

Indigenous Post-Secondary Mental Health and Needs Assessment

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Our Partners



The Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health is funded by the Ontario Government



Agenda

- Context
- Project Objective
- Process and Methodology
- Sample breakdown
- Findings
- Next steps

Context

Statistics

- ~1.7% attend Ontario post-secondary
- 57.7% College/University Credential
- 32.9% Bachelor's degree or higher

Experiences in Post-Secondary

- Isolation
- Cultural exclusion
- Financial issues
- Racism

Mental Health

- Intergenerational Trauma
- Substance use
- Suicide

Project Objective



The primary objective of this project is to conduct a needs assessment to identify gaps that exist in supporting Indigenous post-secondary student mental health and well-being across Ontario.

With the goal of better understanding how best to improve mental health services for Indigenous students from a student and staff perspective.

Process and Methodology

Qualitative & Quantitative Design

Community Research Ethics Office (CREO)-REB approved

Consultation with various Stakeholders

Indigenous Advisory Board

Community of Practice

Council of Ontario Universities (COU)-Reference Group on
Aboriginal Education

Colleges Ontario (CO)-IPEC

Study Sample

Total

- 147 Indigenous students
- 51 Indigenous staff

Institution

- University (61%)
- College (32%)
- Indigenous Institute (7%)

Region

- Northern region (59%) (Orillia, Timmins, Sault St. Marie)
- Central region (18%) (Toronto, greater Toronto area)
- West (15%) (Hamilton, Kitchener-Waterloo, Guelph)
- East region (7%) (Bellville to Ottawa)
- South West (3%) (London, Windsor, Sarnia)



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Indigenous Students Survey



Indigenous Students & Mental Health on Campus

Have you accessed mental health services on campus? If so, have you experienced stigma when accessing mental health services?

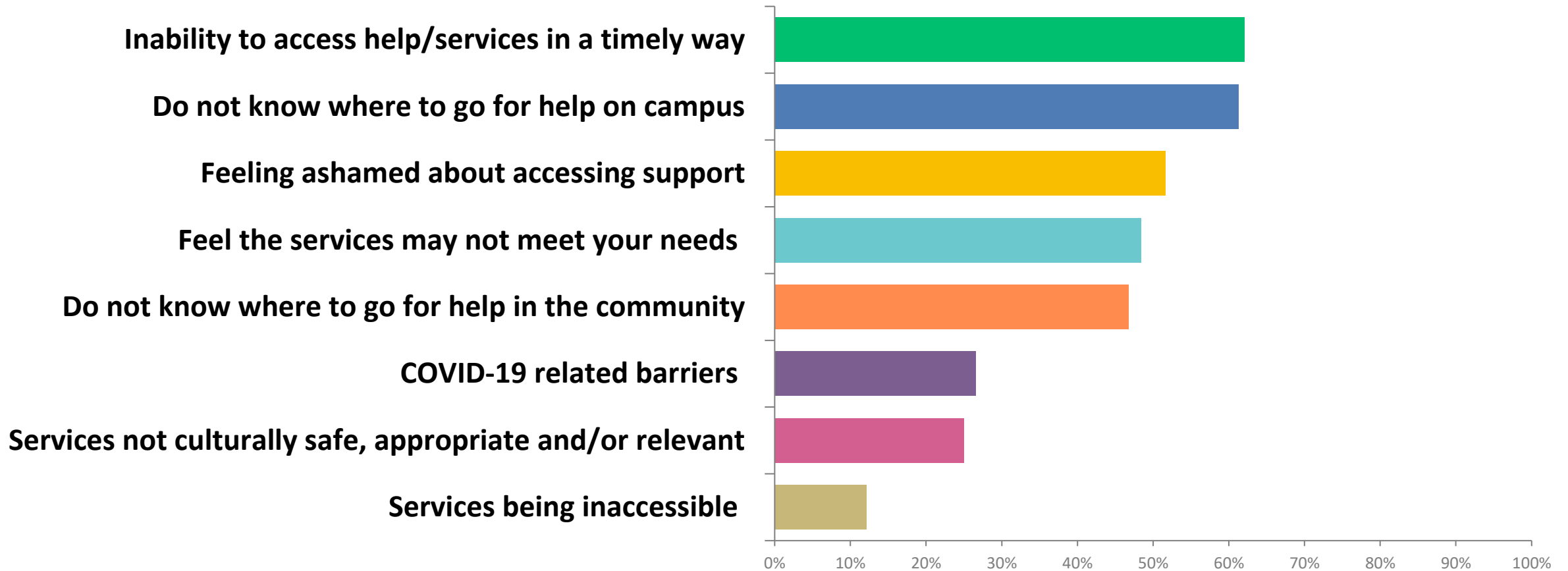
- **69%** did not access mental health services on campus
- **50% did not** experience stigma when accessing mental health services
- **47%** mental health impacted their ability to continue studies

“

My classes are hybrid. I have a counselor outside of school

”

