

# Managing Change During A Global Pandemic:

## Ontario Immigrant-Serving Agencies Building for the Future

John Shields, Toronto Metropolitan University

Valerie Preston, York University

Jayesh D'Souza, York University

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# Purpose

Health

## **Communities with low incomes, immigrants, essential workers hardest hit by COVID-19: study**



'Striking' trend seen in multiple provinces, says lead author of peer-reviewed paper



[Lauren Pelley](#) · CBC News · Posted: Feb 15, 2022 4:00 AM ET | Last Updated: February 15

- How did immigrant-serving agencies adapt to the pandemic?
- How did funding and contracting relationships influence immigrant-serving agencies' adaptation?
- What lessons can we learn to enhance the future success of immigrant-serving agencies?

# Canadian integration & settlement services

**ICS**  
Centre for Immigrant & Community Services

**Newcomer Mental Health Program**  
Let's take on this wellness journey together.

Short-term case management  
Wellness seminars and  
Volunteer  
Community  
Support Groups

**Settlement Program**  
Service Delivery Improvements (SDI)  
2017 FUNDING GUIDELINES

Canada



The New Canadians' Centre of Excellence  
Welcomes Afghans to Canada

- “Canadian” model relies on non-profit organizations to deliver government-funded services
- Government
  - funds projects, not organizations
  - sets accountability/reporting rules – strict targets and eligibility criteria
- Funding practices pose challenges for the capacities, autonomy, and advocacy of immigrant-serving agencies
- What happens in a pandemic?

## QUESTION 1

What was the biggest pandemic challenge for your agency?

