



# Fast Moving Consumer Goods

Sector EAP analysis  
and clinical insights

  
**assure**  
PROGRAMS

## COMMENTARY

### Introduction

This report considers the psychosocial risks and insights derived from EAP (Employee Assistance Program) observations for customers in the Fast Moving Consumer Goods Sector. It is intended to support Assure Programs' business partners in exploring trends at an industry level and is best used in conjunction with each customer's individual EAP reporting and other data sources, to inform proactive mental health and wellbeing strategies.

Assure covers over one million Australians across all industry sectors including employees' family members, and in 2019 provided 65,000 hours of EAP counselling and 6,800 hours of support for critical incidents and significant events. 77% of all Assure's counselling sessions were face to face, and 95% of clients were either 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with their counselling experience.

In the Fast Moving Consumer Goods Sector, Assure provides EAP services to 10 organisations, totalling 17,000 employees plus their families. In 2019 Assure provided 2,000 counselling sessions and 130 hours of support for critical incidents and significant events in this sector.

Mental health issues are the most common reason people are accessing EAP at Assure, comprising 35% of all presenting concerns. Because we only use experienced psychologists (not provisionally registered psychologists, counsellors, social workers or chaplains) we are able to assess and treat these issues (particularly complex and trauma-related cases) using evidence-based interventions. Additionally, if appropriate, we offer continuity of care for longer term treatment in conjunction with a GP Mental Health Care Plan, where clients can receive rebates through the Medicare system when necessary and continue to use the same Assure psychologist if they choose.

### Industry context and psychosocial risks

The Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) Sector is currently grappling with a variety of psychosocial risk factors that may increase the susceptibility of employees to mental health issues. Significant disruption has swept through the FMCG Sector, with consumers now expecting a high degree of choice, convenience and value on demand. Rather than purchasing the same items time and time again out of loyalty, consumers are now more likely to shop in a targeted way and prioritise factors such as price and value. The proliferation of new services specialising in convenience (e.g., online food delivery and shopping platforms) has also placed pressure on other organisations to adapt to the busy lifestyles of consumers and meet their growing desire for convenience, speed and instant gratification from the comfort of their own home. This makes for a highly competitive global landscape, necessitating a high degree of adaptability, innovation, and out-of-the-box thinking under high pressure for personnel working in this sector.

Furthermore, rapidly evolving technology trends are also transforming the way employees work. By taking advantage of the right metrics, organisations can more effectively understand and meet the needs and preferences of their target consumers, improve operational efficiency, and manage multifaceted supply chain requirements. However, this can be a complex and cognitively demanding task for employees in this sector, given the advanced skill sets required to fully take advantage of the data available. Furthermore, as new technologies accelerate shifts in supply and demand, pressure is increased across all parts of this sector to evolve quickly in order to embrace new consumer trends. This may increase the risk of burnout for those who do not have effective coping strategies in place to manage this pressure.

Although these factors present opportunities for the growth and development of professionals working in this sector, these sector-wide changes have also redefined many employees' roles and ways of working. For example, smaller organisations may need to dramatically revise their strategic approach in order to challenge the status quo, effectively compete with larger competitors and secure greater market share. The resultant strategic realignments, loss of jobs, and dramatic shifts in how roles are carried out on a day-to-day basis may pose significant threats to psychological wellbeing and job satisfaction.

Above and beyond the specific requirements of an individual's role, it is critical to ensure that employees within the FMCG Sector are equipped with the coping skills required to maintain their resilience and seek support when it is needed. This may involve equipping managers with the capabilities required to check-in with their staff on a regular basis, gently draw their attention to the support services available (e.g., Assure's EAP service), and actively promote activities that support wellbeing.

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Significant disruption has swept through the FMCG Sector, with consumers now expecting a high degree of choice, convenience and value on demand. This may place pressure on those working in this industry to innovate, solve problems and “think outside of the box”.

