



Media

**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 Media 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 Media Sector, Assure provides EAP services to 11 organisations, totalling 5,100 employees plus their families. In 2019 Assure provided 800 counselling sessions and 60 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 Media Sector is currently grappling with a variety of psychosocial risk factors that may increase the susceptibility of employees to mental health issues, with potential implications for EAP utilisation as a result. Significant disruption has swept through the Media Sector, with consumers now expecting a high degree of choice, convenience and value on demand and on a cross-platform basis. As such, finding an appropriate balance between the demand for high-quality content and the need for longer-term efficiency may be more important now than ever before.

For individuals and teams alike, this sharpened focus has significant implications for the quantity and pace of work undertaken on a daily basis. Developing and acquiring the best content can pose significant demands in terms of the need for rapid creativity and innovation under high pressure. Furthermore, the availability of 'big data' has increased the importance of leveraging available metrics in a meaningful way without compromising trust, privacy, and data ownership laws. By taking advantage of the right metrics, organisations are better positioned to understand and meet the needs and preferences of their target consumers. Inherent to these trends is the need for constant adaptability, critical thinking capability, and resilience in the face of rapid change.

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 platforms, data, and consumer demands. This may increase the risk of burnout for those who do not have effective coping strategies in place to manage this pressure.

In addition to this ever-changing landscape, the decline of traditional media channels (e.g., print journalism) and rise in the popularity of digital media channels (e.g., online advertising) continues to transform the way organisations and their employees operate in this sector. This has led the decline of some traditional careers (e.g., copywriters) and increased the demand for digital media experts in areas such as programming, communications, web development and design.

Although this presents 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, a person who has developed a career in print journalism may need to adapt their skill set to different types of media. These 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.

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As significant disruption in the Media Sector accelerates shifts in supply and demand, pressure is increased across all parts of this sector to evolve quickly in order to embrace new platforms, data, and consumer demands. Although this may pose a risk to employee mental wealth and wellbeing, it also reflects a valuable opportunity for businesses to strengthen the adaptability and resilience of their people in a proactive manner.

As is evident in current levels of EAP utilisation, HR personnel and supervisors have a critical role to play when it comes to facilitating contact between staff and the provision of support through EAP.

EAP Insights

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

- Overall utilisation decreased slightly from 7.72% in 2018 to 6.70% in 2019, compared to 8.15% for the all-sector average in 2019. This stable degree of utilisation reflects consistent levels of awareness and acceptance of mental health issues between 2018 and 2019. It is notable that overall utilisation in the Media Sector is slightly 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 substantially lower in the Media Sector than in other sectors, particularly in the age bracket of 20-29 (40% in Media compared to 24% across all sectors). This may reflect a younger workforce overall in this sector, or alternatively suggest that younger employees may be more likely than older employees to be willing to reach out for support from EAP.
- 45% of clients were in their first 2 years of tenure, and 24% were in their first 2 to 4 years. Compared to other sectors, this suggests that employees in the Media Sector who are early in their tenure may be more likely to utilise Assure's EAP service than those with comparable tenure in other sectors.
- Slightly more clients were female (66%) than for other sectors (63%). This may be consistent with the overall gender mix of employees in this sector, especially for younger employees. It is also notable that a greater proportion of males are accessing EAP in 2019 (34%) than in 2018 (29%).
- Access by family members was slightly higher in 2019 (10%) than in 2018 (13%). This rate of utilisation was somewhat lower than the rate across all sectors during 2019 (13%).
- Employee awareness about their EAP service comes predominately from HR or People & Culture (42%), which was substantially higher than in other sectors (22%). This data suggests that equipping 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. By way of contrast, hearing about EAP from a supervisor was less common in the Media Sector (8%) than in other industries (20%), reflecting a potential need to educate more supervisors about how to refer staff on when needed.
- The mix of workplace concerns (36%) and personal concerns (64%) was consistent with other sectors and remained more or less 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, symptoms of anxiety (including pre-existing anxiety) were the most commonly reported concern (27%), which is higher than the all-sector average (23%). This was also accompanied by concerns about relationship issues between couples, including loss & grief (27%), which again is higher than the all-sector average (23%).
- Among workplace concerns, excessive workload pressures (24%) and work life balance (10%) were the most commonly reported. It was notable that these concerns about excessive workload pressures and work life balance were both more frequently reported in the Media Sector than in other sectors (which were 16% and 7% respectively).
- Access to Assure's Manager Support Program was primarily to help employees through change, critical incidents and other stressful situations (43%), which was substantially higher during 2019 than during 2018 (20%). This rate was also much higher than in other industries (33%). This may be reflective of the high-pressure and rapidly evolving nature of work in the Media Sector. There was also a substantial reduction in seeking advice about on referring employees to EAP (29% in 2019, down from 50% in 2018), reflecting an opportunity to educate managers about making appropriate referrals.

