

Psychologists face challenges of increased demand, patient severity

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The ongoing mental health crisis is causing significant challenges for many psychologists as they grapple with both heightened demand and patients presenting with increasingly severe symptoms, according to the

results of a survey released Dec. 5 by the American Psychological Association.

The 2023 Practitioner Pulse Survey was emailed to a random sample of licensed psychologists in the United States from Aug. 30 to Sept. 29, 2023. The analysis included a total of 561 responses.

According to the survey, more than half of psychologists (52 percent) say they are seeing an increase in severity of symptoms among their [patients](#), with 41 percent saying they are seeing an increase in the number of sessions spent treating each patient, which may reduce their capacity to accept new patients. Furthermore, more than half (56 percent) say they have no openings for new patients.

Among psychologists who maintain wait lists, more than two-thirds (69 percent) say the average wait is up to three months for a first appointment, but 31 percent report wait times longer than three months. Increased demand for treatment was seen among patients with [anxiety disorders](#) (68 percent) and trauma- and stressor-related disorders (50 percent).

"This paints a clear picture of [psychologists](#) operating at the brink of their capacity," Arthur C. Evans Jr., Ph.D., chief executive officer of the American Psychological Association, said in a statement. "To better meet demand, it is essential that we develop comprehensive public health strategies that reach people throughout their lifespan and robustly address behavioral health alongside [physical health](#)."

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