# Surveys and focus groups

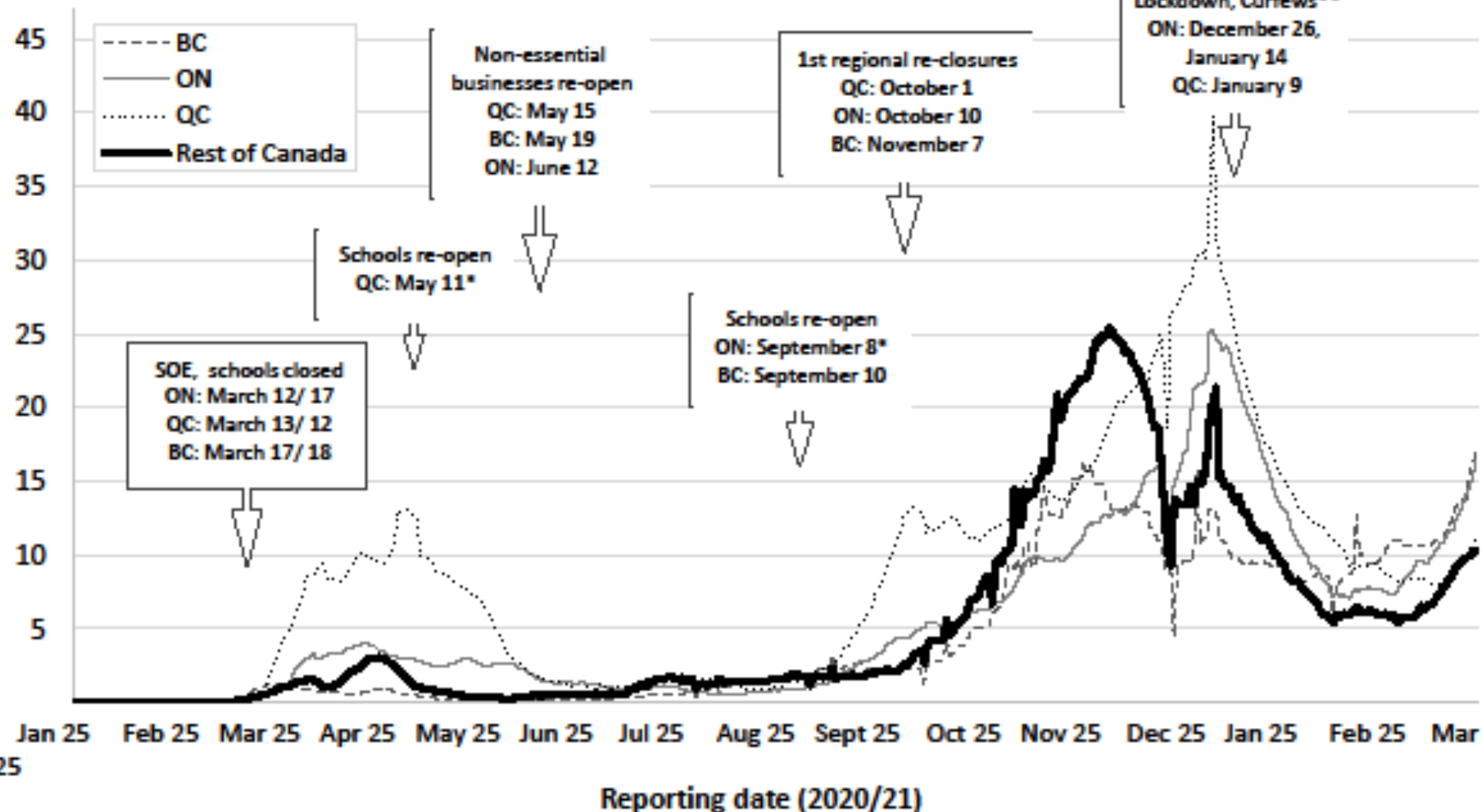
## Surveys

- Managers and workers at immigrant-serving agencies
- On-line surveys
- Manager survey
  - About 20 minutes
  - Demographics, impacts of pandemic on agency operations & concerns for future
  - 50 agencies
- Worker survey
  - About 15 minutes
  - Demographics, impacts of pandemic on working conditions & views about return to the office
  - 173 workers

## Focus Groups

- Managers at:
  - immigrant-serving agencies
  - Local Immigration Partnerships (local planning tables that bring together agencies, other public institutions, and private sector representatives interested in immigration)
- Very preliminary.

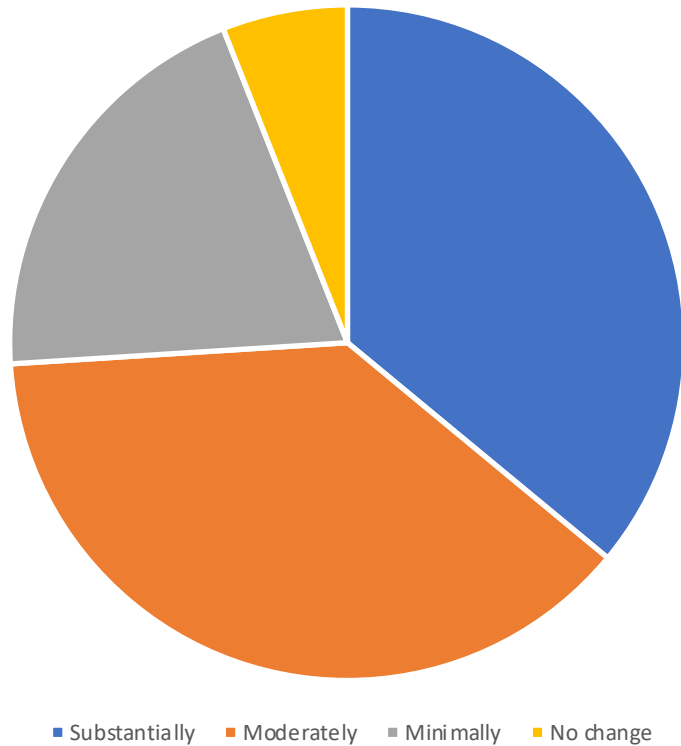
Reported Number of Confirmed COVID-19 Cases  
(per 100,000 population, 7-day Rolling Average)