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Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategies

Assure has been working with a number of its customers in the Media 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), including how to support staff in need and refer them to EAP when required
- 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
- Change management
- Leading resilient teams, particularly in the face of a rapidly evolving marketplace
- 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 dispersed locations and at times that fit with business requirements.
- A number of customers have looked at extending Assure's support to their clientele, as a way to make their client offering more competitive.

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?

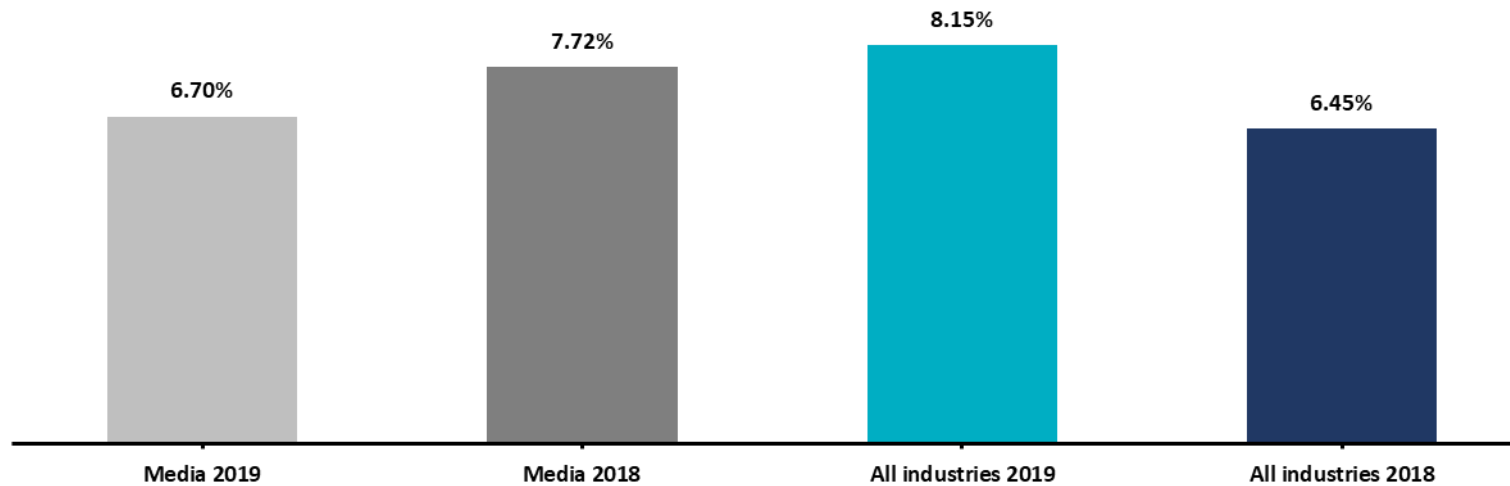
Assure has designed a program Thrive to address this, using an assessment tool based on the 6 key neuroscience pillars of resilience, that can be targeted to the specific needs of each organisation. Acknowledging the need to scale up across large, geographically dispersed workforces, this program incorporates 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.

