

# Understanding mental health service access among gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (gbMSM) in Montréal, Toronto, and Vancouver



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## Introduction

- Compared to heterosexual men, gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (gbMSM) disproportionately experience poor mental health outcomes<sup>1</sup>.
- In HIV-negative gbMSM, poor mental health is associated with multiple risk factors for HIV, including condomless anal sex<sup>2</sup>.
- In HIV-positive gbMSM, poor mental health is associated with decreased adherence to (and, in turn, effectiveness of) antiretrovirals<sup>3</sup>.
- Understanding barriers to mental health service access among gbMSM is an important first step for addressing mental health disparities (and, in turn, associated HIV-related challenges).

## Methods

- 2198 gbMSM were recruited in Montréal (1179), Toronto (422), and Vancouver (597) via respondent-driven sampling.
- Participants completed a computer-assisted questionnaire. In one question, participants were asked to rate their mental health in the past 6 months (Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair, or Poor). Participants were also asked questions about their experiences accessing mental health services.
- We calculated descriptive statistics using preliminary non-RDS-adjusted and RDS-adjusted (RA) data from a pooled sample of participants who self-reported “Poor” mental health in the past six months (N = 180).

## Results

- Among participants who self-reported “Poor” mental health in the past six months, 93.6% (93.7% RA) felt the need to access mental health services. Only 62.9% (62.5% RA) received services (Figure 1).
- Participants who received services were on average 34.5 (34.4 RA) years old, had mild depression and moderate anxiety, and the majority (68.2%; 68.4% RA) reported an annual income of less than \$40,000 (Figure 2).
- Mental health services were received primarily from a family doctor (71.8%; 70.5% RA), social worker/counsellor (59.1%; 58.5% RA), or psychiatrist (49.5%; 49.4% RA) (Figure 3).
- Services were mostly accessed at no cost (81.7%; 81.0% RA), although 48.6% (48.7 RA) reported difficulty accessing services.
- A third (32.9%; 32.8% RA) reported little to no satisfaction with services (Figure 4).

## Conclusion

- More work is needed to better connect gbMSM with mental health services that are not just affordable, but also address their mental health needs with greater satisfaction.