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### EAP Insights

The information on the following pages summarises EAP utilisation for Assure’s customers in the FMCG Sector over the past two years, in comparison with all other sectors. We can make the following observations and insights:

- Overall utilisation increased slightly from 5.13% in 2018 to 6.79% in 2019, compared to 8.15% for the all-sector average in 2019. This increasing degree of utilisation reflects improving levels of awareness and acceptance of mental health issues between 2018 and 2019. However, it is notable that overall utilisation in the FMCG Sector is lower compared to other sectors. Although this may suggest that the proactive management of psychosocial risks in this sector has been effective so far, it also presents an opportunity in 2020 and beyond to further increase the awareness and acceptance of mental health issues. Doing so may subsequently increase the uptake of Assure’s EAP service in this sector.
- It is notable that the most common age of clients is somewhat higher in the FMCG Sector than in other sectors, particularly in the age brackets of 40-49 (30% in FMCG compared to 24% across all sectors) and 50+ (17% in FMCG compared to 15% across all sectors). This may suggest that older employees may be more likely than younger employees to be willing to reach out for support from EAP.
- 40% of clients were in their first 2 years of tenure, and 17% were in their first 2 to 4 years. Although this is consistent with other sectors, it was notable that compared to 2018, more people in their first 2 years of tenure and fewer people past 8 years of tenure accessed EAP during 2019 (33% and 35% respectively for 2018).
- Substantially more clients were male (45%) than for other sectors (37%). This may be consistent with the overall gender mix of employees in this sector, and also highlights the importance of addressing mental health stigma in male-dominated workplaces within the FMCG Sector.
- Access by family members was consistent between 2018 and 2019 (both 13%), and also consistent with the rate of utilisation across all sectors (also 13%).
- Employee awareness about their EAP service comes most commonly from their supervisor (29%), which was much higher than in other sectors (20%). This was followed by HR or People & Culture (21%), which was more or less consistent with other sectors (22%). This data suggests that equipping supervisors and HR personnel with the capabilities required to support vulnerable staff members and offer a referral to EAP when needed may be of particular importance in this sector, given that these personnel are the primary gateway to EAP for many employees.
- The mix of workplace concerns (33%) and personal concerns (67%) was consistent with other sectors and remained stable. However, it should be noted that whilst relationships and mental health issues are classified as personal concerns, they often have their origin in workplace pressures. Furthermore, workplace issues can often be a factor underpinning stress in the home environment.
- Among personal concerns, relationship issues between couples or within families anxiety were the most commonly reported (28%), which was slightly higher than the all-sector average (26%). This was followed by symptoms of anxiety, including pre-existing anxiety (18%), which was less than the all-sector average (23%).
- Among workplace concerns, excessive workload pressures (17%), conflict with supervisors (10%) and concerns about performance and reduced productivity (9%) were the most common. Notably, concerns about role redundancy were reported more frequently in the FMCG Sector (6%) than in other sectors (3%), which may reflect the increased psychological risks and uncertainty associated with role redefinition and change in this sector.
- Access to Assure’s Manager Support Program was primarily to manage a distressed employee or colleague (42%), which was substantially higher than the rate in other sectors (26%) and also during 2018 (38%). This may highlight the importance of providing personnel with the skills required to support those within their workplace at risk. The second most common purpose was to help employees through change, critical incidents and other stressful situations (21%), which was lower than in 2018 (25%) and also was lower than in other industries (33%).



## COMMENTARY



### Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategies

Assure has been working with a number of its customers in the FMCG Sector to develop and deliver proactive mental health and wellbeing strategies. Every organisation has its own challenges and priorities so there is no one-size-fits-all solution, but common themes include:

- Mental health awareness (for leaders and employees)
- EAP awareness: Assure has an awareness video to allow much greater reach via customer Intranets and email
- Dealing with aggressive customers and difficult customer conversations, including content tailored to the unique demands and pressures associated with FMCG work environments
- Change management
- Leading resilient teams
- Handling vicarious trauma
- Creating psychologically safe workplaces
- Wellbeing assessments and positive psychology programs have also been helpful for people who are already coping well ('surviving') but want to raise their performance to another level ('thriving').
- Electronic or virtual delivery of training and awareness programs allows employees to access them in geographically remote locations and at times that fit with rosters and business needs.