# Tumultuous Times

## Service changes Sept. 2020-Sept. 2021

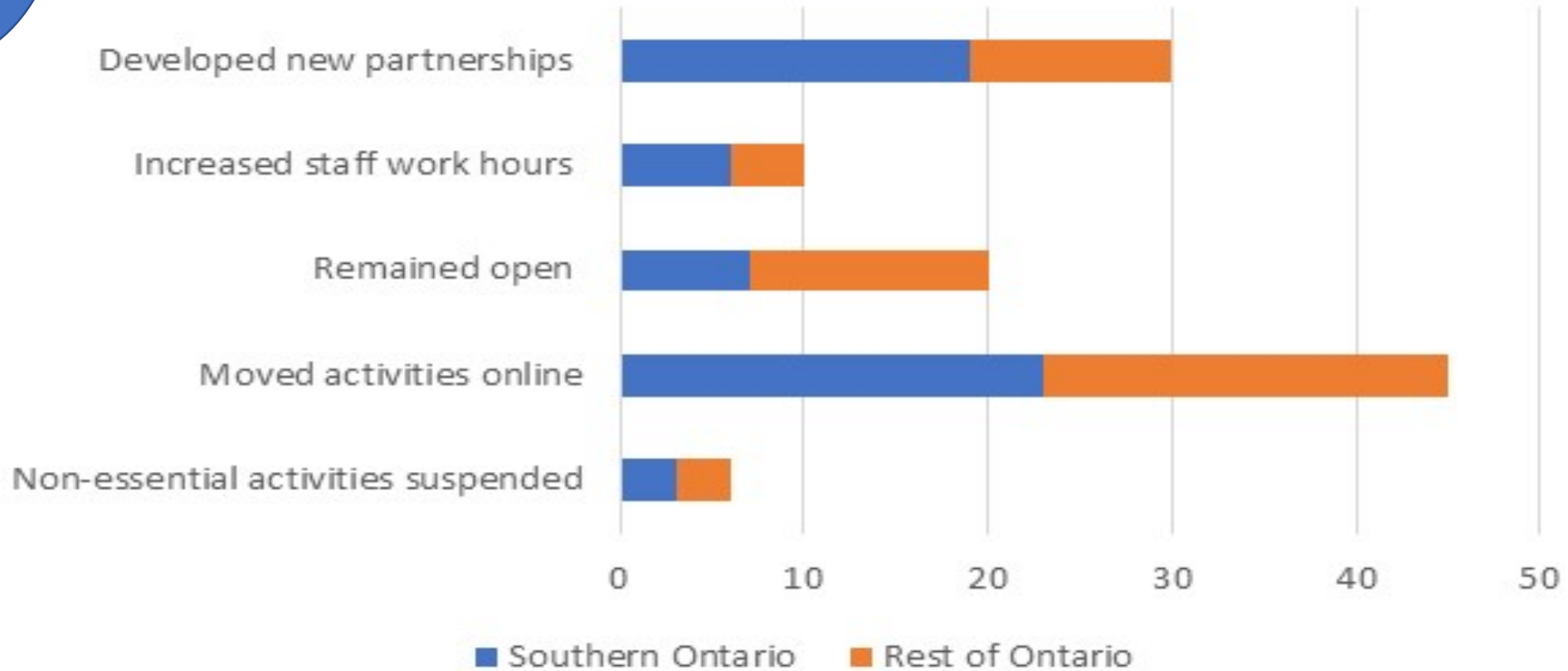
Changes in Service: Ontario Agencies



- Approximately three quarters of managers experienced substantial and moderate change
- Similar in all parts of the province:
  - Southern Ontario
    - Toronto to Kitchener-Waterloo and east to Niagara
  - Rest of Ontario

Change continued between Sept. 2020 and Sept. 2021

## Types of Service Changes





## QUESTION 2

How similar and different were the service changes in your agency?