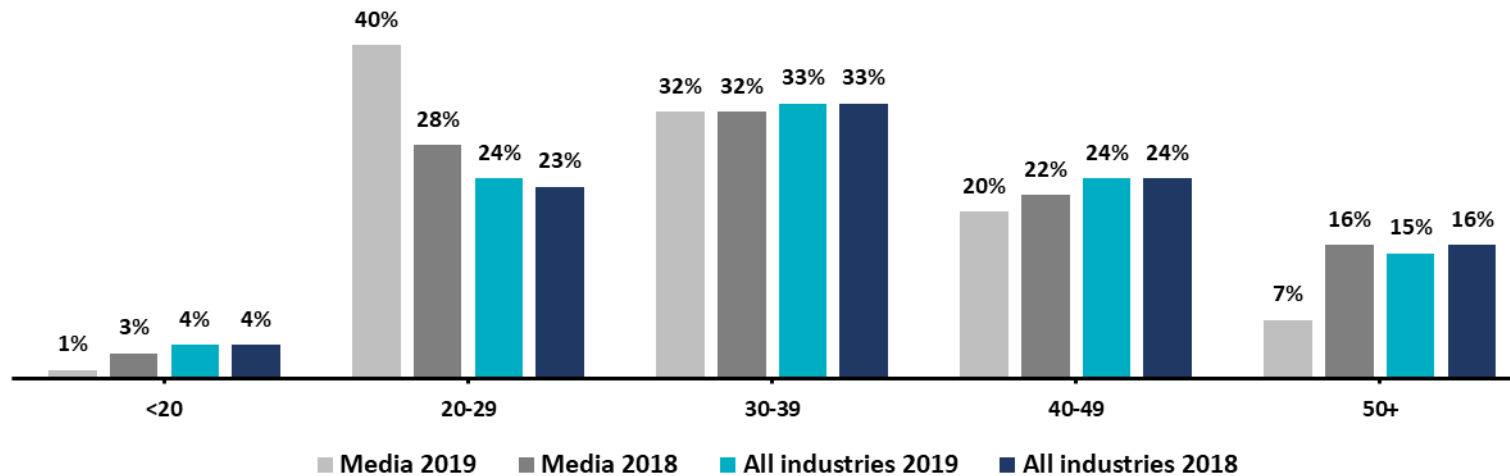
If you would like to discuss your strategy for proactively improving the mental health and wellbeing of your organisation, please talk to your Assure Programs Customer Care Manager or call (07) 3211 8919.

WHO HAS BEEN ACCESSING EAP?