**Resilience and self-care:** Noting the increasingly complex and uncertain environment within the modern workplace, the need to build a resilient and agile workforce is critical. Research tells us that one-off resilience training simply does not cut it, so how can we create sustained behaviour change to help employees and leaders navigate our increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous work environment?

Assure has designed a program Thrive to address this, using an assessment tool based on the 6 key neuroscience pillars of resilience, that can be targeted to the specific needs of each organisation. Acknowledging the need to scale up across large, geographically dispersed workforces, this program incorporates virtual coaching via state-of-the-art technology and artificial intelligence, alongside face-to-face training and coaching programs. This approach provides an interactive and engaging way to build resilience through a comprehensive program tailored to different learning needs.

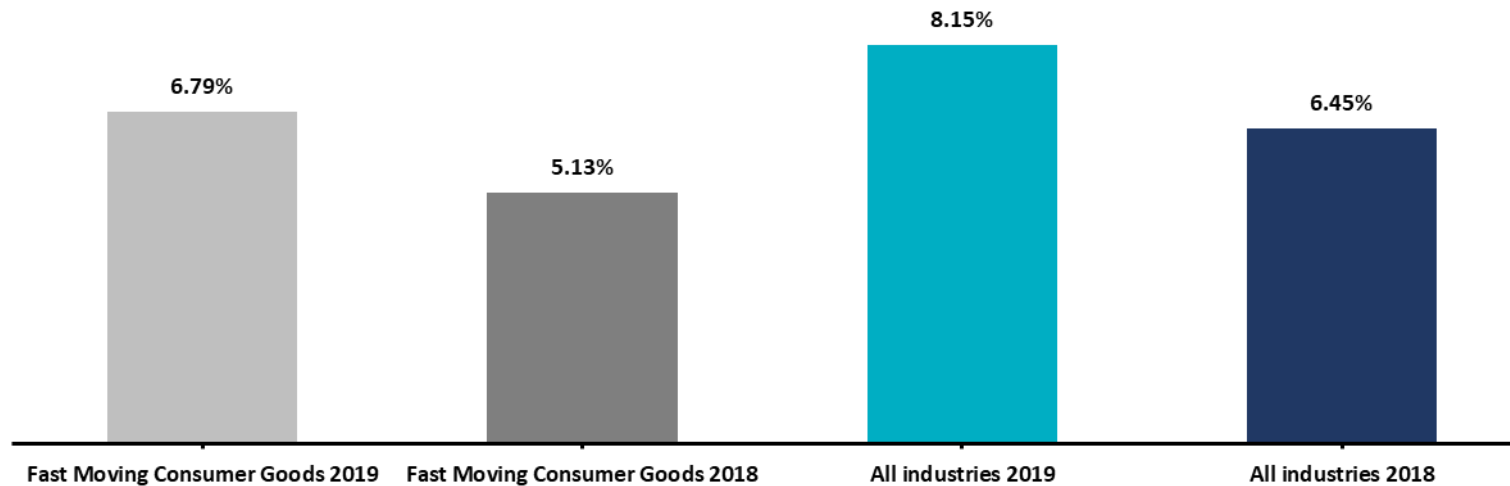
**Psychosocial risk assessments:** As a precursor to deciding on specific mental health and wellbeing initiatives, and to help target investment in the most cost effective way, we would recommend carrying out an assessment of psychosocial risks across your organisation. Assure has developed an online assessment tool the Backbone of Mental Health & Wellbeing in the Workplace which allows business leaders and employees to assess strengths, or areas to improve, within 8 key areas of clinical risk.

If you would like to discuss your strategy for proactively improving the mental health and wellbeing of your organisation, please talk to your Assure Programs Customer Care Manager or call (07) 3211 8919.