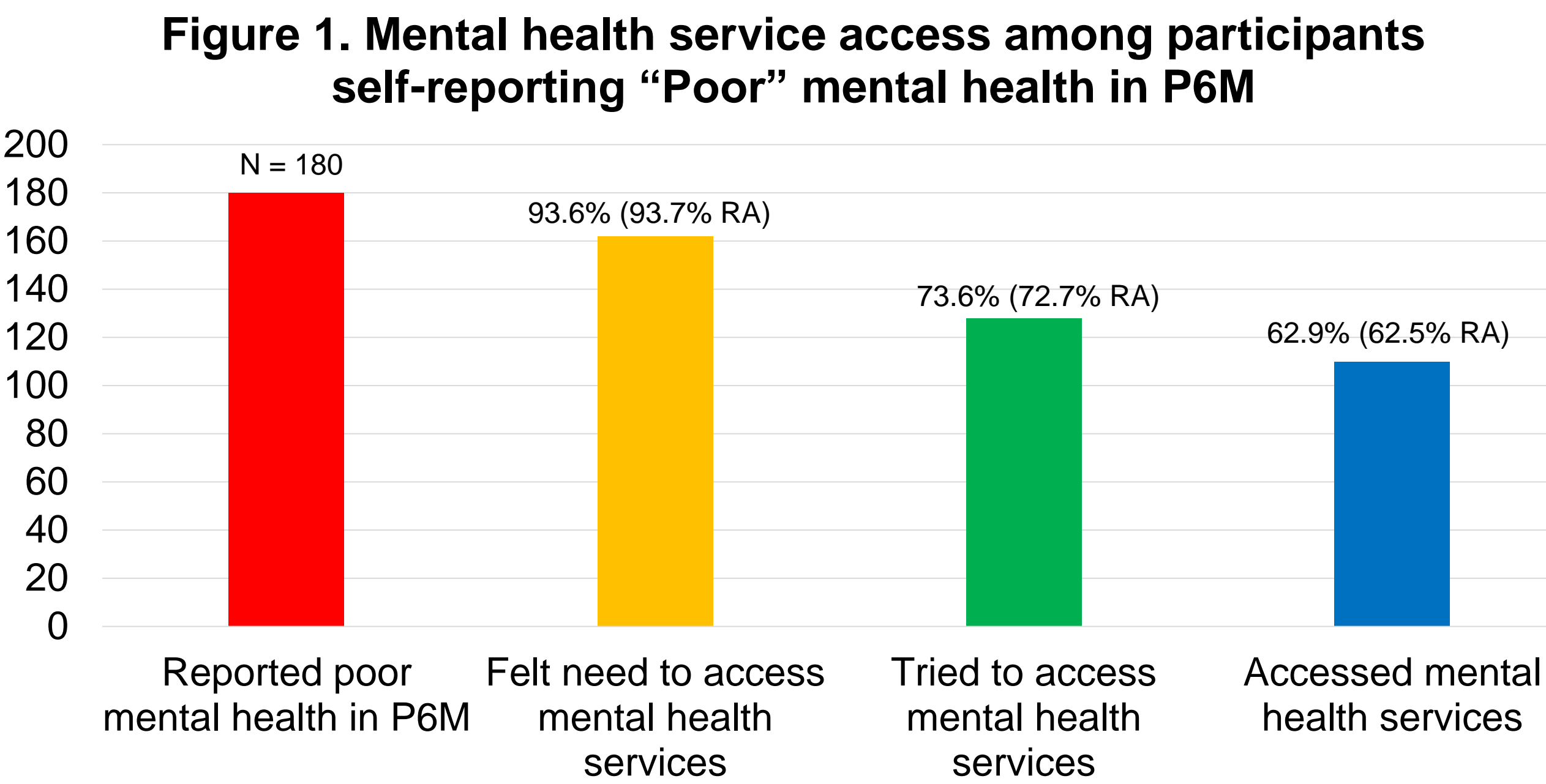
## References

<sup>1</sup>King, M., Semlyen, J., Tai, S. S., Killaspy, H., Osborn, D., Popelyuk, D., & Nazareth, I. (2008). A systematic review of mental disorder, suicide, and deliberate self-harm in lesbian, gay and bisexual people. *BMC Psychiatry*, 8, 70. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-244X-8-70>

<sup>2</sup>Card, K. G., Lachowsky, N. J., Armstrong, H. L., Cui, Z. Wang, L., Sereda, P., . . . Moore, D. M. (2018). The additive effects of depressive symptoms and polysubstance use on HIV risk among gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men. *Addictive Behaviors*, 82, 158-165.

<sup>3</sup>Blashill, A. J., Bedoya, C. A., Mayer, K. H., O’Cleirigh, C., Pinkston, M., Remmert, J. E., . . . Safren, S. A. (2015). Psychosocial syndemics are additively associated with worse ART adherence in HIV-infected individuals. *AIDS and Bheavior*, 19(6), 981-986. doi:10.1007/s10461-014-0925-6

Not all gay men who require mental health services actually access these services, and those who do are not fully satisfied with them.



**Figure 2. Sociodemographic characteristics of participants who self-reported “Poor” mental health in P6M and accessed mental health services (N = 110)**

		RDS-adjusted population estimate
Mean age	34.5	34.4
Gay-identified	78.2%	78.0%
Ethnic minority	30.9%	38.9%
Born in Canada	60.9%	57.7%
Canadian citizen or Permanent Resident	84.5%	84.0%
Post-secondary education (degree or above)	38.2%	39.4%
Current student	30.9%	31.9%
Currently employed	60.9%	59.8%
Income less than \$40,000/year	68.2%	68.4%
Mean financial strain score (out of 3)	2.32 (high)	2.32
Mean depression score (out of 21)*	8.4 (mild)	8.3
Mean anxiety score (out of 21)*	12.5 (moderate)	12.5