# Clients Facing Service Challenges – Worker Survey

**Has your organization had difficulty with clients who faced digital access barriers?**

Online services difficult for clients in all waves

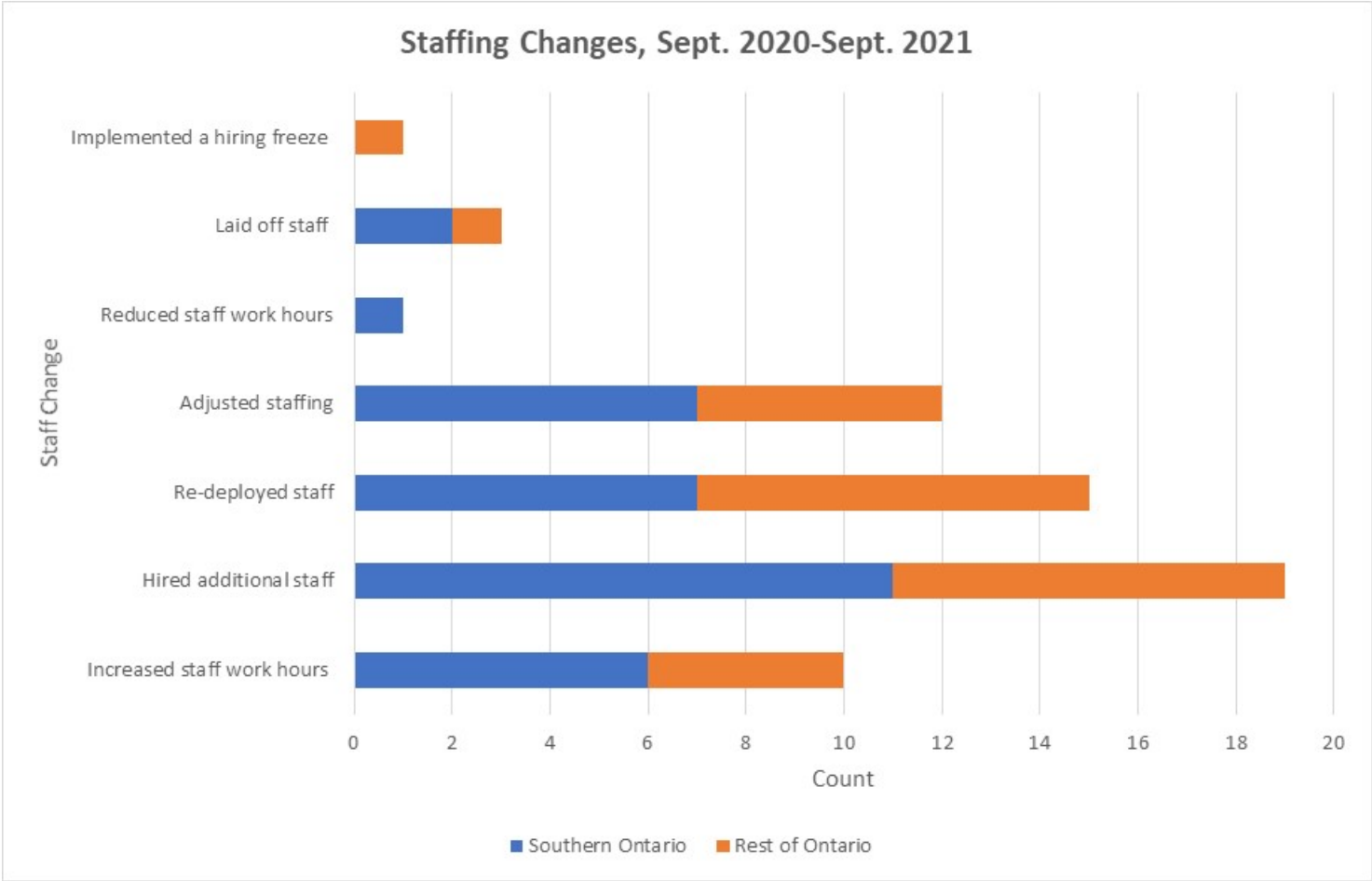
		Wave 1		Waves 2,3,&4	
Yes	78.0%	131	78.0%	128	
No	22.0%	37	22.0%	36	
<b>N</b>		<b>168</b>		<b>164</b>	

