



Mental health care

What is the perceived patient need and how are physicians responding?

Perceived need

The 2004 National Physician Survey (NPS) asked FPs about what they perceived the patient need for mental health care services to be.

- Eighteen percent of FPs across Canada indicated that at least 10% of their patient population was composed of patients with chronic mental illness. Provincial and Territorial results can be found in **Figure 1**.
- Sixty-six percent of FPs rated accessibility for their patients to psychiatrists as fair or poor on a 5-point scale (excellent, very good, good, fair, poor).
- Fifty-two percent of FPs rated accessibility for their patients to psychosocial support services (eg, psychologists, social workers) as fair or poor; 34% of all other specialists also rated accessibility for their patients to psychosocial support services as fair or poor.

Response

The 2004 NPS asked FPs to indicate if they provided psychotherapy or counseling as part of their practice.

- Forty-one percent of FPs indicated that psychotherapy or counseling was part of their practice. Provincial and Territorial results can be found in **Figure 1**.
- Fifty-one percent of female FPs compared with 35% of male FPs ($P < .0001$) provided psychotherapy or counseling.
- The proportion of FPs providing psychotherapy or counseling also differed by physician age: 37% among FPs younger than 35, 42% of FPs aged 35 to 44, 46% of FPs aged 45 to 54, 38% of FPs aged 55 to 64, and 32% of FPs older than 65.

The NPS is a collaborative project of the College of Family Physicians of Canada, the Canadian Medical Association, and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. Additional results are available from www.nationalphysiciansurvey.ca. If you would like the opportunity to develop and write a future Fast Fact using the NPS results, please contact **Sarah Scott**, National Physician Survey & Janus Project Coordinator, at 800 387-6197, extension 289, or sks@cfpc.ca. 

Figure 1. Proportion of family physicians with at least 10% of their patient population consisting of patients with chronic mental illness and proportion of family physicians providing psychotherapy or counseling by province and Territory