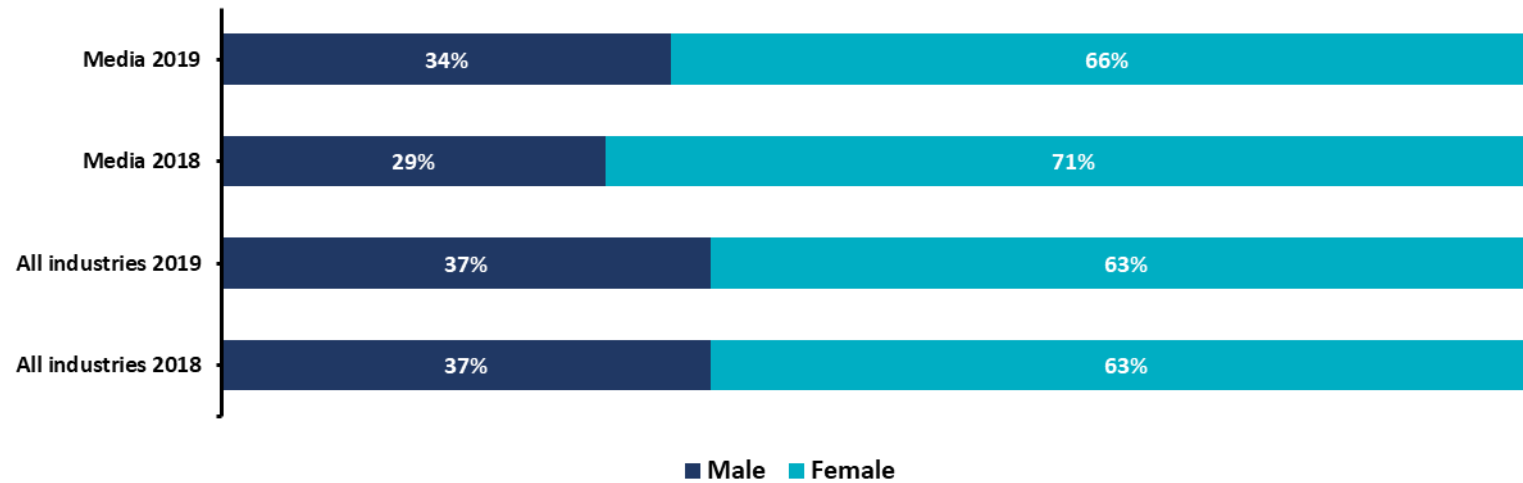
EAP Utilisation



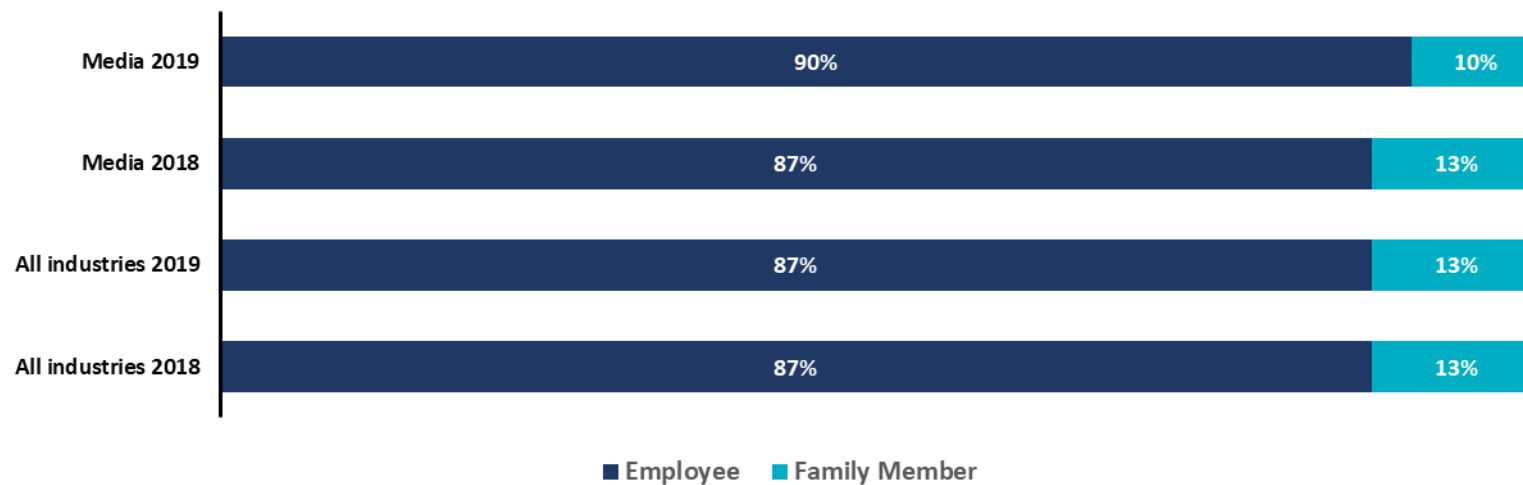
EAP client age (as % of all clients)