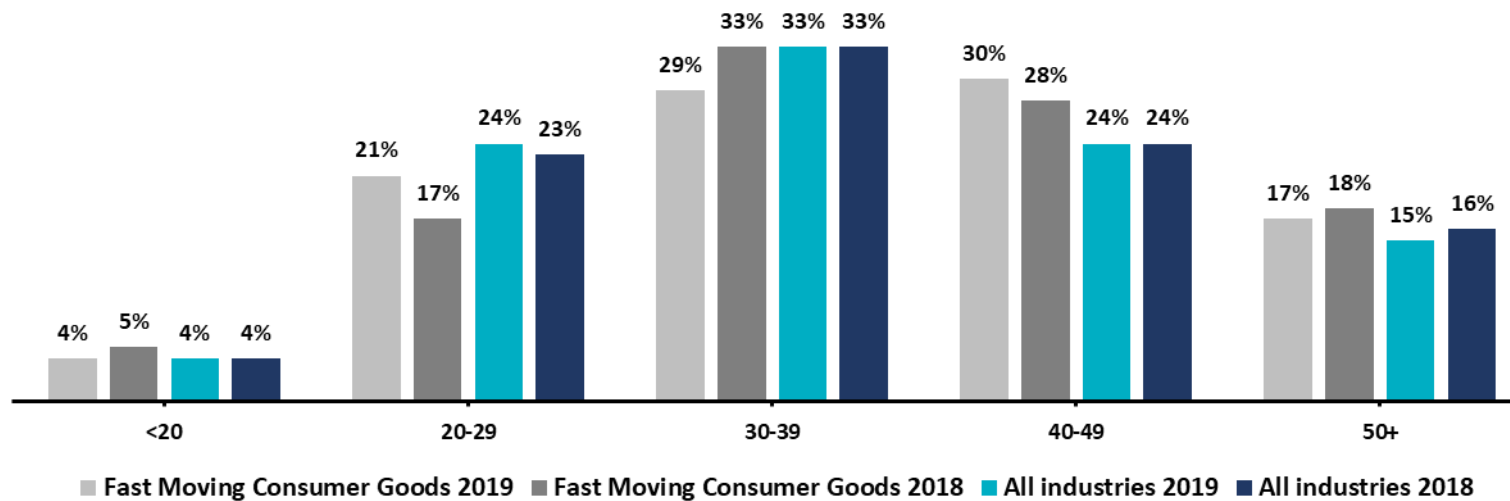
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## WHO HAS BEEN ACCESSING EAP?

