

Effectiveness Bank user survey 2020

Overview

Drug and Alcohol Findings has survey data going back to 2008. Below are some of the headline statistics across this period, with hyperlinks to previous survey reports:

	2020	2019	2016	2015	2014	2012	2011	2010	2008
Number of respondents	221	342	476	254	418	584	506	563	183
Respondent is a drug/alcohol service practitioner	82%	81%	81%	78%	80%	81%	83%	80%	79%
Service developed thinking or changed response to substance use	77%	85%	80%	81%	80%	78%	82%	77%	69%

The 2020 survey (see [SurveyMonkey](#) or Appendix 1) ran from 17th August 2020 to 31st January 2021, and featured new questions designed to inform the development of the service provided by Drug and Alcohol Findings. The survey was promoted via the usual mechanisms (Drug and Alcohol Findings mailing list, social media, and third party websites and mailing lists), and participation was optional.

As with previous surveys, the findings may be subject to a non-response bias. While we do not assume that the survey findings will be representative of how the larger population feels about or uses the work of Drug and Alcohol Findings, they constitute an important way of trying to understand our readership and our performance.

About the respondents

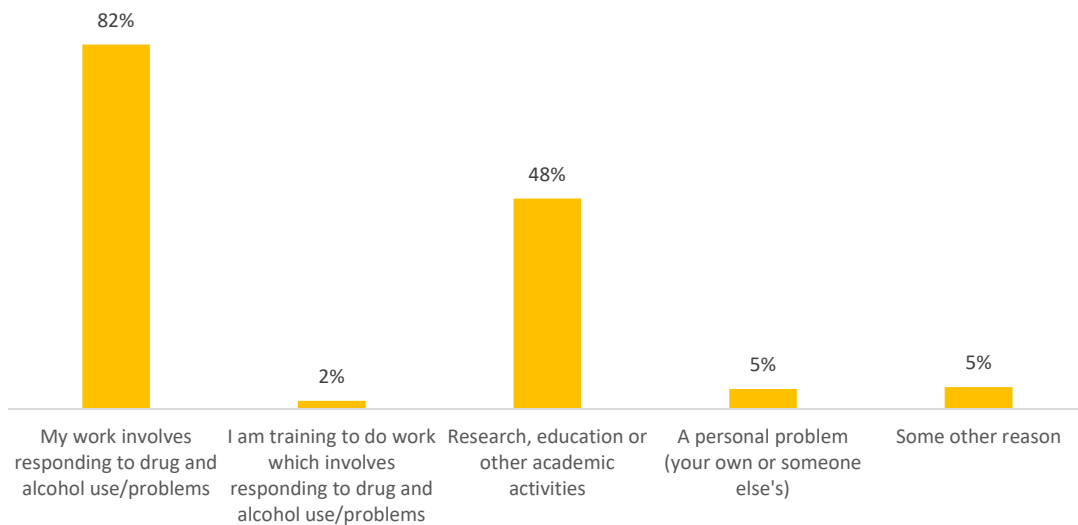


Figure 1: Most respondents say their work involves responding to drug and alcohol problems – a useful proxy for ‘substance use practitioners’

Most respondents (82%) said they visited the site because their work involves responding to drug and alcohol use/problems, which is a useful proxy for the intended audience of Drug and Alcohol Findings: substance use practitioners. About half (48%) visited as well or instead in the course of research, education or other academic activities.

About current and preferred methods of communication

Previous survey reports have presumed that most respondents are mailing list subscribers. This was confirmed with the addition of a new question in the 2020 survey. Just over nine in ten respondents (92%) said they were signed up to receive emails from Drug and Alcohol Findings.

Most respondents (96%) said that their preferred way of finding out about new publications is an email direct from Findings, which curiously was slightly more than the proportion currently receiving emails. Only seven people consulted the website to keep informed, one person did so via Twitter, and one person via LinkedIn. One person said they were normally alerted via DrugWise, and another the EFTC mailing list.

About the impact of the Effectiveness Bank

Arguably the most important question in the survey was, “Has anything you have read on this site influenced you or your colleagues’ thinking about how drug and alcohol use should be responded to?” Respondents could tick as many options as they liked.