Barriers faced by Indigenous Students



Recommendations for Improvement of Services on Campus

Accessibility of Services

- Service hour flexibility
- Online booking
- Virtual services
- Anonymity

Awareness of Services

- Improve marketing of services
- Improve services/location visibility

Culturally Inclusive/ Accessible

- Indigenous Staff
- Space for smudging
- Sharing Circles

Mental Health interventions

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- Trauma Informed Support

Psycho-education

- Webinar
- Courses

Suggestions for Improvement

“I think there should be more advertisement of what services are offered. Also, maybe the creation of talking circles or group mental health activities so people don’t feel alone”-Indigenous Student

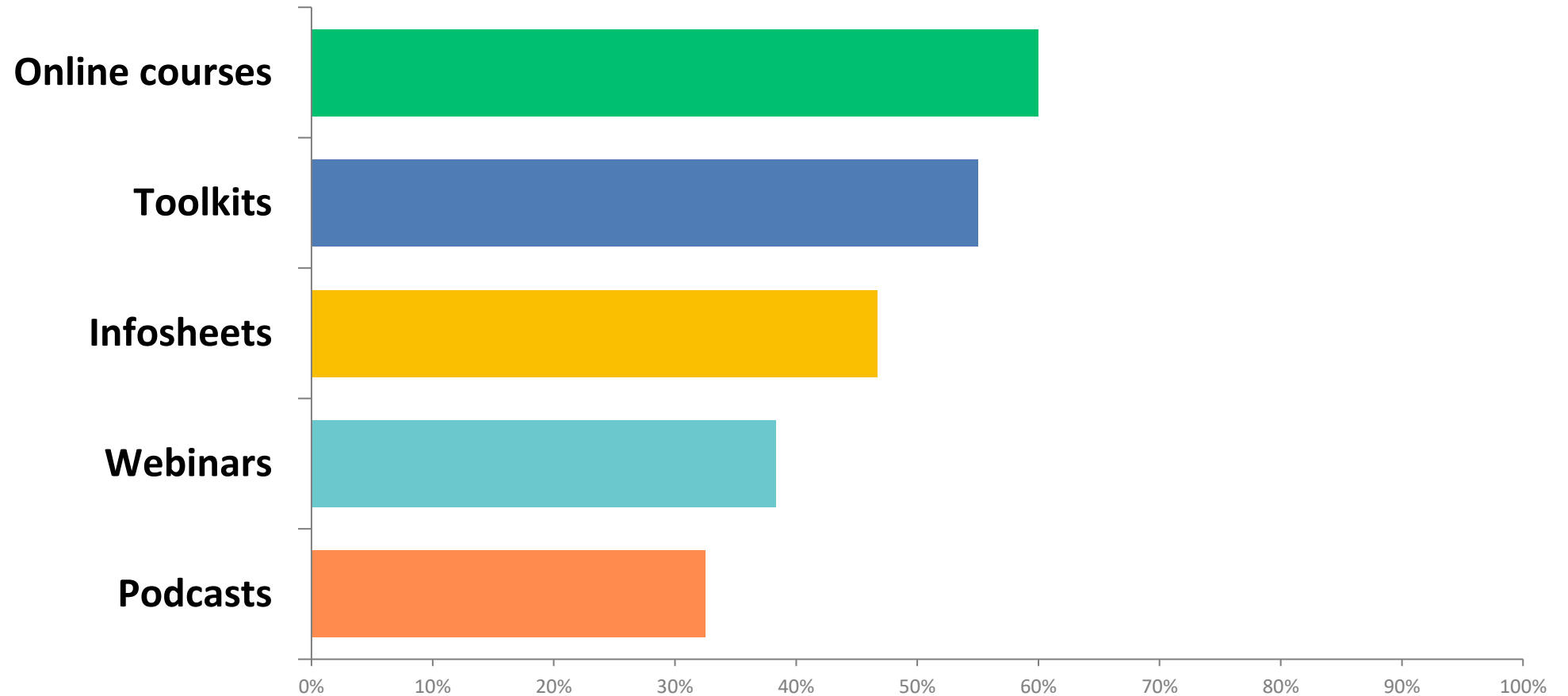
“Promotion, awareness, encouragement to use and how to use, availability. Visual and frequent reminders of all the above especially during high-stress times (midterms, end of term/finals, holidays) when students may not have capacity to search out help (or even realize it's available)” – Indigenous Student

What is Needed on Campus



*“Flexible spaces that prioritize Indigenous well-being and ways of connecting/relating, support Indigenous ways of healing/smudging/sacred fires/medicine gardens, etc; Adaptable policies that consider Indigenous ways (e.g. circle/consensus vs hierarchy)”-
Indigenous Student*

Preferred Modality of Resources





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Indigenous Staff Survey



Indigenous Staff & Mental Health on Campus

Have you experienced mental health related issues in the workplace?

Have you seen an increase and complexity of issues faced by Indigenous students?