## Changes in Number of Clients: Sept. 2020 – Sept. 2021

Client numbers mainly increased or stayed the same

		Southern Ontario		Rest of Ontario		Total	
		Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Number of clients	Increased	14	56.00%	8	29.60%	22	42.31%
	Stayed the same	2	8.00%	4	14.80%	6	11.54%
	Decreased	9	36.00%	15	55.60%	24	46.15%

Marked regional variations



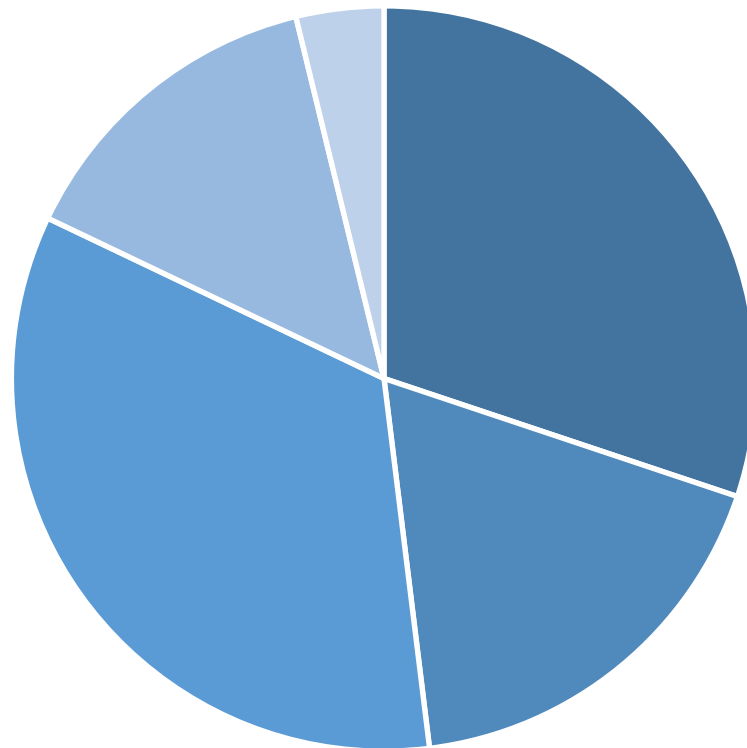
Period of continued staff adjustment and GROWTH

## QUESTION 3

What is contributing to the regional differences in pandemic impacts across Ontario agencies?