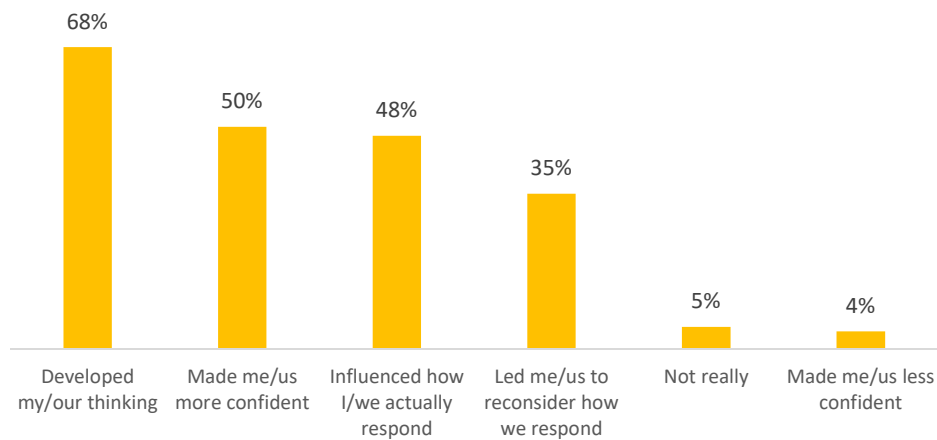


Figure 2: Two thirds of respondents say the Effectiveness Bank has influenced their thinking about how drug and alcohol problems should be responded to

- 68% - “Developed my/our thinking about how drug and alcohol use/problems are best responded to”
- 50% - “Made me/us more confident that what we do is evidence-based”
- 48% - “Influenced how I/we actually respond to drug and alcohol use/problems or might respond in future”
- 35% - “Led me/us to reconsider how drug and alcohol use/problems are best responded to”
- 5% - “Not really”
- 4% - “Made me/us less confident that what we do is evidence-based”

About the importance of the different components of our service

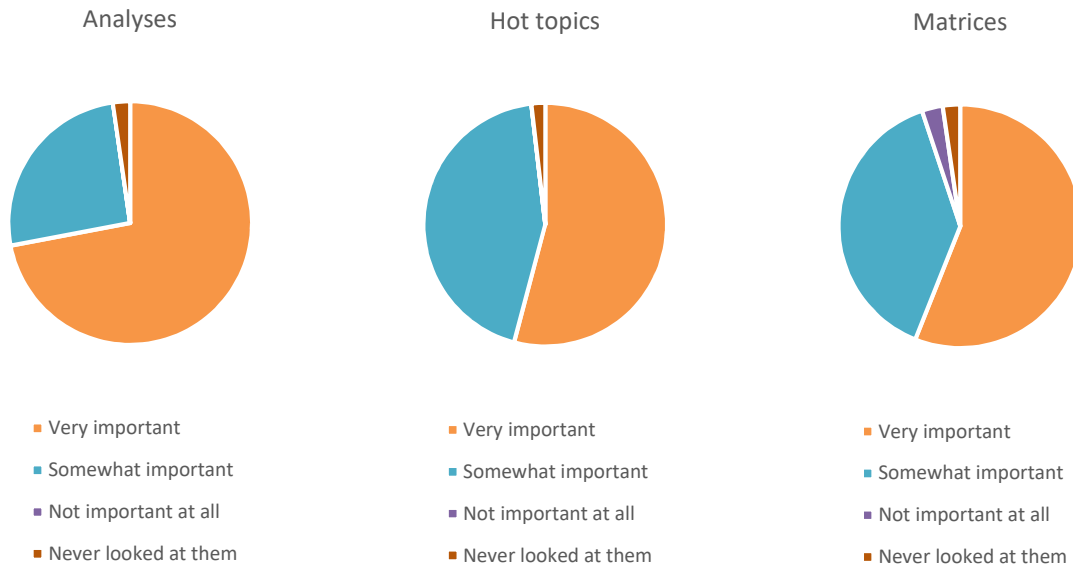


Figure 3: Analyses are the most important component of the Drug and Alcohol Findings Effectiveness Bank according to this survey of 221 readers

Analyses. Almost all respondents said that our analyses of research studies and reviews were “very important” (75%) or “somewhat important” (26%), and just 2% said they “never looked at them” (five respondents).

Hot topics. On the importance of hot topics, a considerable majority said these were “very important” (54%) or “somewhat important” (44%), with 2% saying they “never looked at them” (four respondents).

Matrices. A similar proportion (56%) of respondents said that the matrices were “very important” or “somewhat important” (39%), with 3% saying they were “not important at all” (six respondents) and 2% saying they “never looked at them” (five respondents).

About the website

One of the survey questions explained that Drug and Alcohol Findings was planning to redesign its website, and asked respondents whether they would be interested in providing feedback on the current website and how it could be improved, or trialling new designs. In total, 69 participants said they would be interested in helping and provided their contact information.

About how we are doing in general

Written responses (from 143 people) to the question of how we are doing – including what we can improve or develop – were overwhelmingly positive. For example, there were 47 references to our work being good, great, fantastic, excellent, essential, valuable or invaluable. Many of the positive or encouraging comments made reference to specific elements of our work, rather than being broad platitudes:

“I always look forward to opening an email from you because the topics are so varied. Sometimes, like magic, it'll arrive just at the time I am pondering a particular issue - love it when that happens. And I share so much of what I read: we have a number of teams working with different client groups and it's great to be able to share items specific to pregnant women or people undertaking managed withdrawal or on OST.”

