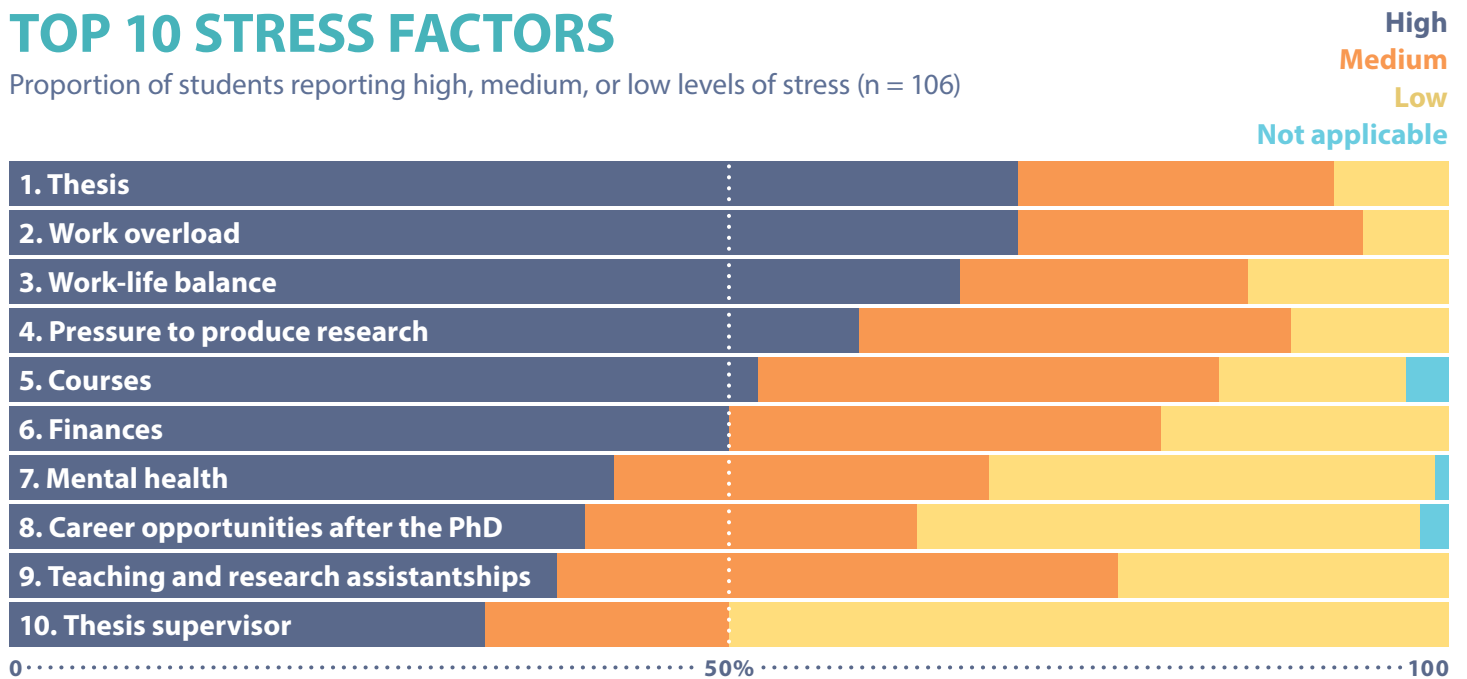
SUICIDAL IDEATION

11% (past two weeks)
12% (past year)
4.3% tried or seriously considered attempting suicide (past year)

Barreira, Basilico, & Bolotnyy, 2018; Drum et al., 2009; Evans et al., 2018

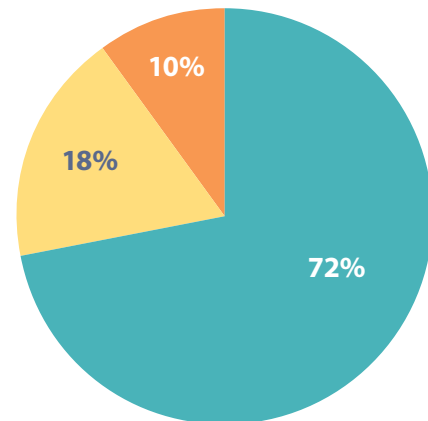
TOP 10 STRESS FACTORS

Proportion of students reporting high, medium, or low levels of stress (n = 106)