# Workers' Views

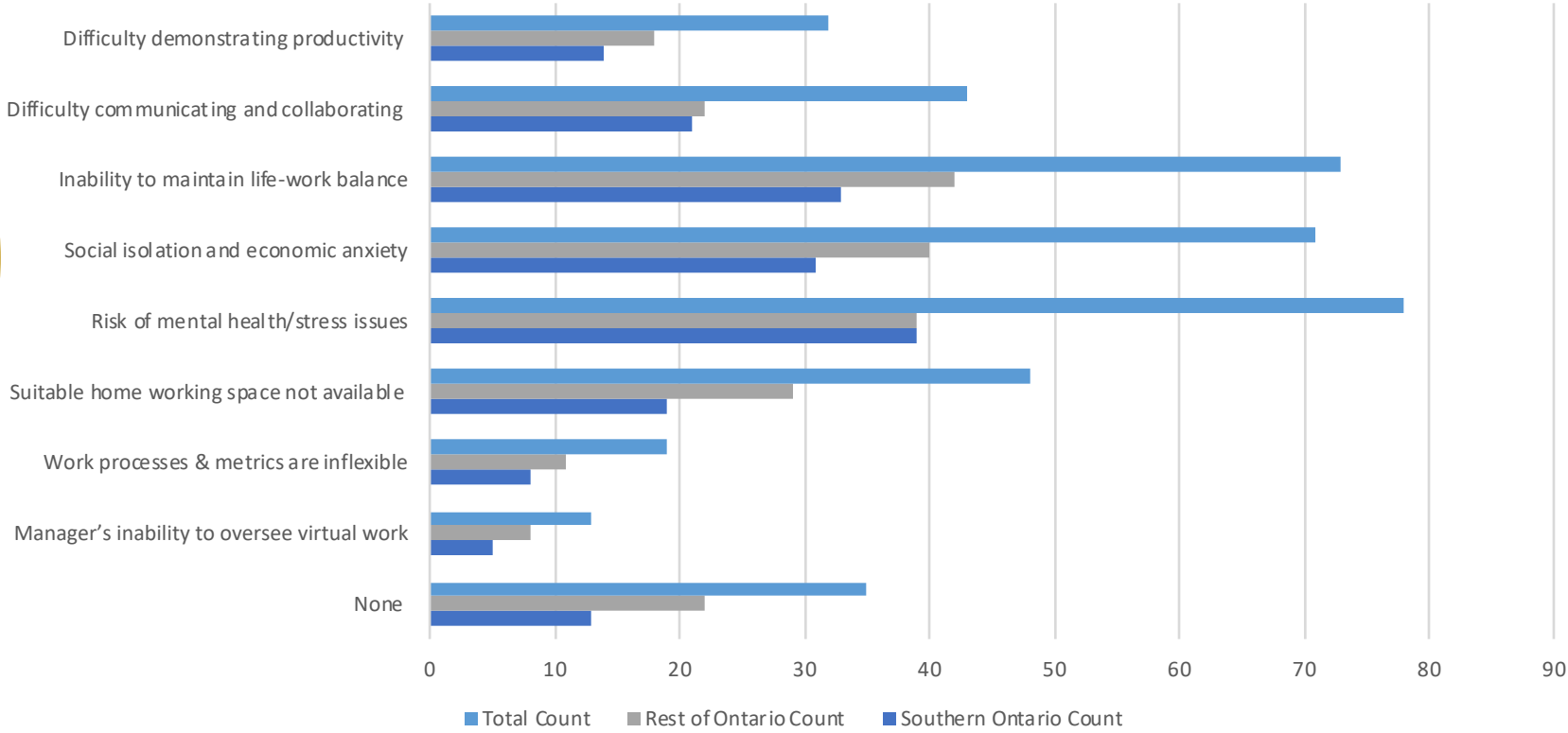
Productivity while working at home



■ Increased a lot ■ Increased a little ■ Stayed the same ■ Decreased a little ■ Decreased a lot

- Almost half, 49% feel productivity increased
- Approximately one third, 34%, feel it has stayed the same
- For a minority, 17%, productivity has declined