“I think you do a fantastic job of synthesising developments in the drug and alcohol field.”

“I have always found your work very helpful. It provides an evidenced approach from very broad reading but also questions herd thinking, which is refreshing. It doesn't take sides, to my mind, in the constant battle for ideological dominance of drug use theories but presents evidence in a way that allows the reader to agree or disagree, but always from a now more informed position. I sound like a fan boy but I do think it is very important work synthesising such a wide range of research into coherent blocks. I wish many more would take better advantage of the work done.”

“I am a manager at a community treatment hub in Bristol – I direct all new staff to your website and it's often my first source when we are designing services to look at the evidence. I really appreciate the website and your service in general”

“You are doing a great job - and have been doing so for so many years! I read all your mails / study comments and usually follow them up more closely (reading the original papers). For the continuous updating and rethinking of my understanding of the addictions, your well presented and profoundly discussed study results/expertises are of elementary importance for me.”

“You provide an invaluable resource to busy practitioners. Many of us are put off reading research, fearing it is too academic and will not apply to the real world.

You increase our confidence and understanding in offering evidence-based interventions."

"I rely on Findings to pull evidence together."

"You're the go to source for info. The Wikipedia of drug & alcohol use responses (I'm saying that as a fan of Wikipedia so meant as a compliment!)"

Constructive or critical points were predominantly about the style or organisation of the website, which has been the case in previous surveys:

"Well...the website is a bit tired looking...something fresher might be easier to navigate."

"You are doing great, I have found the website very helpful in my work. main change that I think needs to happen is to add more search options to help narrow down searches as searching topics can be frustrating."

"Excellent work and essential reading. I do agree that the website looks a little dated, and while highly functional, could be improved for first time users."

"The content (quality and quantity) of information is excellent. However, not the simplest/easiest to navigate. The planned redesign of the website sounds fantastic to overcome these issues."

"An invaluable resource. A redesign of the website would be welcome though – as it is it's fine for people already familiar with it, but a more modern website might help people new to the sector, which can only be a good thing."

"Sometimes I can find it difficult to find things I would find useful but it is maybe as I do not use the site as regularly as I should."

There were some comments indicating that the work and reach of Findings could be extended:

"Not persuaded your services are as valued and well used as they could and should be and if there is some way to advocate for this and to have key influential people in academia, policy, service commissioning and management incorporating this into reviews and routine programmes of work the field would be better informed."

"Findings is very treatment focused but I work in policy so I'd like to see a bit more of a focus on that area and how to achieve policy change."

Appendix 1: User survey 2020

Effectiveness Bank user survey 2020

Your chance to have your say on the services provided at findings.org.uk

Thanks for completing this brief survey. Your comments will help us and our funders evaluate and improve the service. Just skip any questions you can't answer.

1. What led you to access the [EFFECTIVENESS BANK](#)? (tick as many you like)

- My work involves responding to drug and alcohol use/problems
- I am training to do work which involves responding to drug and alcohol use/problems
- Research, education or other academic activities
- A personal problem (your own or someone else's)
- Some other reason

2. Has anything you have read on this site influenced you or your colleagues' thinking about how drug and alcohol use should be responded to? (tick as many you like)

- Not really
- Made me/us **more confident** that what we do is evidence-based
- Made me/us **less confident** that what we do is evidence-based
- Led me/us to **reconsider** how drug and alcohol use/problems are best responded to
- Developed **my/our thinking** about how drug and alcohol use/problems are best responded to
- Influenced how I/we **actually respond** to drug and alcohol use/problems or might respond in future

3. We'd like to assess how important you find the main components of our service

How important to you are our [analyses of research studies and reviews](#)? (link takes you to archive of bulletins of analyses)

- Never looked at them Not important at all Somewhat important Very important

How important to you are our [hot topic essays](#) on controversial and key issues?

- Never looked at them Not important at all Somewhat important Very important

How important to you are our [alcohol](#) and [drug](#) treatment matrices selecting and commenting on seminal and key research and guidance?

- Never looked at them Not important at all Somewhat important Very important

4. One of the ways we publicise our work is via emails to a mailing list of approximately 4,000 subscribers. Are you [signed up](#) to receive emails from Drug and Alcohol Findings?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Other (please specify)

5. What is your preferred way of finding out about new Findings publications?

- Email direct from Findings
- Findings website
- Twitter
- Facebook
- LinkedIn

Other (please specify)

6. We are planning to redesign the Drug and Alcohol Findings website. Would you be interested in providing feedback on our current website and how it could be improved, or trialling new designs?

- Yes - get in contact with me using the email address below
- No

Email address

7. Before you go, tell us in your own words how we are doing, including what we can improve or develop. Enter your feedback below and include your email address if you are happy for us to get in touch with you about your comments.

Finish