### EAP Utilisation

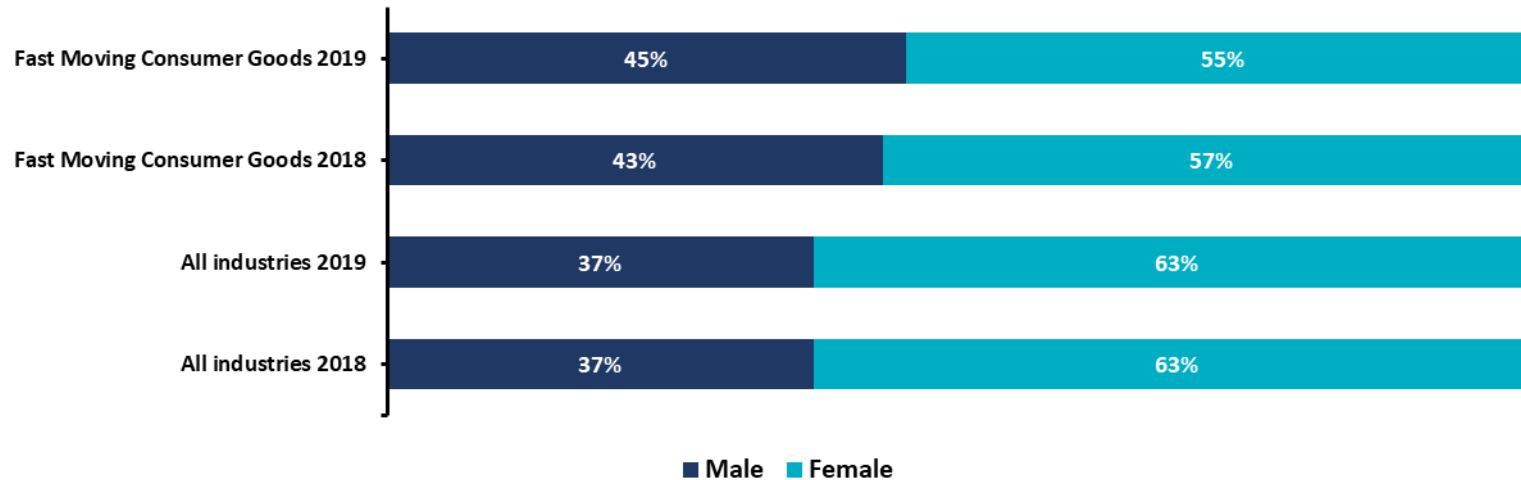


### EAP client age (as % of all clients)

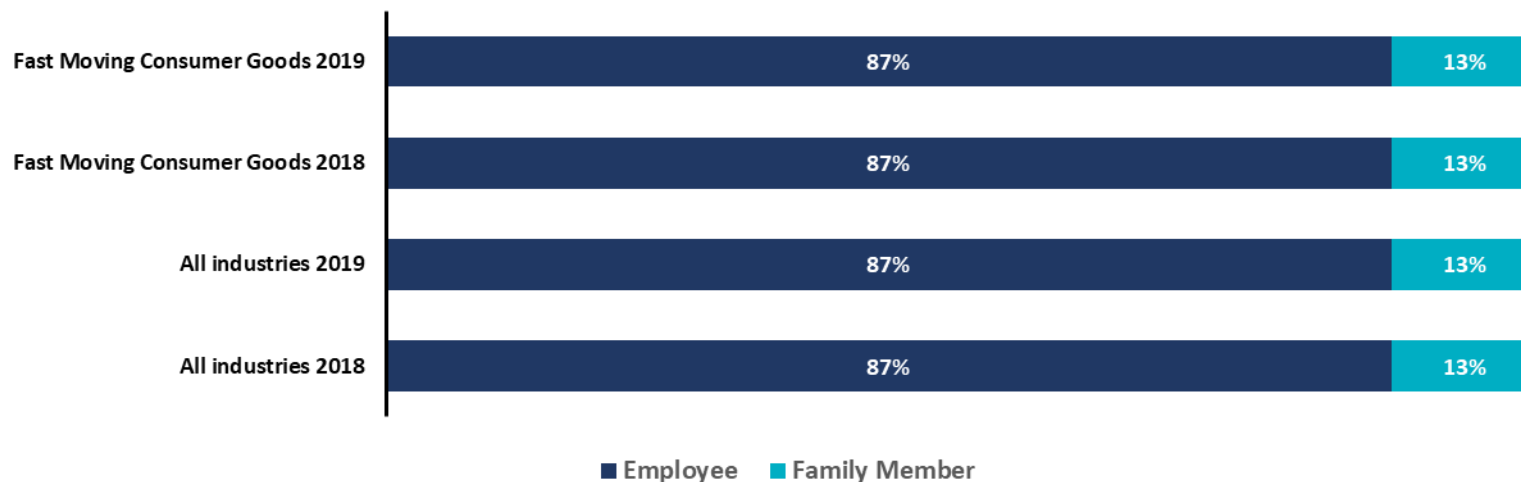


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EAP client gender (as % of all clients)