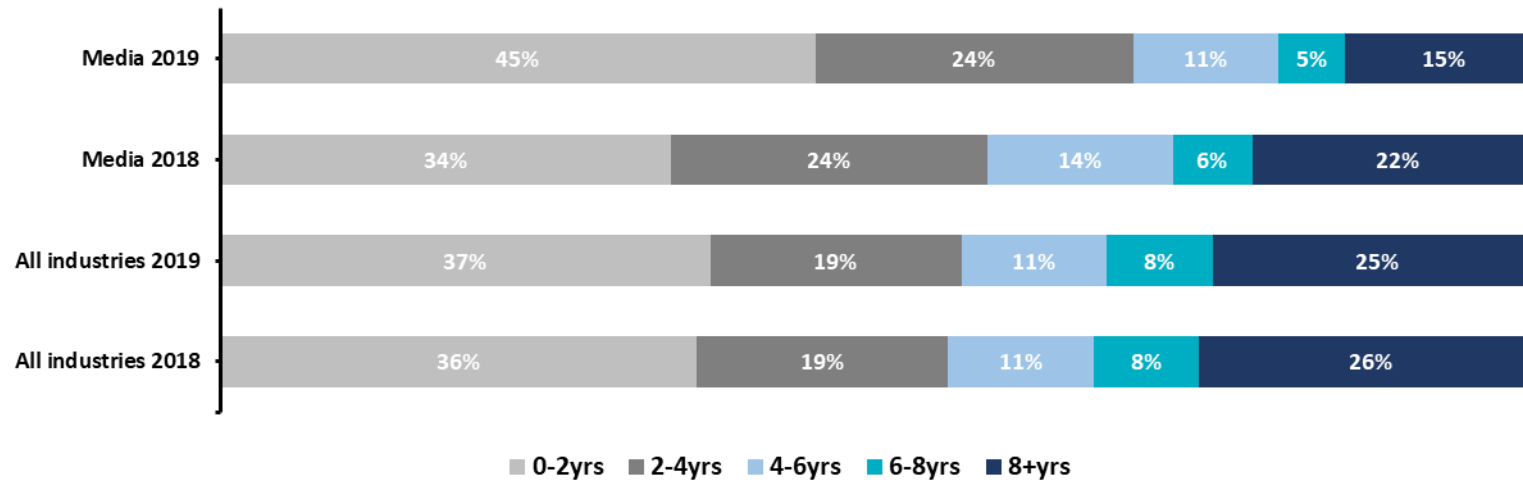
EAP client gender (as % of all clients)



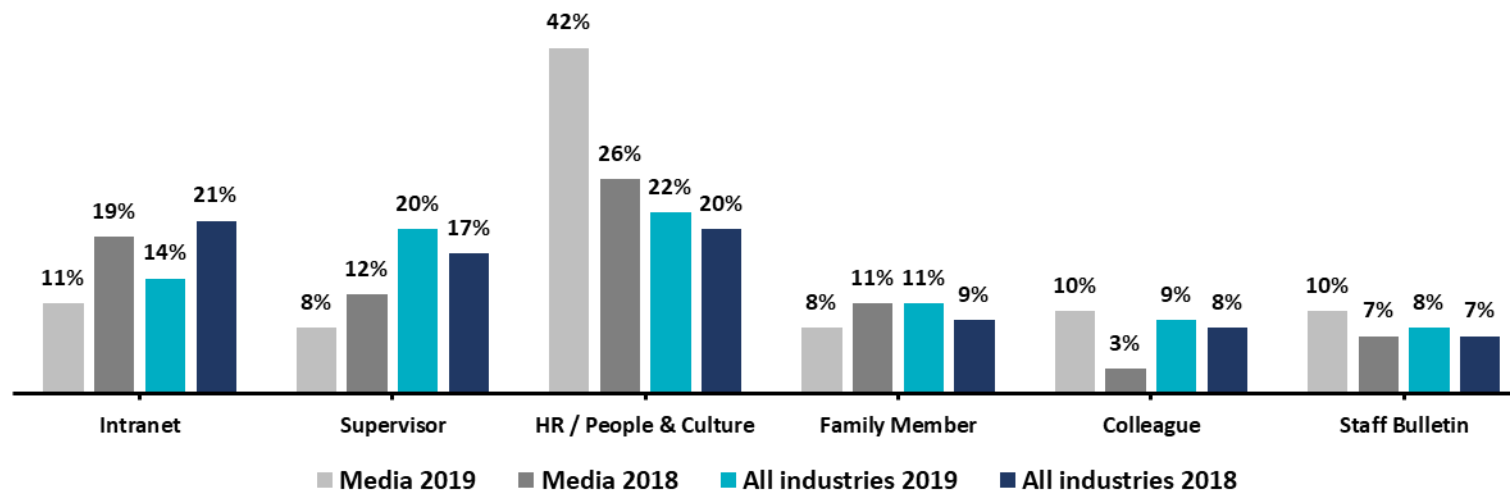
EAP client type (as % of all clients)