64% experienced compassion fatigue/empathic strain exhaustion

29% took on mental health support duties they were not sufficiently trained for

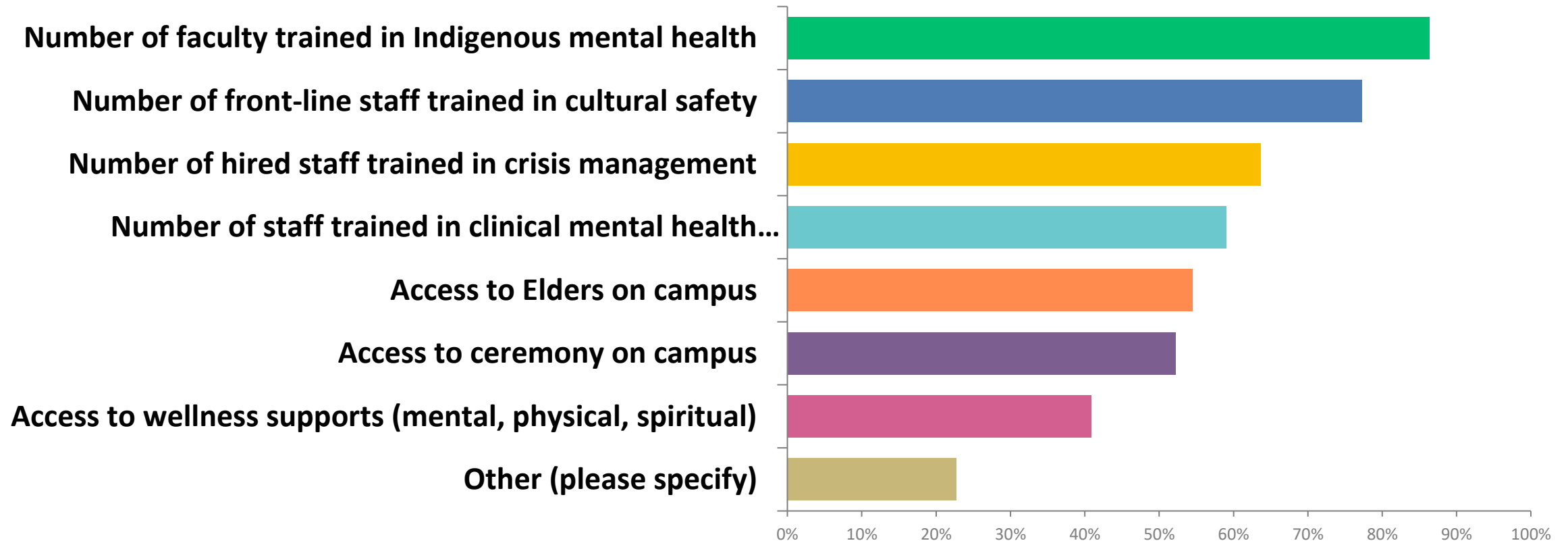
75% saw an increase in the number of Indigenous students seeking mental health supports

82% noticed an increase in complexity of issues faced by Indigenous students

Challenges Faced on Campus

“We have 1 Indigenous personal counsellor for 500 self-id students. It is a difficult task for one person to take on. But even getting this position was a challenge. We need more Indigenous counsellors. Or more culturally trained counsellors to assist our student population”

Barriers to Providing Support to Indigenous Students



Suggestions of Improvement

“We need more trained Indigenous staff to meet the high demand. At our university, we have had a second cultural counselor position posted for over a year and have not been able to find a suitable candidate”- Indigenous Staff

“Less silo-ing of supports. divisions or department names don't matter. Students need to know what services are available and where to find them. that's it for Indigenous students: campus services need to be connected to or at least know about, the Indigenous specific supports on their campus (eg. student centres, Elders, Indigenous specific counselling) so they can make appropriate referrals”- Indigenous Staff

Recommendations for a Psychologically Safe Campus

Mandatory staff training

- Cultural safety
- Trauma informed care
- Indigenous student realities on campus
- Mental health experiences amongst Indigenous communities

Training for Non-Indigenous staff/faculty

- Historical context
- Indigenous ways of knowing
- Truth and Reconciliation
- Decolonization
- Anti-oppression

Professional Development

- Micro-aggression
- Self-care
- Work life balance
- Lateral/cultural violence

Implement Indigenous ways of knowing

- Access to ceremony on campus
- Access to Indigenous specific supports

Suggestions on Improving the Workspace



“People to understand micro aggressions, understanding how to hear what is needed and ask how they can help, implement formal policies for Indigenous ways of doing things for students and valuing these ways of doing things” - Indigenous Staff

“Supporting staff capacity and wellbeing so we can continue to give our students the high level of support and expertise they need. Infusing Indigenous Knowledge into everything we do and how we conduct ourselves to create a culturally safe space for Indigenous students. Policies that support Indigenous students in being away from classes due to ceremony”- Indigenous staff

Areas that Need Further Exploration

- Indigenous specific programming
- Stigma faced by Indigenous students
- Format of resources created
- French language

Wholistic Wellbeing



“Invite Indigenous elders and healers to work with Indigenous students, needs are different and require a spiritual component to wholistic health” – Indigenous student

Next Steps

- Final report
- Creation of knowledge management resources
- Sharing Circle to be held at Cambrian College
- French inclusion

“

Consistently and continually implementing an Indigenous Empowerment Program that assist students with Culture, Self Esteem, Anxiety & Depression, Encouragement etc.

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Thank You! Nia:wen!

Questions?

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