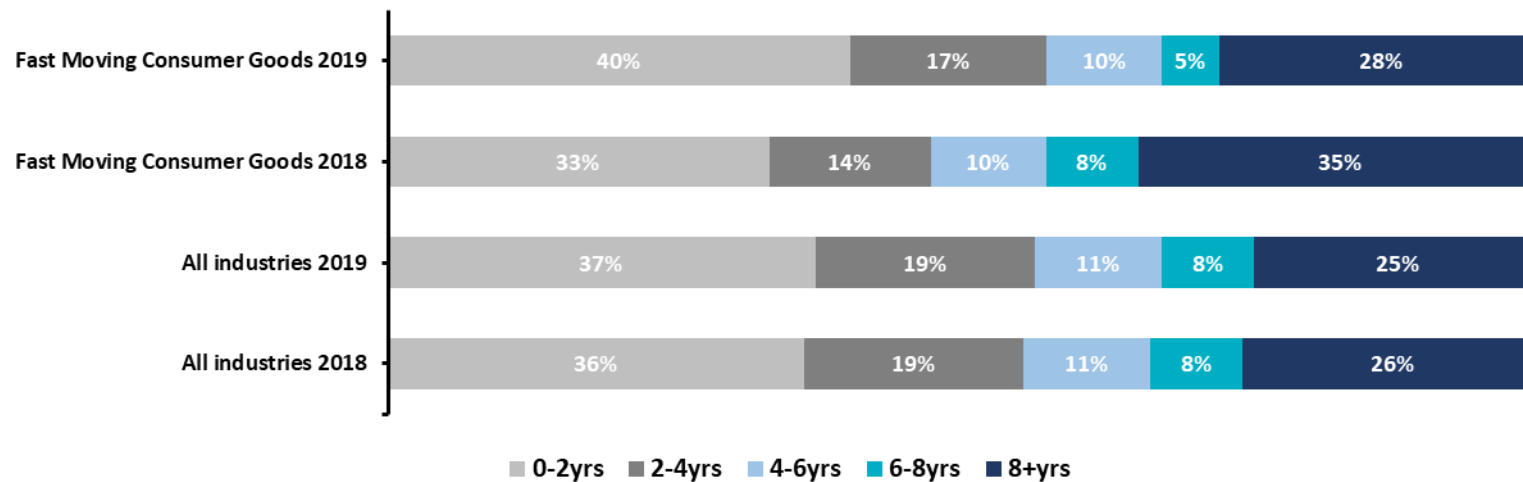


EAP client type (as % of all clients)

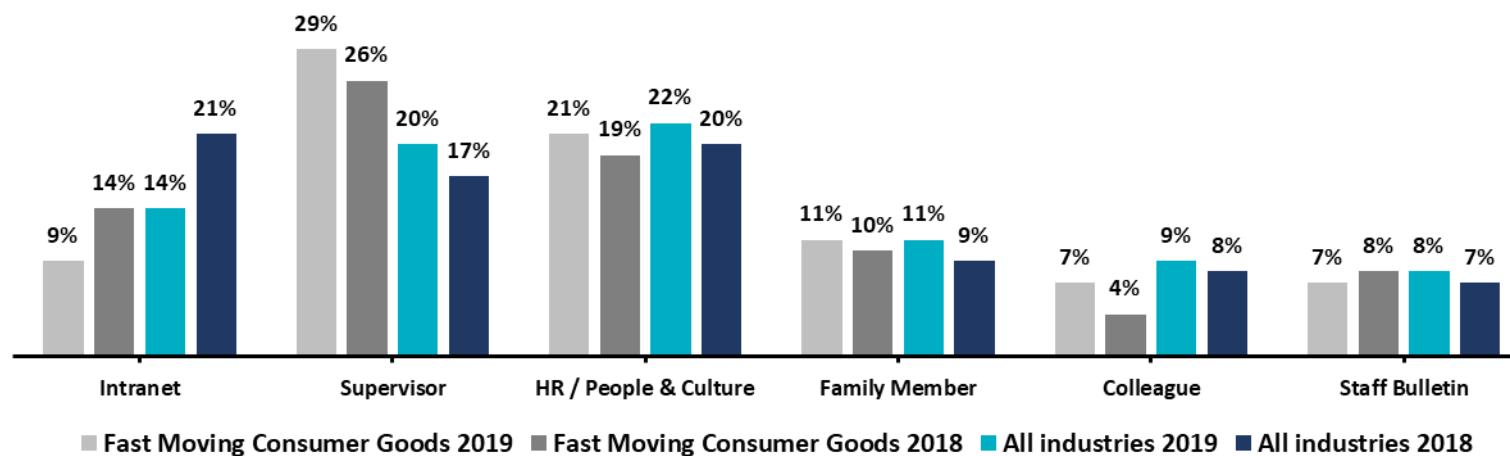


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EAP client length of employment (as % of all clients)



