

Expanding care with teletherapy: 89% of therapists want their license to allow for *nationwide care*

As we enter the third year of the COVID-19 pandemic, it's clear that teletherapy is here to stay. Therapists and their clients alike have embraced the convenience and flexibility it offers, as well as its positive impact on accessibility.

Teletherapy could also open the door for clients with specific needs to work with specialized therapists, even if those therapists live in a different location. But in practice, licensure regulations lag behind — and allow geography to limit access to virtual care.

Alma surveyed over 200 therapists across the country to better understand their experience with teletherapy, and to get a sense of how state-level licensure impacts their practices.

As a bicultural, bilingual trauma therapist, I would be able to work with folks who may not have the same access to my specialties in their states. And as a brown immigrant woman, I know the importance of having someone who understands you and your background.

- ANONYMOUS THERAPIST

Virtual care is here to stay

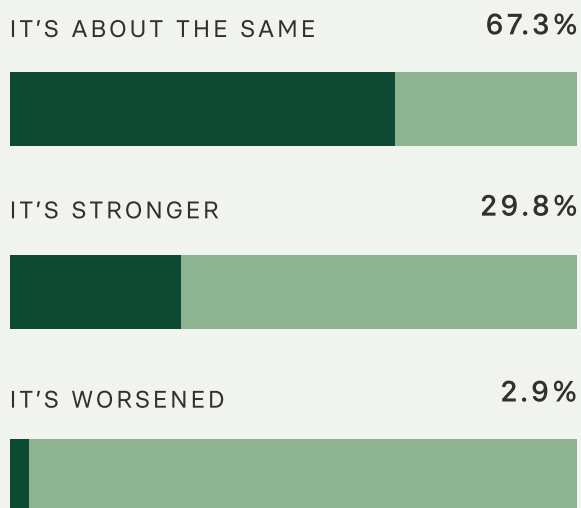
When asked if they plan to continue offering teletherapy over the next 6-12 months, 100% of our respondents said yes — and **70% said that they plan to maintain an entirely virtual practice.**

This is a significant shift from one year ago, when only **41% of the therapists we surveyed** planned to maintain an exclusively virtual practice.

Teletherapy supports strong therapist-client relationships

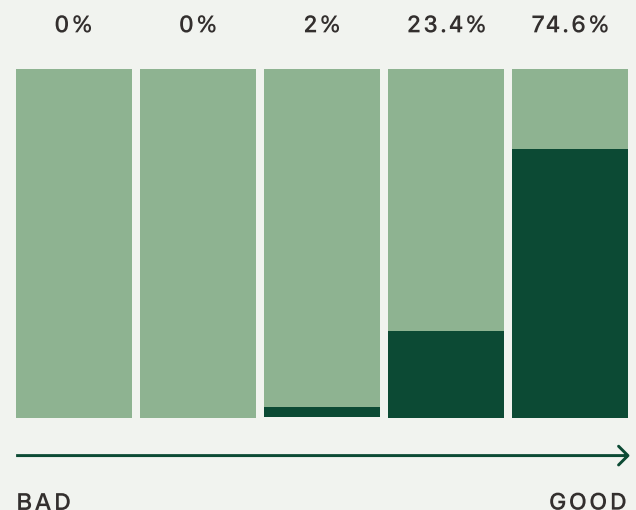
One possible reason for this increased interest in fully-virtual practice is that after several years of experience, therapists know that teletherapy does not negatively impact their relationships with clients. In fact, **30% of therapists reported that teletherapy has made these relationships stronger,** and **98% of therapists** said they've had positive experiences (at least 4 out of 5 on a 5-point scale) seeing clients via teletherapy.

How has teletherapy impacted the quality of your relationships with clients?



2022

How has your experience seeing clients via teletherapy in the last year been, on a scale from 1-5?



AVERAGE RATING OF 4.7

2022

Cross-state licensure benefits both therapists & clients


The rise of teletherapy has opened up opportunities for therapists to expand their practices and potentially work with clients outside of their home state. But doing this requires a therapist to become licensed in each of the states where the clients they see live, in a process called cross-state licensure.