IMPROVING RESOURCES

Students who indicated that mental health resources on campus could be improved (n = 108)



NECESSITY FOR NEW RESOURCES

Students who indicated that new mental health resources were necessary on campus (n = 107)

UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

KNOWLEDGE OF SERVICES

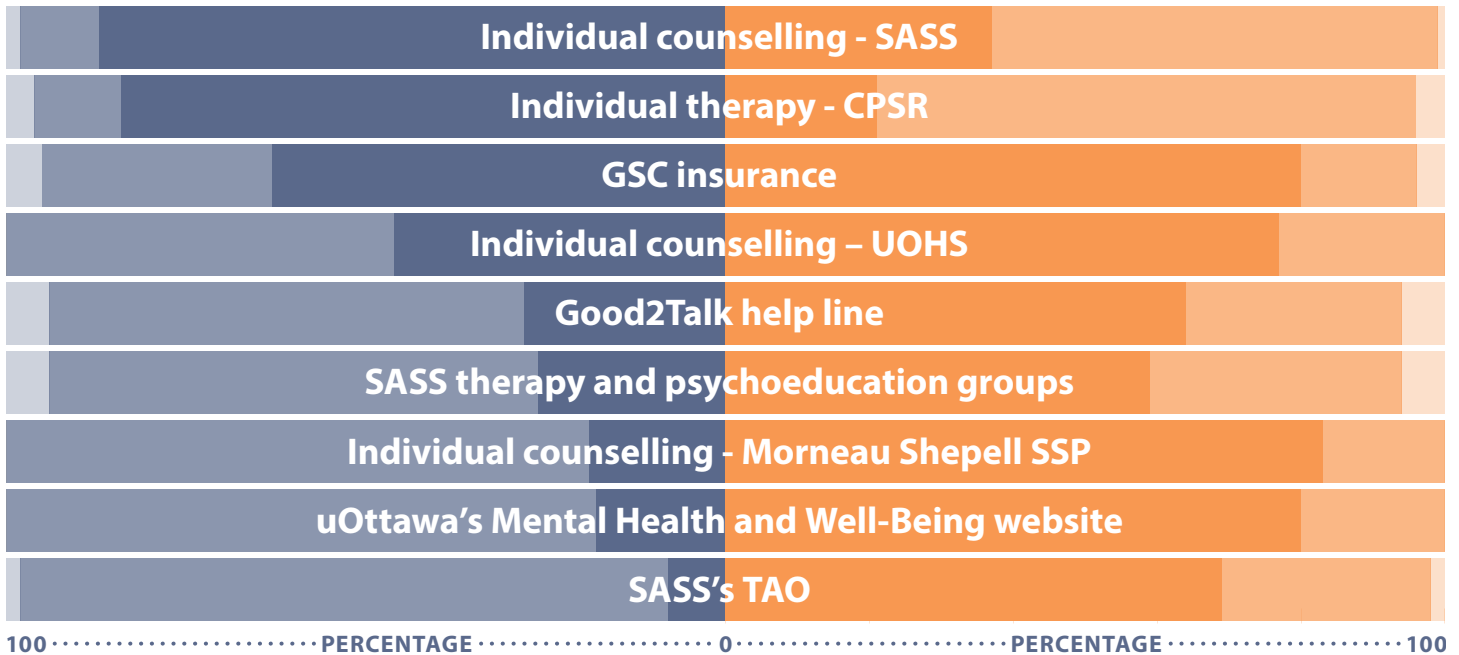
Psychology graduate students' knowledge of the University of Ottawa's mental health resources (n = 109)