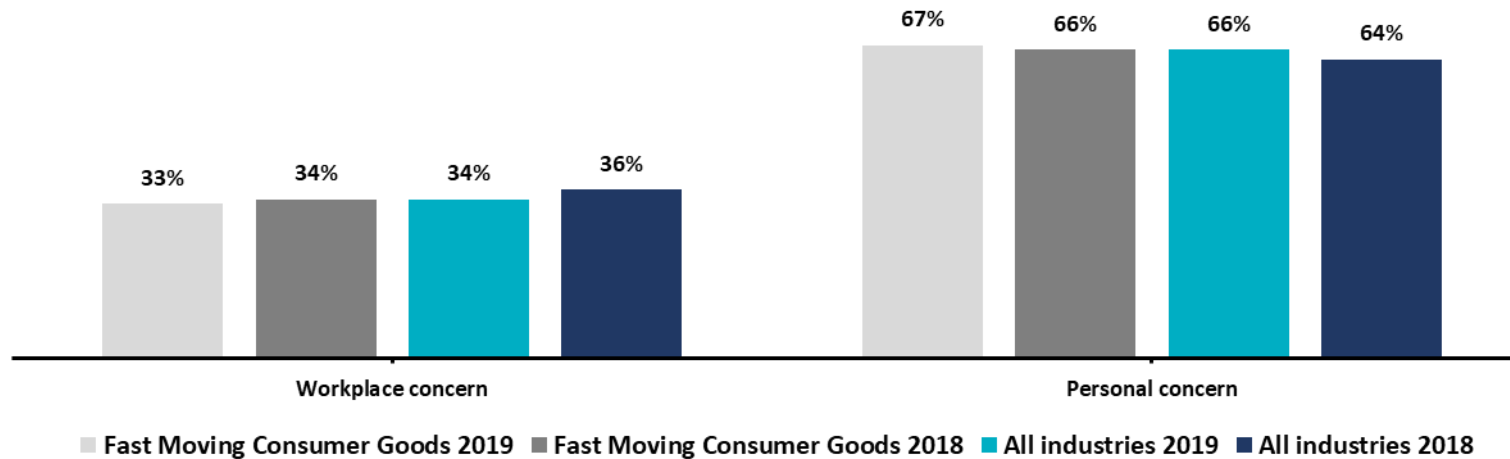
How learnt of EAP? (as % of all clients)