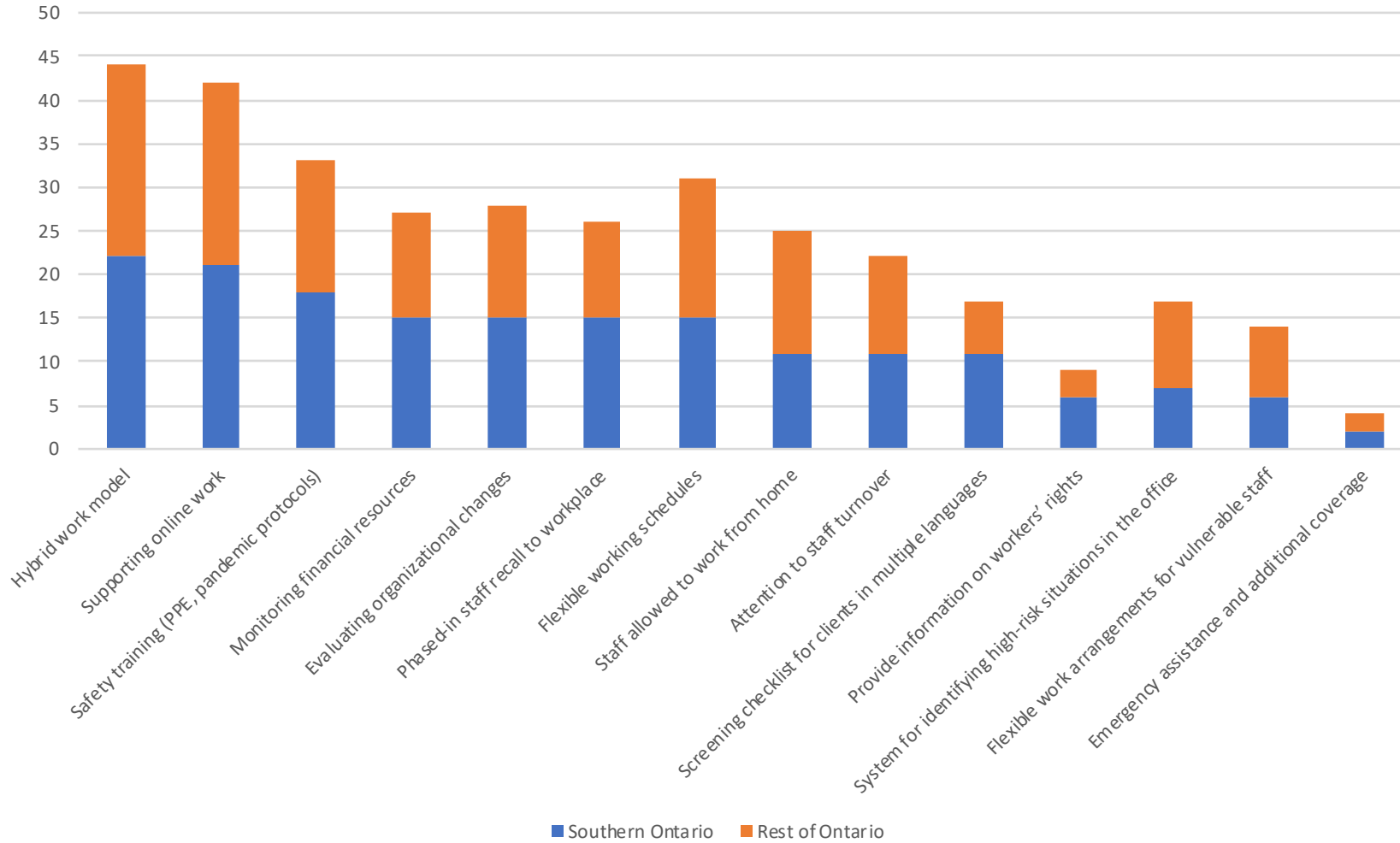
### Workers' Views: Challenges of Working Remotely



Majority struggle with social impacts and mental health

Remote work continues to have challenges, even after 18 months

### Actions to Support Staff (Counts)



Most frequent actions concerned with working remotely and employee wellbeing



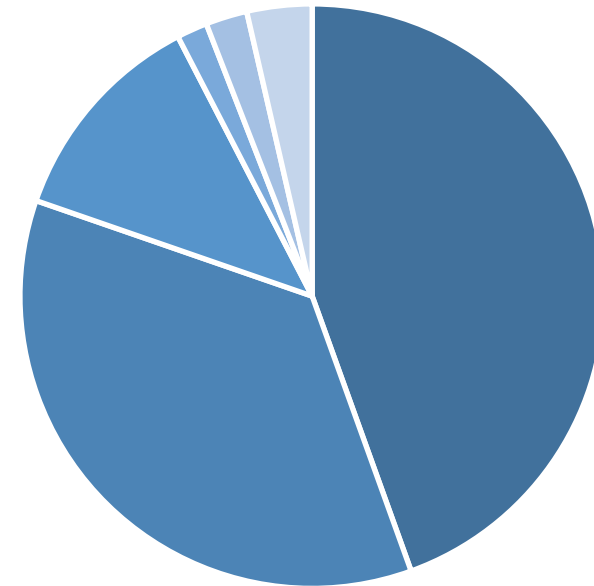
# Satisfaction with Pandemic Responses

## Managers

- Between Sept. 2020 and Sept. 2021, staff-management relations:
  - Improved – 36.6%
  - Stayed the same – 55.7%
  - Deteriorated – 7.7%