■ N/A ■ Unaware ■ Aware

OPENNESS TO SERVICES

Graduate Students in Psychology's openness to the University of Ottawa's mental health resources (n = 109)

■ Open ■ Closed ■ N/A



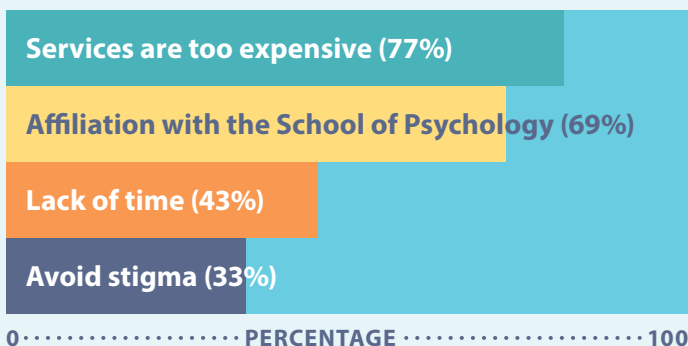
SASS Student Academic Success Services
CPSR Centre for Psychological Services and Research
GSC Green Shield Canada

UOHS University of Ottawa Health Services
SSP Student Support Program
TAO Therapy Assistance Online

UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA AND COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

BIGGEST OBSTACLES TO ACCESSING SERVICES

Proportion of students endorsing these factors as obstacles to using services on campus (n = 109)



TOP CHARACTERISTICS OF A MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCE

Important characteristics of mental health resources endorsed by the greatest proportion of students (n = 109)

1. Reduced cost
2. Evidenced-based
3. Not affiliated with the School of Psychology
4. In the official language of their choice
5. Offered by a clinical psychologist
6. Rapidly accessible

Based on the findings of the needs assessment, we recommend the following actions to address the mental health needs of graduate students:

Improving the dissemination of available mental health services to graduate students would be extremely valuable, as several available resources were virtually unknown to students, professors, or staff. A regularly updated mental-health resource guide for on-campus and community mental health resources is in development. We recommend that the Faculty of Social Sciences (FSS) make an action plan for ongoing and systematic dissemination of the guide (e.g., through their website, on orientation day with new students, during mandatory courses, and appended to course syllabi).

It would also be worthwhile to **increase the accessibility of services**. For example, by *helping students to be able to afford mental health services*. We recommend that the Graduate Student Association (GSAÉD) negotiate for improved insurance coverage for mental health. We also recommend that the FSS advocate for financial relief for upper-year students (e.g., part-time status, tuition waiver). Similarly, where possible, we recommend that the FSS seek sources of funding for graduate students that are not tied to research productivity.

We also recommend that the FSS *hire a full-time mental health professional* specifically for its graduate students. It would be especially valuable if that is able to meet the need for evidence-based services for more severe mental health difficulties.

To **help students better manage the demands of their program**, we recommend that the FSS conduct focus groups with graduate students to identify changes at the program level that could remediate students' program-related stress while maintaining program integrity. One such possible change might be to implement more pass-fail courses. We also recommend that the FSS examine ways to reduce stress arising from the thesis supervisor-supervisee relationship (e.g., through supervisor training and annual evaluation).

Relatedly, we recommend that the FSS clarify communication with students (e.g., about teaching/research assistantships, employment outside the university, changing thesis supervisors, mediating supervisor-supervisee disputes, or research expectations). We also recommend that workshops be delivered by the FSS to help graduate students develop specific skills (e.g., time management, assertiveness, mindfulness, stress management).

Finally, **helping students to overcome stigma** could remove a barrier between students and mental health service use. One major way to reduce this stigma could be through increased structured self-disclosure by professors about their own use of services. Stigma could also be reduced faculty-wide if the FSS were to offer a mental health stigma-reduction workshop to its graduate students (e.g., "The Inquiring Mind" workshop).

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