Cross-state licensure allows therapists who hold a primary license in one state to obtain a secondary license in another.

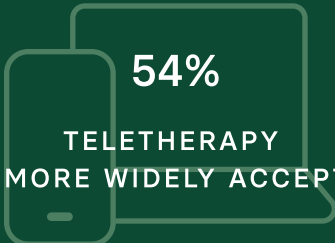
We found that **67% of therapists have already pursued or are considering pursuing licenses in one or more additional states**. Of these therapists, the top motivator is a desire to grow their client bases (58%), as 79% believe that their caseload would increase with licensure in an additional state.

Why are you considering pursuing licensure in another state?

58%
DESIRE TO
GROW CLIENT BASE



54%
TELETHERAPY
IS MORE WIDELY ACCEPTED



48%
MAINTAIN RELATIONSHIPS WITH
CURRENT CLIENTS THAT MOVED/
ARE MOVING ACROSS STATE LINES

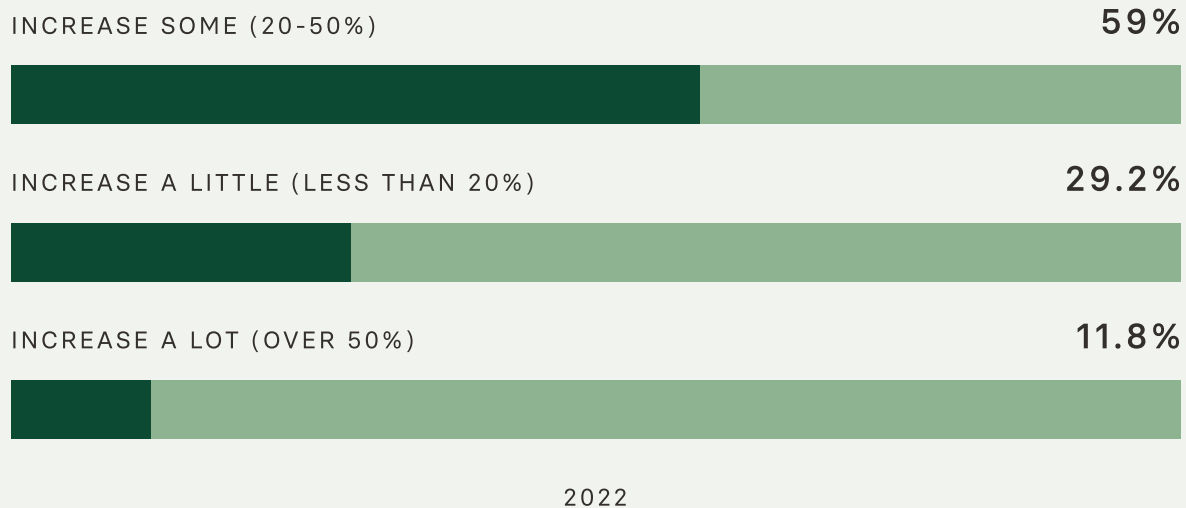


41%
FLEXIBILITY TO SPLIT TIME
BETWEEN TWO STATES



2022

How much do you estimate that your practice revenue would increase with licensure in a second state?



Another significant driver is the ability to maintain relationships with clients who have moved or are moving to a new state. In the last year, **70% of therapists had to stop working with a client because they moved** — even if they were solely seeing the client virtually.

Finding the right fit and building a strong therapeutic relationship is essential to effective care. Teletherapy presents an opportunity for therapists to work with the clients who could benefit from their background and experience the most, regardless of their location. But current licensing regulations prevent this from happening — and can sever these ties after they're built.

I've also had several potential clients who really wanted to work with me and felt I was a great fit but couldn't because they were in another state. Not being able to provide services in other states greatly reduces access to mental health services when we have a great amount of need.