## Workers

Organization has taken appropriate actions



■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Missing

# Client Satisfaction – Worker Surveys

**In your opinion, how would your clients rate the quality of services available to them during the pandemic?**

Answer Choices	Wave 1		Waves 2,3,& 4	
	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count
Equally pleased as pre-crisis levels	24.40%	41	30.30%	50
Pleased	38.10%	64	34.55%	57
Satisfied	32.14%	54	31.52%	52
Discontent	3.57%	6	3.03%	5
Very upset with the new modes of service delivery	1.79%	3	0.61%	1
	N	168		165

## QUESTION 4

What do you think helped managers respond effectively to workers' concerns?

# Funding Stability

TABLE 1

Funding Changes and Responses, 2020-2021

	Total	
	Count	Percent
Changes in funding		
Lost continuing funding	6	11.5%
Lost user fees/ donations	23	44.2%
Applied for wage subsidy	11	21.1%
Ineligible for govt. supports	7	13.5%
Response to funding changes		
External financial aid	18	34.6%
Used in-house expertise	21	40.4%
Information webinars	30	57.7%
Researched financial advice	10	19.2%
Shared information	21	40.4%
Initiative to diversify revenue		
None	20	38.5%
Sales/fundraising	16	30.8%
Lottery/raffle etc.	0	0.0%
Running events	2	3.8%
Extending social enterprise	10	19.2%

Agencies retained government funding, lost independent sources

Agencies sought information, few took other actions

Respondents could choose as many responses as applicable so percentages do not sum to 100.0%. Percent is calculated as percentage of total number of agencies.

# Significance of Funding

‘Recovering from the pandemic while also confronting new challenges is stretching the sector thin and antiquated funding models are failing. Over and over again, the sector has critiqued short-term and program-specific funding as they do not cover general operating costs necessary for nonprofits to deliver their programs and services. ... Flexible and targeted funding is crucial to organizations’ ability to respond quickly to a changing environment and deploy resources accordingly. The need for flexibility is especially important now during periods of rapid change’ (ONN and ACFÉO 2022, p. 11).

# Collaboration not Competition

	TABLE 2		
Number of Clients who live outside your local area	Increased	32	61.5%
	Stayed the same	15	28.8%
	Decreased	5	9.7%
Competition for clients with other organizations	Increased	13	25.0%
	Stayed the same	35	67.3%
	Decreased	4	7.7%

## QUESTION 5

Were flexible funding and effective collaboration key to the success of immigrant-serving agencies?

What else helped agencies cope successfully with pandemic challenges?

# Conclusions

- Adaptation to pandemic conditions continued after Wave 1 :
  - Additional services moved online, some in-person services restored and mix of services changed
  - Managers tried to respond to worker concerns, often with some success
  - Clients were perceived as satisfied despite continuing problems getting online
- Success of ISAs is associated with:
  - Sustained federal government funding despite decline in immigration
  - Some flexibility in use of funds, especially for technology
  - Suspension of service targets
  - Responsive, regular and respectful communication between funders and ISAs
  - Less competition among ISAs
- What happens next?
- What about diversity of agencies and workers?



# QUESTION 6

SO...

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

HOW MUCH DO YOU AGREE?

Thank you

Questions/Comments

[jshields@ryerson.ca](mailto:jshields@ryerson.ca)

[vpreston@yorku.ca](mailto:vpreston@yorku.ca)

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