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

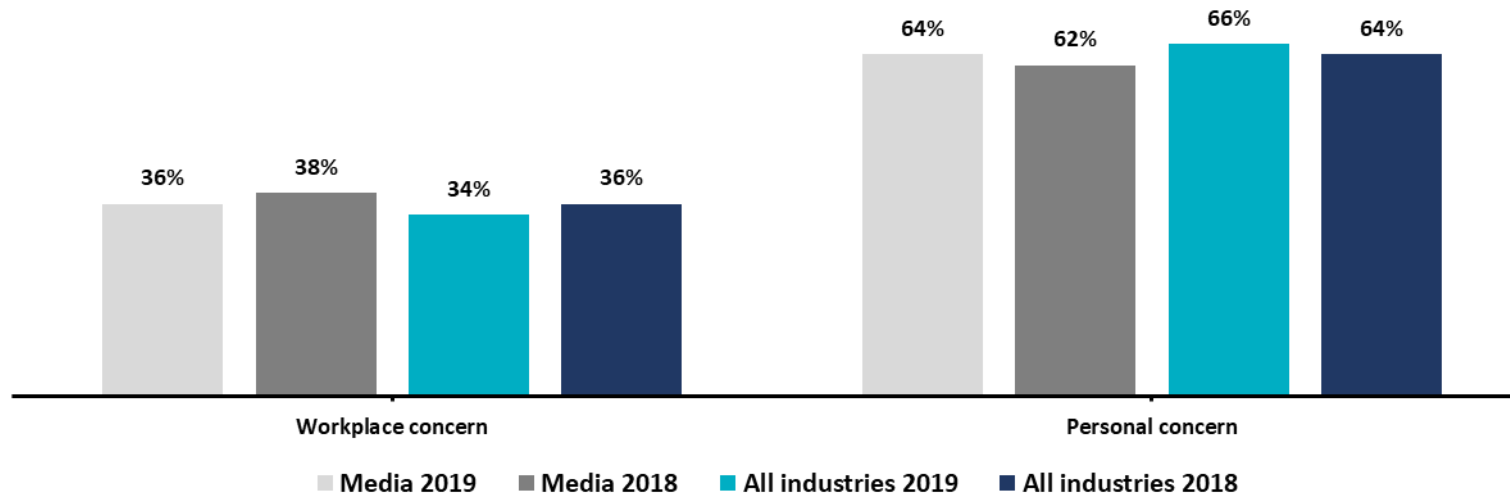


How learnt of EAP? (as % of all clients)