\*Hospital Anxiety and Depression scale

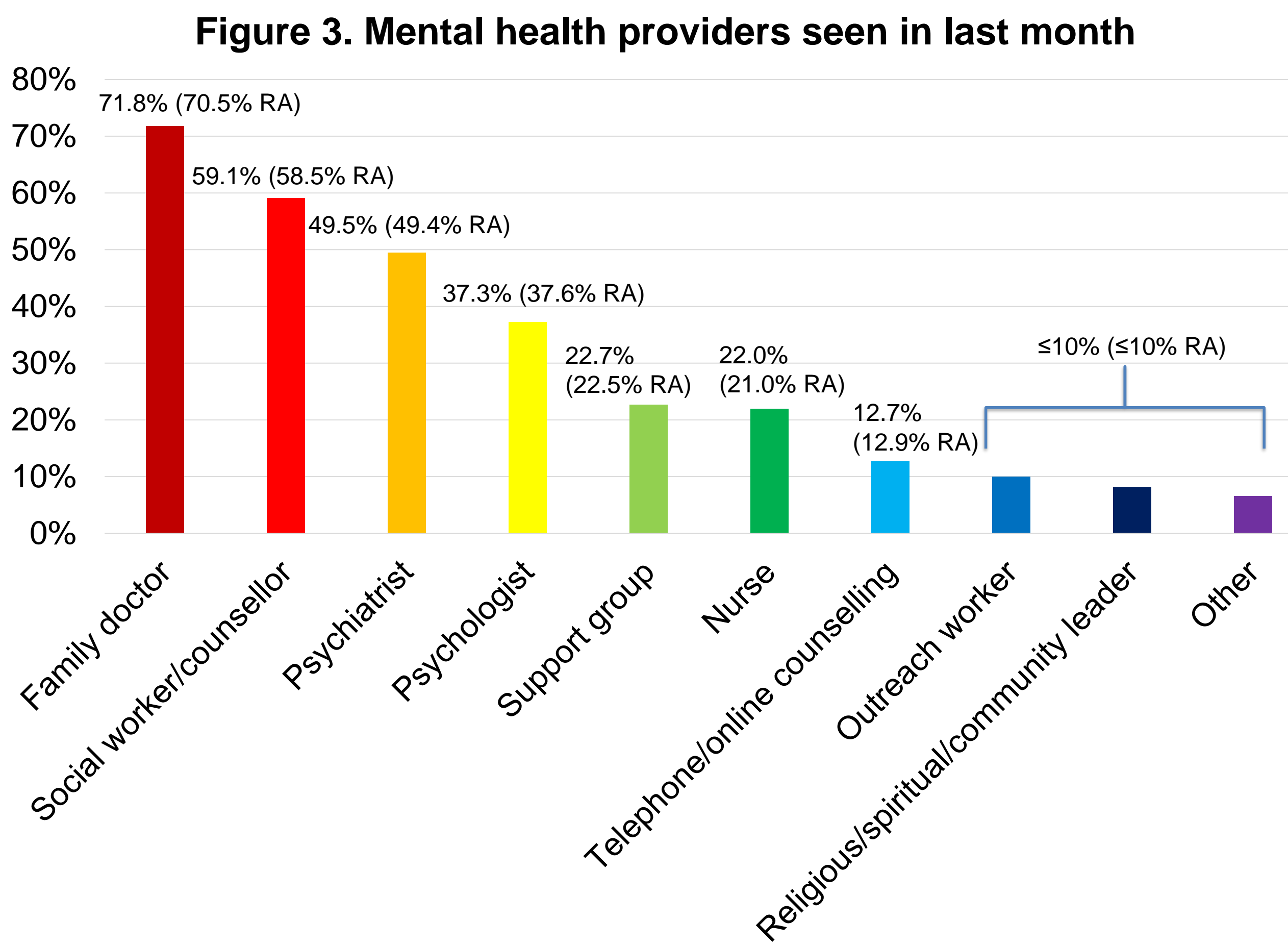


Figure 4. Satisfaction with services