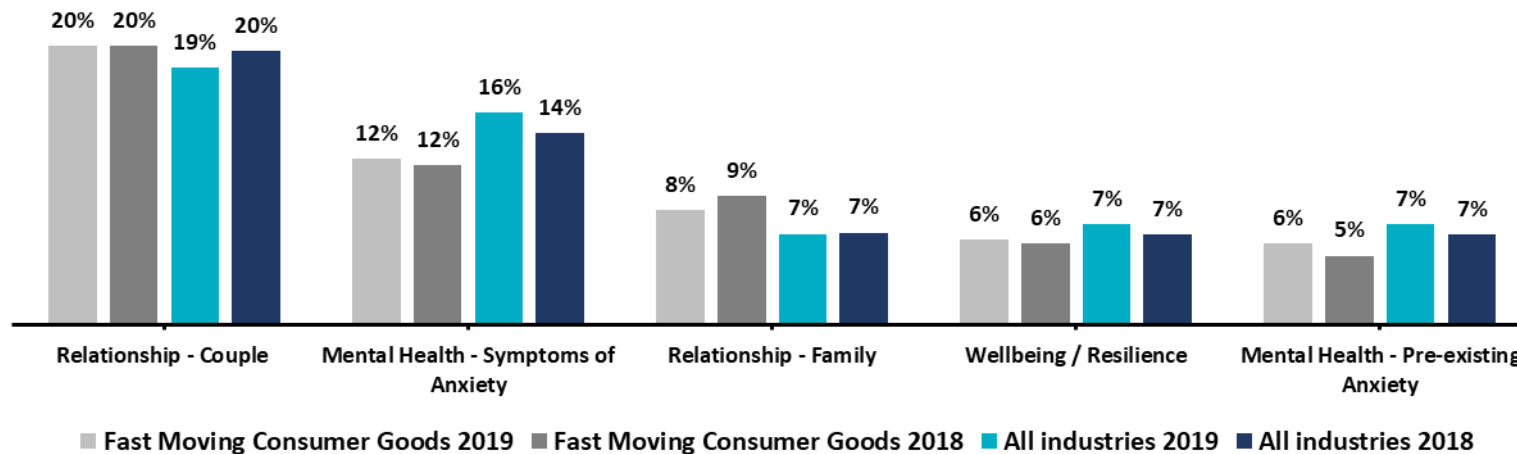
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## WHY HAVE PEOPLE BEEN ACCESSING EAP?

### Primary presenting concern (as % of all clients)



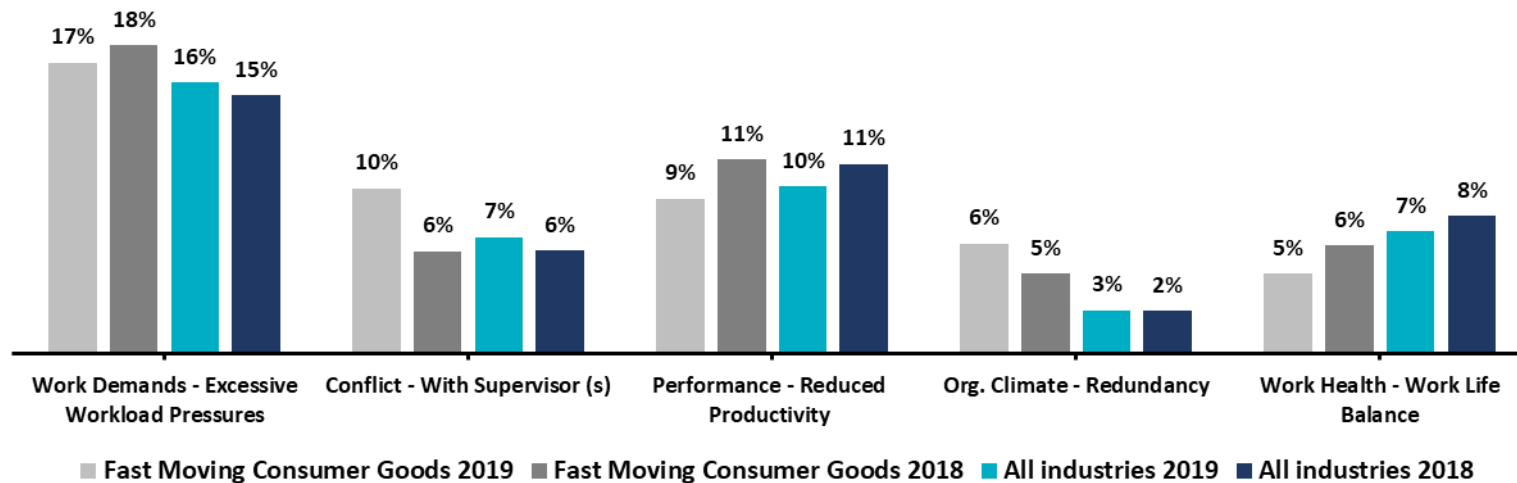
### Top 5 primary presenting concerns - PERSONAL (as % of all clients)





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Top 5 primary presenting concerns - WORKPLACE (as % of all clients)



Reasons Managers accessed Manager Support Program (as % of all MSPs)