- ANONYMOUS THERAPIST

Securing cross-state licensure presents challenges

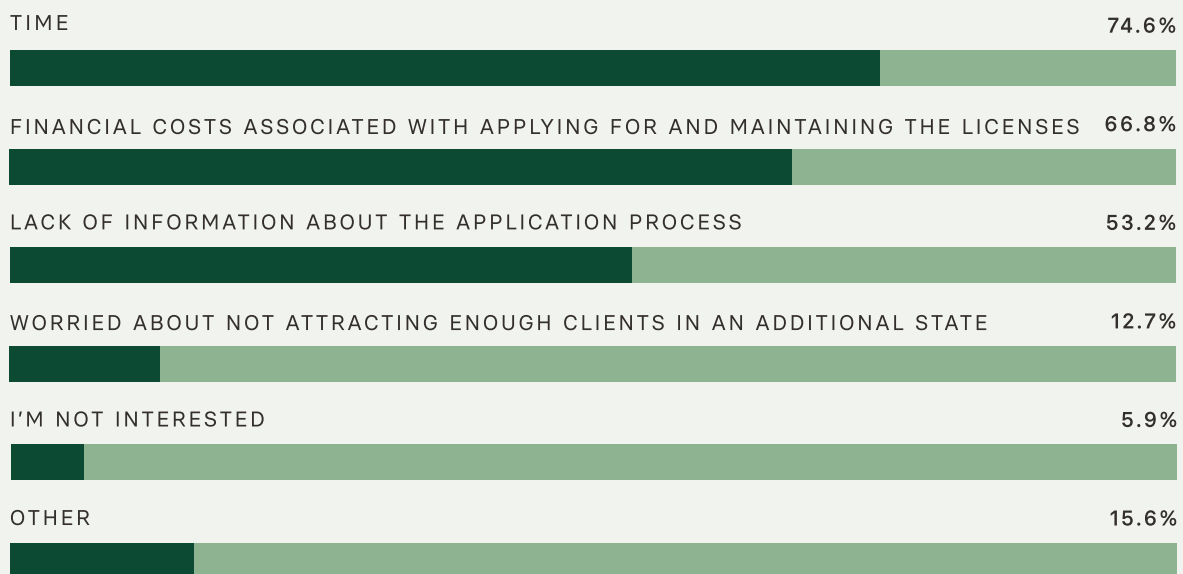
Though the majority of therapists want to see clients in new locations, many are put off by the time and money required to do so. Of our respondents, **56% reported having concerns about the cross-state licensure application process.**

In one word, how would you describe the cross-state licensure process?

ANNOYING ARDUOUS BUREAUCRATIC
 CONFUSING DAUNTING
 FRUSTRATING OVERWHELMING TEDIOUS

TOP RESPONSES
 2022

What have been your top barriers to getting
 licensed in an additional state?



2022

There have been so many unintended benefits of teletherapy. Clients can easily schedule sessions at times when they otherwise couldn't. In addition, being in each others' spaces (even if virtually) helps to humanize the therapeutic relationship and level the power dynamic between client and provider.

- ANONYMOUS THERAPIST

It's time for regulatory reform around cross-state care

The current regulatory system is no longer serving the needs of mental health care providers or their clients. Therapists are prevented from working with people who could benefit from their experience and background because of geographic location — and clients who do find the right match are at risk of losing that relationship if they move.

Many therapists want to offer specialty care to out-of-state clients, and feel concern and frustration at being required to stop care for clients who relocate. When asked about possible solutions to these issues, **89% of therapists say they want their license to make them eligible to practice in all 50 states.**

At Alma, we hear these concerns, and we believe it's time for legislators to make teletherapy across state lines easier for everyone. And if you're a mental health care provider, there are a few steps you can take to advocate for licensure reform:

1. **Contact your professional organizations.** If you're a member of the American Psychological Association, the National Association of Social Workers, or another professional organization, contact your leadership and ask them to support upcoming legislative efforts for licensure flexibility.
2. **Reach out to your local legislators.** Advocating for change at the local level is impactful. Reach out to your city or state legislators and share the importance of interstate practice for improved specialty access and continued care.
3. **Consider joining PSYPACT.** The Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact (PSYPACT) is an organization designed to facilitate the practice of psychology across state lines.