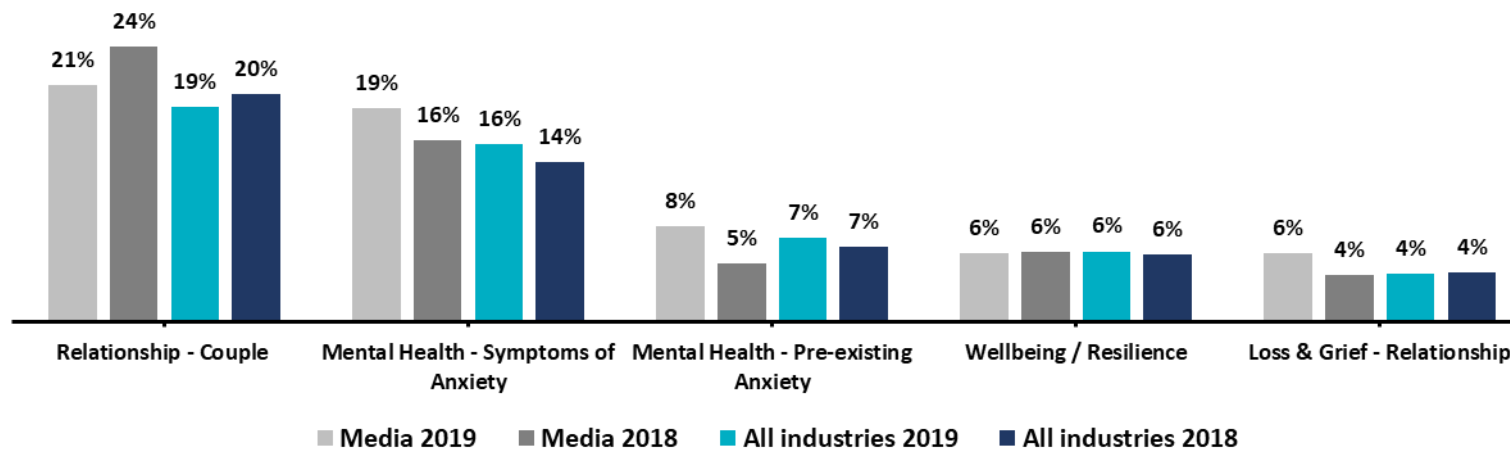


WHY HAVE PEOPLE BEEN ACCESSING EAP?

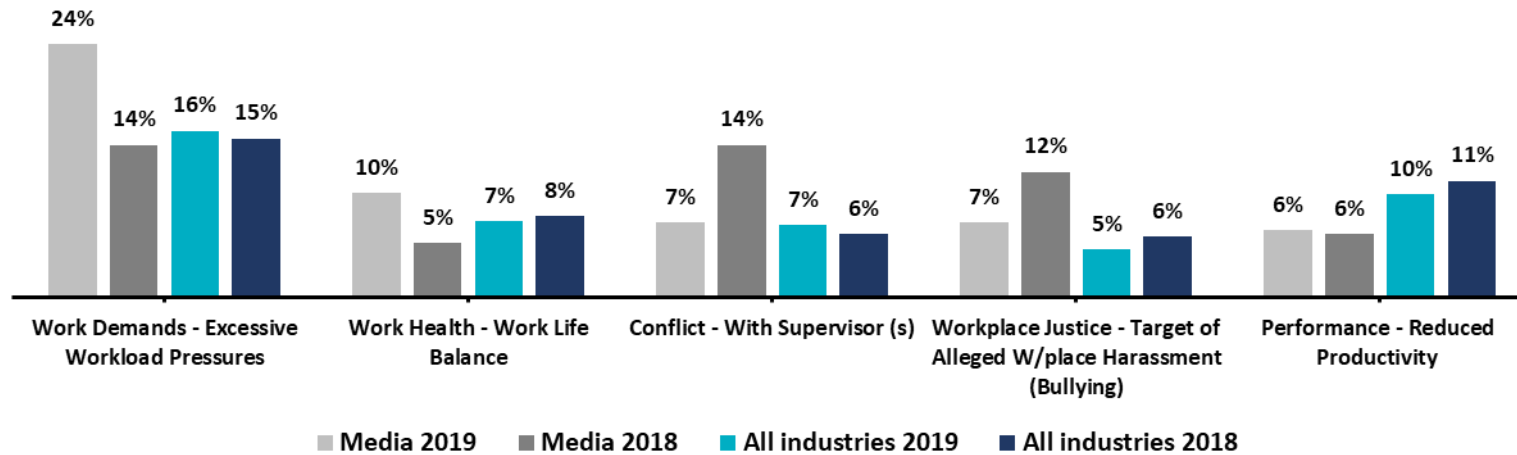
Primary presenting concern (as % of all clients)



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



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



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

